



### NO MAKE-UP OK!

Actor Kirti Kulhari says she is not afraid of facing the camera without make-up

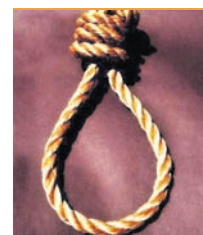
LEISURE P2



### ELURU MYSTERY ON

14 agencies, on the job, seek more time to zero in on the exact cause of the mysterious illness in Eluru

TWO STATES P7



### JOURNO HANGED

An Iranian journalist, accused of fanning unrest during the 2017-18 protests, was executed Saturday by the govt

INTERNATIONAL P10

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



New Parliament will have better facilities for the Opposition too... probably a bigger, deeper well in the House

### TMC MP questions MHA summons to WB's top 2 officials

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Dec 12: A day after the MHA summoned two top officers of the Bengal government... TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee Saturday wrote to Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla alleging "political vendetta" as the motive for the summons.

"We firstly want to inform you that Law and Order subject is within the domain of the state under the 7th schedule of the state list of the Constitution of India. How in respect of Law and Order situation you can call both the two officers of any sorts or discussion? Can you under the Constitution of India and any other law, inter-

**CAN YOU (MHA) UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA AND ANY OTHER LAW, INTERVENE IN RESPECT OF LAW AND ORDER OF THE STATE?**

KALYAN BANERJEE | TMC, MP

vene in respect of Law and Order of the state?" Banerjee said in the three-page letter.

The Trinamool MP said that he was surprised to come across the letter and the MHA's summon was coercion of the officers of the state government with political vindictiveness.

The MHA summoned state chief secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay and director general of police Virendra for an explanation on the law and order situation in the state, especially in the wake of an attack on the convoy of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national president JP Nadda Thursday.

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
MAX	31.6°C	31.8°C
MIN	17.8°C	16.5°C
Humidity	96%	96%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Fog or mist in the morning	

## Temple admin for Srimandir reopening

A MEETING OF 'CHHATISA NIYOG' WAS HELD AND THE SJTA WILL SEND ITS RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STATE GOVT FOR FINAL APPROVAL

AGENCIES

Puri, Dec 12: The Srimandir here is likely to throw open its gates to devotees before New Year after being closed for nine months due to COVID-19, the temple administration said Saturday. The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) chief administrator Krishan Kumar said the decision on reopening the temple was taken keeping in view the religious sentiments of the devotees and the COVID-19 protocol will be strictly observed when the 12th century shrine reopens.

A meeting of temple servitors 'Chhatisa Niyog' was held and the SJTA will send its recommendations to the state government for the final approval to reopen the temple, he told PTI.

Kumar said that it is planned to reopen the temple December 23 and the people of Puri will get the first opportunity to enter the temple. The detailed standard operating procedure will be issued after the government's approval.

We will urge the government to reopen the temple for residents of Puri in the first five days of its reopening. These people are unable to have darshan of the Lords even though they live very close to the temple, he said.

The temple will remain closed January 1 and 2 in view of the possibility of the rush of devotees to the pilgrim town on New Year's Day.

However, from January 3 onwards the temple will be kept open for all. From that day COVID-19 negative certificates given in the last 48 hours will be required and both RAT and RT-PCR tests will be allowed. All temple servitors will



Meeting of the 'Chhatisa Niyog' underway

have to produce identity cards for entry into the shrine.

Initially, 5,000 devotees will be allowed to enter into the temple. "Thereafter, the number of devotees al-



Re-barricading work in progress near Srimandir, Saturday

**The decision on reopening the temple was taken keeping in view the religious sentiments of the devotees and the COVID-19 protocol will be strictly observed when the 12th century shrine reopens**

KRISHAN KUMAR | SJTA CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

lowed per day will be gradually increased every week," he added.

The SJTA chief administrator thanked servitors for the smooth conduct of the world famous Ratha Yatra of Lord Jagannath during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### State attracted ₹1Lcr investments even during pandemic: Naveen

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 12: Odisha has been able to attract new investments of over Rs1 lakh crore across multiple sectors even during the COVID-19 pandemic, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said Saturday.

Addressing FICCI's Annual Convention, Patnaik said Odisha is fast emerging as a manufacturing hub of eastern India and listed a series of steps taken by his government to promote industries and investments across different sectors.

He added that Odisha has been recognised as an industry destination of choice over the years, was ranked number one in terms of attracting investments during April-September 2019, and poised to continue this leadership position.

"I am happy to note that the investor sentiment towards Odisha is extremely encouraging. Even during the difficult COVID pandemic time, I am happy to inform you that Odisha has been able to at-



The Chief Minister was addressing FICCI's Annual Convention

tract new investments of over ₹1 lakh crore across multiple sectors," the CM said.

Patnaik added the state has also developed a dedicated land bank with over one lakh acre of land available on the GIS based platform for easy site selection by the industries.

He said in the recent past, new industrial projects were launched in diverse sectors ranging from healthcare, renewable energy, steel and aluminium to food processing.

## Probe ordered into 'missing' 103kg gold from CBI custody

AGENCIES

Chennai, Dec 12: The Madras HC has ordered a probe by the Crime Branch-Crime Investigation Department (CBCID) into the missing 103.864 kg gold out of 400.47 kg seized by the CBI from Surana Corporation Ltd and kept under lock and key.

The 103.864 kg gold was found missing when it was weighed to be handed over to the liquidator of Surana Corporation.

The high court order came Friday. The CBI in a curious submission told the court that the gold when it was seized several years back was weighed together and when it was to be handed over to the liquidator each item was weighed individually and hence there was a difference.

According to CBI the seized gold were kept in the vaults of Surana



REPRESENTATIVE PIC

Corporation and the keys were handed over to a special court for CBI cases.

Rejecting an objection raised by the CBI against the CBCID probe as it would bring down the prestige of the organisation, the High Court said all policemen are to be trusted and ordered the probe.

The court also ordered the liquidator C Ramasubramaniam to lodge a complaint with the CBCID.

The case dates back to 2012, when the CBI had booked a case against the officials of Metals and Minerals Trading Corporation (MMTC) for

showing undue favours for Surana Corporation, a gold importer.

The probe agency had raided Surana Corporation and seized 400.47 kg of gold.

Later, the CBI said the seized gold was not needed for prosecuting the MMTC officials for corruption but filed another case in 2013 against Surana Corporation for violation of Foreign Trade Policy.

The seized gold was transferred from 2012 case to 2013 case. Later, the case was closed as there was no offence committed.

### First discuss repealing three new farm laws, farmers set condition

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 12: Sticking to their demands, farmer leaders Saturday said they are ready to hold talks with the government, but will first discuss repealing the three new farm laws. They announced that representatives of their unions would sit on a hunger strike during a nationwide protest December 14.

Addressing a press conference at Singhu Border here, farmer leader Kanwalpreet Singh Pannu also said that thousands of farmers will start their 'Delhi Chalo' march with their tractors from Rajasthan's Shahjahanpur through the Jaipur-Delhi Highway at 11 am Sunday.



The distance between Shahjahanpur and Delhi-Gurgaon border is around 94 kilometres.

Spelling out their strategy to make the agitation even "bigger", the farmer leader announced that their mothers, sisters and daughters will also join them soon, and that arrangements for their stay are being made at the protest sites.

Farmers' move to further intensify their agitation comes on a day Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured them that his government was committed to their welfare and that the three legislations were aimed at giving them alternative markets to boost income.

Without directly referring to the farmers' agitation, which entered the 17th day Saturday, Modi said at the annual meeting of industry body FICCI here that agricultural reforms as part of government efforts are aimed at removing roadblocks, and the new laws will also bring in technology and investment in the sector.

## Can't force family planning, Centre tells SC

THE SUBMISSION WAS MADE IN RESPONSE TO A PIL FILED BY BJP LEADER AND LAWYER ASHWINI KUMAR UPADHYAY CHALLENGING A DELHI HC ORDER THAT DISMISSED A PLEA SEEKING CERTAIN STEPS, INCLUDING TWO-CHILD NORM, TO CONTROL 'THE COUNTRY'S GROWING POPULATION'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 12: The Centre has told the Supreme Court that India is unequivocally against forcing family planning on its people. Any coercion to have a certain number of children is counter-productive and leads to demographic distortions, it said.

In an affidavit filed in the top court, the Health ministry told the apex court that the family welfare programme in the country is voluntary in nature, which enables couples to decide the size of their family and adopt family planning methods best suited to them, according to their choice and without any compulsion.



The submission was made in response to a PIL filed by BJP leader and lawyer Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay challenging a Delhi High Court order that dismissed a plea seeking certain steps, including two-child norm, to control the country's growing population.

The ministry said that 'public health' is a state subject and the state governments must lead the process of health sector reforms in a suitable and sustainable manner to protect the common people from health hazards.

"Improvement in the health sector can be effectively led by the state government with effective monitoring and specific intervention to control and regulate

the implementation process of the guidelines and schemes in a proper perspective," it said.

"The answering respondent no. (ministry) plays a supportive and facilitative role in achieving the health care reforms and outcomes. It is reiterated that the answering respondent no. 1 merely acts as a facilitator for providing accessible and affordable healthcare through state-led reforms in the health sector," it said.

The ministry said that as far as implementation of the guidelines and schemes in the states is concerned, it does not have any direct role and it is the prerogative of the respective state governments to implement the schemes

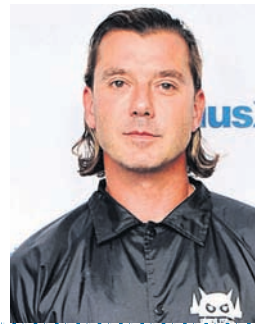
as per the prescribed guidelines.

The ministry only allocates funds to state governments for implementation of the approved schemes, it added.

The Ministry of Health And Family Welfare told the top court that India has adopted a comprehensive and holistic National Population Policy (NPP), 2000, with clearly articulated objectives, strategic themes and operational strategies.

The National Health Policy (NHP), 2017 provides for a policy guidance to inform, clarify, strengthen and prioritise the role of the government in shaping health systems in all its dimensions, it said.





## SINGER GAVIN ROSSDALE IS INSPIRED BY HIS KIDS

Singer Gavin Rossdale feels inspired by his children. He says he makes music with an intention of impressing his kids. He has three sons -- Kingston, 14, Zuma, 12, and Apollo, 6 -- with his former wife, singer Gwen Stefani. He is also a father to 31-year-old model Daisy Lowe.

## JAMIE DORNAN SUFFERS NASTY ALLERGIC REACTION

Actress Emily Blunt accidentally gave an allergy breakout to co-actor Jamie Dornan while they were on the sets of their upcoming countryside film, *Wild Mountain Thyme*. Both actors are allergic to farm animals and the film is set on a farm in Ireland, reports [aceshowbiz.com](#).



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Do something really exciting today - perhaps you could put on your trekking boots and explore unknown territories. Ganesh advises you to keep busy but not to go overboard. In group activities today, everybody will focus their attention on you.

**TAURUS**  
Today, says Ganesh, you will be likely to encounter someone who is bent upon provoking and getting on your nerves. You are urged not to retaliate and do things unbecoming of your good nature. Keep calm and unruffled.

**GEMINI**  
You will be surrounded by conflicts today. However, you will come to realise within a short while the solutions required to troubleshoot your way out of your difficult circumstances. You will desire solitude and peace so much so that you will not find even your family members welcome company, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
Your way of talk today will be such that it can cause misunderstanding. In a fit of emotion, you will take a hasty decision. You will regret the same in future, but you will also get a chance to rectify the same. So, says Ganesh, do not take a any ad hoc or temporary decision but a firm decision.

**LEO**  
You will try to finish your tasks as per schedule and will also be able to earn well. You will benefit from the influence of high ranking officials. They will appreciate your dedication. A promotion may come your way. You will reap the rewards of your hard work, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Ganesh sees you keeping away from a joint venture. You are capable enough to handle big projects yourself. You are most likely to lead and coordinate large teams and extract work from them as you will.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says today will be a wonderful day and bring forth a breakthrough for you. You shall get to know and learn a lot from top most officials and elderly people. The higher ups in your office will give you good support today. Ganesh warns you to stay away from judicial proceedings or pleadings, as today is not a good day for fighting court battles.

**SCORPIO**  
The crown jewel of your character will be your supreme confidence today. Try to pick up tasks that require Herculean efforts, and you shall come close to achieving them, predicts Ganesh. Your nerves and buoyant nature will be infective and also leave people awestruck.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Your business is likely to grow with leaps and bounds, foresees Ganesh. Increase in financial returns will keep you happy for the entire day. Work in progress gives out positive signals. Your expert advice will be valued at work. In short, a day full of activities.

**CAPRICORN**  
You will be a live wire, today. With amazing exuberance you have completed mammoth tasks and have spread the energy around. It will give you tremendous job-satisfaction, foresees Ganesh. Everything seems well and good the personal front, too.

**AQUARIUS**  
One way or the other, money matters will be the highlight of the day. Working environment at your office will be better than before. Be prepared to work harder as today your bosses may assign you some new projects, foresees Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
To get away from your daily tasks you will concentrate on entertainment, fun and rest today. You will feel like a free bird today. In all this also some important task will need your attention today. Ganesh says you feel nice as things around you change.

## 'No fear of facing camera sans make-up'



Kirti Kulhari

**Mumbai:** Actress Kirti Kulhari will be seen in the web series *Criminal Justice: Behind Closed Doors* donning a zero make-up look. She says she is not afraid of facing the camera without make-up.

"It's very important for me to render the character I'm essaying with sincerity. I have no fear of facing the camera without make-up; to be honest it's quite a relief and it saves time," she said.

"I'm playing the role of a murder suspect who is vulnerable and frightened. Embodying her was a challenge and the zero make-up did its job," she added.

Told from a woman's perspective, the upcoming season of the series chronicles a murder allegation against an eminent lawyer's wife, Anu Chandra. It looks like an open-and-shut case but there's more to the crime than meets the eye. Actor Pankaj Tripathi will be seen as lawyer Madhav Mishra.

## Malaika Arora is 'out of focus'

**Mumbai:** Actress Malaika Arora has shared a picture where the mood, according to her, is out of focus.

Malaika posted the picture on Instagram. In the image, she is seen lounging on a sofa dressed in a white shirt and striped pants. "Outta focus.." Malaika wrote.

Recently, Malaika and her best friend Kareena Kapoor Khan were in Dharamshala, where actors Saif Ali Khan and Arjun Kapoor were shooting for their next film, *Bhoot Police*, a horror comedy. Malaika posted a lot of images from the scenic hill town during her Dharamshala trip.



## The Dirty Picture actress Arya found dead



Arya with Vidya Balan in *The Dirty Picture*

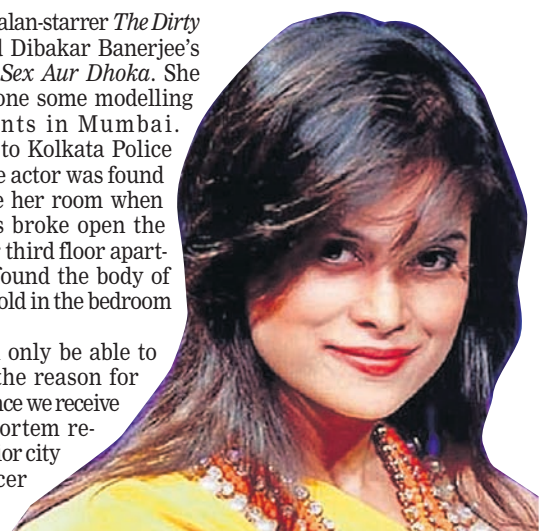
**Kolkata:** Actor-model Arya Banerjee (35), the youngest daughter of sitar maestro late Pandit Nikhil Bandyopadhyay, whose real name was Debdattha Banerjee, was mysteriously found dead in her

posh south Kolkata residence, the police said on Saturday.

Actor-model Banerjee used to stay alone at her Jodhpur Park residence with her pet. She worked in several Hindi films, including

the Vidya Balan-starrer *The Dirty Picture* and Dibakar Banerjee's *LSD: Love Sex Aur Dhoka*. She had also done some modelling assignments in Mumbai. According to Kolkata Police sources, the actor was found dead inside her room when the sleuths broke open the door of her third floor apartment and found the body of the 35-year-old in the bedroom Friday.

"We will only be able to ascertain the reason for her death once we receive the post-mortem report," a senior city police officer said.



## Regional actors court pan-India limelight in digital space

Actor Pratik Gandhi's portrayal of 'Harshad Mehta' made him a household name with the show being declared by IMDb as the top Indian web series of 2020

**Mumbai:** This year, OTT platforms emerged as ready spaces for several regional actors. The likes of Pratik Gandhi, Jisshu Sengupta, Samantha Akkineni, and Swastika Mukherji have been consistently doing good work in their respective regional turfs, and occasionally courting the dazzle in Hindi film industry. While cinema halls remained closed for most parts, these actors represented an emerging lot that have looked at wider reach beyond their regional realms.

**Pratik Gandhi**  
Born and brought up in Surat, Pratik predominantly works in Gujarati theatre and cinema. He has been seen in Hindi films such as *Mitron* and *Loveyatri*. However, it was in 2020 that he rose to



prominence with his performance in filmmaker Hansal Mehta's drama web-series *Scam 1992: The Harshad Mehta Story*. Pratik's portrayal of Harshad Mehta was bang on, and it made him a household name overnight. The show is the top

Indian web-series of 2020 according to IMDb.

**Jisshu Sengupta**  
Jisshu is an established name in Bangla cinema but he has occasionally done Hindi films, too. He was seen in *Barfi!*, *Mardaani*, *Piku*, and *Manikarnika*. However, Jisshu has come of age in the attention span of Hindi film buffs only this year, with his well-crafted performances in *Shakuntala Devi* and *Durgamati*.



Samantha Akkineni

Samantha Akkineni is a star of South Indian films and is married to Telugu superstar Naga Chaitanya. She is all set to make her debut in the Hindi digital space in the second season of the much-awaited series, *The Family Man* starring Manoj Bajpayee. She had earlier appeared the digitally-released Tamil anthology *Super Deluxe*, and will hope to reach out to pan-Indian audiences with her new role.

### Swastika Mukherjee

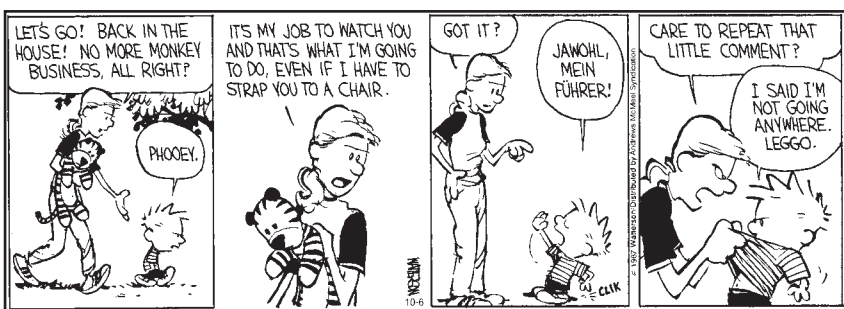
Swastika has been an established star in Bengal for a while but her tryst with Mumbai filmdom wasn't having much of an impact. She did a role in the Sushant Singh Rajput-starrer *Detective Byomkesh Bakshi!* as well as films like *The Stoneman Murders* and *Mumbai Cutting*, but was far from a recognised face among Hindi cine-goers. Earlier this year, she also appeared in Sushant's last film, *Dil Bechara*. She will next be seen in the upcoming web show *Black Widows*, after a strong performance in *Paatal Lok* earlier this year.



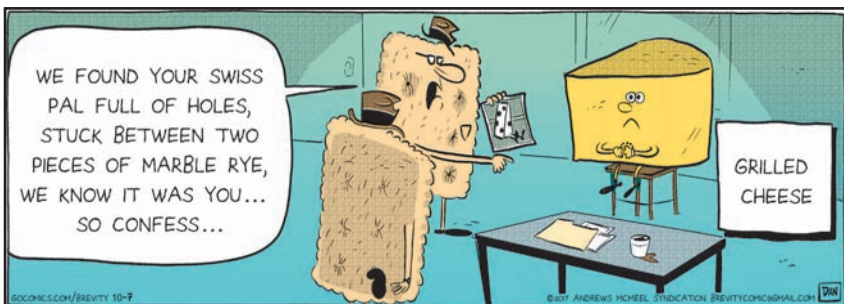
### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

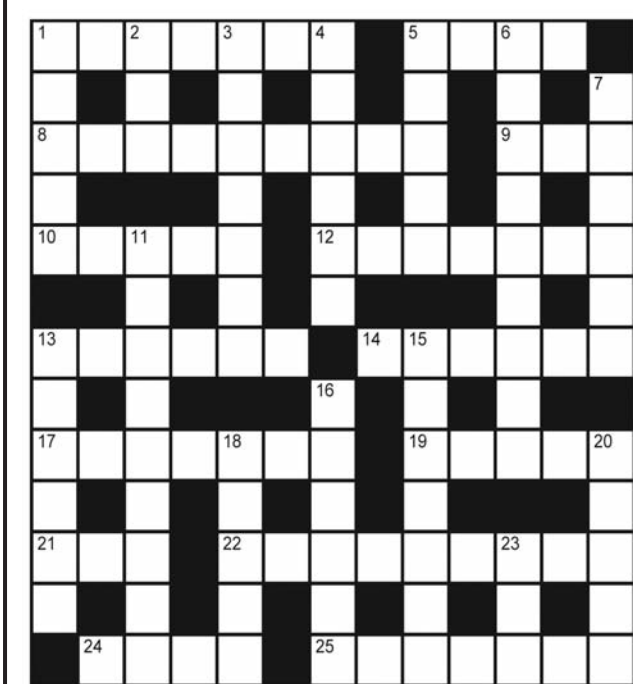


### BREVITY



### FUN post

### CROSSWORD



- Copyright ©2020 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Go-between
  - 5 Choir attire
  - 8 Sweepstakes
  - 9 Scrooge's cry
  - 10 High point
  - 12 Flags
  - 13 Curved shapes
  - 14 Risk
  - 17 Bitterness
  - 19 Fragrant wood
  - 21 Elevator part
  - 22 Canadian inland sea (6,3)
  - 24 Distress signal
  - 25 Oil source
  - 6 Piano type (4,5)
  - 7 Pursued
  - 11 Oddball
  - 13 Togo locale
  - 15 Soft-finned fish
  - 16 Wears away
  - 18 Earthy colour
  - 20 Synthetic silklike fabric
  - 23 Quilting party
- Down**
- 1 Sachet scent
  - 2 Behave
  - 3 Apparition
  - 4 Creaks and shrieks
  - 5 Takes five

### SUDOKU

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

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

### SOLUTIONS

**CROSSWORD**

S	A	H	A	R	A	T	R	A	U	M	A
Q	E	E	T	A	O	N	S				
U	R	N	P	U	B	L	I	M	P		
I	N	O	O	I	C	I					
D	W	A	R	F	R	A	N	C	O	U	R
				F	T	R	I				
F	E	W	E	S	T	T	U	R	N	I	N
I	I	P									
C	A	L	Y	P	S	O	A	I	S	L	E
T	D	I	U	W	A	S					
I	N	D	E	X	C	H	A	B	U	S	
O	O	I	H	R	E	R					
N	U	G	G	E	T	S	E	V	E	R	N

**SUDOKU**

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

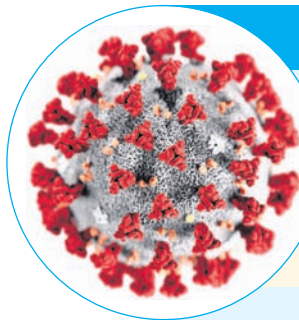
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW





## DISPLAYING TALENT

Girls perform at a district-level cultural event at Bishwambhar Vidyapitha in Puri, Saturday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	7,16,63,565	4,98,25,228	16,05,060
India	98,26,775	3,24,328	1,42,628
Odisha	3,23,364	3,18,683	1,802

# CS takes stock of 7 major rly projects

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Reviewing progress of seven major railway projects in the state, Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy directed the officials concerned to provide advance possession of government land for faster implementation of the projects.

Tripathy reviewed the progress of the projects and resolved the issues relating to ground level implementation at a high-level meeting held on digital mode at Lokseva Bhawan here recently. Commissioner, Railway Coordination, Manoj Mishra presented the updates for discussion.

The Chief Secretary asked the District Collectors and tehsildars to give advance possession of government land to ensure uninterrupted progress of construction of projects.

He directed the departments and the project proponents to ensure

## CLEARING HURDLES



■ The Chief Secretary asked the District Collectors and tehsildars to give advance possession of government land to ensure uninterrupted progress of construction of projects

■ Issues related to distribution of compensation money to the land owners, handing over the possession of the government land, forest clearances, compensatory afforestation, setting up of towers, shifting of utilities, wildlife clearances and other issues were deliberated and resolved

strict ground-level follow-up of the work schedule till completion and commissioning of the projects.

Tripathy set timelines for different phases of the projects. "Since the projects are critical from coal evacuation, passenger traffic and

trade infrastructure points of view all the related field-level officials should be on alert and proactive mode," he said.

He reviewed the progress of 289-km long Khurda-Bolangir new broad gauge railway line with an

expenditure of around Rs 3,550 crore; 174.11-km Sambalpur-Talcher doubling rail link involving Rs 679.27 crore; 264.6-km long Vizianagaram-Sambalpur 3rd line with Rs 2575 crore and 170-km long Budhapank-Salegaon 3rd and 4th rail line with an investment of Rs 1,173 crore. Likewise, the progress of 101-km long Rourkela-Jharsuguda 3rd new rail link with ₹1,173 crore; 98.7-km long Angul-Sukinda new line involving ₹638.5 crore and 155-km long Talcher-Bimlagarh new line with an expenditure of ₹810.78 crore was also reviewed.

Issues related to distribution of compensation money to the land owners, handing over the possession of the government land, forest clearances, compensatory afforestation, setting up of towers, shifting of utilities, wildlife clearances and other issues were deliberated and resolved at the meeting.

## HAZY MORNING



Dense fog causes inconvenience for the commuters as visibility reduces in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

OP PHOTO

# ₹194Cr Central fund for state to withstand Covid dent

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** The Union government has released Rs 194 crore to Odisha out of Rs 388 crore sanctioned under 'scheme for special assistance to states for capital expenditure' in view of Covid-19 pandemic.

According to the Ministry of Finance, the scheme is aimed at assisting the state governments which have faced shortfall in tax revenue due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Capital expenditure has a higher multiplier effect, enhancing the future productive capacity of the economy, and results in a higher rate of economy growth. Therefore, despite the adverse financial position of the Union government, it was decided to extend special assistance to state governments in respect of capital expenditure, in financial year 2020-21," the Finance Ministry said.

It is further said that the scheme has received very good response



from the state governments. "Capital expenditure proposals of Rs 9,879.61 crore from 27 states have so far been approved by the Ministry of Finance. A total of Rs 4,939.81 crore has been released to the states as the first tranche of assistance under the scheme," the ministry said.

Capital expenditure projects have been approved in diverse sectors of economy like, health, rural development, water supply, irrigation, power, transport, education, urban development, the ministry added.

# State govt allows 1 more chance to OCS aspirants

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Good news for those who have either exhausted the chances of appearing the Odisha Civil Services (OCS) examinations or have attained the upper age limit. The state government has allowed one more attempt to these aspirants to appear in the OCS examinations, 2020.

Keeping Covid-19 pandemic in mind, the General Administration and Public Grievances department has issued a notification in this regard. The provisions of the OCS, Combined Competitive Recruitment Examination (CCRE), Rules, 1991 will be amended accordingly, it said.

The candidates, who have appeared in OCS examinations-2018 or 2019 and are ineligible to appear in the test in 2020 for attaining upper age limit or those who have exhausted the attempts prescribed under the Rules, will be



allowed one more compensatory attempt for appearing the OCS Examination- 2020.

The state government has already given two additional attempts to the aspirants following their request. In spite of that, some aspirants have once again urged the government to allow additional chances to appear in both preliminary and main examinations considering the Covid-19 induced disruptions to coaching and library facilities this year.

## Many meritorious OCS aspirants could not appear in the OCS Preliminary Examination held in March owing to Covid-19 pandemic

Even though the Covid-19 was announced as a disaster in the state, Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) conducted the OCSE-2019 (Prelims) March 15. As a result, many meritorious rural OCS aspirants could not appear in the examination.

Welcoming the move of the government, Satya Mohapatra, an OCS aspirant, said, "All educational institutions still remain closed. We are unable to prepare for the examinations at home. The government should consider for another chance."

# PHULBANI SHIVERS AT 9.5 ° CELSIUS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Cold wave continued to grip many parts of the state even as Phulbani recorded the state's lowest temperature of 9.5 degrees Celsius, Saturday.

As many as 14 places recorded the minimum temperature of 15 degrees Celsius or below it during the last 24 hours. The minimum temperature at Daringbadi was 11 degrees C while it was 11.6 degrees C at Angul, 12.2 degrees C at Koraput, 12.6 degrees C at Bhawanipatna and 13 degrees C at Sundargarh.

Similarly, Keonjhar recorded night temperature of 13.2 degrees, preceded by Jharsuguda (13.4), Baripada (13.6), Boudh, Talcher and Bolangir (14.5 each), Sonepur (14.8) and Sambalpur (15).

Bhubaneswar and Cuttack witnessed a minimum temperature of 17.8 and 16.5 degrees Celsius, respectively.

The Met department said dense fog is very likely to occur at one or

14 places recorded minimum temperature of 15 degrees Celsius or below it during the last 24 hours

The Met department said dense fog is very likely to occur at one or two places in Nayagarh, Boudh, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Kandhamal, Rayagada and Koraput in between Sunday night and early Monday

two places in Nayagarh, Boudh, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Kandhamal, Rayagada and Koraput in between Sunday night and early Monday.

Besides, shallow to moderate fog would occur at a few places of Rayagada, Kandhamal, Koraput, Nayagarh, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda, Puri, Kendrapara Bhadrak, Kalahandi and Boudh districts, in the morning.

# Cyber crooks dupe two of ₹4 lakh

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Cyber criminals duped two persons of around Rs 4 lakh by fraudulently securing the account details from the mobile phones of the victims.

The victims, Manoj Kumar and Mustaq Ali Khan, have lodged two separate complaints at Chandrasekharpur and Tamando police stations

Police have been investigating the incidents after registering two separate cases

The accused asked him to open a link sent on his WhatsApp number and follow the instructions.

Accordingly, Khan opened the link on his cellphone and followed the instructions given there to update the KYC details.

A few minutes later, he received several messages regarding the online transactions worth around Rs 3 lakh which was deducted from his wife's account. Khan alleged

that the criminals hacked the phone in which he had downloaded 'Yono' app attached to his wife's bank account.

Similarly, Manoj received several OTP messages on his mobile phone recently. Later, upon checking his credit card applications, he found online transactions of around Rs 1 lakh through Amazon pay.

Subsequently, he informed the Amazon authorities about the fraudulent transactions and asked them to return the amount deducted from his account, but to no avail.

He also requested the credit card authorities to not pressurize him for the repayment but the banking officials allegedly refused consider his request.

Police have been investigating the incidents after registering two separate cases.

# BJD ditched farmers, says Purandeswari

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** BJP's Odisha in-charge D Purandeswari, Saturday, took a swipe at the state government for the alleged anti-farmer policies of the latter and accused Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik of not keeping his poll promises.

The senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader held a presser here to fire salvos at the state government and the Chief Minister. Purandeswari said, "The state is making so much noise on the farmers' issue but the farmers here understand very well as to which government has stood with them."

She also said, "The state came up with the KALIA scheme but the dues are yet to be paid to the eligible farmers. Initially, the state had said that

## The BJP leader raked up the issue of KALIA money and said that many eligible farmers are yet to receive the assistance

it had 35 lakh farmers but later it said it has 21 lakh farmers. It hints that they have failed to do a proper enumeration of the farmers."

She also said that the state government has also failed in providing adequate irrigation facilities for the farmers while the drinking water promises also remain unfulfilled. "There are many villages in Odisha where water available in their area is not fit for drinking. There are more than 1,000 villages in the state which are yet to see



D Purandeswari addresses the media, Saturday

pipiped water projects," she said.

The BJP leader also accused the Chief Minister of not fulfilling the promise of pucca houses. "The BJD government never keeps its promises it makes to the people. In 2014, the government had said that it would turn all kutcha houses into pucca. However, the same promise

was fulfilled in 2019. It was clear that the government has failed on this front too. In rural areas, more than 2 lakh kutcha houses are yet to be made pucca," she said.

She also questioned the state government for not joining Ayushman Bharat scheme.

However, Biju Janata Dal's (BJD) national spokesperson Sasmit Patra said, "It would have been better if she had spoken more about farmer related issues, particularly hiving the MSP as per a unanimous resolution of March 25, 2017 in Odisha Assembly seeking revision of MSP of paddy from Rs 1,470 to Rs 2,930 per quintal."

Patra also said, "It seems that she is unaware that Odisha has received five awards from her party's government at the Centre for constructing largest number of houses."

## GOLDEN HARVEST



Farmers spreading newly-harvested paddy alongside Bhubaneswar-Puri National Highway near Pipli to dry out the grains, Saturday

OP PHOTO

# BMC lauded for safe sewage mgmt

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Lauding efforts of the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) for initiating safe faecal sludge management, the Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Saturday, congratulated the civic body for making Bhubaneswar the 'first city' in the country to launch 24x7 'Safai Mitra' helpline.

Initiated by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the Safai Mitra helpline number 14420 is aimed at discouraging usage of manual labour in cleaning of sewage. The ministry had launched the scheme to ensure that no life of any sewer or septic tank cleaner is ever lost again owing to the issue of 'hazardous cleaning. The scheme is being implemented in five other cities in the country other than Bhubaneswar.

Taking to his official Twitter handle, the Chief Minister said, "People can now call on the toll free number '14420' for more in-

## For a better city

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■ The ministry had launched the scheme to ensure that no life of any sewer or septic tank cleaner is ever lost again owing to the issue of 'hazardous cleaning.

■ The scheme is being implemented in five other cities in the country other than Bhubaneswar



formation on safe cleaning of septic tanks/sewers & registering complaint for hazardous cleaning."

Other than providing information over de-sludge of sewer, the helpline will also be used to gather information for private operators working without the civic au-

thority's permission or dumping waste in open drains.

Moreover, the Centre will also introduce a review system for the cities that will be judged on the parameters like services, awareness, campaign activity and eco-system.



# LOCALS RALLY AGAINST ILLEGAL SAND MINING



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Villagers from the Pankapal village in Jajpur district have written to the state authorities seeking their intervention into alleged sand mining activities along the Baitrani river lying in close vicinity of their area. They claimed the validity of sand mining operations in that area expired October 3, 2020 but local mining is continuing in open defiance of sand mining norms and orders of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on the matter. The environmental clearance for the same was granted for five years in 2015 for conducting sand mining over an area of 7.84 hectare in Pankapal-I in Danagadi Tehsil,

ing laws and sought action against the miner in the case. It was alleged that use of excavators was rampant while permission was only for manual mining (through labour).

It has also been alleged that mining is going on beyond allocated areas, mining in excess of permissible limits is done while the vehicles engaged in mining are causing pollution to the area as they move without covering the top of the vehicle against the norms.

"There is a bridge in the Brahmani river at (Kabatghai-Sasan) in close proximity to the present mining site at Pankapal. Further the bridge is already damaged and in this regard a warning has been placed on the bridge. Hence using earth movers (excavators) and heavy vehicles at mining site and plying of heavy vehicles on bridge will further impact the damaged condition of the bridge," the letter written by the villagers to the state authorities claimed.

The letter has been addressed to the chief secretary, state pollution control board, water resource department and others. The offices have been asked to take stock of the situation and take stern action in this regard.

The aggrieved villagers have also sent photographs of use of excavators and other violations of rules to support their allegations.

## Norm violations

The environmental clearance was granted for five years in 2015 for conducting sand mining over an area of 7.84 hectare in Pankapal-I under Danagadi Tehsil in Jajpur in Brahmani river

Villagers alleged that mining is going on beyond allocated areas in excess of permissible limit while the vehicles engaged in mining are causing pollution to the area as they move without covering the top of the vehicles against the norms

Jajpur in Brahmani river. The villagers have also reported several other defiance of sand min-

# Woman Maoist shot dead by security forces in Kandhamal

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Dec 12:** In a major crack-down Friday, a woman Maoist was gunned down during a combing operation jointly conducted by the Special Operations Group (SOG) and District Voluntary Force (DVF).

The exchange of fire took place between the security forces and Left-wing extremists at Gochhapada village in Kandhamal, Director General (DG) of Odisha Police Abhay informed Friday afternoon.

**Two firearms and four rounds of live bullets including Maoist literature were seized from the spot**

At a presser at the police headquarters in Cuttack, DGP Abhay said, "Combing operation has been intensified in the area following the encounter between the forces and the ultras. The body of a woman Maoist in uniform was recovered from the area."

Two firearms and four rounds of live bullets including Maoist literature were seized from the spot during thorough search following the encounter.

Acting on a tip-off, combing operation was initiated under Gochhapada police limits which has been continuing since December 9. Notably, the DGP appealed to the ultras on this occasion to shun violence and join the mainstream in their better interest.

# RAGING FIRE



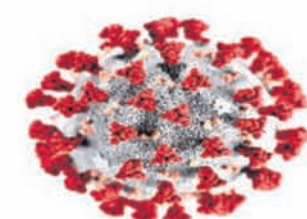
Members of All India Kishan Sangharsh Coordination Committee and other trade unions staging a demonstration at Pipli toll plaza on Bhubaneswar's outskirts calling out motorists not to pay toll fees at the gate as a mark of protest against the Centre's new farm laws

# Covid-19 fatalities cross 1,800-mark

PNN/AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** The state's Covid-19 death toll crossed the 1,800-mark Saturday as four more patients succumbed to the disease, while 335 new cases pushed the tally to 3,23,364, a health and family welfare department official said.

Four fresh fatalities – two from Sundargarh and one each from Balasore and Malkangiri districts – pushed the coronavirus toll in the state to 1,802. Khurda district, of which Bhubaneswar is a part, has accounted for 308 fatalities followed by Ganjam (245), Sundargarh (154), Cuttack (137) and Puri (110). Fifty-three Covid-19 patients have also died due to comorbidities. Of the 335 new cases, 193 were re-



## THREE DISTRICTS - GAJAPATI, KANDHAMAL AND SUBARNAPUR - REGISTERED NIL CASES

ported from different quarantine centres and the rest detected during contact tracing. Meanwhile, 405 patients have recovered from the disease, the official said.

Sundargarh recorded the maximum number of new cases at 52, followed by Khurda 31 and Mayurbhanj 29. Three districts - Gajapati, Kandhamal and

Subarnapur - did not register any case since Friday, he said.

Odisha currently has 3,231 active cases, while 3,18,278 people have recovered from the disease so far. Over 63.45 lakh samples have been tested for the novel coronavirus in the state, including 32,998 Friday. The positivity rate stands at 5.1 per cent, the official added.

# Four sand, stone-laden trucks seized

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Khurda, Dec 12:** Illegal transportation of minor minerals in this district is on the rise as revenue officials raided various places and seized four vehicles, Saturday. Three sand laden Hywa dumpers were seized from the new bus-stand area in the town while a truck loaded with laterite stones was seized from the National Highway-16.

The matter came to the fore when the revenue officials led by additional tehsildar Rabindra Padhi conducted raids at various places in and around Khurda town.

The revenue officials intercepted three sand laden trucks en route to Nayagarh near the new bus-stand and asked drivers to show papers.

They seized the vehicles when the drivers failed to show them papers. Later, the truck loaded with laterite stone was seized from the national highway.

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By an affidavit before Notary, Bhubaneswar, I Barik Priyanka (22), Aadhaar No. [REDACTED], D/o. Prashant Barik resident of Flat No. 203, 2nd Floor, Jagannath Plaza, Gajapati Nagar, P.O.- Sainik School, P.S.- Sahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Dist.- Khurda declare that I have changed my name from "Barik Priyanka Prashant" to "Barik Priyanka" on 10.12.2020 for all purpose.

By virtue of affidavit before Notary Public, Puri, I, Trinath Jena, S/o Late Markand Jena of Village Khataphiringi, P.S.- Brahmagiri, Dist.- Puri do hereby declare that my younger son's correct name is Bipini Kumar Jena and his Date of Birth is 2nd February 2002 for correction of pension book.

# Private bank in soup for using same TC to finance 3 vehicles

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** The local branch of a prominent private bank is in trouble after it financed three vehicles using the same trade certificate. The Regional Transport Office, Bhubaneswar- II has lodged a complaint with the Infocity police against the bank authorities for flouting the directions of the transport commissioner.

As per orders, financial institutions intending to finance vehicles have to secure a par-

ticular trade certificate with a unique number which can be used for one vehicle only from the RTO office. The banks and NBFCs have also been directed to pay a specific amount for getting the trade certificate and number each time.

However, the bank reportedly financed three vehicles using the same trade certificate and the unique number. The RTO officials came across the mischief while uploading the related documents presented by the vehicle dealers in VAHAN portal.

Meanwhile, sources in the RTO revealed that the bank authorities have admitted committing mistake out of ignorance of the rules.

It also assured the authorities that such mistakes will not be repeated in future.

On the other hand, the RTO officials claimed that senior officers of banks were informed and trained in procedures and rules for vehicle registration.

Police have been investigating the incident after registering a case in this regard.

# 2 killed, 1 hurt in Nuapada road mishap

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nuapada, Dec 12:** A youth and his brother-in-law were killed and another sustained critical injuries Friday night after an SUV in which they were travelling overturned at Timanpur village under Sinapali police limits in Nuapada district.

According to sources, the deceased were identified as 25-year-old Kalyan Bag and 16-year-old Laxhan Bag. The critically injured

Sushil Dharua has been undergoing treatment at a hospital in Raipur.

The three persons were returning to their respective villages at Rajpur and Binapur areas in Nuapada district. Owing to poor visibility, the vehicle hit a huge stone, following which the driver lost control over the ill-fated vehicle leading to its overturn.

Some local villagers rescued the three critically injured and rushed them to Sinapali community health

centre (CHC) in the district.

However, the doctors treating at the CHC declared both Kalyan and Laxhan 'brought dead'. Sushil was later shifted to a private hospital in Raipur as his condition deteriorated.

Sinapali police immediately reached the spot after they were informed about the tragic road mishap. Police have sent the bodies for post-mortem and launched a probe in this connection.

# CP GRILLS ATM LOOTERS BROUGHT ON REMAND

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** A special squad of the commissionerate police Saturday started interrogation of two interstate ATM looters. They were involved in the looting of PNB ATM at Patia Station Road in the intervening night of October



10 and 11. The sleuths took the accused duo to the spot and recreated the loot incident.

The police recently brought Samarjyot Singh and Zafar Sadiq on a three-day remand from Vizag. Police also revealed that Singh was a high school dropout while Sadiq has studied till Plus 2.

The duo revealed before police that they had learned the loot techniques from YouTube, popular video sharing website.

The looters reached Bhubaneswar October 5 and checked in to two hotels during their stay here. They used gas cutters to open the ATM kiosks before decamping with the cash.

Following the loot, they went to New Delhi by a flight and later reached Chandigarh on road. Subsequently, they also visited Bangalore and Vizag.

The duo revealed that Singh had spent ₹3 lakhs from the looted cash on hair transplantation.

# AKASH PATHAK DUPED MANY YOUTHS, SAYS CB

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Dec 12:** Additional Director General of Police (Crime Branch) Soumendra Priyadarshi Saturday claimed that Akash Pathak, son of suspended IPS officer AK Pathak, has duped many youths of huge amount on the pretext of providing jobs in a reputed company.

Addressing a presser here, Priyadarshi revealed that six of the duped youths had filed complaints with police. "Based on the complaints, a case has been registered at the Economic Offences Wing of the Crime Branch. All others cheated by Akash Pathak can lodge their complaints with police," Priyadarshi said.

The Crime Branch ADG further claimed that six youths had transferred money to the bank account of MLA Pradip Panigrahi and his close associates after being assured of jobs, of which two had trans-

**Pathak was issuing fake job letters to gullible aspirants after collecting money from them through Panigrahi and his close associates**

ferred money directly to the account of the accused MLA.

"During investigation by Cyber Police Station of the CID CB, it is found that Akash had used fake logo and stamp of Tata Motors and also created fake email ID and visiting card to impersonate himself the MD of the company. He was issuing fake job letters to gullible job aspirants after collecting money from them through Panigrahi and his close associates. Pathak had also started online training classes for such job aspirants," said Priyadarshi.

# Jankia police crack youth's murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Khurda, Dec 12:** Jankia police cracked the murder case of a youth who was killed at a marriage party as it arrested six persons of Ramabili village in the district for the offence, Saturday.

The victim was identified as Bikash Sahu of Dia village under Nirakarapur police limits. His marriage had been fixed with his engagement scheduled to be held soon.

The incident spread tension in the area as family members recovered Bikash's body from an abandoned well in Ramabili village, Friday.

Family members and villagers staged a road blockade on New Jagannath Sadak demanding immediate arrest of the accused and transfer of Jankia IIC over police inaction, Friday. They relented after SP Ajay Pratap Swain intervened and assured to look into their demands.

The accused were identified as Dillip Mohapatra, 30, alias Dilu, Trinath Mohapatra, 60, alias Sarat, Gopinath Mohapatra, 52, alias Joka, Nilamani Pradhan, 57, Bijay Mohapatra, 48, and Srikant Sahu, 45, alias Sura in Ramabili village. They were produced in court and remanded to judicial custody after their bail pleas were rejected.

Bikash had been to Ramabili village as part of a groom's entourage December 9 when the participating members had a fight with the local youths.

Unnerved, they escaped from the spot while Bikash failed to do so. Family members and villagers on finding him absent visited Ramabili village again but failed to trace him.

Family members tried to lodge complaints in the Jankia police station first and later, at Nirakarapur police station but their pleas were turned down, November 10. Jankia police registered a case and started an investigation only after the SP intervened on the request of the family members.

# POLL FERVOUR



A lawyer casting his vote at a polling booth for elections to Bhubaneswar Bar Association Saturday

OP PHOTO

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# Jumbo corridor in jeopardy

NEARLY 40K TREES LIKELY TO BE FELLED FOR SOLAR PROEJCT; IDCO TO ACQUIRE LAND

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Dec 12:** The elephant corridor in Sambalpur forest division is going to face massive damage due to a solar project. About 40,000 valuable trees will be chopped off to make space for the project, a report said.

According to the report, The elephant corridor spreads over areas like Beladunguri, Niladunguri and Kutarajuri, which are part of the proposed solar project.

On one hand, the forest department is spending crores of rupees for safety and protection of forest and elephant, this project will deal a blow to the efforts, it was alleged.

The forest department has granted permission for the project while tree counting has begun. However, some locals were worried over this project and warned of agitation.

Till date, 25,000 trees have been identified. An official of the forest department said that there are 40,000 trees, including valuable trees, sal, piashal, gambhari, jackfruit, mango, neem, asna, and khair in the land earmarked for land acquisition.



**AN ECOCIDE IN THE OFFING**

TILL DATE, 25,000 TREES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED. AN OFFICIAL OF THE FOREST DEPARTMENT SAID THAT THERE ARE 40,000 TREES, INCLUDING VALUABLE TREES, SAL, PIASHAL, GAMBHARI, JACKFRUIT, MANGO, NEEM, ASANA, AND KHAIR IN THE LAND EARMARKED FOR ACQUISITION

quisition.

Most of these trees have grown over decades. Bamboo plants are plenty on the land. Elephants are usually fond of bamboo leaves.

This area plays a favourable host to the elephants. Meanwhile, the process has started to acquire 500 acres of land. IDCO had in fact initiated the land acquisition process in 2018. For the last few days, the forest department and the revenue

department have been routinely carrying out survey for trees.

Locals and some environmentalists have expressed concern over this development.

The land is under the revenue department. But the area has been made dense with trees planted by the forest department.

Locals alleged that the local Vana Surakhya Samiti and gram sabha had not been taken into confidence

The elephant corridor spreads over areas like Beladunguri, Niladunguri and Kutarajuri, which are part of the proposed solar project

The forest department is spending crores of rupees for safety and protection of forest and elephant, this project will deal a blow to the efforts, it was alleged

The department has granted permission for the project while tree counting has begun. However, some locals were worried over this project and warned of agitation

before the tree felling.

Jujumara tehsildar Suman Minj said the land acquisition process was started two years ago. This place is not human settlement, but elephants reside there.

Padiabahal range officer Prabhakar Behera said that the forest department has initiated the process of identifying trees to be cut down. About 25,000 trees have been identified till date, he added.

## Woman dies after family planning operation; kin fume

**Jagatsinghpur:** Tension gripped Ersama community health centre (CHC) in Jagatsinghpur after family members of a woman, who died following a family planning operation Friday, staged a protest at the CHC Saturday. They held the doctor and the staff responsible for their patient's death. According to sources, Trilochan Rout, a resident of Nalakani village, had taken his wife Bindulata Rout (34) to the CHC for a family planning operation. After waiting for some time, her turn came and she was taken to the operation theatre. Later, her husband and other family members waiting for her to come out of the OT were said that Bindulata had died. Not in a position to believe that a person walking into the OT by herself could die, family members alleged medical negligence. They alleged their patient had died at the hands of Dr Pratap Das, a retired doctor. They demanded compensation and action against the retired doctor.

## Boat ambulance service launched in Malkangiri district

**Malkangiri:** The long-awaited boat ambulance service was launched in the Swabhimani Anchal of Malkangiri district Friday. Two boat ambulances were pressed into service to facilitate emergency medical care of people living in cut-off areas. The service was inaugurated by Collector Yeddula Vijay while many officials of the district administration were present on the occasion. The boat ambulance service will benefit over 20,000 people in 40 villages in the area lacking road communication. It has been decided to station one boat ambulance at Arapad and another one at Kuntarpadar. The boat ambulances, fitted with GPS devices, have been connected with the 108 Ambulance service. It can be available by dialing the emergency number.

# Gemstone smuggling thrives in Rayagada

MAFIA IS ON A LOOTING SPREE IN BISAMKATAK EVEN AS THE GOVT LOSES CRORES OF REVENUE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bisamkatak, Dec 12:** Gemstone mafia has been on a looting spree in various parts of Rayagada district. About three days ago, the STF of the Crime Branch arrested a person involved in gemstone quarrying and smuggling. Some gemstone quarries have been lying inoperative, but the mafia is plundering these precious minerals at their will. On the other hand, the mines department and the administration have allegedly not taken any action against them, a report said.

Rampant gemstone loot has caused resentment among locals. The government is losing crores of rupees due to smuggling of gemstones.

A gem stone mine is at Paika Dakuluguda under Bisamkatak block. Mafai has been active here for a long time. Every day, valuable gemstones are being mined with the help of locals and are transported outside.

Notably, the STF has got clues about gem stone trafficking. November 7, the Special Task Force (STF) of the Crime Branch had arrested ganja and gemstone smuggler



Jitendra Behera. His car was loaded with two gunny bags of illegally procured gemstones worth over crores of rupees.

Rayagada police arrested two more persons on charge of supplying the semi-precious stones and arranging buyers. One of the two is a block grant school teacher of Boudh district.

During investigation into Behera's illegal trade network, police nabbed Mahana and Ratnallu, who admitted to its involvement in gemstone smuggling.

Mahana and Ratnallu have close links with prime accused Behera. The three used to run a racket. Ratnallu procured gemstones from

illegal mines operating in Takiguda area and sold them to Behera.

This has exposed the illegal gemstone mining in the district.

Many local people claimed that gem stone loot had been taking place at several mines in the district with the help of local residents.

"Though local administration and police are well aware of such illegal activities, they are keeping quiet. This has raised many eyebrows," they lamented.

# Another minor girl missing in Nayagarh raises concern

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Ranpur, Dec 12:** At a time when the Pari death case is still hugging headlines, Nayagarh district has reported yet another missing of a minor girl.

The girl went missing Friday and is still untraced, according to her family members.

The missing girl has been identified as the daughter of Sanjay Sahu of Budhipatna village under Ranpur police limits.

According to the family, the girl was playing in the village Friday. It was when she did not return until late, the family members launched a frantic search for her. Not finding her despite searching



at every possible place, they eventually lodged a missing report at Ranpur police station.

The police have launched an investigation, taking the case seriously which is par for the course.

Notably, the Pari death case created ripples in the state after the ha-

rassed and distressed parents of the victim attempted self immolation in front of the Odisha Legislative Assembly November 24 when the Winter Session was underway.

The five-year-old girl went missing from her house at Jadupur under Sadar police limits in Nayagarh district June 14. Her body was recovered from a spot only 50 metres away from the place where she went missing June 23.

Meanwhile, Nayagarh Sadar police station IIC Rinarani Sahoo was suspended and sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Niranjan Padhi was transferred. The case is being probed by the SIT formed by the state government.



TRUE REFLECTION

A fisherman catching fish in Mahanadi in Sambalpur as his image is reflected on rippling water of the river OP PHOTO

## 3 diarrhea patients carried on cart as ambulance fails



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nabarangpur, Dec 12:** Bad road connectivity has been acting as a hindrance in shifting patients from remote pockets of Nabarangpur district to hospitals. With ambulance failing to reach doorsteps, villagers carry patients on cots or slings to the vehicle which waits at the nearest motorable road.

In a fresh incident, as many as three of Patakhalia area under Chandahandi block of Nabarangpur district reportedly suffering from diarrhea and vomiting had to be carried on a bullock cart for 5 kms to an ambulance waiting on the motorable road, Saturday. According to a source, three people of Patakhalia area were suffering from diarrhea and vomiting. As their condition deteriorated, the villagers contacted the 108 ambulance service. The ambulance, however, could not reach the village which lacks road connectivity and stood waiting about 5 km away on the main road.

With no options left, the three patients were carried on a bullock cart to access the ambulance. On reaching the main road, they were shifted to the ambulance which took them to Chandahandi

## Bad road connectivity has been acting as a hindrance in shifting patients from remote pockets of abarangpur district to hospitals

Community Health Centre.

The three patients are currently undergoing treatment at the hospital. Doctors at the Community Health Centre informed that the three patients were given necessary treatment and their condition is stated to be stable now.

The Patakhalia area is cut off from the mainland as the muddy road and paddy fields are the major obstacles. A motorable road is the long-standing demand of villagers. But neither the district administration nor the local MLA are taking necessary steps despite repeated requests.

The villagers said that they have been requesting the district administration for the facility for years but no measures have been taken to provide road connectivity to the villages. As a result of which the residents of the village have been facing untold miseries.

## Farmer couple electrocuted

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Dec 12:** In a shocking incident, a farmer couple was electrocuted after coming in contact with an 11KV live wire over their field at Puruna Burupada village under Hinjilicut police limits in Ganjam district.

The deceased was identified as Heena Samal (65) and Bishnu Samal (55) of Puruna Burupada village.

The mishap occurred in the wee hours of Saturday. The live wire snapped from an electric pole was lying in the field.

The couple had gone to their farm to pluck cauliflowers at around 4.00 am. They were hardly aware of their death lurking in their own field. As they entered the field, they came in contact with the live wire and died.

# Forest dept staff attacked by stone mafia in Dhenkanal

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal, Dec 12:** As many as seven forest department employees sustained critical injuries after illegal stone mining mafia caught them unawares and attacked them with sticks and stones. The team was on its way to an illegal stone mine to conduct a raid.

The incident was reported from Karadabani area under Nihalprasad police limits in Dhenkanal district Saturday.

Among the injured were two forest guards and five forest watchers. They are all undergoing treatment at Barapada primary health centre (PHC). After injuring them seriously, the miscreants also snatched service revolvers, cell phones and other articles away from them.

After getting information about the incident, Nihalprasad police reached the spot and carried out an investigation. A manhunt has been launched to nab the culprits, it was learnt. According to a source, the forest department was tipped off that illegal stone mining activities were rampant at Karadabani. A team was formed and sent to the location to carry out a raid.

However, anticipating the forest department's move, the miscreants had been well prepared to stop the team from visiting the

spot. As they came under their radar, the miscreants launched a fierce attack with sticks and stones.

Informing about the incident, Dhenkanal DFO Prakash Chand Gogineni said the miscreants were around 25 in number. One of the miscreants has already been identified as Pramod Lenka.

"We have already informed the Collector about the incident and lodged a report at the Nihalprasad police station," he added.

# Dhenkanal tourist spots to shut till New Year

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal, Dec 12:** Last year, the tourism spots like Saptasajya and Kapilas in the district were full of activities with tourists and picnickers thronging these sites in large numbers. However, that is not the case this year due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 graph is showing a downward trend in the district. Restrictions are being eased in phases and life is slowly limping back to normalcy. As of now, people are eagerly waiting for when the administration will announce opening of the tourist spots in the district.

Even though there has been a decline in COVID-19 cases, the district administration believes that the danger has not been over as yet. And since the pandemic is said to



THE COVID-19 INFECTION GRAPH IS SHOWING A DOWNWARD TREND IN THE DISTRICT. RESTRICTIONS ARE BEING EASED IN PHASES AND LIFE IS SLOWLY LIMPING BACK TO NORMALCY

THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION BELIEVES THAT SINCE THE PANDEMIC IS SAID TO BE MORE SERIOUS DURING WINTER, THERE IS NEED FOR MORE CARE AND CONCERN IN THESE TWO MONTHS - DECEMBER AND JANUARY

Collector Bhmesh Chandra Behera wrote a letter to the superintendent of police while the sub-collectors have been directed to deploy police force at tourist and picnic spots under their jurisdiction. Picnic at any tourist spot has been banned and there will be police deployment on holidays and Sundays to avoid congregation

be more serious during winter, the administration is becoming more careful in these two months -

December and January. Meanwhile, the administration has decided to deploy police force at

Saptasajya and Kapilas during the period from Christmas to New Year to not allow picnickers at these spots.

Similarly, restrictions are to be imposed on other picnic spots as well. In this regard, District Collector Bhmesh Chandra Behera wrote a letter to the superintendent of police. Similarly, the sub-collectors have been directed to deploy police force at tourist and picnic spots under their jurisdiction. Picnic at any tourist spot has been banned and there will be police deployment on holidays and Sundays to avoid congregation.

When contacted, sub-collector Saphalya Mandit Pradhan said that fearing a rush, all the tourist spots in the district have been closed since the beginning of this month. The restrictions at these places will be stricter between Christmas and New Year. Regarding deployment of police force at these places, a meeting with the Collector has already been held.

<b>EAST COAST RAILWAY</b>	
Tender Notice No. ST-OT-AMC-MEDHA-KUR-201 Dt: 03.12.2020	
Name of the Work: PROVISION OF COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT FOR ELECTRONIC INTERLOCKING SYSTEM TO RDSO/SPN/19/2005 OF MEDHA MAKES AT BHUBANESWAR NEW, MALATIPATPUR AND PARADEEP STATIONS OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION OF EAST COAST RAILWAY FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS.	
Tender Value	₹ 72,28,500/- EMD: ₹ 1,44,600/- Cost of tender document: 5,900/- (Including 18% GST)
Bidding start date	14.12.2020 Tender closing date & time
at 1100 hrs. of 28.12.2020.	
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders.	
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">http://www.ireps.gov.in</a>	
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/ corrigenda issued for this tender.	
Divisional Railway Manager (S&T),	Khurda Road
PR-410/L/20-21	



FOCUS AGRICULTURE

# FARMERS VS. THE STATE



India's farmers view the new legislations very differently. They fear that these "modernising" laws will pave the way for the predatory corporate commercialisation of Indian agriculture, led by politically well-connected tycoons

for some flexibility and concessions when required, than with faceless, intractable corporations that can use various means – such as "quality control" during purchase – to deprive them of their due. To be sure, farmers must also worry about ecological constraints and soil degradation resulting from ever-greater reliance on chemical agriculture, scarce and contaminated water, and climate change (reflected in adverse weather events and changing rainfall patterns). But the Modi government's policies, farmers fear, would worsen these problems.

So far, the government has sought to deal with the angry farmers much as it has done with all democratic protests. It initially ignored the demonstrators, before claiming that they were being misled and manipulated by malevolent opposition forces. The government then implied that the Sikh farmers were "anti-nationals" and therefore "terrorists," and used brute force to quell peaceful protests. Pliant mainstream media and social media trolls have been unleashed in an effort to undermine the farmers and discredit their demands, just as they have aggressively attacked all dissenters over the past six years.

The government has refused to bend to the farmers' central demand of doing away with these laws. It apparently thinks the open-air protests may in time fizzle out, especially given the cold that has already claimed the lives of several demonstrators.

But this could be hubris. Around half of India's total workforce depends on agriculture, and two-thirds of the population (and 70 per cent of rural people) depend on farm incomes directly or indirectly. The protesting farmers' resolve, and their widespread public support, suggest that this time could be different.

*The writer, Executive Secretary of International Development Economics Associates, is a member of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation.*

PROJECT SYNDICATE

India's capital is under siege from more than two million farmers, who are currently gathered at the city's border in a massive protest that started two weeks ago. Old and young men, women, and even children from farming families are camping on open roads in the bitter cold of a Delhi winter. They have abandoned their concerns about viral infection and come prepared for the long haul, bringing enough food to last for several months.

The movement began when several thousand farmers from the neighbouring states of Punjab and Haryana drove their tractors toward Delhi in the hope of publicising their grievances in the city's center. The protests subsequently swelled as more farmers arrived from other states, and show no sign of dissipating. More than 500 farmers' organisations across India are supporting the protesters' demands, and the farmers' calls for 'Bharat Bandh,' or a national shutdown, on December 8 garnered widespread support from trade unions and several opposition parties.

The immediate trigger for the protests was the government's hasty enactment of three new farm laws, introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic without consulting stakeholders, like the farmers themselves, or state governments, which are responsible for agriculture under India's Constitution.

On the face of it, the laws appear harmless or even beneficial for farmers. They relax restrictions on the purchase and sale of farm produce, remove constraints on stockpiling under the 1955 Essential Commodities Act, and enable contract farming based on written agreements. The government's declared purpose is to create "an ecosystem where farmers and traders enjoy freedom of choice," with "competitive alternative trading channels" that "promote efficient, transparent, and barrier-free" trade.

India's farmers view the new legislations differently. They fear that these "modernising" laws will pave the way for the predatory corporate commercialisation of Indian

agriculture, led by politically well-connected tycoons. Others argue that the laws effectively deregulate farm-produce transactions, contract farming, and stock holding in ways that will harm farmers. Small and marginal farmers fear they will be the worst affected. These measures were probably the proverbial last straw for many farmers, whose protests have become more vocal in recent years as threats to their livelihood have increased. True, farm incomes were declining continuously before Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014. In fact, farmers played a crucial role in Modi's initial election triumph after he promised to double their incomes in five years by offering minimum support prices (MSPs) for their produce (sold to the public food-procurement agency) that were 50 per cent above total cultivation costs. But Modi failed to keep that promise, and farmers instead received prices that were even lower relative to their costs than they had been under the previous government. Several of Modi's other promises to the agriculture sector also turned out to be hollow, further eroding farmers' trust in his administration. In recent years, collapsing demand in the Indian economy has

kept prices for agricultural produce low. This was the result of policy blunders – two in particular – that destroyed many informal economic activities and damaged livelihoods: the November 2016 demonetisation initiative and the subsequent poorly conceived and implemented national goods and services tax.

The government did not use fiscal policy to revive employment and demand, so both incomes and consumption declined, keeping crop prices low. The pandemic subsequently made it much harder for farmers to grow produce and get it to market, while crop prices have remained well below 2019 levels.

Farmers suspect that the new laws will sound the death knell for the public food-procurement system, which, though imperfect, still provides them with some basic protection against the vagaries of the market. And they can see that crop prices in states like Bihar (which has already ended the monopoly of regulated market yards) fall well below the MSPs.

One of the new laws aims to do away with "middlemen" like commission agents. But farmers say they would rather interact with such people, and potentially develop a relationship that allows



Jayati Ghosh

**IN RECENT YEARS, COLLAPSING DEMAND IN THE INDIAN ECONOMY HAS KEPT PRICES FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE LOW**



Aakar Patel

**Atmanirbhar privileges the industrialist over the consumer but that is not the way that it is advertised**

Whatsoever has courage can give courage to others just as the flame of the candle can light up another.

THE MOTHER



## Perils of formalisation

The head of the NITI Aayog said something that upset many people and so he had to explain himself. This was of course his statement, repeated twice, that India had too much democracy. However something else was said in the same speech that did not get as much attention though, in my opinion, it is far more important and concerning. The fact checking website altnews.in analysed the video recording of his speech and confirmed that he had indeed used the words he denied using. It reported: "In India we are too much of a democracy so we keep supporting everybody." He went on to elaborate, "For the first time in India a government has thought big in terms of size and scale and said we want to produce global champions. Nobody had the political will and the courage to say that we want to support five companies who want to be global champions. Everyone used to say I want to support everyone in India, I want to get votes from everyone."

That second bit is the thing that got ignored. The head of NITI Aayog, which is the prime minister's think tank, was explaining the strategy of the Modi government on the economy. It has not been articulated as clearly as it was in the statement above but has been expressed in policy quite clearly.

In brief, the theory is that India has too many small companies and this is inefficient. It should instead have only a handful of very large players running its economy and these giants can then compete with the world. So what will the government do to make this possible? It will try and make it difficult for small and medium size industrialists to compete. This is also called 'formalisation'. It assumes that the small and medium sized entities in business are all tax thieves. They cheat the government by operating in cash. To make their existence difficult if not impossible, the first step is to remove cash from the economy. This was done on Tuesday, 8 November 2016. Businesses that depended on cash transactions, even if they were legitimate ones, were not able to operate for weeks and were hampered for months. The large businesses were not affected because they could do with electronic transfers just as the upper class in the metro areas managed with their credit cards.

The second stroke against the small and medium was the Goods and Services Tax which was made so complicated as to require large teams of people in-house for compliance. The repeated and frequent filing of returns and the managing of the digital system meant that once again a large number of people exited from businesses that became unviable because of added cost or simply because people could not cope with the complications and chose to do something else. Who benefited from the exit of the small and medium was again the large.

The third stroke was the lockdown of this year which broke the back of the small and medium, who had neither the cash reserves to be able to deal with such a blow or the ability to get staff to 'work from home.'

The Economist, the most respected global magazine, reported that the net worth of Mukesh Ambani had gone up by 350 per cent since November 2016. The net worth of Gautam Adani has gone up by 750 per cent in the same period. And all this happened in an economy that has been in decline. This month, December, is the 36th straight month that India's economic growth has been slowing down.

The collapse began in January 2018 according to government data and has continued for three years. The finance ministry's chief economic advisor last week asked that a survey that the Modi government had refused to release be released finally. What did it show? It showed that Indians were spending less money in 2018 than they had been in 2012. Meaning that they were earning less also. Not all Indians of course: some were making much more precisely because of the fact that the others were making less.

Everything that seems to many to be puzzling about the Modi government's economic policy makes sense after we consider what it is deliberately doing to this nation. Modi's former advisor and enthusiast Arvind Panagariya complained about Atmanirbhar, saying it was merely import substitution and had failed before. What does that mean? It means that Modi has applied tariffs on imported things that Indians buy, like television sets and mobile phones, so that local industrialists can sell their goods at a higher price than the imported ones.

Atmanirbhar privileges the industrialist over the consumer but that is not the way that it is advertised. Who does the policy seek to make Atmanirbhar? It is not the consumer or the citizen. It is those selected favourites of the government who have been tasked with winning while the rest of us are made deliberately to fail.

### WISDOM CORNER

Arrange whatever pieces come your way.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

Time is the least thing we have of.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Forever is composed of nows.

EMILY DICKINSON

### WORDSWORTH

#### Wanion

The first generation of editors of the Oxford English Dictionary were especially literate men and this shows in their definitions, which sometimes needed a dictionary to interpret them (luckily, the reader always had one immediately to hand, if a rather cumbersome one). Take wanion. Its still-current OED definition, written nearly a century ago, says: "An altered form of 'wanian' used in certain formulas of asseveration or imprecation." A modern dictionary aiming at plain English definitions might say instead that in set phrases it meant an emphatic statement or curse. In itself, wanion means "in the waning of the moon". It's from the Old English verb wanian, to lessen, from which we get wane. You may feel wanion is too mild and agreeable a word to be attached to a curse, but in bygone centuries the waning of the moon was thought to be an unlucky time. Various fixed expressions took on the word and the idea, such as with a (wild) wanion (with a plague or with a vengeance), a wanion on (a curse on) and fetch one a wanion (bring one a misfortune).

### LOL

#### War insurance

Airman Jones was assigned to the induction centre where he was to advise new recruits about their government benefits, especially their GI insurance.

It wasn't long before Captain Smith noticed that Airman Jones had almost a 100 per cent record for insurance sales, which had never happened before.

Rather than ask about this, the Captain stood in the back of the room and



listened to Jones' sales pitch. Jones explained the basics of the GI insurance to the new recruits, and then said: "If you have GI insurance and go into battle and are killed, the government has to pay \$200,000 to your beneficiaries. If you don't have GI insurance, and you go into battle and get killed, the government has to pay only a maximum of \$6000." "Now," he concluded, "which bunch do you think they are going to send into battle first?"

### SPECTRUM SOUTH ASIA

## The road ahead for SAARC

D.K. Giri

**THE CRUX OF REVIVAL OF SAARC IS A GENUINE DEMOCRACY IN PAKISTAN REFUSING TO PLAY CHINESE GAME IN SOUTH ASIA POLITICS**

On the 36th SAARC Charter Day Anniversary, the heads of SAARC countries delivered messages albeit conflicting ones. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave not-so-veiled warning, "the full potential of SAARC can only be realised in an atmosphere free of terror and violence." He called upon its leaders to "recommit to defeating the forces that support and nurture terrorism."

Nepal PM and SAARC Chairman KPS Oli made an appeal for SAARC process to be resumed. In his message he said, "SAARC is not a choice but a necessity for meaningful regional cooperation in South Asia. The longer we will delay, the more will be the opportunity cost." Pakistan PM Imran Khan gave his message which was as expected critical of India. He said, "It is unfortunate that due to long standing unresolved disputes amongst the member states, SAARC countries have been unable to achieve the desired socio-economic cooperation and prosperity in the region so far. Artificial obstacles had been raised against the SAARC process."

From the very beginning, the SAARC has been a body of unequal and disparate members. The size of India as the biggest country compared to smaller ones like Sri Lanka, Maldives and Nepal cuts both ways. It could be the biggest market for neighbouring countries, and also be perceived as a bully. Wrongly or rightly, the latter has been the perception of quite a few countries. The history of two other countries being a part of India in the past brings up other traditional problems. The socio-religious configuration in South Asian countries emanating from such a history is unique. India is a Hindu majority country with a large Muslim population along with other smaller religious groups. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Maldives are Muslim majority countries with other minorities. Nepal is Hindu majority and Sri Lanka is Buddhist majority with Tamils, Muslims and Christians as minority. Such demographic composition should make the countries socio-religiously inter-dependent. Strangely that's not the case.

Similar is the history of conflicts and wars between the members of European Union. The Détente between two major European powers France and Germany made EU possible. A similar development between India and Pakistan could perhaps do the trick for SAARC. Unfortunately, while India is a democracy, Pakistan

has been ruled directly or by proxy by the military. Efforts have been made largely by India to build peace, and admittedly, occasionally, depending on the leadership in Pakistan, Islamabad has responded. But the military, time and again has torpedoed any attempt at reconciliation with New Delhi. One incident worth recalling was when Morarji Desai won the hearts of even Pakistan military by offering Indian military assistance to it. On one occasion, Desai telephoned Zia-ul-Haq, "General, why do you spend on your military instead of putting the scarce resources into development. If your country is under attack, I will put my military behind yours." No wonder, Morarji was honoured with Pakistan's highest civilian award.

Similarly, IK Gujral had invented a doctrine for peace and security in South Asia known as Gujral Doctrine. It comprised principles to guide conduct of foreign relations with India's immediate neighbours, mainly Pakistan. Former PM Atal Behari Vajpayee had famously said, "You can change your friends, but you cannot change your neighbours." The statement was made in reference to traditional tensions between India and Pakistan. His famous bus trip to

Lahore as a symbol of rebuilding friendship was received warmly in Islamabad raising hope for peace. But the military as said before wanted to scupper it and sent mercenaries to Kargil. Rest is history. Even Modi began well by inviting the heads of SAARC nations to his first swearing-in ceremony as PM. He went to Lahore on social visits to show warmth and friendship. But sadly Islamabad did not reciprocate and things have gotten worse. Pakistan-sponsored terrorism continues unabated. There is no scope for dialogue. Pakistan while conning with China to foment trouble in India wants to have dialogue with New Delhi. It is fast learning the Chinese art of duplicity.

That has been the SAARC story, stilled by a recalcitrant Pakistan hopelessly under military grip, thriving on terrorism and drugs, playing a sidekick as a satellite country of China. Unless SAARC countries put pressure – moral or otherwise on Pakistan, SAARC is a no-go. The crux of revival of SAARC is a genuine democracy in Pakistan refusing to play Chinese game in South Asia politics.

*The writer is Professor, International Relations, JIMMC, INFA*

### Farmers on tenterhooks

Sir, Farmers in our country are now on tenterhooks as the government has passed laws against them which led to massive protests. Farmer leaders rejected the proposal from the government to amend the laws. If the government bows under pressure, it is a signal that any reform effort in our country can be oppressed by some interest group's opposition. Now the question arises how should the laws be amended to appease the farmers. The majority of farmers are from Punjab, the state which has overdependence on public procurement of cereals. If the MSP is not guaranteed, it would leave many farmers at loss as they cannot find buyers for their produce. Odisha on Wednesday passed a resolution to move the Centre with a demand to implement the recommendations of the MS Swaminathan Committee on MSP of crops. According to this committee, the MSP should be at least 50 per cent more than the weighted average cost of production. It is also to be noted that the Modi government pushed these farm bills through the parliament in an autocratic manner. **P Shantarani Jena, BERHAMPUR**

### Atmosphere & weather

Sir, Among the handful of atmospheric phenomenon which determines weather and climatic condition of India is El Nino. Most of us, more or less have some knowledge on El Nino and its impact on rainfall in India. However, the advanced monsoon season also popularly known as rainy season provides plenty of rainfall across India during the months of June to September, except some areas such as leeward side of Western Ghats, Central India, western parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan and Ladakh and so on. The cyclic nature of seasons continues in India except during El Nino affected years. Geographers, climatologists, and meteorologists had confirmed in earlier years that when El Nino – a warm ocean current of Pacific Ocean occurs, it pulls the moisture laden winds from the Indian Oceanic region leaving India dry. On further scientific research and exploration on drought, the branch of IISC, Bangalore – the Centre for Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences – recently confirmed that atmospheric disturbance in mid-latitude region of North Atlantic Ocean too is severely impacting the rainfall status of India. Ten out of 23 droughts in previous centuries in India had occurred due to disturbance in atmospheric conditions in North Atlantic Ocean and during non-El Nino years. Intensive scientific research on the impact of atmospheric conditions on weather is the need of the hour. **Santosh Kumar Satapathy, PARALAKHEMUNDI**

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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



# Eluru illness yet to be decoded

14 AGENCIES ON THE JOB SEEK MORE TIME TO ZERO IN ON THE EXACT CAUSE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Eluru (AP), Dec 12:** As many as 14 agencies working to ascertain the nature of the mysterious illness in Eluru, the district headquarters of Andhra Pradesh's West Godavari, are yet to zero in on the exact cause and some of them have indicated that they needed more time.

"The National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) has also found the presence of organophosphate in blood samples and requires some more time for further investigations," West Godavari Joint Collector Himanshu Shukla said in a statement.

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, has tied up with other institutions to study the presence of organochlorine and organophosphates in the blood of the affected people.

As part of investigations on several samples, AIIMS found the presence of lead and nickel only in two of the 40 urine samples.

"AIIMS and the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT) have not found anything adverse in the water samples and claim that water is unlikely to be the source," said the statement.

Experts from Hyderabad-based NIN asked time till Monday to further analyse water samples, which were found to be laden with pesticide organochlorine.

However, officials claimed that Eluru water was found to be potable and "absolutely fit for human consumption."

In food samples such as vegetables, NIN detected herbicides which are incidental to the study. "Other results relating to vegetables, rice, fish, meat and soil are under analysis and the results will likely be



## Residents prescribed helmets to counter collapsing injuries

**Eluru:** Amid cases of people suddenly collapsing in Eluru on being struck with the mysterious illness, doctors advised the townspeople on the go to wear helmets for safety. "We advised all the people travelling outside to wear a helmet. Because even when riding a bicycle or a two-wheeler they are suddenly falling," West Godavari District hospital superintendent Mohan told IANS. He said there is a high risk of sustaining injuries and the helmet prescription applies to everybody in Eluru. "Cases of people falling off from vehicles were reported. They were in countable numbers, some auto-rickshaw drivers fell down while driving and starting their vehicles. Motorcyclists have fallen. People fell down while working," highlighted the senior doctor. Mohan also observed that some people suffered convulsions while just sleeping. Corroborating the caution advised by doctors, a 26-year-old mother of two, who suffered the mysterious illness vouched with the doctor's advice. Sri Sai Hima Bindhu, a resident of JP Colony, one of the hardest hit with the illness, suffered three bruises on her face when she suddenly collapsed in Rampachodawaram near Rajamundry while talking with her friends as she was enjoying a cascade, away from home in Eluru. "What will happen to me if I get fits while pillion riding my husband's two-wheeler. My husband took me to the hospital, and there was nobody else. Suddenly if something happens and I get fits and fall down, what would happen?" she queried. Commenting on the preventive measures advised for people in general in the wake of the scourge experts were struggling to decipher, doctors told people to be careful while consuming vegetables. People have also been advised to be careful with drinking water. They have been recommended to change drinking water regularly. "If you are drinking one kind of water, change it to another. Do not drink tap water," said the senior government doctor.

available by the coming Wednesday," said the note. Meanwhile, the number of cases reached 616 by Friday

evening, but only six of them were active cases, and even two of these were ready to get discharged. Until

now, only one patient succumbed to the illness. Symptoms of the mysterious ill-

## MoHF preparing detailed report

**New Delhi:** With the health crisis caused by a mysterious illness in Andhra Pradesh's Eluru getting better, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHF) is busy preparing a detailed report based on the preliminary information shared by a Central team visiting there. The report will be completed soon after the Central team returns to the national capital from Eluru, the headquarters of West Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh, where only two new cases were reported a day ago in the backdrop of many people getting hospitalised with the 'undiagnosed' illness. Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan and Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal shared the inputs with Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu Saturday while apprising him of the latest health situation in Eluru. Bhushan briefed Naidu on the preliminary findings of the Central committee that is on a visit to the affected areas in Eluru. He said that a detailed report will be prepared upon the Central team's return to Delhi and necessary advisory will be issued accordingly. The Vice President was told that the number of new cases in Eluru has come down sharply with only two new cases getting reported on Friday.

ness had included three to five minutes of epileptic fits without repetition, forgetfulness, anxiety, vomiting, headache and back pain.

Eluru, which is 58 km north-east of Vijayawada, is a coastal paddy cultivation and aquaculture hub.

# Termed 'missing' by Oppn, Vijayan slams detractors

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 12:** Hours after Leader of Opposition Ramesh Chennithala Saturday wanted to know about the whereabouts of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, as he was not seen in public even during the campaigning for the Kerala state polls, the latter surfaced and took on his detractors.

He blamed the Central agencies probing the gold smuggling case. He also attacked the BJP for what they did in Tripura and Karnataka and finally said he will bring everything to the attention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Vijayan Saturday evening released a list of names, all Congress leaders who had been jailed. "Just look what happened to former Union Minister P. Chidambaram and present Karnataka Congress president D.K. Sivakumar. They were in jail and did the Congress treat them as outcasts. Late Congress veteran Ahmed Patel was another person who was haunted by the Enforcement Directorate and now his son and son-in-law are also on their radar. The Punjab Chief Minister's son is another one. The others in the Congress who have come under the national agencies' scanner include Priyanka Gandhi, Robert Vadra, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Ashok Gehlot and others," said Vijayan.

"Another thing is just see what happened in Tripura. Overnight the BJP took over the Congress party. Another thing that's happening is if anyone joins the BJP, they become clean and all their



**I wish to point out that Communists are made of sterner stuff and will not be cowed down by any sort of intimidation**

PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CHIEF MINISTER

misdeeds are forgotten. Any number of names can be given," added Vijayan.

He said ever since the gold smuggling case surfaced, it remains to be seen if the Central agencies are conducting the probe in the right manner. He said he expects the Prime Minister to act and hence he is approaching him with a letter. "I wish to point out that Communists are made of sterner stuff and will not be cowed down by any sort of intimidation," added Vijayan.

He responded to the Congress and the BJP leaders' allegations that he was missing during the civic polls campaigning, by stating that he did not want to go out in the open for campaigning because he did not want to have crowds gathering with the COVID pandemic unabated.

# Free Covid vaccine for all in Kerala

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

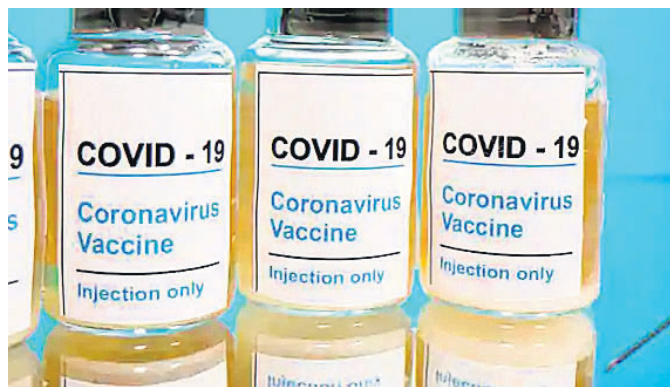
**Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 12:** COVID-19 vaccine will be made available free of cost to all people in Kerala, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said Saturday.

"No one will be charged for the vaccine. This is the stand of the government," he told reporters at Kannur.

Kerala is the latest to announce free of cost COVID-19 vaccine for its people. States, including Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh, have already made a similar announcement.

The Centre Tuesday said three COVID-19 vaccines, developed by Bharat Biotech, Serum Institute of India and Pfizer, are under active consideration of India's drug regulator and there is hope that early licensure is possible for all or any of them.

Five vaccine candidates are under different phases of clinical trials in the country.



Vijayan said the quantity of the vaccine that would be allotted to the state by the Centre was not yet known.

"The fact is that the number of COVID-19 cases are decreasing, which is a matter of relief. However, it needs to be seen if the local body polls, two phases of which are over, would contribute to increase in cases. That will be known only in the days to come," he said.

If the cases do not increase, this trend (of cases declining) will continue, the chief minister added.

Kerala Saturday recorded 5,949 COVID-19 cases and 32 deaths, taking the caseload to 6.64 lakh and the toll to 2,594. The active cases stood at 60,029.

Vijayan urged the people to exercise extreme caution against the spread of the disease, saying otherwise the situation in the state

**KERALA IS THE LATEST TO ANNOUNCE FREE OF COST COVID-19 VACCINE FOR ITS PEOPLE. STATES, INCLUDING TAMIL NADU AND MADHYA PRADESH, HAVE ALREADY MADE A SIMILAR ANNOUNCEMENT**

would worsen further. A total of 3,15,167 people were under observation in various districts with 13,334 of them in hospitals. There are 437 hotspots in the state with the addition of Manarkkad in Palakkad and removal of four localities.

## IN GOD'S OWN COUNTRY



German Ambassador to India Walter J Lindner (R) with EU Ambassador Ugo Astuto (L) and French Ambassador Emmanuel Lenain during their visit to Kerala on the occasion of fifth anniversary of Paris Agreement on climate change, in Kochi, Saturday.

PTI PHOTO

## ED detains PFI youth leader while trying to flee country

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Varkala, Dec 12:** The annual Sivagiri pilgrimage at Sivagiri mutt here in Kerala, observed annually in memory of social reformer and sage, Sree Narayana Guru, will be virtual this time in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With less than 1000 pilgrims daily, online speeches and classes by dignitaries and no usual mass meetings and programmes, the 88th edition of the pilgrimage would be celebrated fully in adherence with the COVID protocols and guidelines.

Mutt management sources here said preparations already began for the three-day pilgrimage.

"This time, the pilgrimage will be in compliance with the strict COVID protocols. It will be held on December 30, 31 and January 1 as virtual pilgrimage," they said.

To avoid heavy rush, only less than a thousand pilgrims would be allowed to enter Sivagiri daily. Mutt officials said in a meeting, chaired by additional district magistrate V R Vinod at the Collectorate, Friday.

The meeting, attended by Sree Narayana Dharma Sangam Trust general secretary Swamy Sandrananda and district police chief, B Ashokan among others, was held to take a stock



## FESTIVAL DURING PANDEMIC

With less than 1000 pilgrims daily, online speeches and classes by dignitaries and no usual mass meetings and programmes, the 88th edition of the pilgrimage would be celebrated fully in adherence with the COVID protocols and guidelines

The Sivagiri Mutt is the headquarters of the Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham, an organisation established by the Guru to propagate his doctrine 'One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man'.

LOCATED OVER 50 KMS FROM THE KERALA CAPITAL, THE MUTT USED TO ATTRACT THOUSANDS OF PILGRIMS AND VVIP GUESTS ANNUALLY DURING THE TIME OF THE PILGRIMAGE.

of the preparations of the annual event.

The Sivagiri Mutt is the headquarters of the Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham, an organisa-

tion established by the Guru to propagate his doctrine 'One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man'.

Located over 50 kms from the Kerala capital, the Mutt used to at-

tract thousands of pilgrims and VVIP guests annually during the time of the pilgrimage.

"This time, there will be no mass meetings and programmes like in the past. Speeches and classes by dignitaries will be telecast online on Sivagiri TV from December 25," the Mutt officials said.

As part of efforts to avoid overcrowding during the pilgrimage, no trade stalls would be allowed in and around Sivagiri.

There would be no food distribution or accommodation facility for pilgrims as usual, the additional district magistrate said.

Pilgrims should avoid coming as large groups and the Mutt authorities should give them strict instruction in this regard, he said.

There won't be regular special bus or train services this time as part of reducing congestion, he said adding that facilities should be ensured for all pilgrims to meet COVID protocols.

For this, sanitiser and thermal scanners should be made available and special arrangements should be made for pilgrims to wash hands at the Mutt and other parts of Sivagiri.

The health department has been directed to provide necessary medicines and other facilities for pilgrims at Varkala Taluk hospital, officials added.

# AP records 7.5 pc growth in farm loan disbursement

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Amaravati, Dec 12:** Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy Friday asked senior bank employees to focus on doubling farmers' income, reducing investment costs, providing proper market facilities for crops and supporting them at the time of natural disasters.

Reddy was addressing the 213th State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC), where he announced that a 7.5 per cent growth rate has been registered in the last quarter in issuing loans and 99 per cent of crop loans were disbursed.

"The government has started various initiatives to reduce the investment cost to farmers. The government has been providing financial assistance of Rs 13,500 per annum through Rythu Bharosa

Scheme," said the Chief Minister. He said that 50 per cent of farmers have less than half a hectare of land in the state and 80 per cent of investment cost to those farmers would be covered through this scheme.

Reddy said that Rs 7,500 is being credited to the bank accounts of beneficiaries before kharif in May, Rs 4,000 in October and Rs 2,000 to farmers for Sankranti in January.

"The state government paid all arrears of the previous government pertaining to interest free loans and encouraging farmers to take interest free loans," he said.

The CM also asked the bank employees to support MSMEs as they play a key role in the financial sector. He explained them about several other empowering and welfare initiatives of the government towards minorities and backward classes.







Despite crossing eight decades of his life, Pawar Saheb is just as enthusiastic today as he was. His energy to work tirelessly inspires us all. I wish you a long and healthy life. Happy birthday

SUPRIYA SULE | SHARAD PAWAR'S DAUGHTER

## NEW YEAR EVE REVELRY BANNED IN COVID-HIT BANGALORE

New Year eve revelry on December 31 night would not be allowed in public places across Bangalore to contain coronavirus spread, a senior minister said Friday



### of the day quote

I have been working for farmers for the last 20-25 years. I know the situation. These laws have been made on the basis of ground realities



NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

Joint release of commemorative stamps to mark the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and China was one of the activities agreed with the Chinese side last year but there had been no discussion on any launch date



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



SIDDARAMAIAH | CONGRESS LEADER

# EC initiates debate on poll expenditure limit

The Election Commission has sought views of political parties on what should be the limit of expenditure for candidates contesting Lok Sabha and Assembly polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: The Election Commission has sought views of recognised national and state parties on what should be the limit of expenditure for candidates contesting Lok Sabha and Assembly polls.

In a letter sent out December 7, the commission asked parties to send their "views and suggestions" on as to what should be the ceiling limit of election expenditure for candidates for Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the future.

The parties have been asked to send their views to the nodal officer of the committee that was set up in October to revise the expenditure limit.

While there is a limit on candidates to spend on their election campaign, there is no such cap on political parties.

The committee was tasked to examine the issue of revising the expenditure limit for candidates for Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in view of the increase in number of electors and rise in the Cost Inflation Index.

Expenditure limit for candidates was last revised in 2014. For Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the limit was enhanced in 2018.

"In last six years, the limit was not increased despite an increase in electorate from 834 million to 910 million in 2019 to 921 million now. Further, Cost Inflation Index during this period has increased from 220 to 280 in 2019 to 301 now," the com-



- The political parties have been asked to send their views to the nodal officer of the committee that was set up in October to revise the expenditure limit
- Expenditure limit for candidates was last revised in 2014. For Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the limit was enhanced in 2018

mission had said in October while announcing constitution of the panel.

The committee will assess the change in number of electors across states and Union Territories, and its bearing on expenditure.

It has also been mandated to assess the change in Cost Inflation Index and its bearing on the pattern of expenditure incurred by candidates in recent elections.

The committee is likely to submit its report early next year to the poll panel.

Considering the difficulties candidates could face in campaigning amid Covid-19, based on the recommendations of the EC, the government had in October enhanced the existing expenditure limit by 10

per cent. The 10 per cent hike was applicable in the Bihar Assembly polls and various by-polls.

The maximum limit for candidates differs from state to state. While it is more in larger states it is different for smaller states.

After the Law Ministry notification of October, in bigger states like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Bihar and Haryana, the maximum expenditure a candidate can incur for campaigning in Lok Sabha polls is now ₹77 lakh. So far it was ₹70 lakh. For Assembly polls, it has been hiked from ₹28 lakh to ₹30.8 lakh.

For Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Telangana and Delhi, the expenditure limit for candidates for Lok Sabha polls is now ₹77 lakh and for Assembly elections, it is ₹30.8 lakh.

In Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, the new limit is ₹77 lakh for Lok Sabha elections and ₹22 lakh for assembly polls. For Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Sikkim, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep, Puducherry and Ladakh, it is ₹59.4 lakh for Lok Sabha elections and ₹22 lakh for Assembly polls.

### SHORT TAKES

#### 4 PLFI militants held in J'khand

Simdega: Four militants of the banned People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI) were arrested in two separate operations in Jharkhand's Simdega and Lohardaga districts, police said Saturday. Three militants were arrested in Simdega district in a raid in Kanarwa forest in the Bano police station area. Pistols, cartridges, a motorcycle and three mobile phones were seized from the militants, Superintendent of Police Shams Tabrez said. Acting on specific inputs, police conducted the raid and made the arrests, he said.

#### RTI activist commits suicide

Patna: A 26-year-old RTI activist allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself from a ceiling fan in his house in Buxar district. The deceased was identified as 26-year-old Amit Rai, who was allegedly found hanging in the bedroom of his house located in the industrial area of Buxar district. He reportedly committed suicide Friday evening. According to Dinesh Kumar, Station House Officer (SHO), Buxar Industrial area, Rai's family members went out for dinner on Friday evening and he was alone in the house.

#### Punjab Police bust drug cartel

Chandigarh: With the arrest of two people and seizure of four kg of heroin, Punjab Police Saturday said it has busted a major drug cartel with an international trail as well as links to gangsters and terrorists. Initial investigations have exposed a nexus of the accused - Jaswinder Singh and Ramesh Kumar, both residents of Jalandhar district - with some gangsters lodged in Punjab's jails and a Dubai-based smuggler. Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta said investigations suggest that the proceeds generated from the sale of the drugs, smuggled into Punjab from Kashmir, were probably being used to fund terror activities.

#### Buddhadeb's health condition stable

Kolkata: The health condition of former West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee was stable on Saturday morning, an official said. Bhattacharjee, who is on non-invasive ventilation, slept well last night, she said. "Mr Bhattacharjee is okay. He is still on NIV and taking it well. He is maintaining all critical clinical parameters.

## JOY RIDE



Tourists take a boat ride on the Narmada river as seagulls fly past them in Jabalpur, Saturday

# 132 ARRESTED, 1.63 LAKH REGISTRATIONS CANCELLED

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 11: In its drive to check fake firms, fly-by-night operators, and circular trading entities, the GST field formations have cancelled 1,63,042 registrations in the month of October and November this year due to non-filing of GSTR-3B returns for more than six months, sources in the Department of Revenue said.



1,430 cases against more than 4,586 fake GSTIN entities identified across the country.

### GST INVOICE FRAUD

In one month of its nationwide drive against GST fake invoice frauds, the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) and CGST Commissionerates has so far arrested 132 persons including four chartered accountants and a woman for availing or passing on ineligible ITC fraudulently and have filed

Sources in the Department under the Finance Ministry said that the fourth chartered accountant, Akshay Jain, was arrested from Visakhapatnam for his involvement in issuing fake ITC (input tax credit) to the tune of ₹20.97 crore on the invoices of cement by creating 14 fake firms without supply of goods. The investigation on the matter is still going on. All these GSTIN entities who

had not filed their GSTR-3B returns for more than six months were first issued cancellation notices and then their registrations were cancelled as per the standard operating procedure, the sources said. Also, out of 720 deemed registrations granted between August 21, 2020 to November 16, 2020 where Aadhaar authentication was not done, 55 deemed registrations have been identified for discrepancy and the process of cancellation was initiated in these cases as per the SOP issued earlier.

Sources said that further, 28,635 taxpayers who have not filed their GSTR-3B returns for more than 6 months as on December 1, 2020 have been identified and all the GST Commissionerates have been directed to initiate suo-moto cancellation process in these cases.

## SINO-INDIAN STAND-OFF

# 'India is being tested; will meet security challenge'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Saturday said India was being tested in the seven-month-long border standoff with China in eastern Ladakh and expressed confidence that the country will meet the national security challenge.

Calling the "events" along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh "very disturbing", Jaishankar also said what has happened there was not in China's interest as it is facing the prospect of losing goodwill in India that was developed carefully in the recent decades.

He said these events have raised some very "basic concerns" as the "other party" has not abided by agreements on respecting the LAC.

Participating in an interactive session at the annual general meeting of the industry body FICCI, he declined to be drawn into a discussion on any timeline for a resolution of



the standoff.

When asked whether it will be a long-haul or a breakthrough is expected soon for a resolution to the military standoff, Jaishankar said: "I would not go into prediction zone at all, whether it is going to be easy or not, and what will be the timelines." "I do not believe that the events of this year have helped at all. In fact I think the real danger is that the goodwill which was so carefully developed will dissipate," he said.

"But I also would say that, yes, we are being tested. I have every confidence that we will rise to the occasion," he added.

# Farmers consider expanding protests to 'pan-India' scale

## PROTESTING FARMERS TO HOLD A DAY-LONG 'HUNGER STRIKE' DECEMBER 14

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 12: Getting no positive signal from the Central government about rolling back the three contentious farm laws enacted in September, farmers protesting on the national capital's different borders Saturday announced their plan to expand the demonstrations and expand them to a 'pan-India' scale, appealing all sections of society, including girls and women, to join them.

Declaring that they'll hold a day long 'hunger strike' December 14, farmers representatives of 32 different unions jointly announced their plans for a 'pan-India' protest if the government does not accept their demands and withdraws the three laws - The Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price



Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

Addressing a press conference at Singhu border, Kisan Sangharsh Samiti President Kawalpreet Singh Pannu said: "We have decided to expand this movement pan India."

The farm leader said that farmers will move from Rajasthan's Shajapur to Delhi borders blocking

the Delhi-Jaipur route on Sunday and all District Collector offices would become the Centre of the protest on December 14.

Announcing that all the leaders of 32 unions would sit on a day-long hunger strike at the Singhu border protest site from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. December 14, Pannu sought support from other sections of society.

# 8 more arrested for attack on Nadda's convoy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 12: Eight persons were arrested Saturday from various parts of South 24 Parganas district for their alleged involvement in the attack on BJP national president JP Nadda's convoy at Diamond Harbour, a senior police official said.

With this the total number of people apprehended in connection with the attack on the BJP leader has increased to 15, he told this news agency.

All the eight arrested Saturday have been booked under various sections of the IPC for rioting, obstructing a public servant in the discharge of public functions and other offences.

# HC quashes I-T proceedings against Karti

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Dec 12: The Madras High Court has quashed the Income Tax proceedings initiated against Karti Chidambaram, son of former Union Finance Minister P Chidambaram, and his wife over alleged non-disclosure of cash transactions of about ₹7 crore following sale of a property near here.

The Court, while ruling that the action is "not maintainable and premature", clarified that proceedings may be initiated again if the authority concerned deemed the same is required after proper assessment.

The prosecution case was that Karti, the Congress Member of Parliament, representing Sivaganga, and his wife Srimidhi received ₹6.38 crore and ₹1.35 crore in cash respectively, through sale of a land owned by them near Muttukadu.

However, they had neither disclosed the same in their assessment nor paid taxes for the income. Hence, the I-T department initiated criminal prosecution for alleged non-disclosure of income by them to the tune of ₹7.73 crore for 2015-16 fiscal.

# Callous apathy awaits patients at JK Lone hospital

DESPITE THE GOVERNMENT'S ASSURANCES, LITTLE SEEMS TO HAVE CHANGED AT KOTA'S JK LONE HOSPITAL WHERE OVER 100 INFANTS HAD DIED A YEAR AGO AND NINE MORE CHILDREN DIED LAST THURSDAY

AGENCIES

Jaipur, Dec 12: Despite Rajasthan government's assurances, little seems to have changed at Kota's JK Lone government hospital where over 100 infants had died a year ago.

In December 2019, over 100 infants died at JK Lone government hospital in Kota triggering a major furore. On Thursday, it was reported that nine infants have died over 24 hours at the JK Lone government hospital.

The tragic death of nine infants, after the death of over 100 children in December 2019, underlines the medical apathy and negligence in one of the biggest government hospitals of Kota. Apart from Kota, children from Baran, Sawai Madhopur and nearby districts of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh also visit this facility.

A visit to the Kota hospital revealed that it remains as miser-



able as it used to be last year when over 100 children had died and the government had made several promises to improve the infrastructure and the health condition. Unhygienic conditions,

were seen waiting for long hours to get a sonography done with no one to attend to them. Several of these women had arrived at 6 am with their children.

Sonography at the hospital is scheduled to start at 9 am but even after spending close to 2.5 hours, scores of women were seen waiting at the hospital not knowing when it will be done. No one was there at the counter to attend them as they waited for hours.

A day before, Rajasthan Health Minister Raghu Sharma had promised that health officials were told to not be negligent and that not even a single death due to negligence would be acceptable.

On Friday, a row erupted over the deaths of nine infants at the hospital as several BJP leaders lashed out at the Ashok Gehlot government.

Senior BJP leader Bhawani Singh Rajawa claimed that the Rajasthan



# national



In most of the cases, girls have a consensual relationship, a live-in setup and then file an FIR (First Information Report) for rape after separation

KIRANMAYEE NAYAK | CH'GARH WOMEN'S COMMISSION CHIEF

## MUSEUM AT STATUE OF UNITY TO SHOWCASE MAKING OF INDIAN NATION

Gujarat government has decided to build a museum at the Statue of Unity campus site to showcase recollection of history that made the dream of united India possible



### of the day quote

The worrisome situation in West Bengal is police don't reply, and no action has been taken on the complaints



REKHA SHARMA | NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN CHAIRPERSON

Pawar saheb had last week said that he wanted the Opposition parties to come together. It is not important who will lead the front. That can be decided later



NAWAB MALIK | NCP LEADER

I am extremely in pain to see the suffering of my farmer brothers. Government should do something fast



DHARMENDRA | HINDI FILM ACTOR

## India readies for 600 million Covid vax jabs

INDIA WILL DEPLOY ITS VAST ELECTION MACHINERY TO DELIVER 600 MILLION DOSES OF COVID-19 VACCINES TO THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN THE NEXT SIX TO EIGHT MONTHS

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 12: India will deploy its vast election machinery to deliver 600 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines to the most vulnerable people in the next six to eight months through conventional cold chain systems, the expert leading the initiative said.

The government has lined up cold storage facilities with temperatures between 2°C and 8°C (36°F and 48°F), said VK Paul, who heads the group of experts on vaccine administration for Covid-19 that advises India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Paul said these preparations meet the requirements of what he said were the four emerging candidates in the race for India's vaccine.

"The four that I can see, including Serum, Bharat, Zydus, and Sputnik need normal cold chain. I see no problem for these vaccines,"



he told Reuters in an interview.

Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine maker, is already mass producing and stockpiling AstraZeneca's Covishield shot, while Indian biotech players Bharat Biotech and Zydus Cadila are developing their own vaccine candidates. And last month, Indian

pharmaceutical player Hetero inked a deal with Russia's RDIF to manufacture over 100 million doses of the Russian Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine per year in India.

The government expects the first approvals "very soon" from the independent drug regulator for emergency use, he said.

## Modi assures farmers on agriculture reforms

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: As farmers vowed to expand their protests over new farm laws, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday assured them that his government was committed to their welfare and that the legislations were aimed at giving them alternate markets to boost income.

Without directly referring to the farmers' agitation, which entered the 17th day Saturday, Modi said agriculture reforms as part of government efforts are aimed at removing roadblocks, and the new laws will also bring in technology and investment in the sector.

The government, he said, is committed to protecting the interest and welfare of farmers through its policies and actions.

"Reforms will help draw investment in the agriculture sector and benefit farmers," he said at the annual meeting of industry body FICCI here. "The aim of all government reforms is to make farmers prosperous."

The new legislations, which were approved in the previous Parliament session, give farmers an additional option outside of the designated mandis to buy or sell their crops, he said.

"The idea is to help increase farmer incomes," Modi reiterated.

Hundreds of farmers from states like Punjab and Haryana have blocked some of the highways leading to Delhi borders for more than two weeks now against the new farm laws which they fear will prompt the government to stop making direct crop purchases at minimum state-set prices, called minimum support price (MSP).

They have vowed to expand their protests across the country until the government scraps the new farm



laws. The government has so far refused to heed to their demand but has promised to continue the MSP-based procurement.

The three new laws remove restrictions on marketing farm products and allow cultivators to engage with private companies to sell their crops. This, the government says, allows farmers an alternate avenue to sell crops, raising their income and is aimed at making farming more competitive.

Listing his government's farmer-friendly measures, Modi said the government has encouraged producing ethanol from sugarcane. This ethanol is blended in petrol to cut India's oil import dependence and gives farmers remunerative prices for their crops, he said.

Modi said farmers will get technology and benefit from access to the market.

Expressing dissatisfaction over the limited participation of India Inc in the agriculture sector, the Prime Minister asked industries to show their interest and increase investment in the sector.

Unfortunately the India Inc has not made adequate investments in agriculture and private players did not explore the sector to its full potential, rather they worked in a limited fashion, he said.

### SHORT TAKES

#### Soldier dies after falling into gorge

Jammu: A soldier died Saturday after accidentally falling into a deep gorge along the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. Lance Naik Suresh Gurgey was part of a patrolling party in the Kalal area of Nowshera sector, they said, adding he slipped and fell into the gorge and sustained severe injuries. He was immediately taken to a hospital, where he died.

#### 3 killed in tractor-truck accident

Shahdol: Three persons were killed when a truck hit their stationary tractor-trolley on National Highway 43 near Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol district in the early hours of Saturday, police said. The accident occurred at around 4 am near Batura village on NH-43 between Shahdol and Anuppur, where the tractor-trolley broke down and was parked on the side of the road, sub inspector Vikas Singh.

#### Celebratory firing kills boy

Rajgarh (MP): A 12-year-old boy was killed in celebratory firing at a marriage function in Laharchi village in Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh district, police said Saturday. The incident occurred on Friday night when a man, who was part of the marriage procession, opened fire from his gun, and the round hit the boy who was standing close by, said Kalipeeth police station in charge Jitendra Chouhan.

#### Three killed as car rams into SUV

Unnao (UP): Three people were killed and another injured when their car collided head-on with an SUV here, police said Saturday. The incident took place late Friday night, they said. Circle Officer, Bighapur, Kripa Shankar Kanaujia said, "The accident took place when the passengers of the car were returning from Shuklaganj after attending a marriage function."

#### ITBP jawan injured in IED blast

Narayanpur: A personnel from the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) was injured when a pressure improvised explosive device (IED) planted by Naxals went off in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district Saturday, police said. The blast occurred around 1 pm on Narayanpur-Kurusnar road under Kurusnar police station area where a team from the ITBP's 53rd battalion was out patrolling.

## SNOW BLANKET



People remove snow from a bridge after the town received fresh snowfall at Keylong in Lahaul Spiti, Saturday PTI/PHOTO

## Workers go on rampage at iPhone plant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Dec 12: The workers of Taiwan headquartered Wistron Corporation, which manufactures iPhone near here went on a rampage on Saturday in the facility over issues related to 'salary', police said.

Quoting preliminary inputs, police said employees at the facility in the Narasapura Industrial Area of Kolar district, about 51 kilometers from here, rampaged through the plant premises overturning cars and damaging furniture besides other things. A police officer told PTI that workers pelted stones, smashed glass windows, damaged vehicles, furniture, computers and laptops in connection with 'salary related issues.'

## SUSPECTED HONOUR KILLING 24-YR-OLD WOMAN KILLED BY BROTHERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mainpuri, Dec 12: In a suspected case of honour killing, a 24-year-old woman was shot dead by her brothers and her body was buried in a field in Faranji village in Uttar Pradesh's Mainpuri district, police said Saturday. Chandni Kashyap's body was found buried in the field on Friday after her brothers Sunil and Sudhir, and mother Sukhrani were taken into custody, they said.

She had married Arjun Jatav (26), a resident of Todarpur village in Uttar Pradesh's Pratapgarh district, against her parents' wishes at a temple June 12, police said.

Chandni and Jatav after getting married moved to Delhi where he worked at a factory. They were in a relationship for eight years before their marriage, according to

police. On November 17, Chandni came to her village, Faranji, from Delhi after she was called by her brothers, police said, adding that Jatav tried to reach Chandni on her phone but got no response.

On November 23, he, his mother and family members reached Faranji and enquired about Chandni. However, they were told that she had gone back to Delhi, police said. Jatav, after going back to Delhi, lodged a complaint at the Mayur Vihar Police Station against Chandni's brothers, accusing them of abducting her, they said.

"The Delhi Police during investigation reached Faranji and inquired about the whereabouts of Chandni. Sudhir and Sunil during interrogation confessed to killing her and burying the body in a field," an official said.

## Protesting farmers 'unwilling' to undergo Covid-19 test

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: With the shadow of coronavirus looming large over protest sites, the Sonapat district administration is offering testing facility to farmers protesting the Centre's new agri laws but most of them are "unwilling" to get tested, fearing they would be isolated if found positive and this would "weaken" their agitation.

Farmers' leaders said the new farm laws pose a "greater threat" to the lives of protesters than Covid-19. Thousands of farmers have been camping at Delhi's different border points for over two weeks, demanding a repeal of the three agriculture reform laws.

Senior Medical Officer (Sonapat) Anvita Kaushik, who is also the in-charge of medical facilities at the

Singhu border protest site, said despite her team's "best efforts", farmers are not willing to get tested for Covid-19.

"Our district's medical vans and teams have been deployed at Singhu border. They (protesters) are getting medicines from us for cough, fever and other health problems, but are unwilling to undergo Covid-19 test," Kaushik told this news agency.

The district medical officer said the ongoing protests by farmers, only a few of whom wear face masks, not only pose a threat to their lives but also to those of hundreds of workers of various factories located on the Delhi-Sonapat road.

She said the administration has been distributing masks among the protesters so that they can protect themselves against coronavirus. However, Bhartiya Kisan Union

Ekta (Ugrahan) Punjab general secretary Sukhdev Singh said farmers don't want to "create a problem" by undergoing Covid-19 test.

He said farmers have come to Delhi to protest against the new farm laws and not for coronavirus testing.

Asked why most farmers are not willing to undergo Covid-19 test, Singh said, "If some farmers test positive, the government will have a reason to isolate them and that will only weaken our agitation against the new farm laws." "We have been protesting for over five months and coronavirus cannot stop us from raising our voices."

Two DCP-rank officers of the Delhi Police overseeing security arrangements at Singhu border have tested positive for Covid-19. Both of them are in isolation.

## In book, Pranab blames Sonia, Dr Singh for 2014 debacle

The memoir, 'The Presidential Years' by former President Pranab Mukherjee is scheduled for a global release in January 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: The Congress had lost political focus after his elevation as the President and some party members believed that had he become the prime minister in 2004, the 2014 Lok Sabha poll debacle could have been averted, Pranab Mukherjee wrote in his memoir.

Mukherjee completed the book "The Presidential Years" before his death. It will be published by Rupa in January.

The former President died August 31 at the age of 84, following Covid-19 complications.

His observations come at a time of intense internal turmoil in the Congress.

The publishers issued a statement announcing the book.

"Some members of the Congress have theorized that, had I become the PM in 2004, the party might have averted the 2014 Lok Sabha drubbing. Though I don't subscribe to this view, I do believe that the



party's leadership lost political focus after my elevation as president. While Sonia Gandhi was unable to handle the affairs of the party, Dr (Manmohan) Singh's prolonged absence from the House put an end to any personal contact with other

MPs," Mukherjee is quoted as saying in his book.

"I believe that the moral authority to govern vests with the PM. The overall state of the nation is reflective of the functioning of the PM and his administration. While Dr

Singh was preoccupied with saving the coalition, which took a toll on governance, (Narendra) Modi seemed to have employed a rather autocratic style of governance during his first term, as seen by the bitter relationship among the government, the legislature and the judiciary."

"Only time will tell if there is a better understanding on such matters in the second term of this government," Mukherjee said in the book, according to the statement by Rupa.

"This is a deeply personal account of the manner in which one of the country's most respected, veteran politicians reshaped the functioning of Rashtrapati Bhavan and responded to tumultuous events as the country's first citizen, leaving behind a legacy that will be hard to match," the statement said.

In this first-person account, Pranab da, as he is affectionately called, recalls the challenges he faced in his years as President - the

difficult decisions he had to make and the tightrope walk he had to undertake to ensure that both constitutional propriety and his opinion were taken into consideration, it further said.

The book also reveals a minor diplomatic issue that arose during the visit of US President Barack Obama in 2015 when the US Secret Service insisted that their president travel in a specially armoured vehicle that had been brought along from the US, and not in the car designated for use by the Indian head of state.

"They wanted me to travel in the same armoured car along with Obama. I politely but firmly refused to do so, and requested the MEA to inform the US authorities that when the US President travels with the Indian President in India, he would have to trust our security arrangements. It cannot be the other way around," Mukherjee wrote in the no-holds-barred account.

## EC toys with idea of digital voter ID card



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: The Election Commission (EC) is toying with the idea of providing voters with election photo identity card in a digital format for easy accessibility, a senior official said.

He, however, made it clear that no decision has been taken by the EC yet in this regard.

"We keep getting suggestions and ideas from officers on fields, through working groups of (state) chief electoral officers and public. This is one such idea we are working on," the functionary said.

Asked whether the digital voter identity card would mean that a voter can carry it on his or her mobile phone using an application, the official said once the EC takes a decision, such details will be settled.

"It can be on a mobile, website, through e-mail... The idea is to provide faster delivery and easy accessibility. The physical card takes time to print and time to reach the voter," he explained.

The Aadhaar card, Permanent Account Number (PAN) card and driving licence are available in digital mode.

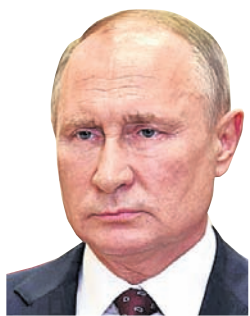
In digital mode, the picture of the voter will also be clearer, making the identification easier.

Another senior poll panel official said to prevent the misuse of technology, the EC will have to look into the safety aspects before taking a decision.

Eligible voters who are on EC's electoral rolls are provided with a physical voter identity card.

Introduced in 1993 for the first time, the election photo identity cards are acceptable as proof of identity and address.





It is significant to integrate the implementation of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative with the work of the Eurasian Economic Union  
VLADIMIR PUTIN | RUSSIAN PRESIDENT

## 138 SCRIBES KILLED IN PAK

At least 138 journalists have been killed in Pakistan since 1990, according to the International Federation of Journalists



## of the day quote

The Covid-19 pandemic provides overwhelming evidence that we need more and more effective multi-lateralism, with vision, ambition and impact. We cannot respond to this crisis by going back to what was or withdrawing into national shells. We need more international cooperation and stronger international institutions



ANTONIO GUTERRES | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

We all signed the Paris Agreement. Now let's insist that we put it to work. I urge all world leaders to act. Act for all of us. Act for our future. Act for our children and grandchildren



VOREQE BAINIMARAMA | FIJIAN PM

Europe is the leader in the fight against climate change. We decided to cut our greenhouse gas emissions of at least 55 per cent by 2030



CHARLES MICHEL | EUROPEAN COUNCIL PRESIDENT

## Journalist hanged for 2017 protests

Ruhollah Zam, who ran the anti-government Amadnews website, was hanged Saturday morning

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

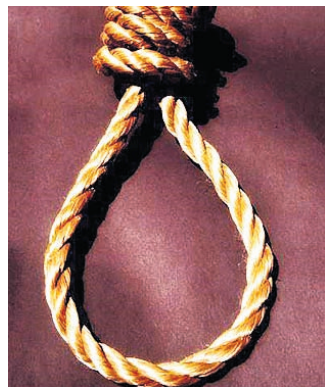
Tehran, Dec 12: An Iranian journalist, accused of fanning unrest during the 2017-18 nationwide protests, was executed Saturday after the Supreme Court upheld a death sentence against him.

According to a BBC report, Ruhollah Zam, who ran the anti-government Amadnews website, was hanged Saturday morning. The Iranian government has accused the news portal of inciting the 2017-18 unrest after it shared videos of protests and damaging information about officials.

The BBC said the journalist, who had been living in exile in France, was reportedly detained while travelling to Iraq last year. Details of his arrest however remains unclear.

But a news report on the Amadnews' website quoted the journalist's wife as saying that Zam was lured to Iraq in September 2019 and was kidnapped and transferred to Iran by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) and convicted to death.

The spokesperson for the Islamic Republic's judiciary announced four days ago that the Supreme Court had approved Zam's sentence, the Amadnews report added.



According to Amadnews, Zam's closed-door trial began in February 2020 and ended in May.

"The proceedings were secret and Zam was not allowed to choose a defence attorney," it said. The court charged Zam with "assembly and conspiracy with intent to commit crimes against national and international security", encouraging people "to wage war and riot, effective persuasion of devoted members of the armed forces to mutiny, desert, or refuse to perform their military duties".

In a statement earlier, the IRGC had alleged that Zam was "under the guidance" and protection of intelligence services in France, Israel and the US.

## Supreme Court rejects Trump-backed lawsuit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Dec 12: The US Supreme Court has rejected a lawsuit seeking to overturn the results of the presidential election in several key battleground states won by Joe Biden, effectively ending President Donald Trump's bid to challenge the outcome of the November 3 polls.

The Supreme Court Friday rejected a bid from Texas' attorney general and backed by President Trump to block the ballots of millions of voters in battleground states of Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin that went in favour of President-elect Biden.

Supreme Court Justices Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas said they believed the court was required to hear the case but expressed no position on Texas' claim. As many as 126 Republican Congressmen had also backed the lawsuit.

"Texas has not demonstrated a judicially cognisable interest in the manner in which another State conducts its elections. All other pending motions are dismissed as moot," the Supreme Court said in a brief unsigned order on Thursday, delivering a devastating blow to the efforts of the Republican pres-



ident to challenge and overturn the election results decisively won by Biden, a Democrat.

Biden not only bagged the most popular votes in the presidential electoral history of the United States, his tally in the electoral college was 306, more than the 270 votes required for winning the race to the White House. Trump received 232 electoral votes. The election results are scheduled to be formally certified next week by the 538-member Electoral College.

Reacting to the verdict, an angry Trump tweeted, "The Supreme Court really let us down. No Wisdom, No Courage!" He also said the verdict was a "legal disgrace" and "an

embarrassment to the USA."

Trump and his campaign team have been making unsubstantiated allegations of massive voter fraud and electoral malpractice in the election. State election officials and mainstream media say they have not found any such evidence.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton in his lawsuit alleged that four battleground states -- Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin -- had violated their own state laws, and thus the US Constitution. The lawsuit urged the court to bar these four states from casting their electoral votes for Biden and as such shift the selection of electors to the states'

legislatures. Trump had said he expected to prevail in the Supreme Court. Pennsylvania, in its response to the lawsuit, alleged that Texas wanted the justices to disregard the Constitution, not interpret it. It said Texas' filings attempted to construct a surreal alternate reality.

"Texas' effort to get this Court to pick the next President has no basis in law or fact. The Court should not abide this seditious abuse of the judicial process, and should send a clear and unmistakable signal that such abuse must never be replicated," said the response filed by the State of Pennsylvania.

Reacting to the development, Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, said, "The Court has rightly dismissed out of hand the extreme, unlawful and undemocratic GOP lawsuit to overturn the will of millions of American voters."

She said the Republican members that signed the lawsuit brought "dishonour" to the House of Representatives. "Instead of upholding their oath to support and defend the Constitution, they chose to subvert the Constitution and undermine public trust in our sacred democratic institutions," the top Democrat said.

## SHORT TAKES

### 4 killed, 8 hurt

Abuja: At least four people were killed and eight others injured when two cars exploded in Nigeria's northeastern state of Borno, according to the Nigeria delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

### Two killed

Colorado City (US): Two men were killed when a helicopter crashed in a field in West Texas, authorities said. Mitchell County Sheriff Patrick Toombs said Friday night that the helicopter crashed Thursday about eight miles (13 kilometers) southwest of Colorado City, which is about 250 miles west of Dallas.

### China renews alert for fog

Beijing: China's meteorological authority Saturday has renewed its yellow and blue alerts for fog and a cold wave across the country. In an update, the National Meteorological Center said the yellow alert was issued for fog that will cover parts of Hebei, Tianjin, Shandong, Anhui, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hubei and Hunan provinces, reducing visibility to less than 200 metres, reports Xinhua news agency.

### 10 rockets hit Kabul

Kabul: At least one person was killed and two others were injured on Saturday after 10 rockets were fired into different parts of Kabul city, Afghanistan's Interior Affairs Ministry said. According to the Ministry, the rockets were fired from capital city's Lab-e-Jar area, TOLO News reported.

### Protesters hurl eggs

Seoul: Angry protesters threw eggs and shouted insults as one of South Korea's most notorious child predators was released from a prison in southern Seoul on Saturday at the end of a 12-year term. Law enforcement authorities strapped the 69-year-old Cho Doo-soon with an electronic ankle and escorted him to his home in nearby Ansan, where authorities have added and upgraded security cameras and vowed around-the-clock monitoring for a man residents still see as a risk to their community.

## This calculator says who must get vaccines first

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New York, Dec 12: Researchers, including one of Indian origin, have developed a new online calculator for estimating the individual and community-level risk of dying from Covid-19.

The study, published in the journal Nature Medicine, revealed that the calculator will be useful to public health authorities for assessing mortality risks in different communities, and for prioritizing certain groups for vaccination as Covid-19 vaccines become available.

The algorithm underlying the calculator uses information from existing large studies to estimate risk of Covid-19 mortality for individuals based on age, gender, socio-demographic factors and a variety of different health conditions.

The risk estimates apply to individuals in the general population who are currently uninfected and captures factors associated with both risks of future infection and complications after infection.

"Our calculator represents a more quantitative approach and should complement other proposed qualitative guidelines for determining individual and community risks and allocating vaccines," said study senior author Nilanjan Chatterjee from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in the US.

The calculator based on the model is available online for public health officials and interested individuals alike. It enables a user to determine indi-



vidual risk based on factors such as age, sex, race/ethnicity, and medical history and can be used to define risk for a group, such as for a particular community, corporation, or university, based on the mix of relevant factors that define the group.

In their paper, the research team used their calculator to describe the risk distribution for the whole US population, showing, for example, that only about four per cent of the population at high risk -- defined as five times greater risk than the US average -- is expected to contribute close to 50 per cent of the total deaths.

The researchers also showed that population-level risk varies considerably from city to city and county to county. "For example, the percentage of the adult population exceeding the fivefold risk threshold varies from 0.4 per cent in Layton, Utah, to 10.7 per cent in Detroit, Michigan," Chatterjee said.

The calculator allows users to calculate the mortality risk of individuals by combining information on individual-level factors with community-level pandemic dynamics, as available from a large variety of forecasting models.

## PROMPT ACTION



Health officials disinfect an area near duck farms following bird flu cases at Jangseong, South Jeolla Province, South Korea, Saturday

## US executes Louisiana truck driver

In his last words, Bourgeois offered no apology and instead struck a deeply defiant tone, insisting that he neither killed nor sexually abused his baby girl

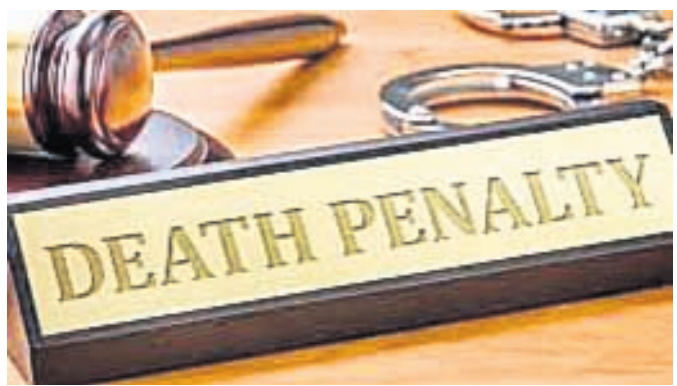
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Terre Haute (US), Dec 12: The Trump administration continued its unprecedented series of post-election federal executions by putting to death a Louisiana truck driver who severely abused his 2-year-old daughter for weeks in 2002, then killed her by slamming her head against a truck's windows and dashboard.

Alfred Bourgeois, 56, was pronounced dead at 8:21 pm. Eastern time Friday after receiving a lethal injection at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana.

His lawyers argued Bourgeois had an IQ that puts him in the intellectually disabled category, saying that should have made him ineligible for the death penalty under federal law. Victor J. Abreu, said it was "shameful" to execute his client "without fair consideration of his intellectual disability".

In his last words, Bourgeois offered no apology and instead struck



a deeply defiant tone, insisting that he neither killed nor sexually abused his baby girl. "I ask God to forgive all those who plotted and schemed against me, and planted false evidence." And he added: "I did not commit this crime."

Bourgeois was the 10th federal death-row inmate put to death since federal executions resumed under President Donald Trump in July after a 17-year hiatus. He was the second federal prisoner

executed this week, with three more executions planned in January.

As the lethal injection of pentobarbital began flowing through IVs in both of his arms, Bourgeois tilted his head to the side to look at his spiritual adviser standing in a corner of the death chamber clutching a small Bible. Bourgeois gave him a thumbs up sign, and his spiritual adviser raise his thumb in reply.

## Relatives make plea for info on HK detainees in China

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hong Kong, Dec 12: Relatives of a dozen Hong Kong residents who have been detained in mainland China for more than 3 1/2 months made a plea Saturday to be informed of the timing of any trials and whether they can attend.

The request underscored the sharp contrast between the relatively open legal system in Hong Kong, a semi-autonomous Chinese territory, and that of the mainland, where often little information is divulged until a trial is over.

"I miss my son so much," the mother of Wong Wai-yin, one of the detainees, said, choking up. "I

want to visit him so badly. I haven't seen my son in a very long time -- it's almost four months. Please tell me (about the trial). I'm just an ordinary mother." The 12 were arrested at sea in August while they were apparently making a bid to flee to Taiwan after a tough national security law took effect in Hong Kong earlier this year.

They were picked up after entering mainland waters for crossing the maritime border without permission. At least some took part in anti-government protests in 2019 and were facing charges in Hong Kong.

Though Hong Kong is a part of China, travelers must still pass through immigration when going



to and from the mainland. Two are being held on suspicion of organizing an illegal border crossing. The group has been locked up in

Shenzhen, a southern Chinese city that borders Hong Kong.

The relatives covered their faces with masks, and some wore sun-

glasses, caps or hoods to hide their identities as they spoke at a news conference. They did not give their names. Owen Chow, an activist who has been helping the families, said they wanted to know whether the trials would be open to the public and if family members could attend.

He and some family members questioned the authenticity of letters some of the latter had received, purportedly from their detained relatives, saying they were being held in a good environment and not abused. "The only thing I can do is to have dissatisfaction and be angry," said a relative of Tang Kai-yin, another detainee. "I don't know what else to do."

## Algeria leader goes 'missing'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Algiers, Dec 12: Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune marks a year in office Saturday but he is nowhere in sight since his evacuation to Germany more than six weeks ago for treatment of COVID-19.

The President's office issued a statement November 30 saying Tebboune had left a "specialized" medical facility, was continuing his convalescence and should be returning home "in the coming days." The statement compounded the growing mystery surrounding the 75-year-old Tebboune, his whereabouts and his health.

The clinic where he was treated was never made public. The absence of the head of state, who also serves as defense chief, recalled the long absences of his predecessor, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, for treatment in France of a stroke in 2013 and later in Switzerland for numerous medical check-ups, with lots of speculation and little information on his whereabouts or health. Bouteflika rarely appeared in public but kept ruling. He was forced to abandon his bid for a fifth term last year before being pushed from office under pressure from street protests and the powerful army. Tebboune left for Germany October 28. "I expected him to give us a surprise by returning home today for the first anniversary of his election," Hassiba Aoudia, a retired French teacher said.

## Pro-China news channel in Taiwan ends broadcasts

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Taipei, Dec 12: Employees and supporters rallied for a Taiwanese pro-China cable news channel as it was taken off air Saturday, after the government refused to renew its license, citing accuracy issues.

CTITV's channel 52 broadcast a countdown and then went black after midnight. The cable network, whose non-news channels were not affected, plans to continue putting news on YouTube and other digital platforms.

A large crowd chanted "Hang on, CTITV" and held up signs reading "Thank you CTITV, we will see you again." Employees, some tearing up, sang songs and swayed in unison wearing matching blue windbreakers. Liao Chia-yu, a language teacher, said she would keep watching CTITV on YouTube. "I also hope they don't forget their ideals," Liao said. "They should put out whatever they want, and report on the truth."

The National Communications Commission cited repeated violations of rules on accurate reporting in rejecting the renewal last month. The station has been fined 25 times in the past six years for spreading inaccurate information. The station is owned by the Want Want China Times media group.



# business



The government is taking a series of measures to make India highly competitive in the global economy with focus on sunrise sectors  
AMITABH KANT | CEO, NITI AAYOG

## 'SBI TO PREFER CO-ORIGINATION MODELS'

State Bank of India (SBI) will prefer the co-origination model to cater to the financing needs of MSMEs and collaboration with fintechs is a good idea as it helps in assessing the risk profile of the borrower in a better manner, its chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara said Saturday



## of the day quote

We have witnessed an increase in wholesale numbers in November, where PVs grew by 4.65% and two-wheelers by 13.43% over the corresponding month of last year, primarily on account of the festive season

RAJESH MENON | DIRECTOR GENERAL, SIAM

Our expectations have to be realistic. If the Indian economy grows at 5% in the era of deglobalisation, then it will be a significant achievement. It is no longer feasible in the world of deglobalisation to grow at 7% as exports cannot grow at 20% or 30% in a year

RUCHIR SHARMA | CHIEF GLOBAL STRATEGIST, MORGAN STANLEY

Investment climate in India is improving and the economy will bounce back faster in the next financial year from the impact of the pandemic

MANOJ KOHLI | COUNTRY HEAD, SOFTBANK (INDIA)

## SHORT TAKES

### Exim Bank extends \$448mn LOC

Mumbai: Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) Saturday said it has extended a \$448-million line of credit (LOC) for various infrastructure projects in Uzbekistan. The LOC has been extended on behalf of the Indian government, Exim Bank said in a statement. With the signing of this LOC agreement, Exim Bank has now in place 266 LOCs, covering 62 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Commonwealth of Independent States and the Oceania, with credit commitments of around \$26.59 billion, available for financing exports from India, it added.

### RBI appoints 3 exec directors

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has appointed R Subramanian, RS Ratho and Rohit Jain as executive directors. In the new role, Subramanian will look after foreign exchange department, financial markets regulation department, internal debt management and international department, a statement from RBI said. Prior to being promoted as executive director, he was CGM-in-Charge, Enforcement Department.

### 'No specific plan needed'

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Saturday said that borrowers opting for resolution of COVID-related stressed loans are not required to submit any specific plans. In FAQs on Resolution Framework for COVID-19 related stress, the RBI said that borrowers can invoke the resolution framework by merely submitting a request to the lending institutions.

### 'Innovative' award for LMW

Coimbatore: The city-based Lakshmi Machine Works-Textile Machinery Division (LMW TMD) was named as the "Most Innovative company of the year 2020", by CII. The Confederation of Indian Industry announced its Industrial Innovation Award recently through an online ceremony recently and named LMW as the most innovative company for 2020, a company release said.

# 'Tech key to exploring new frontiers of eco recovery'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 12: Microsoft's Chief Executive Officer Satya Nadella Saturday said that despite the constraint caused by the pandemic, digital technology is being adopted to scale core resilience, not only for future transformation but for business continuity.

Addressing the 'AI and the New Digital World Ahead' session at industry body Ficci's 93rd Annual General Meeting (AGM), Nadella

said: "The ability to use the digital tools and our built-in infrastructure and capability around the digital track is going to create resilience and transformation."

Asserting further on the future during a fireside chat with Ficci President Sangita Reddy, Nadella said that broad paradigms are reshaping the expectations especially the exponential changes and the exponential change is technology.

"The innovation in India around digital infrastructure in every field,



from financial services, healthcare to retail is tremendous due to the ubiquity of computing fabric that is available through every Indian business and every Indian citizen,"

The innovation in India around digital infrastructure in every field, from financial services, healthcare to retail is tremendous due to the ubiquity of computing fabric that is available through every Indian business and every Indian citizen

SATYA NADELLA | CEO, MICROSOFT

he said. Taking this a step further,

Nadella elucidated: "Computation and computing fabric is now embedded in the real world and the layer of AI and data capability is getting embedded in every consumer and business application is tremendous."

According to Nadella, public sector should be supported in their modernisation. "To develop the economy, a catch-up growth is possible when both the public institution and public sector can move rapidly," said the Microsoft CEO.

## FICCI ANNUAL CONVENTION

# Economic indicators show encouraging signs: PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: Economic indicators have shown encouraging signs of recovery of the Indian economy post-pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Saturday as he vowed to keep government controls to a bare minimum and encourage private capital.

In this time of pandemic, he said, the government has accorded highest priority to saving lives of Indians and the way India has handled the crisis through concerted effort has surprised the world.

Compared to February when the pandemic started, things have changed in December, he said, adding, there is a road map to deal with this now.

"Even the economic indicators are encouraging," he added. Various measures taken by the government in the last six years has instilled confidence among global investors, he said. As a result, he said, "India has seen record Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Foreign Portfolio Investment inflows during the pandemic."

Addressing the FICCI Annual Convention, he said, a decisive government always strives to remove



A decisive government always strives to remove obstacles for others and always tries to contribute towards the society and the nation, Modi said

obstacles for others and always tries to contribute towards the society and the nation.

Recalling the time when government was in all the sectors, he said, a visionary and decisive government, on the other hand, encourages all the stakeholders to realise their potential.

Modi pointed out that in the last

six years, the government has encouraged stakeholders in all sectors and this is reflected in the all-round reforms in sectors ranging from manufacturing to MSME; agriculture to infrastructure; from tech industry to taxation and from real estate to regulatory easing.

Talking about various reforms undertaken by the government in the last six years, he said changes have been brought in manufacturing, MSMEs, agriculture, infrastructure and regulatory easing.

As a result of taxation reform, he said, India has got competitive advantage in corporate tax rate and initiated faceless assessment and faceless appeal leaving behind the scar of tax terrorism and Inspector Raj. Pointing out that the old policies protected inefficiencies while 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' is guided to promote efficiency in all the sectors, he said the government has introduced Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to promote sunrise sectors and technology based industries.

This scheme is for those industries which are on path to make India a global champion and those who would perform would be entitled to incentive, he added.

## FIND SWADESHI ALTERNATIVES TO IMPORTS, URGES GADKARI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: Asserting that India was importing "a lot of things" from China, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari Saturday urged the domestic industry to come up with Swadeshi alternatives to the imports from various nations without compromising with their quality and cost. Addressing the annual meeting of Ficci virtually, the MSME and road transport minister highlighted the need to reduce imports and increase exports. He said this can help enhance economic growth and boost the contribution of domestic manufacturing to the GDP to up to 30 per cent.

Citing the example of magnets used in electric vehicles, he asked industry experts to study which parts are being imported by India.

"Now the magnet, there are a lot of things we are importing from China. I am not a businessman or a



business expert but I am seeing a huge potential for electric cars, e-bikes, electric autorickshaws and even electric trucks," said the minister.

He called upon business experts to deliberate with the domestic automotive industry, especially those engaged in manufacturing of electric vehicles, to find out what products are being imported, like magnets and lithium ion batteries.

"We should find out Swadeshi alternatives in the country without compromising with the quality and cost," he added.

Highlighting the need for injecting liquidity into the market, he said: "I know that there are some problems.

and affordable data," Chandrasekaran said.

He added that the government should also establish the regulatory standards that are required on data privacy, data residency, data localisation and taxation in general. Stating that there is tremendous and limitless opportunity for India in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic, he said that in the past, India has often struggled to grow manufacturing as a percentage of GDP.

"We usually highlight issues like power; logistics and labour. We have pointed (out) high interest rates and also have underscored over-reach and interference.

"But, in the future, if we put this behind, by visioning our scale we will become a pivot for the new world order," he said.

Chandrasekaran said his years at TCS shaped him in such a way that his roots are embedded in technology, which made him see the

# Mahanadi Coalfields produces 87.74MT coal in eight months

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 12: A leading coal producer Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) posted 87.74 million tonne (MT) in coal production in eight months reaching steadily to its target for financial year 2020-21. The company has set target to achieve 173 million tonne of coal during current fiscal in Odisha.

MCL reached 87.74 million tonne in November, 2020 when it produced 12.79 MT in same month.

According to the data available in MCL's website, the company targeted to achieve 104.15 MT in eight months, but have reached 87.74 MT falling short from their yearly target.

"The company has been declining from getting their monthly target. MCL targeted to achieve



15.98MT in coal production from opencast and underground mining in November, 2020.

The subsidiary of Coal India managed to produce 0.411 lakh tonne of coal from underground and 127.531 lakh tonne from opencast mining," the data revealed. The company had produced 11.08 MT of coal in October, 2020.

According to sources the company expected to extract around 5 lakh tonne of coal per day and 15

MT coal in a month. Also a media report claimed that the coal producer has also set a target to produce 263 million tonne of coal by 2023-24.

Currently, MCL has 48 coal blocks having mineable resources of 29,100 MT, which can meet the requirement of thermal coal for another 100 years. There are also another miscellaneous 22 projects are in pipeline, which includes washeries, coal gasification and solar power.

# Post-Covid world order offers limitless opportunity for India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: The post-COVID-19 new world order offers limitless opportunity for India but for the country to be ready to participate in it, there is a need to establish regulatory standards on data and taxation in general, Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran said Saturday.

Speaking at the 93rd annual convention of industry Chamber FICCI, he also said that if the idea "that the 2020s belong to India" has to be realised, industry should be bold and start visioning all projects at scale, while there is also a need a new focus on talent, enable data and bandwidth.

"I see a collaborative role between the industry and the government here...The government should enable this partnership and to make India ready to participate in this new world, it should ensure that every village has sufficient bandwidth

and affordable data," Chandrasekaran said.

He added that the government should also establish the regulatory standards that are required on data privacy, data residency, data localisation and taxation in general. Stating that there is tremendous and limitless opportunity for India in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic, he said that in the past, India has often struggled to grow manufacturing as a percentage of GDP.

"We usually highlight issues like power; logistics and labour. We have pointed (out) high interest rates and also have underscored over-reach and interference.

"But, in the future, if we put this behind, by visioning our scale we will become a pivot for the new world order," he said.

Chandrasekaran said his years at TCS shaped him in such a way that his roots are embedded in technology, which made him see the



COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on India on a positive frame of mind. He stressed on the need to reimagine "the whole technology blueprint nationwide" and make technologies like robotics and AI (artificial intelligence) become part

of the mainstay of manufacturing.

"We need to recognise the fact that tech manufacturing and energy are converging in the creation of new platforms and new ecosystems," he added.

Stating that the coronavirus pan-

demic "exacerbated global supply chains and clearly outlined a new global world order", Chandrasekaran reiterated that "2020 marks the decoupling of China and the US. What it means is countries and companies will need to de-risk and balance their supply chain" in the future.

If India's first plank for the 21st Century is digital, he said the second plank is a new approach to global value chain.

"India's strength is our largest talent pool, and we can leverage this to become a key player in the global value chain. "The vulnerabilities exposed by the pandemic, and the new geopolitical order only accelerates this opportunity and the time is now," Chandrasekaran asserted.

Underscoring environmental resilience as the third plank for India, he said, "Within two decades, nearly 20 new energy sources could likely be powering the global economy."

## Handicraft, GI Toys exempted from 'Quality Control Order'



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 12: Centre has exempted Handicraft, GI Toys from quality control order. The development comes after Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) released the Toys (Quality Control) Second Amendment Order, 2020.

Subsequently, the order exempts goods manufactured and sold by artisans registered with "Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), from use of 'Standard Mark under licence from Bureau of Indian Standards, as per Scheme 1 of Schedule-II of BIS (Conformity Assessment) Regulations, 2018'.

"The Amendment Order 2020, also exempts products registered as 'Geographical Indications' from following 'Indian Toy Standards' and compulsory use of Standard Mark licence from Bureau as per Scheme 1 of Schedule-II of BIS (CA) Regulations, 2018," the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in a statement Saturday.

"The Gazette notification issued by the department says that "nothing in this Order shall apply to goods or articles manufactured and sold by Registered proprietor and Authorised user of a product registered as Geographical Indication by the Registrar of Geographical Indications, Office of Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks (CG-PDPTM)."

## Now, Oracle to move Silicon Valley headquarters

AGENCIES

San Francisco, Dec 12: Cloud major Oracle has announced to move its California-based headquarters to Austin, Texas and cited flexibility of employee work as the key reason behind the decision.

The decision came a day after the company posted revenues of \$9.8 billion in its fiscal second quarter; a growth of 2% (on-year) and Cloud services and licence support revenues were up 4% to \$7.1 billion.

"Oracle is implementing a more flexible employee work location policy and has changed its Corporate Headquarters from Redwood City, California to Austin, Texas. We believe these moves best position Oracle for growth and provide our personnel with more flexibility about where and how they work," a company spokesperson told CNBC Friday.

"In addition, we will continue to support major hubs for Oracle around the world, including those in the United States such as Redwood City, Austin, Santa Monica, Seattle, Denver, Orlando and Burlington, among others, and we expect to add other locations over time," Oracle said.



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N CHANDRASEKARAN | CHAIRMAN, TATA SONS



# PANT, VIHARI PROPEL INDIA

# Aussie media lauds Siraj for his gesture

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sydney, Dec 12:** Rishabh Pant (103 batting, 73b, 9x4, 6x6) and Hanuma Vihari (104 batting, 194b, 13x4) put themselves in the reckoning for next week's first Test with contrasting hundreds as India thoroughly dominated Australia A in the pink ball warm-up match here Saturday.

Needing 19 runs to reach his century when Jack Wildermuth commenced the second evening's final over, Pant clobbered him for 4, 4, 6, 4, 4 to remain unbeaten. At the other end, Vihari laboured his way to a fine 104-run knock off 194 balls. Also staking a claim for selection is young Shubman Gill (65, 78b, 10x4), with an elegant half century.

In the final session of play, Pant's aggressive approach paid dividends as he smashed the Australia A bowlers to all corners of the Sydney Cricket Ground, the southpaw making a strong case for himself for the wicketkeeper's job in Adelaide ahead of Test specialist Wriddhiman Saha.

To cite an example of his power-hitting, Pant swept one over the cow corner for a six, leaving Nic Maddinson to search for the ball among the rows of chairs at the SCG. At the close of play, India were strongly placed at 386 for four for an overall lead by 472 runs, having bundled out the home team out for a paltry 108 in their first innings Friday.

In their first innings, India were all out for 194, which would have been far less if not for pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah's maiden first-class fifty, but the visitors staged a strong comeback with both bat and ball.

While Gill may have booked him-



self one of the opening slots with his dazzling strokes, Hanuma's effort might force the Indian team to play an additional batsman in the series opener.

Coming out to bat again in the beginning of the day's play, India lost Prithvi Shaw in the second over as the young right-hander drove the ball at cover-point without any great foot movement. It was a bit of a soft dismissal.

If Shaw missed out on an opportunity to make a big score in good batting conditions, his contemporary Gill grabbed it with both hands on the way to reaching his half-century off 49 balls.

During his stay in the middle, Gill played some elegant drives and looked assured while going on to the backfoot, which seems to be his forte. However, the 21-year-old got



out in an unfortunate manner to leg-spinner Michell Swepson.

Swepson bowled a faster one and Gill, shaping up to flick it, missed, prompting the bowler to appeal for an lbw even as the ball headed towards the first slip where a diving Sean Abbott held on to it.

TV replays were inconclusive and the absence of DRS and snickometer in the practice game, a disappointed Gill had no option but to walk back to the dressing room as umpire's decision could not be challenged.

That ended a 104-run partnership for the second wicket between Gill and Mayank Agarwal (61, 120b, 4x4, 2x6), who was joined in by Vihari for another half century stand.

Thereafter, the duo of Vihari and skipper Ajinkya Rahane was involved in a partnership of 78 runs for the fourth wicket as the Australian bowlers toiled hard for wickets.

There was a brief rain interruption after Pant walked in at the fall of Rahane's wicket. But he straightaway played his shots to further unsettle the Australian bowlers.

Even as Vihari showed great composure and patience in collecting his runs, Pant was quite at ease while clearing the fence, reaching his fifty with a cracking square cut in just 43 balls.

Pant continued in same vein till the end of the day's play and hurtled towards his century with a flurry of big hits. While Vihari, in all, struck 13 boundaries.

Brief scores: India 194 & 386/4 (Hanuma Vihari 104 batting, Rishabh Pant 103 batting, Shubman Gill 65, Mayank Agarwal 61); Australia A 108. Match to continue.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sydney, Dec 12:** India fast bowler Mohammed Siraj's fine gesture of rushing in and attending to rival Cameron Green after he was hit on the head during the opening day of the warm-up game here has got praised from the Australian media.

Green attempted a catch off a straight drive from Jasprit Bumrah off his own bowling but the ball flew through his fingers and hit on the right side of his head. Siraj immediately dropped his bat and rushed to check on Green. Bumrah also did the same following his teammate.

Green, who suffered concussion, was later ruled out of the remainder of the three-day pink warm-up game between the Indians and Australia 'A' side.

"Indian cricketer Mohd Siraj has been praised for his sportsmanship in helping young all-rounder Cameron Green after he suffered a blow to the head during the match," tweeted 9News Australia. "Non-striker Mohammed

Siraj and umpire Gerard Abood rushed to check on the star all-rounder, who patted Bumrah on the leg to assure him he was OK," said abc.net.au.

"Mohammed Siraj, at the non-striker's end, dropped his bat and immediately rushed to check on the injured bowler," wrote cricket.com.au.

Siraj's gesture has also taken the internet by storm with netizens lauding him for his sportsman spirit. "Absolutely brilliant from Mohammed Siraj ... Did not care about the run and straightaway dropped his bat and checked on Green. Top spirit by him," wrote a Twitter user.

The BCCI also shared a picture in which Green can be seen on his knees after the blow on his head and Siraj standing next to him and checking on the Australian.

"Non-striker batsman Mohd Siraj quickly rushed to check on Cameron Green, who got hit on his head by a Jasprit Bumrah straight drive," the BCCI said on its Twitter handle.



# Jamieson fifer put NZ in control Yet another loss for Odisha FC

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Wellington, Dec 12:** Kyle Jamieson (5/34) has made a reputation in his short Test cricket career for New Zealand as a man who makes things happen.

He enhanced that reputation Saturday on the second day of the second Test, taking a five-wicket haul as New Zealand had the West Indies 124/8 at stumps in reply to its first innings of 460. The tourists need 136 to avoid the follow on.

It was Jamieson's second five wicket bag in only five Tests in which he has increased his claim to the designation 'all-rounder' with a half century and two innings of 40 or more.

Drama seems to attend everything Jamieson does in the test arena. He took two West Indies wickets with consecutive deliveries in his opening over Saturday — a double wicket maiden — and narrowly missed a hat-trick when his appeal for lbw from the next ball was turned down.

The on-field umpire denied the appeal, with it the hat-trick, and his decision was confirmed when the television official saw replays that showed the ball just clipping leg stump. An lbw appeal from the following, which might have given Jamieson the consolation of three wickets from four balls, was also refused.

The tall right-armed then broke a 68-run fifth-wicket partnership between Jermaine Blackwood (69,



92b, 11x4) and Shamarh Brooks to re-establish the ascendancy New Zealand had held through most of the second day.

He completed his five-wicket bag late in the day with the wickets of West Indies captain Jason Holder (9) and Alzarri Joseph.

First Test century-maker Blackwood, who survived Jamieson's hat-trick ball, again provided most resistance among the West Indies' batting lineup but was out shortly before stumps for 69.

Tim Southee, who began the decline of the West Indies' innings with the early wickets of Kraigg Brathwaite and Darren Bravo, removed Blackwood and ended the day with 3/29 from 16 overs.

Earlier, Henry Nicholls (174, 280b, 21x4, 1x6) and Neil Wagner (66 n o, 42b, 8x4, 4x6) posted their highest Test scores and shared a 95-run partnership for the ninth wicket which allowed New Zealand to lift their overnight total of 294/6 to 460.

Nicholls batted for five minutes more than seven hours and was the last man out for 174, beating his previous Test-best of 162 against Sri Lanka. Wagner was left not out on 66 after celebrating his 50th Test with his maiden half century.

Brief scores: New Zealand 460 (Henry Nicholls 174, Neil Wagner 66 n o, Shannon Gabriel 3/93, Alzarri Joseph 3/109); West Indies 124/8 (Jermaine Blackwood 69; Kyle Jamieson 5/34). Match to continue.

AGENCIES

**Goa, Dec 12:** FC Goa edged out Odisha FC 1-0 in their fifth match of the ongoing Indian Super League (ISL) season Saturday at the GMC Stadium in Bambolim. Igor Angulo's first half strike (45+2nd minute) was enough to seal a comfortable win for the Gaurs over the Juggernauts.

This was fourth defeat in five matches for the Bhubaneswar-based side as they are 10th in the 11-team standing with only one point, which came from a draw.

Stuart Baxter made four changes to the Odisha lineup who lost to Mumbai City FC in their last game. Arshdeep Singh, Hendry Antonay, Vinit Rai and Manuel Ounu replaced Kamaljit, George D'Souza, Nandhakumar Sekar and Daniel Lalhimpuia.

Juan Ferrando made just one change to the winning combination from their game against Kerala Blasters. Alberto Nogueira returned to the lineup replacing Edu Bedia.

Goa controlled the game right from the off and had more than 65 per cent of ball possession in the first half. Odisha, on the other hand, were not up to the mark and failed to pose any threat in their attacking third.

Ferrando's men exploited both flanks and created numerous scoring opportunities but were not able to convert those until the very end

of the half when Igor Angulo found the back of the net from Alexander Romario's pass.

The winger beat Shubham Sarangi on the left edge of the box and found the Spanish forward who beat Steven Taylor with his first touch and struck past Arshdeep Singh to hand his team the lead.

The Gaurs continued to domi-

nate proceedings in the second half as well as Odisha no real urgency to score an equaliser.

Juan Ferrando's side could have easily increased their tally if not for Arshdeep Singh's brilliant performance under the bar. Jorge Ortiz came close to score twice but on both occasions the Odisha goalkeepers pulled off quality saves.

Baxter introduced Marelinho in the final few minutes of the game. The Brazilian's absence was felt throughout the match as there was clearly a lack of creativity in the midfield.

FC Goa moved up to the fourth position on the league table while Odisha languished at the bottom half after Saturday's result.



Goa players celebrate their goal against Odisha FC, Saturday

# We've achieved our primary target: Marijne

# F1: Mick Schumacher makes practice debut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Dec 12:** Indian women's hockey head coach Sjoerd Marijne Saturday said that the team have achieved their primary target of improving fitness level of the players as they were left with practically no competition this season due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The team did not play any competition since February when it had travelled to New Zealand. Since then they have been camping at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Centre here. The camp ends Saturday.

"One of our goals was improving fitness and that worked out very well. In the past few weeks, we also worked with the junior men's team in a few sessions to test our speed and handling skills and I am happy with the progress we have made as a group," Marijne said.

He believes the core group had worked hard towards a good build-up to the Olympic Games next year. "We have done well so far in utilising this time and our primary focus is the Olympics.

"We are hopeful of playing good



matches early next year that will show where we stand and we can plan the months leading up to the Games keeping in mind the areas that require improvement basis our performance in these tours," the

head coach explained.

Marijne said the break the players are getting will help them recover from the mental fatigue. "The players have worked hard these past four and half months and they have

done it without complaining about anything — be it living in a bio bubble with zero outside interaction or living away from their families for so long.

"I am extremely happy with the

"One of our goals was improving fitness and that worked out very well. In the past few weeks, we also worked with the junior men's team in a few sessions to test our speed and handling skills and I am happy with the progress we have made as a group

SJOERD MARIJNE

attitude they have showed these past four months and I understand that the training camp was physically and mentally quite challenging. This break will be especially good to recover from the mental fatigue."

The players are given certain team-related assignments when they are on a break. "I would want the players to enjoy time with their family and follow the Hockey India SOP when they meet people and socialise because the pandemic is still not over," the coach said.

"They have all been given some homework to do as well because this break is part of our training schedule except, they won't be using the stick and the ball."

AGENCIES

**Abu Dhabi, Dec 12:** Mick Schumacher made his first track appearance as a fully signed-up Formula One driver Friday when the German took part in opening practice at the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

The newly crowned Formula Two champion, son of Ferrari great and seven times F1 World Champion Michael Schumacher, did 23 laps and was 18th fastest for the US-owned Haas team he will race for in 2021.

It was the first time a Schumacher had taken part in a session at a grand prix weekend since Michael's last race with Mercedes in Brazil in 2012.

"I think it's an exciting moment for the whole of Formula One, not only for us. We are honoured to be giving him the first (official) outing," declared Haas team principal Guenther Steiner. "It's a fantastic thing to have a Schumacher back in Formula One."

Schumacher had been due to

make his practice debut at the Nuerburgring in October, ahead of the Eifel Grand Prix, with Alfa Romeo but fog prevented the German from doing any laps on home asphalt.

Steiner said the 21-year-old would have a more meaningful stint when the Yas Marina circuit hosts a young driver test next week.

"FP1 (first practice) is always difficult, you've got two sets of tyres, everybody is looking at you, the pressure is high, your focus is not doing anything wrong," he said. "The real work starts Tuesday."

Schumacher told reporters on a video conference that everything had gone well with no major issues.

"It was a hell of a ride, it was really fun and great to be back in a Formula One car," the German, who has tested in F1 and done demonstration runs in older cars including those raced by his father, said of his first run. "Any running is good and great preparation for next year."