THE ASIAN AGE

NATION 3

Kamal Nath hints at retirement, creates ripples in political circles



SPORT | 8

Finch forewarns Aussies about ruthless Virat ahead of Adelaide Test

DELHI AGE 11

Beyonce's daughter Blue Ivy is officially a Grammy nominee at age 8

Vol. 27 No. 299 | 16 pages | ₹5.00

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Actor Malaika Arora spotted at Bandra in Mumbai on

John Le Carre, top spy thriller writer, passes away at 89

London: John le Carre, the spy-turned-novelist whose elegant and intricate narratives defined the Cold War espionage thriller and brought acclaim to a genre critics had once ignored, has died. He was 89. Le Carre's literary agency, Curtis Brown, said Sunday he died in Cornwall, southwest England on Saturday after a short illness. The agency said his death was not related to Covid-19. His family said he died of pneumonia. Full report on Page 6

Tata Group, AI staff in bid for Air India

New Delhi: Tata Group and US-based fund Interups Inc were among "multiple" entities that put in preliminary bids for buying loss-making carrier Air India. A group of 219 AI employees submitted an expression of interest for the carrier in partnership with Interups at the close of the deadline on Monday. Full report on Page 4

Gmail, YouTube hit

by worldwide glitch

New Delhi: Google services, including Gmail, YouTube and Google search suffered major outages around the world. DownDetector said almost all the Google services, including Google Drive, Hangouts, Meet, Play and Duo, were affected.
Full report on Page 3

COUNTERPOINT



I don't need a farmer... I am strictly non-vegetarian!

WEATHER



Max: 19.4°C Min: 8.4°C **RH:** 90% Rain: NIL

Forecast: Moderate Fog

Sarvari: Dakshinayana Tithi: Margasira Shuddha Padyami till 7.10 pm Star: Mula till 9.33 pm Varjyam: 8.05 pm to 9.33 pm; then from 6.35 am (Wednesday)

Durmuhurtam: 88.54 am to 9.37 am; 10.53 pm to 11.45 pm

Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm SUNSET TODAY 5.26 PM SUNRISE TOMORROW 7.06 AM **MOONRISE TOMORROW 07.38 AM**

MOONSET TODAY 5.10 PM

RNI No. 57290/94, Regd No: DL-SW-05/4189/15-17

Govt ready to listen: Rajnath ■ Kejriwal, Amarinder in Twitter spat Farmers intensify agitation, Tomar bid to engage some groups for fresh talks

SANJAY KAW NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

As the protesting farmers intensified their agitation against the Centre's three agricultural "reform" laws and went on a daylong fast on Monday, Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar said Centre was trying to engage with farmers' leaders to decide

the next date of talks.

"The meeting will definitely happen. We are engaging with farmers, Mr Tomar said. "The government is ready for discussions anytime. The farmers' leaders have to 'decide and convey' when they are ready for the next meeting," he added.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh said the recent reforms were undertaken with the best interests of farmers in mind and the Centre was always open to a dialogue to allay the misgivings of the agri sector. He said: "We are always willing to listen to our farmer brothers to allay misgivings ... Our government is always open to discussion and dialogue.'

The contentious farm laws also led to a Twitter spat between Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab CM Capt. Amarinder Singh, with the two accusing each other of "playing politics" over the sensitive issue. Mr Kejriwal lashed out at Capt. Singh for criticising him for notifying one of the three farm laws passed by the Centre. The Delhi government on November 23 notified the Farmers' Produce Trade and (Promotion Commerce Ordinance 2020.



Farmers shout slogans as they sit on a day-long hungerstrike at the Delhi-Haryana border, outskirts of New Delhi, on Monday.

'Punjab CM has made allegations against me that I've passed the black laws in Delhi. How can he do such low-level politics in this fragile situation? It's not up to the state govt to implement it. Had it been so, why would farmers of the country hold

talks with the Centre?"
Mr Kejriwal asked Capt. Singh if he was accusing the Delhi CM in a bid to form friendship with the BJP. He said: "So, is it (due to) the pressure of these people that you are putting allegations against me? Are you doing it for friendship with the BJP or are you under pressure as the Enforcement Directorate has filed a case against your family?"

Capt. Singh hit back, saying: "At a time when our farmers are braving Facilitation) the winter cold on the nce 2020. roads outside your city Kejriwal said: and many of them are

MoS FOR agriculture Parshottam Rupala claimed most farmers in the country were in favour of the new laws and there was no need to bring the MSP under purview of the law as demanded by them

A LARGE number of farmers from Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh on Monday turned up at Delhi's borders to express anger over the new laws

dying fighting for their rights, all you can think of is how to make the most of the opportunity to promote your political inter-

While the farmers stayed adamant on continuing their agitation until the three laws were repealed, minister of state

Parshottam Rupala claimed most farmers in the country were in favour of the new laws and there was no need to bring the MSP under purview of the law as demanded by them. The minister urged the protesting farmers to return to the discussion table and find an amicable solution to the deadlock.

The protests against the new laws kept growing. A large number of farmers from Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh on Monday turned up at Delhi's borders to express anger over the new laws. The massive protests led to huge traffic jams in and around Delhi-NCR with com-muters forced to use alternate routes to reach their

destinations. This was the second nationwide protest in less than a week after national Turn to Page 2

Amid protests, **Modi to meet** farmers in Guj

Ahmedabad, Dec. 14: Amid the ongoing protest by farmers on Delhi borders against the Centre's new agri laws, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet members of the farming community, including Sikh cultivators in Gujarat, during a visit to Kutch district on Tuesday. Mr Modi will be at Dhordo in Kutch to lay the foundation stones for several projects coming up in different parts of the

border district, an official statement said. These projects include the world's largest hybrid renewable energy park, a desalination plant and a

milk chilling plant. — PTI

Agri laws will lead to immense **inflation: Kejriwal**

New Delhi: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said the new farm laws will lead to immense inflation and will only favour a few capitalists, as he termed the legislations "anti-farmer and anti-common man". Mr Kejriwal, who joined AAP leaders, MLAs and volunteers at the party office in observing a daylong fast in support of the protesting farmers, said the new farm laws "gives license to inflate"

Addressing volunteers, Mr Kejriwal said this law says people can hoard as much as they want.

More on Page 2

Modi, Hasina to hold a 'virtual' summit Dec. 17

Teesta waters, Rohingya, celebration of 1971 war golden jubilee on agenda

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

India and Bangladesh will hold a crucial virtual summit on Thursday that will be co-chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina during which the "two leaders will hold comprehensive discussions on the entire spectrum of the bilateral relationship, including further strengthening cooperation in the post-Covid era", New Delhi announced on Monday. This is likely to include the progress of development projects, sharing of river waters including the Teesta issue, the Rohingya migrants issue, border security, Covid-19 vaccines as well as the forthcoming jubilee celebrations of the

1971 war of liberation.
The summit will take place at a time when India is making a renewed bid to reach out



Narendra

to its immediate neighbourhood and also when Pakistan is trying its best

to improve relations with

Bangladesh. On Monday, New Delhi said: "India and Bangladesh have continued to maintain regular exchanges at the highest level. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid an official visit to India in October 2019. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi delivered a video message on the historic occasion of Mujib Borsho in March 2020. Both leaders have remained in regular touch during the Covid pandemic." The Covid pandemic."

Govt releases ₹42Kcr to states as GST compensation shortfall

New Delhi, Dec. 14: The Centre has so far borrowed ₹42,000 crore since October and released the funds to states to meet GST compensation shortfall. the finance ministry said on Monday.

The latest instalment of ₹6,000 crore was released to the states on Monday, out of which ₹5,516.60 crore has been released to 23 states and ₹483.40 crore has been released to 3

Union Territories (UT) with legislative assemblies (Delhi, Jammu and Puducherry).

■ Turn to Page 2

The remaining 5 states

– Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram Nagaland and Sikkim do not have a gap in revenue on account of GST implementation, finance ministry said in a statement.

More on Page 4

Vaccine SOPs:

13-14 people to

get shots 1 hr,

watch 30 mins

AGE CORRESPONDENT

With India soon to start rolling out the Covid-19 vaccine, the Centre on

Monday released guide-

lines for its distribution

once available. It envis-

ages vaccinating 100-200

people in each session a

day, monitoring them

for 30 minutes after the

shots for any adverse

event and allowing only

one person at a time. States and UTs can fix

the vaccination days,

guidelines said, adding

that the "vaccination process [will be] similar

to the election process" The SOPs mandate

around 13-14 people will

be administered the vaccine in an hour due to

limitations caused by Covid-19. The Centre

will also use community halls and makeshift

tents for vaccination in

future. Each vaccination

site will have five vacci-

nation officers, including a security guard, one

for waiting, one to inoc-

ulate and one to observe.

health ministry

TMC MLA claims foreign secy in Asansol 'deprived' of Central funding

Furore after he targets Mamata govt

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, DEC. 14

Singing the BJP's tune, heavyweight Trinamul Congress MLA of Pandabeshwar and outgoing Asansol mayor Jitendra Tiwari directly accused the Mamata Banerjee government and state urban development and municipal affairs minister Firhad Hakim in a "confidential" letter on Sunday of depriving the city in Burdwan West of getting two Central welfare funds, totalling ₹3,500 crores, for "political reacenes".

on Monday, BJP IT cell national-in-charge Amit Malviya tweeted Mr Tiwari's letter, which only stumped the ruling TMC and led to a political uproar in the poll-bound

Mr Tiwari alleged in the letter to Mr Hakim: "Our city was chosen by the ministry of urban development, Government of India, under the Smart City Mission Project, which if would have been allowed by you our city could have received funds amounting ₹2,000 crores, which would be very crucial for the development of our city. Asansol was chosen under this project as a result of a tremendous effort by councillors and the entire team of the AMC leading to being

OUTGOING ASANSOL mayor Jitendra Tiwari accused the Mamata Banerjee government and minister Firhad Hakim of depriving the city in Burdwan West of getting two Central welfare funds, totalling ₹3,500 crores, for 'political reasons'

qualified as a city to be chosen under this, but due to political reasons we were not allowed to get the benefits of this project by the state government."

He also claimed: 'Similarly, under the solid waste management project, Asansol City could have received another ₹1,500 crores funds by the Central government... but you and your department have not allowed us to get the benefits of these Central government funds...'

Accusing Mr Tiwari of conniving with the BJP, Mr Hakim said: "It was not right for him to write the letter to me. He could have talked to me about his issues. Anyone planning to leave... will do so anyway." In protest, Mr Tiwari resigned from his posts in the executive committee of two colleges in Asansol while threatening to quit as an MLA

too.
"I do not know how the letter got leaked. Will it

Turn to Page 2

Jaishankar, UK Delhi talks today

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

British foreign secretary Dominic Raab is scheduled to arrive in India on Monday and will hold ministeriallevel talks with his Indian counterpart S. Jaishankar on Tuesday on bilateral, regional, and interna-tional issues of mutu-

al interes. The visit comes just days after reports that British Prime Minister Johnson has been invited by India to be the chief guest at the Republic Day parade.

More on Page 3



A nurse receives a Covid-19 vaccination at University of Louisville Hospital, Kentucky, on Monday. The biggest vaccination drive in American history got underway on Monday as health care workers started receiving the vaccine developed by Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech. A nurse in New York City was among the first people to receive the early dose of the vaccine.

BIDEN WILL come to

power with a narrowly

month's runoff elections in

will control the Senate and

Georgia will decide who

majority in the House as

a thinned Democratic

divided Senate next

■ 'Republicans must focus their attention on fighting Covid' Biden aides to Trump, GOP: It's time to move on

Biden's aides have a message for President Donald Trump and his support-ers: It's long past time to move on.
With the Electoral

College set to formally elect Biden as president on Monday, his aides say they hope Republicans will consider their own long-term interests (and country's), accept Trump's defeat and focus their attention on fighting the coronavirus pandemic and staving off economic tumult.

Republicans, by and large, have stood by Trump as he's made unsubstantiated claims of a rigged election, and they show no signs they'll give



Joe Biden

Biden the semblance of a honeymoon period. Biden will come to power with a narrowly divided Senate next month's runoff elections in Georgia will decide who will control the Senate and a thinned Democratic majority in the House as Republicans picked up seats even as Trump lost. But aides are pointing to

Republicans picked up seats even as Trump lost Biden's strong approval

numbers, tallying a record 81 million votes and an electorate worn by the pandemic in their Republicans to cooperate. Mike Donilon, a senior adviser to Biden, said the American electorate is looking for Democrats and Republicans to get in

president-elect is putting forward is very much at the forefront of what peo-ple want in their lives, Donilon said.

So, I think the case is going to be that it's going to be in the interest of the country, it's going to be in their own self-interest to get on board and not to get in the way.

In making the case for a mandate, Biden's team points to the presidentelect retaking Rust Belt states that helped spring Trump to the White House four years ago as well as wins in Arizona and Georgia firsts for a Democratic presidential candidate since the 1990s.

The SOP said at the site, only pre-registered beneficiaries will be vac-cinated, and there will be no on the-spot registrations. The states have been asked, as far as possible, to allocate the vaccine from one manufacturer to a district.

A total of 27,071 new infections were reported in the last 24 hours, while the death toll rose to 1,43,355, with 336 new fatalities.

More on Page 2





SHORT TAKES

KAMAL HAASAN SAYS INDIAN DEMOCRACY IS 'ILL'

Dindigul (TN), Dec. 14: Makkal Needhi Maiam chief Kamal Haasan on Monday praised 18th century rebel commander Mohammed Yusuf Khan for his "fight against the Britishers" and alleged that Indian democracy was now afflicted by illness. Hailing Khan

(1725-64), Marudanayagam Haasan said he fought against the Britishers and was hanged by them through a conspiracy and not in a war.

This happened about '100 before the Sepoy Mutiny' (1857, the first war of Indian independence) and Khan's fight against the Englishmen is the 'first Sepoy mutiny' for independence, he said, addressing a party event.

Haasan had aspired to produce a film on the life and times of Marudanayagam, but the project did not take off. Subsequently, he said the struggle was continued by

men like Tipu Sultan and Velu Nachiar for independence and it was achieved.

Like the bygone saga of val-our, another 'revolution' should be ushered in as Indian democracy was afflicted by illness, he said. "It will not be an exaggeration to say that Indian democracy is today afflicted by illness," he said. The Election Commission,

Haasan said, has denied the torch light symbol allotted in the 2019 Lok Sabha election to the party and added that it could not deter them.

Earlier in the day, he said in Madurai that he would contest the Assembly elections, but declined to specify the con-stituency. — PTI

SENA MLA MOVES PRIVILEGE NOTICE AGAINST KANGANA

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, DEC. 14

Shiv Sena MLA Pratap Sarnaik, who is being investi-gated by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with alleged money laundering, on Monday moved a breach of privilege notice against Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut.

Sarnaik said he has submitted the notice against Ranaut to the office of Maharashtra Vidhan Sabha Speaker Nana Patole. He accused the actress of spreading fake news against him by claiming that ED has recovered a Pakistani cre-

dit card from the MLA's house. The Sena MLA said that he submitted the notice after Kangana allegedly tweeted that a Pakistani credit card was found when the probe agency raided his premises. "This false news has maligned me. My family and I have been cooperating with the ED investigation. Nothing illegal has been found in my possession during the ED raids. But following Ranaut's tweet, fake news against me is circulating on social media," he added.

"What would I do with the credit card of Pakistan, which is left with no credit in the world?" he asked. The Sena MLA recently had a spat with the actress over her 'PoK' remarks about Mumbai. On December 12, Ranaut, without naming the Sena MLA, tweeted. "He had threatened to break my face when I had said Mumbai was feeling like POK. India recognise those who are staking everything for you and those who are taking everything from you. Where you place your faith their lies your future. *India Pakistan na* ban jaye sambhalo yaaron. The actress then re-tweeted a post by someone else, "Credit Card of Pakistan national recovered from Shiv Sena MLA Pratap Sarnaik's resi-

Govt issues Covid vaccination SOPs Kejriwal asserts 100-200 beneficiaries per session, monitoring for 30 mins after inoculation that farmers will

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

Amid growing talks that India is soon to start the rolling out of Coronavirus vaccine, the Centre has released guidelines for the distribution of the vaccine once it becomes avail-

As per the new guidelines issued by the Centre, vaccinating 100-200 people in each session per day, monitoring them for 30 minutes after administering the shots for any adverse event and allowing only one beneficiary at a time. The Centre also said that states and union territories will be allowed to fix the days for vaccination. 'Conduct of the vaccination process [will be] similar to the election process," the health ministry said in the document, "Covid-19 vaccines operational guidelines"

"Anticipating that Covid-19 vaccine may soon be available, GoI (Government of India) is preparing for its introduction in the country so that it can be expedi-tiously rolled out when

One of the milestones in this direction has been the constitution of a national expert group on vaccine administration for Covid-19 (NEG-

The NEGVAC guides on all aspects of Covid-19 vaccine introduction in India," the health ministry stated in a draft SOP, which was shared by the Centre with states and Union Territories on Thursday.

According to the central government, around 13-14 people will be administered the vaccine in an hour due to the limitations caused by Covid-19.

The Centre is also planning to use community halls and makeshift tents for the purpose of vaccination in future. Each vaccination site will have five vaccination officers, including a security guard, and one for waiting, one for vac-cination and one for observation.

The SOP released by the health ministry said at the vaccination site, only pre-registered bene-ficiaries will be vaccinat-

Chennai, Dec. 14: The Indian Institute of

Technology-Madras here

has been hit by the

Coronavirus outbreak with over 100 people, a

majority of them stu-

dents, testing positive for

the contagion, a top health official said on

Monday. A total of 104 students

and others have con-tracted the disease and

all were doing well in a

hospital, Tamil Nadu

Health Secretary J. Radhakrishnan said, allaying fears of further

Of the 444 samples lift-

ed till date, 104 have test-

ed positive for Covid-19,

he said, adding from

December 1 to 12, sam-

ples from the institute

turning positive steadily

spread.



Youngsters with their horses at Marina beach in Chennai on Monday after it reopened for public following its closure

Odisha to reopen religious places soon

AKSHAYA KUMAR

SAHOO BHUBANESWAR, DEC. 14

Odisha chief secretary Asit Tripathy on Monday dropped hints about the reopening of all religious places in the state for the public in near future. In a tweet, the chief sec-

retary said, "The state govearlier ernment has empowered district collectors to take local level decisions to open religious institutions for public worship after discussing with stakeholders and standard operating procedures putting in place. It is understood that the process is on for opening religious institutions in different dis-

ed in accordance with the prioritisation, and there will be no provision for on the-spot registrations.

The states have been asked, as far as possible,

to allocate the vaccine from one manufacturer to a district to avoid mixdifferent Coronavirus vaccines in the field.

IIT-Madras closes as over

increased from a few to 33 specimens on Monday.

Institute of Preventive

Medicine and Research

as per the directive of

are all doing well," he

A spokesperson for the

institute said all departments and labs have

been shut and as of now

only about 700 students,

mostly research scholars

were accommodated in

'Classes are being held

Radhakrishnan said

showed a 20 per cent pos-

itivity rate, there was no

need for concern as

the results

nine hostels.

though

measures

online," she said.

told reporters here.

minister Palaniswami and they

"All of them are being

100 test +ve for Covid-19

The demand for reopening of temples and religious places across Odisha is growing louder following the Sri Jagannath Administration Temple (SJTA)'s recent announcement to open the 12th century shrine before the New Year 2021.

Earlier, the Odisha endowments commission had also recommended the government to reopen temples across Odisha in strict adherence to Covid-19 guidelines.

'Some people had filed multiple petitions in the Odisha High Court seeking permission for reopening of temples. The Court heard the petitions and left the decision to the state government. Following the

The country's Covid-19 active cases as on date stands at 3,52,586 lowest in 149 days comprising 3.57 per cent of the total caseload.

The total Coronavirus cases climbed to 98,84,100 with 27,071 infections being reported in a day, while the death toll rose to 1,43,355 with 336 new fatalities.

aggressive contact test-ing are in place as per

Later, the top official

said that he was now visiting the IIT-M campus for inspection and those

being treated at the hos-

pital. Health officials

have also inspected the

"As soon as we started getting cases, we went in

for aggressive testing

and contact tracing. A

majority of them are stu-

dents and some canteen workers."
On the source of infec-

tion, he said "it is said that it could be from the

nothing to panic about

further spread since all

measures were in place

to combat it, he said.

but there was

campus, he said.

the protocol

state government to take a decision in this regard. Aerospace

Court's order the endow-

ments commission has

fixed some modalities related to Covid-19 guide-

lines and recommended

the government to reopen

the temples. The govern-

ment is yet to take a call in

this regard," said Chittara-njan Mohapatra, endow-

On December 12, the Sri

Administration of Puri

has announced to open the 12th century shrine from December 23 in phased

Following a meeting with

Chhattisha Nijog — the highest body of servitors — the temple authorities

had recommended the

ments commissioner.

Jagannath

manner.

Bengaluru. Dec. 14: Eminent aerospace scientist and Padma Vibhushan awardee Roddam Narasimha died at a private hospital here on Monday, doctors said. He was

pital on December 8 after he V. Furtado said.

"When he was brought to our hospital, he was in a very critical stage. There was bleeding inside his brain,' Dr Furtado, neurosurgeon and senior consultant at the Ramaiah Memorial Hospital in the city, said.

related ailment and suffered a brain stroke in 2018 as well. He is survived by his wife

and a daughter. Born on July 20, 1933, Prof Narasimha made a mark in

In the first phase, only Puri residents will be allowed to have darshan of sibling the Devotees from other parts of the state will be able to enter the shrine only from

January 3.
But, they are required to produce Covid-19 negative report before entering the

The temple authorities have decided to keep the shrine closed on the New Year and January 2 in anticipation of heavy

Strict Covid-19 protocols like wearing of mask, use of hand sanitiser and social distancing will be insisted upon during visit of devotees to the temple, officials said.

win in the end

SUNIL THAPLIYAL NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

Expressing solidarity with protesting farmers, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday appealed to people to fast wherever they are in support of protesting farmers and asserted that farmers will win in the end.

The Chief Minister held a one-day fast in support of the farmers' protest on Monday.

Farmer leaders observed a day-long hunger strike as part of their protest against the three new farm laws. Kejriwal also urged his Aam Aadmi Party volunteers, supporters, as well as the people of the country to join the farmers' agitation. "Fasting is sacred. Wherever you are fast for our farmer brothers. Pray to God for the success of their struggle. In the end, farmers will definitely win," Kejriwal tweeted.

Delhi's deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia said he is observing the fast at the party office with other party members. "The Annadata of the country is on hungerstrike, demanding the withdrawal of the three laws of the central government for the sake of saving his daily bread. In support of the demand of farmers, today I am also on a fast with all my colleagues in the ÅAP," Sisodia tweeted.

AAP leader and spokes-person Raghay Chadha on Monday said whoever is calling the farmers protesting against the new agriculture-marketing laws as "anti-nationals" are themselves against the country, and they should go to Pakistan.

"I want to tell those people calling the farmers as

HARYANA BJP MPs, MLAs EXTEND **SUPPORT TO BILLS**

New Delhi, Dec. 14: A del egation of Haryana BJP MPs and MLAs met Union agriculture minis-ter Narendra Singh Tomar on Monday and supported the three new farm laws, against which thousands of farmers are protesting on various borders of the national capi-

tal for over two weeks. Union minister of state for water resources Ratanlal Kataria, Lok Sabha MPs Dharamveer Singh and Nayab Singh Saini and Rajya Sabha MP D.P. Vats and some MLAs were present in the meeting. After the meeting, Rohtak BJP MP Arvind Sharma said the state MPs and MLAs came to thank the central government for agreeing to amend certain provi-

sions of the farm laws. Another issue was also raised pertaining to Yamuna (SYL) canal water which Punjab is holding from its side for many years, he added. — PTI

anti-national that you are the ones who are anti-nationals and you should go to Pakistan. They have no place in India,' chadĥa said.

Reacting to Chadha's comments, Delhi BJP spokesperson Virender Babbar said everybody supports farmers, including the BJP. "Chadha should tell what would you call those who talk about killing the PM and demand the release of people arrested under sedition charge," Babbar said.

scientist Roddam **Narasimha dies**

He was admitted to the hos

suffered a brain haemorrhage. The scientist, who served at the prestigious Indian Institute of Science (IISc), breathed his last at 8.30 pm, neurologist Dr Sunil

Narasimha had a heart-

the field of aerospace and as a fluid dynamicist.

Patient care services as AIIMS nurses go on indefinite strike to go on strike, and not to New Delhi, Dec. 14: The

AIIMS-Delhi Union went on an indefinite strike from Monday over their long pending aemanas including those with regard to the Sixth Central Pay Commission, following which the Union health ministry directed the institute's director to ensure no disruption of nursing functions.

The ministry also said non-compliance of the "code of conduct", laid down as per a Delhi high court judgment, whereby no employee or staff or faculty member will cease work for any reason, will be treated as an under offence Disaster Management

From Monday afternoon, around 5,000 nurses went on strike, hampering patient care services at the All India Institute of Medical Institute of Medic Sciences (AIIMS) here. In a video message, AIIMS director Randeep

Guieria termea strike as "inappropriate and unfortunate" in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic and appealed to nurses to call off their agitation and return to The nurses' union's

demands include correction of an anomaly in the fixation of the initial pay as per the Sixth Central Pay Commission (CPC), redressal of issues such as abolishment of gender-based reservation in the recruiting process of nursing officers and contractual appointments, enhancement of hospital accommodation cadre restructuring

"I appeal to all nurses and nursing officers not

make us feel embarrassed about the dignity that we have as far as the nurses are concerned. I, therefore, appeal to all o you to come back and work and really help us get through this pandemic." Dr Guleria said.

In an order issued to the institute's director, the health ministry said the AIIMS Nurses' Union through their letter, dated November 13, gave a call for an indefinite strike and listed various

With a view to expedite resolution of some of the issues, a meeting was convened on December 8, which was attended by officers of the health ministry, the department of expenditure of the finance ministry and the AIIMS administration, it

Modi, Hasina to hold summit \blacksquare Continued from Page 1

"Mujib Barsho" refers to the birth centenary celebrations

of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman — popularly known as Bangabandhu — who had led the Bangladesh freedom struggle in 1971. Sheikh Hasina is the daughter of Sheikh Mujib, who was assassinated in August 1975. It may be recalled that India and Bangladesh had Bangladesh counterpart Dr

held their sixth Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) meeting in virtual mode on September 29, thus setting the stage for the virtual bilateral between Mr Modi and Sheikh Hasina this month. That meeting in September had been chaired by external affairs minister S. Jaishankar and

Both sides had in September decided to form a "high-level monitoring committee" headed by the secretary, economic relations, from the Bangladesh side and the Indian high commissioner in Dhaka to

A.K. Abdul Momen regularly review the progress of implementation of the line of credit

TMC MLA

■ Continued from Page 1

look good if I say Mr Hakim talks like Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan?" he won-dered. The TMC has called Mr Tiwari, also the party's district chief, to placate him at a meeting in the presence of the party's poll strategist, Prashant Kishor, in Kolkata on Tuesday.

Farmers intensify agitation

■ Continued from Page 1 highways were blocked last

Tuesday as a part of countrywide shutdown call backed by the Opposition. A petition seeking a direction to the authorities to immediately remove the farmers who are protesting at the Delhi borders for the last 19 days is due to come up before the Supreme Court on Wednesday. The plea said commuters were facing hardships due to the roadblocks and the gatherings might lead to an increase in the number of Covid-19 cases.

The Rajasthan farmers continued to block the Delhi-Jaipur highway at Shahjahanpur in Alwar district for the second day on Monday as the police stopped them from marching towards Delhi. The Haryana police too had to close the Ambala-Patiala highway after protesters gathered at the Shambhu border in adjoining Punjab. Farmers raised slogans outside the offices of dis-

trict commissioners and

took out protest marches in

several parts of the coun-

Slogan-shouting pro-

testers pushed at the barricades near the mini-secretariat in Jind while trying to enter the district office complex. In Fatehabad, they took out a tractor procession before some of them sat on a hungerstrike at the district secretariat. In Ambala, there was slogan shouting outside the DC's office.

As the protesting farmers have not responded to the Centre's proposal suggesting amendments in the new farm laws, the agriculture minister has initiated consultations with farmer

groups who are supporting the reforms. After meeting Union home minister Amit Shah,

Mr Tomar met representatives of the All-India Kisan Coordination Committee, who are supporting the new laws with proposed amendments. The committee has members from 10 states, including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana and Haryana. This was the fourth batch of farmers' representatives who met the agriculture minister in the last few days.

TECH | AID Unique health identifiers to make individual records better

Niti Aayog for health surveillance It also suggested setting

Government think tank Niti Aayog on Monday proposed setting up a surveillance information platform to strengthen India's public health surveillance system.

According to a report itled 'Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India: A White Paper',which is jointly prepared by Niti Aayog and University of Manitoba, Canada — India's public health surveillance will be a predictive, responsive, integrated and tiered system of disease

and health surveillance. "Going forward, India's public health surveillance will be based on individual Electronic Health Records

àmalgamate health-care related information through the use of a unique health identifier (UHID)," the Aayog said.

According to the Aayog, this is used in every clinical, laboratory, or pharmacy visit and for vertical disease control programmes.

Further, the periodic surveys are positioned as addicomplementary methods to reassess the incidence and prevalence of diseases or risk factors, to adjust and refine standard case definitions periodically, to define epidemic thresholds, and to refine response levels and meas-

ures, it said.

The Aayog also pitched for establishing mechanisms to streamline data sharing, capture, analysis and dissemination to include the use of situation-aware realtime signals from social media, mobile sensor netand participatory surveillance systems for event based epidemic intelligence.

Surveillance Information Platform will store, analyse, and auto-generate relevant reports for action. As well, this remains a repository for analysis further analysis and research which will complement the available surveil-lance information," the Niti Aayog said.

up an interdependent federated system of governance architecture between the Centre and states. The Aayog also suggested

allowing enhanced use of new data analytics, data science, artificial intelligence and machine learning to bridge gap areas in India's Public Health Surveillance. According to the govern-

ment think tank, it would be important to set up effective and responsive governance mechanisms that establish political, technical, digital and managerial leadership in order to enable India to reach 'One-Health Approach for Public Health Surveillance'.

TAKES

SC AGREES TO EXAMINE PLEA ON EMERGENCY

PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

Supreme Court on Monday said that it will conability" of examining a plea seeking to declare 19-monthlong Emergency that was declared in June 1975 and had witnessed a large scale preventive arrests and the freezing of the fundamental rights as unconstitutional.

The Emergency was declared by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Issuing notice to the Centre, a bench comprising Justices Kishan Hrishikesh Roy and Dinesh Maheshwari, agreed to consider whether it was feasible or desirable to examine the plea that June 1975 Emergency that lasted for 19 months and ended in 1977 was unconstitutional and was an abuse of power and a fraud on the

'We would not be disinclined to see whether probing such a proclamation after such a long time would be feasible or desirable," said Justice Kaul in the order after two rounds of consultations with Justices Roy and Maheshwari.

The court permitted senior counsel Harish Salve to amend the petition and remold the prayers by December 18 as per the course that the court has

decided to embark on. Appearing for 94-year-old petitioner Veera Sarin, who has also sought sought a compensation of ₹25 crores, Mr Salve told the court that such an abuse of power that had taken place in the history had to be corrected so that they don't get repeated in the future.

GMAIL, OTHER GOOGLE SERVICES FACE OUTAGE

New Delhi, Dec. 14: Gmail and

a host of other Google services faced disruptions on Monday evening and the tech major is in the process of fully restoring the services. The company, which faced a similar outage in August this year, is yet to specify areas on for the outage. In an update on the Google work space status dashboard at 18:17 hours, Google said Gmail service has already been restored for some users, and "we expect a resolution for all users in the near future.

an estimate and may change" At around 17:25 hours. Google had said it was "aware of a problem with Gmail affecting a majority of users and that the affected users are unable to access Gmail.

Please note this time frame is

As per the dashboard, other Google services like Google Drive, Calendar, Google Google Docs and Google Meet have also been affected. Down detector, which detects outages and interruptions on networks, also showed that services like YouTube (Google's video platform) and Gmail facing disruption. Netizens turned to Twitter to express their emotions.

MAHA GOVT OFFERS HELP TO PRESERVE

SHAHAB ANSARI MUMBAI, DEC. 14

Claiming that Maharashtra government is willing to help restore and preserve "the historical ship" *INS* Viraat, Shiv Sena MP Priyanka Chaturvedi on Monday said she has written a letter to the defence ministry seeking a no-objection certificate to preserve the decommissioned aircraft carrier.

The Shiv Sena leader in her letter addressed to defence minister Rainath Singh has stated that the government of Maharashtra was happy to cooperate in restoring and preserving the historical ship. She has also requested Singh's immediate intervention to grant No Objection Certificate (NOC) to preserve the aircraft carrier. INS Viraat is being dismantled at the Alang ship-

breaking yard in Gujarat. According to Mukesh Patel, chairman of the Shree Ram Group which bought INS Viraat as scrap, "About 5 per cent of the ship has already

been broken.' In her social media post she has stated that INS Viraat served as India's aircraft carrier for nearly 30 years. "It has been the pride of our seas and our Indian Navv. To see it sold as scrap and dismembered will be a huge disservice to our naval legacy. With RM's NOC. a memorial on INS Viraat will be a reality," she said.



People witness the launch of GRSE-built first Project 17A stealth frigate Himgiri in Kolkata on Monday.

India geared up for any China build-up: Rawat

CDS says armed forces can counter PLA's constant moves

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, DEC. 14

In a veiled warning to China amid a prolong stand-off, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat on Monday affirmed that the Indian armed forces, undertaking steps on this side of the Line of Actual Control to counter the People Liberation Army's military build-up on the other side, would leave no stone unturned to protect the nation's interests from land to air to sea.

'We are in a stand-off situation in Ladakh and based on that there is some development activity which has been ongoing in Tibet Autonomous Region of China. Every nation will continue to prepare for ensuring it's security based on its strategic interests. I do not think there should be much concern in that

UK FOREIGN

SECY ON 4-DAY

VISIT TO INDIA

NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

AGE CORRESPONDENT

Secretary Dominic Raab

is beginning a four-day visit to India from

Monday and will hold

ministerial-level talks

with his Indian counter-

part External Affairs

Minister S. Jaishankar on Tuesday. This comes

just days after media

reports that British

Prime Minister Boris

Johnson has been invit-

ed by India to be the chief guest at the Republic Day parade next month. The

next month. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had recently evaded ques-

tions from the media on

the reported invitation,

saying earlier that in

matters,

announcement is made

In a statement on Monday, meanwhile, the

MEA said, "The Rt Hon

Dominic Raab MP, secre-

tary of state for foreign,

commonwealth and development affairs, United Kingdom, will

pay an official visit to

India from 14-17 December 2020. During

his stay in New Delhi, Raab will hold talks with

Minister of External

Subrahmanyam Jais-

hankar on 15 December

2020 on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual inter-

est. He will also have official meetings with

the minister of environment, forests and cli-mate change Prakash

Javadekar and the min-

ister of education

Ramesh Pokhriyal."
It may be recalled that

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had spo-ken on phone to his British

Johnson last month in

which the two "leaders

agreed that officials from both sides would

continue their work to

quickly finalise an ambi-

tious long-term roadmap for the India-UK part-

nership"

counterpart

Affairs

closer to the event"

are also carrying out similar activity. China's lar activity. China's attempt to change the status quo on the LAC along the northern border amidst the Coronavirus pandemic necessitates high-level preparation on land, in air and at sea. I am fully confident that Indian armed forces will leave no stone unturned to safeguard our frontiers be it on land, in air or at ocean. We are fully prepared for any eventuality we may be faced with," Gen Rawat said at the launch of *INS Himgiri*, the first GRSE-built P17A stealth frigate in Kolkata.

Referring to the Doklam stand-off between the two sides, Rawat elaborated, "A situation had evolved in Doklam in 2017. Ever since we have taken measures to ensure that the situation does not escalate. The PLA on the other side has been carrying out cer-tain activity. We, on our side, have also been



Bipin Rawat

watching this activity very carefully. We have also taken necessary action to counter anything that could be a cause of concern to our national

Underlining the importance of technology in military, he added, "What we are looking at is getting technology. Time has come to look at the future of warfighting imbibing technology into systems. We have adequate force and reserves available to counter any threat or challenge that

we may face on the northern border."

On the Navy's push for a third aircraft carrier vis-athird aircraft carrier.
vis submarines, Gen
Rawat observed, "Both
have their advantages and
"andvantages. Submarines have their separate place in naval warfare in domination of the sea. So does an aircraft carrier. I am no way saying the navy does not need it's air wing. Yes it does. But how to manage air wing and how to ensure the security and sanctity of the sealine of our communication is something we are thinking about. I think we also need to look at our Island territories that we have in large numbers. We can leverage the island territory to our advantage. Then we can balance whether these can be used for launching our naval aircraft or do we need an aircraft carrier. Once we study all that and we understood in detail,

Heavy voter turnout in last phase of Kerala polls

HIRUVANAN I HAPURAM,

Heavy polling was recorded in the third and final phase of local body polls in Kerala. More than 78.62 per cent

polling was recorded till 8 pm in four northern districts Malappuram, Kozhikode , Kannur and Kasargod which went to polls on Monday.

Malappuram recorded 78.86 per cent, Kozhikode 78.98, Kannur 77.54 and Kasargod 77.14 per cent. A total of 89,74,993 vot-

ers were eligible to vote in the third phase in 6,867 wards across 354 local bodies. The polling was held strictly complying with Covid safety protocol. Voters turned out in masks, maintained social distancing while waiting in the queues and used sanitisers before and after casting their votes. Barring minor incidents of scuffle between the supporters of rival parties, no major violence was reported from any of the northern districts.

The state had witnessed heavy turnout of voters in all three phases which



Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan casts his vote during the last stage of Kerala local body elections at Cherikkal in Kannur on Monday.

enthusiasm of the elec-Leaders of LDF, UDF

and BJP are keeping their fingers crossed over the heavy polling with each party trying to interpret the trend according to their respective calculations.

It may be recalled that 72.67 per cent polling was went to polls recorded in the first December 10.

clearly indicated the phase on December 8 southern districts Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Idukki.

A higher voter turnout

of 76.38 per cent was witnessed in the second phase when central dis-Kottayam, tricts Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad and Wayanad

Rajnath lauds valour of forces deployed at LAC

PAWAN BALI

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said that unprovoked aggression on Índia's Himalayan frontiers by China is a reminder of how world is changing and how power is being asserted across Indo-Pacific. He lauded the valour of Indian armed forces deployed along the LAC for standing up to aggression by Chinese troops and said our troops fought the Chinese military with "utmost bravery," forcing it to go back. On farmer's issues Singh said there is no question of taking "retrograde steps against our agricultural sector ever".

Unprovoked aggression on our Himalayan frontiers is a reminder of how the world is changing, how existing agreements are being challenged, how power is being asserted not just in Himalayas but across Indo-Pacific. How

the region and world could be in this backdrop," said Singh while virtually addressing the annual general meeting of apex industry chamber FICCI. Defence minister said that there is a big build up of armed forces at LAC in Ladakh. "In these testing times, our forces have shown exemplary courage and remarkable fortitude. They fought the PLA with utmost bravery and forced them to go back," said Singh. He said that the coming generations will be proud of what our forces have managed to achieve this year. Defence minister point-

ed out that whenever there is a situation at LAC the most obvious outcome is comparison between India and China's military strength. "There can be a serious

debate on who owns more military might but when it comes to soft power the-re is no scope of ambigui-

ty India is far ahead of China when it comes to leading the world with ideas," said Singh. "If one looks at East-Asia from Burma to Thailand to Indonesia and Malaysia and even Japan "there is a huge Indian cultural impact on these countries," he added "Buddhism had a monumental impact on China to the extent that before the 1949 revolution almost 80 per cent of China population followed Buddhism," said Singh. He added that famous

Chinese thinker Hu Shih, who was also the vice-chancellor of Peking University had said that: "India has culturally dominated and controlled China for more than 2,000 years without sending a single soldier." "This statement by Hu Shih underlines the fact that India as a civilisation state has been inspiring and influencing the world through its cultural and soft power for cen-turies," he said.

Kamal Nath hints at political retirement

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, DEC. 14

Former chief minister and Madhya Pradesh Congress president Kamal Nath has created a ripple in the political circle here when he hinted at retirement from poli-

Nath who is facing growing resentment in the party following the poor show by Congress in the November 3 by-elections to 28 Assembly constituencies in Madhya Pradesh, said, "I am ready to take some rest. I have no ambition or greed for any position or power. I have served in various posts at Centre. I have already achieved a lot. I am ready to stay at

He was addressing a rally in his Assembly constituency of Sasaur in Chhindwara on Sunday evening. Nath' statement comes

in the wake of reports of his running feud with veteran Congress leader and former chief minister Digvijay Singh.

Nath is responsible for in November 3 Assembly by-elections. The party suffered a setback in the



Kamal Nath

by-polls because Nath sidelined Singh in the Assembly by-elections", Congress MLA Baburam Janďela said.

Jandela is considered close to Singh. Congress spokesman Narendra Singh Saluja, however, sought to underplay the development, saying, "Nath has several times in the past said he has achieved a lot and has no greed for power or posi-

Nath who holds dual posts of Madhya Pradesh PCC president and Congress Legislature Party chief is under pressure by a strong section of the party to leave one of the posts in the wake of party's poor show in the November 3 Assembly byelections.

Congress could win only the drubbing of Congress nine out of 28 Assembly constituencies which had gone to by-elections on November 3.

WISTRON SUFFERS ₹437 CR LOSS TO **RIOTS AT K'TAKA**

Bengaluru/New Delhi, Dec. 14: Wistron **Dec. 14:** Wistron Corporation, a contract manufacturer for Apple Inc, has suffered losses worth over ₹437 crore due to violence perpe-trated by a section of workers over salary issues at its manufacturing plant in Karnataka.

A large number of employees allegedly carried out arson, loot and violence at Wistron's Narasapura manufacturing plant in Kolar district over some wagerelated issues on Saturday, police had

They damaged the building, damaged vehicles, set them on fire, damaged costly equipment including machines and comput-

The company, which on Monday expressed deep shock over the incident, has already filed a com-plaint at the Vemagal police station.

In the complaint, the company's T.D. Prashanth has stated that office equipment. mobile phones, production macninery equipment worth ₹412.5 crore were

Centre upgrades Vijayvargiya's security with bullet resistant car

New Delhi/Kolkata, Dec. 14: BJP leader Kailash Vijayvargiya's VIP security has been upgraded with the addition of a "bullet resistant" car in his convoy during his West Bengal tour, official sources said on Monday.

The Union home ministry has issued an order directing the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to include an armoured vehicle in the convoy of the 64-year-old national general secretary of the BJP and ensure he only travels in that SUV, they said. "The

"The security of Vijayvargiya has been upgraded with the inclusion of a bullet resistant four-wheeler in the convoy. This has been done keeping in mind the security requirements of the protectee in the wake of the recent attack on his vehicle that was part of a convoy of BJP president J.P. Nadda," an official source said.

The CISF has been providing 'Z' category VIP security cover since Vijayvargiya February last year. The protection includes a mobile team of about sixseven armed CISF commandos as well as a pilot and an escort vehicle. Vijayvargiya's vehicle was attacked with stones during a visit to Diamond Harbour area in the state's South 24 Parganas

district on December 10

when he was accompanying the BJP president.

Vijayvargiya confirmed his security upgrade to reporters after he arrived in Kolkata on Monday afternoon to take part in a programme at Mathurapur in South 24 Parganas programme

Parganas. "As per the order of the Union home ministry, I have been provided with a bulletproof vehicle." he told the media at the airport. On December 10, several vehicles in Nadda's cavalcade were damaged including Vijayvargiya

in the attack. Sources in the BJP said its leaders, and vice president Mukul Roy, sustained injuries in the melee.

WOMEN | SAFETY | Bill gives death penalty, ₹10 lakh fine for crimes on women, modelled after AP

Shakti Bill tabled in Maharashtra Assembly officer. It also aims to establish institutions for

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, DEC. 14

In a historical move, the Maharashtra government on Monday tabled the Shakti Bill in the Vidhan Sabha that provides a death penalty and a fine up to ₹10 lakh for crimes against women and chil-

State home minister Anil Deshmukh tabled the Maharashtra Shakti Criminal Law (Maharashtra Amendment) Act, 2020, as well as Maharashtra Exclusive Special Court (for certain

offences against Women and Children under Shakti Law) on the first day of the two-day winter session of the state legislature.

Based on the Disha Act in Andhra Pradesh, the bill has proposed strict punishments for crimes such as rape, acid attack and derogatory material on social media against women and children.

It has also proposed special courts ensuring speedy trial in cases of crimes against women and children, amendments in sections of Indian Penal • BASED ON the Disha Act in Andhra Pradesh, the bill has proposed strict punishments for crimes such as rape, acid attack and derogatory material on social media against women and children.

Procedure Criminal (CrPC) and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) to sternly deal with such

crimes. The bills have assured to bring down the investiga-tion period from two months to 15 days, the trial period from two months to prosecutors and special police teams, which will 30 days, and appeal period to 45 days from the present have at least one woman

Code (IPC), Code of six months. It is expected to be cleared by the House on Tuesday.

The new law will have a separate judicial system to fast-track the cases that come under the Act's purview with at least one special court in each of the districts. It has the provision for special public

providing services to victims, including medical or psychiatric support care, counselling, facilitating legal and financial aid, and rehabilitation. Deshmukh said the legis-

lation proposes to complete investigation, trial and sentencing within a stipulated time frame. "The offences against women and children, especially heinous and sexual offences have increased many fold in the state. The proposed law will also

have provisions to tackle threats and messages on social media platforms. It is an important legislation and provisions have been made to ensure that the accused are booked and sentenced at the earliest,' he added.

Several women's groups earlier Maharashtra Minister Uddhav Thackeray to not table the Shakti bill, calling it draconian legislation that is fundamentally women with the potential to negate the very offence TUESDAY | 15 DECEMBER 2020 | NEW DELHI

quick

INDICATO	RS	%
Sensex	46,253.46	0.34
Nifty 50	13,558.15	0.33
S&P 500*	3,676.49	0.36
Dollar (₹)	73.56	0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.65	1.32
Euro (₹)	89.41	-0.19
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,371 ▼ 460	0.95
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	49.72	-0.25
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.946	-0.010
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.921	0.030
* As of 8:30 PM IST		

IIM-B achieves 100% summer placements

All 525 eligible students of IIM Bangalore were recruited for summer placements by over 130 companies, which made 529 offers. Roles offered included in the domains of PE/VC, business analytics, consulting, finance, general management, IT/product management, operations, sales and marketing", IIMB said. Accenture, Amazon, Bain, BCG, Kearney and McKinsey were the top recruiters, it said.

Hyundai gets 30,000 bookings for i20 in 40 days



Hyundai Motor India said it has received around 30,000 bookings for the all-new version of its premium hatchback i20 in last 40 days. It has already delivered 10,000 units of the model, the firm said. "We are witnessing a truly superlative customer response," director (sales, marketing & service) larun Garg said. He said 85 per cent of the bookings are for higher trims. Hyundai launched the new i20 on Nov. 5.

UP plans medical colleges in every distt., woos PIOs

The Uttar Pradesh government plans to have a medical college in each of the 75 districts in the state, chief minister Yogi Adityanath has told potential US investors, adding that 30 are being constructed. Addressing an investment and tourism event organised by the **Uttar Pradesh Association of** North America, Aditvanath assured every facility to those who planned to invest in the

Godrej Properties tops global sustainability list

Godrej Properties said it has been ranked first among listed global residential developers by Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark (GRESB). In a regulatory filing, the firm said GRESB, which provides environmental, social and governance (ESG) benchmarks for real estate organisations globally, has recognised the company as a real estate development sector leader both globally and in Asia for listed residential real estate.

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Seek 51% stake with each staff putting in ₹1 L

Employees bid for Air India

RAGINI SAXENA

A group of 219 Air India Ltd employees submitted a bid to purchase 51 per cent of the loss-making stateowned carrier.

The remaining 49 per cent will be held by a financial partner, said Meenakshi Malik, Air India's commercial director. Each employee will have to contribute at least Rs 100,000 toward the bid, she said.

Air India has been on sale since 2017 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet signed off on a plan to sell all or part of the debt-ridden carrier. government sweetthe deal earlier this year when it extended the bid deadline to December 14 from October 30, saying potential suitors will be allowed to decide how much of the flag carrier's debt they want to take on as part of the transaction. The rules before that required bidders to take over the carrier's \$3.3 billion of aircraft debt, deterring buyers.

"We always believed Air India can be a profitable set up," said Malik. "The government has removed a huge part of the debt, so we thought who better than us? We know the airline inside out, we know where the problems are. We're not bidding to win or lose, we're doing it because we believe we can run the

airline well."

Air India has been unprofitable since its 2007



merger with state-owned domestic operator Indian Airlines Ltd, and has relied on taxpayer money to keep flying, with the bailouts adding to the pressure on already strained government finances.

The airline, which began operations in 1932 as a mail carrier before winning commercial popularity, saw its fortunes fade with the emergence of cutthroat low-cost competition. The state-run carrier's entire debt totals more than \$8 billion. The government didn't find a single bidder when it tried to sell the company before.

That said, the the airline does have some lucrative assets, including prized slots at London's Heathrow airport, a fleet of more than 100 planes and thousands of trained pilots and

Malik said a financial partner had already been found, without disclosing

entity's that Employee participation has come from "the most junior employees to the most senior board members," she said, without elaborating.

A local media report on Monday said that US-based Interups Inc plans to bid with the employees. Interups chairman Laxmi Prasad confirmed the development, telling Moneycontrol that we "will be submitting a bid." be submitting a bid."

Tata Group is also said to have submitted an expression of interest for Air India over the weekend. Its interest was submitted via AirAsia India, in which Tata Sons Pvt Ltd has a significant majority stake. Singapore Airlines Ltd, with which Tata Sons operates full-service airline Vistara, won't be part of the bid in the initial stages, according to a news

- Bloomberg

Burger King more than doubles on debut



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD

Burger King India shareholders made a bumper listing gain of 130.67 per cent on the stock's debut on the bourses.

Burger King's shares closed at Rs 138.40 per share against the public issue price of Rs 60 for each share of Rs 10 face

The public issue of Burger King, a sub-sidiary of US-based fast food chain, received overwhelming response from investors, with the Rs 810-crore issue getting subscribed 156.65

The shares listed at Rs 115.35 on the BSE, a premium of 92.25 per cent over the public issue price of Rs 60, and at Rs 112.50 on the NSE. The stock moved up till the market close, indicating more upside as the more upside as the shares closed at the day's high of Rs 138.40 on the BSE and Rs 135 on the NSE.

The market capitalisation of Burger King stood at Rs 5,282.10 crore, close to Rs 6,624.15 crore m-cap of Westlife Development, McDonald's India franchise.

Torrent to invest ₹5,000 cr in Chennai city gas project

New Delhi, Dec. 14: Torrent Gas Ltd on Monday pledged Rs 5,000 crore investment to develop infrastructure to retail CNG to automobiles and piped gas to households and industries in Chennai, the biggest city gas licence in its portfolio.

Torrent Gas, part of the pharma-to-energy Torrent Group, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Government of Tamil Nadu for development of city gas infrastructure at an event in Chennai, the

company said.

The firm will lay pipelines and other infra-



structure in Chennai and Tiruvallur districts, covering an area of 3,569 sq. km, to provide piped natural gas (PNG) connections to homes, industries and commercial establishments. It will also set up the infrastructure to dispense compressed nat-

Torrent Gas holds city gas licence for 16 geographical areas spread across 32 districts covering seven states—UP, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana—and the Union territory of Puducherry.
Jinal Mehta, director,

Torrent Gas, said, "This investment of Rs 5,000 crore by Torrent Gas in development of CGD infrastructure is expected to have a major impact on the socio-economic development of the region by attracting fresh investment in the state." —PTI

GST shortfall: States, UTs get ₹42,000 cr

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 14

The central government has so far borrowed and released Rs.42,000 crore to states and union territories to meet the GST compensation shortfall of Rs 1.10 lakh crore.

The amount under seven installments was borrowed through the special borrowing window at an average interest rate of 4.7 per cent. Of the 7th weekly instalment of Rs 6,000 crore released on Monday, Rs 5,516.60 crore has gone to 23 states and Rs 483.40 crore to the three union territories. The interest rate on the amount borrowed this week is 5.13 per cent.

The Centre had set up the special borrowing window in October to meet the estimated shortfall of Rs 1.10 Lakh crore in revenue arising on account of implementation of GST. The borrowings are being done via this window on behalf of the states and UTs.

Karnataka has received the highest amount of Rs 5,668.31 crore, followed by Maharashtra at Rs 5,472.11 crore. North-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur have nil GST compensation gap.

The Centre has also granted additional borrowing permission equivalent to 0.50 per cent of GSDP to the states choosing Option-I to meet the GST shortfall.

OLA TO INVEST ₹2,400 CRORE IN **E-SCOOTER PLANT**

New Delhi, Dec. 14: Ridehailing firm Ola, backed by Japan's SoftBank Group, said on Monday it planned to invest Rs 2,400 crore (\$326 million) to set up a factory in Tamil Nadu to produce electric

The plant will have an initial annual capacity to produce two million scooters and will create nearly 10,000 jobs, Ola said, as it gears up to launch electric scooters in the coming months.

India needs an invest-ment of over \$180 billion in vehicle production and charging infrastructure until 2030 to meet its EV ambition, says the CEEW Centre Finance. Energy —Reuters for

Pharma funds outshine rest in YTD return

Small-cap rally may run through 2021

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC.14

Pharmaceuticals and healthcare funds have outperformed all other equity mutual fund schemes in Covid-hit 2020 with vearto-date (YTD) returns averaging over 60 per cent. far ahead of equity benchmarks Nifty and Sensex.

Moreover, the funds have more upside left as they had languished for many years before their outper-

NUPUR ACHARYA

The smaller stocks are

beating their larger peers

for the first time in three

years, and some strate-

gists say that outperfor-

mance will likely continue

The Nifty Midcap 100

at least through next year.

Index has climbed 20 per

cent this year, and the Nifty Smallcap 100 Index

has advanced 17 per cent,

outpacing the 11 per cent

gain in the large-cap NSE Nifty 50 Index. While the

RETAIL INFLATION

DROPS TO 6.93%

FC BUREAU

DEC. 14

formance in 2020, when healthcare has become prime focus area for governments and individuals. DSP Healthcare Fund has given a YTD return of 73.69 per cent, outperforming the BSE Healthcare

son, are over 12 per cent. The Mirae Healthcare Fund has given a YTD return of 69.64 per cent while the UTI Healthcare

Nifty has set a series of

new records this year, the

smaller gauges remain

below their peaks after

Broadly strong corpo-

rate earnings, efforts by

the government and cen-

tral bank to bolster the

economy and a surge in

retail trading have helped

smaller shares start to

outperform since summer.

And while the Nifty's

price-to-earnings multiple

has reached an all-time

high, the small- and mid-

two years of losses.

Index's return of 57.1 per cent. Sensex and Nifty's

YTD return, in compari-

Fund has given a return of 62.19 per cent. The Nippon India Pharma Fund has given a return of 61 per cent and the Tata India Pharma and Healthcare Fund, 59.97 per cent.

Analysts say more upside is likely for pharma and healthcare funds unlike Sensex and Nitty which are trading at their

"Besides, there was no lockdown effect on the pharma sector in 2020.

similar valuations to late

2017, the last year they

outperformed the larger

"Such turn in perform-

ance does not fizzle out so

fast, especially when the

valuation gap is still there," said Vinod Karki, head of strategy at ICICI

Securities Ltd, the largest

listed broker. "High liquid-

ity and prospects of eco-

nomic recovery are per-

fect recipes for relatively

riskier assets such as

smaller-sized companies."

After a long period of rev enue degrowth seen in the US market, the trend is reversing, pharma companies are expecting revenue pick up in the main export market," said Meeta Shetty, fund manager-Tata India Pharma Healthcare

Also there is a healthy pipeline of launches for the US market that can boost revenue growth in the next two years," Shetty

over the last two years as

concerns over slowing economic growth drove

investors to the safety of

their larger peers. Now

there are hopes for a

"We believe that the lead

current indicators on earnings and sentiment

are supportive of a signifi-

cantly new high over the

next 18 to 24 months for

the mid-cap and small-cap

for Dolat Capital Market

said Khurana, head of equities

India aims to surpass China in mobile mfg

New Delhi, Dec. 14: India is now aiming to sur-China in field of mobile manufacturing with tne productionlinked incentive attracting global majors in this Ravi Shankar Prasad

segment to the country, telecom and IT

minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said on Monday. He said the government is looking to make India a hub of other electronic

products as well with the expansion of the PLI scheme to other sectors. "We wanted India to

become the second largest mobile manufacturer in the world. Now I am pushing India to surpass China. That's my goal and I am very clearly defining it," Prasad said at a Ficci

India became the second largest mobile manufacturing country in 2017.

The National Policy on Electronics 2019 (NPE) envisages electronic manufacturing turnover of more than Rs 26 lakh



ment. designed to propel India's stature and ease of doing busi-

lakh crore is

expected to

come from the mobile

seg-

pnone

ness under the leadership of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to showcase India as an alternate manufacturing destination, Prasad said. "PLI is designed to

enable global champion companies to come to India and make Indian companies national champion," he noted.

government has started a PLI scheme under which eligible companies can get sops of around Rs 48,000 crore.

The government has cleared 16 proposals from domestic and international companies entailing investment of Rs 11,000 crore under the PLI scheme to manufacture mobile phones.

Boeing ex-CEO hits ground, to head e-tractor firm



Dennis Muilenburg

JULIE JOHNSSON DEC. 14

Former Boeing Co CEO

Dennis Muilenburg is

Tractor, a Silicon Valley

startup that's angling to be the Tesla Inc of the agriculture world with an all-electric tractor that is "driver optional." While Monarch isn't a household name, it combines longstanding interests for Muilenburg, an engineer by training who grew up on an Iowa farm and served on Caterpillar Inc's board for nine years. He is an investor and adviser as the Livermore, Californiabased company pre-pares to deliver the first of its \$50,000 tractors late next year.

"They have all the elements to be a strong, robust, growing business," Muilenburg said in an interview.

The former Boeing chief has largely flown under the radar since being ousted a year ago after fumbling the plane-maker's response to two deadly 737 Max accidents and their aftermath. Since then, Muilenburg has pursued passions such as cycling--he's logged 17,000 miles this year-and advising companies with promising technology.

Monarch is one of about a dozen firms working with Muilenburg, who started a consulting business after a 35-year career at Boeing. He's embracing his new role with characteristic intensity, providing pointers to an executive team at Monarch. —*Bloomberg*

cap gauges are trading at Small- and mid-caps fell APP | RIDE | Firm plans to launch app-based ride-hailing service in select cities Amazon's Zoox unveils driverless robotaxi

rebound.

indexes.'

NEW DELHI, DEC.14

India's retail inflation eased to a three-month low of 6.93 per cent in November from 7.61 per cent in the previous month, as vegetable prices softened significantly, while wholesale price-based inflation, or WPI, rose to a nine-month high of 1.55 per cent in the same month, according to data released by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Imple-

mentation on Monday. The November data showed retail inflation was helped by lower increases in food prices, but fuel continued to put pressure on the overall price data. Still, it was better than a reading of 7.10 per cent estimated by analysts in a poll by news agency Reuters but stayed above the RBI's comfort zone of 4-6 per cent.

ED LUDLOW

Zoox Inc, the self-driving startup owned Amazon.com unveiled fully autonomous electric vehicle with no steering wheel that can drive day and

The vehicle, which Zoox describes as a driverless carriage or robotaxi, can carry as many as four passengers. With a motor at each end, it travels in either direction and maxes out at 75 miles per hour. Two battery packs, one under each row of seats, generate enough juice for 16 hours of run time before recharging, the company said. To commercialise the technology, Zoox plans to launch an app-based ride-

night on a single charge.

hailing service in cities like San Francisco and

"This is really about reimagining transporta-tion," Zoox chief executive officer Aicha Evans said in a television interview. "Not only do we have the capital required, we have the long-term vision.'

The company also plans to launch ride-hailing services in other coun-Evans said. Executives didn't say how much rides would cost but that they would be "affordable" and competitive with services operated by Uber Technologies Inc and Lyft Inc. Nor did they say when the service would launch but confirmed it wouldn't happen in 2021. In a video released on Monday,



Evans used Zoox's app to hail the vehicle outside San Francisco's Fairmont hotel and took a spin around the block.

Acquired by Amazon in June for an undisclosed sum, Zoox is one of several companies racing to put fully autonomous vehicles on the road, an effort that's taking longer than anticipated. Most are testing retrofitted conventional cars on public roads, and few are commercially deployed.

In October, Alphabet Inc's self-driving unit Waymo started a fully driverless taxi service in suburban Phoenix. General Motors Co-backed Cruise LLC is also testing autonomous cars--recently without safety drivers--in San electric vehicles based on

Francisco, using a fleet of the Chevy Bolt. Despite being years from deployment, several of Zoox's quirky-looking mint-green vehicles are already being built at a facility in Fremont, California. The factory

has the capacity to eventually produce 10,000 to 15,000 units annually, executives said. Suppliers send the major components -- the drive unit, body, battery pack and so on-- pre-assembled, and Zoox then does final

process it likens to building a Lego set. Executives declined to reveal the battery supplier.

The unveiling of a production car marks a significant step for a company that has been working on an autonomous passenger vehicle since its founding in 2014. At times Zoox was "ridiculed" for what it was trying to do, chief technology officer

Jesse Levinson said. Zoox isn't the first to unveil a fully autonomous passenger vehicle. GM's Cruise showed off a battery-powered shuttle in January. Called the Origin, it also does away with many of the controls present in conventional cars: pedals, rearview mirrors, steering wheel.



THE ASIAN AGE

15 DECEMBER 2020

Vaccines only way out of Covid; shun politics

he vaccine against Coronavirus is the silver bullet. A world caught in the throes of the deadly Covid-19 pandemic has no alternative but to trust the apolitical integrity of science, which has brought humanity to the point that it can hope to inoculate large sections of the population in order to spread immunity. There is no knowing how long the vaccines will continue to trigger the production of antibodies in the human body to stave off the virus. It isn't clear yet if two shots will be sufficient for life. Will the vaccine be a seasonal jab? The fact that it has found its way into 70 million people causing 1.6 million deaths globally — the figures for India is close to one crore persons infected and 1.43 lakh deaths — is proof enough of its insidious ways. Indian drug regulators are yet to permit even emergency use of vaccines that

have received approvals in Britain, the United States, Russia and China. The need for thoroughness in studying the trial data is a priority right now, considering how even minor ill-effects or side effects of the vaccine can prove inhibiting and erode people's confidence in taking the jab. Dedicated scientists have led international efforts to make various

While spreading awareness to build vaccine should be a priority, the offer of free vaccines for entire populations as Kerala and Delhi have done is a political move.

types of vaccines possible and their best efforts in giving "warp speed" to the projects have been beset not only by the logistics of distribution but confidence in the also the politics injected into prioritising benefi-

The United States and large parts of Europe, which are going through a nightmarish second Covid-19 wave in the autumn, are bracing for a winter of discontent, and they have found it necessary to fast-track the vaccination process. Their experience should prove useful as a case study for India to avoid the pitfalls and maximise the efficiency of what has been a truly international effort at finding vaccines. India, as the world's

largest manufacturing hub, has a pivotal role to play in this as vaccines are the most effective route out of the pandemic as the production of monoclonal antibodies, which President Donald Trump might have been given, is painfully slow and mitigation of the disease is a complicated process that can overwhelm the health infrastructure.

The biggest stumbling block, as seen in the attitude of people, are the antivaccination sentiments. A recent survey reveals only 60 per cent of Americans are saying they will "definitely or probably" get a vaccine, while 21 per cent, constituting members of the "anti-vaxxer" movement, are dead against it. While spreading awareness to build confidence in the vaccine should be a priority, the offer of free vaccines for entire populations as Kerala and Delhi have

The idea of a free vaccine should, however, be welcomed if it were to become possible to inoculate all vulnerable people who must take it, even if it were to cost at least ₹2,000 per person to cover the vaccine, logistics and inoculation costs, and the total number in India is close to 100 crore people. Above all, we must disavow the politics and embrace the idea that a vaccine which promises to work, be it of any type or from any nation, is the only viable route out of

The greatest spy writer ever

The great English novelist John Le Carre — whose real name was David Cornwell — who died on Saturday at the age of 89 will probably be known as the greatest spy writer of any era, anywhere. But he showed through his nearly two dozen novels that he had transcended the genre of spy-writing from the moment his first book came out in 1961.

His third book, *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, published in 1963, established beyond doubt that it is human condition, and its frailties and moral ambiguities, that Le Carre depicted with delicate nuance and exquisite detail uning the field of our work of the modium for the condition.

detail, using the field of spy-work as the medium for his message.

Before him, it was Ian Fleming and his flamboyant spy character James Bond who ruled the roost in the spy genre. Le Carre was a wholly different story. His books had no bang-bang stuff and they provoked reflection. Graham Greene, the famous English writer who was once an ordained priest, has called Le Carre the greatest English writer of the second half of the twentieth

John Le Carre's intricate plots came from the Cold War, in which, for a time, he was himself a participant as a junior British spy. But in his writings, men and women who fought from the Soviet side in the great ideological divide were not, as individuals, moral inferiors of their British (or Western) counternants. It is not so well known that this writer of studied detail had once ited New Delhi, meeting people on the security circuit, with a view to writing a novel on Kashmir, though nothing came of it.

Le Carre shunned literary awards and state honours. When the Cold War ended, he wrote grippingly, fluently, and with understated eloquence — following on deep on-location research — about the drug trade, big pharma, and torture, in the wake of America's questionable interventions in Iraq and its "war on terror". He even began to take part in street demonstrations in Britain on such issues. The writer whose characters teetered on the fine line between right and wrong, good and bad, had begun to cast off ambiguity.

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battered... still upbeat?



Shikha Mukerjee

Union home ministry

would hear of it, orches

trating a media offen-

sive on the "anarchy, lawlessness and intoler-

ance" prevailing in West

Bengal, declaring that

orderly democratic poli-

tics was no longer possi-

ble, by the 2017 incident measure, is a serious overreaction. It falls

short of a politically sav-

vy response. Even with

the state governor, Jag-deep Dhankar, weighing in and declaring that Mamata Banerjee was "playing with fire", that

there was a "deteriora-

tion" in the law and or-

der situation in the sta-te, that he had written a

special report and sent it to the Government of

India because it was an

attack on the "leader of

the national party," the BJP missed its chance of

using the situation to

deliver a political punch. Having taunted both the "bhaipo" or nephew, Trinamul MP Abhishek Banerjee, and

the "pishi" or paternal aunt, Chief Minister

Mamata Banerjee, for an

unholy nexus, accusing

"dynasty" by cutting out senior leaders of the

Trinamul Congress who

in their disenchantment

were waiting to defect to

the BJP, the visit to Diamond Harbour was a

red rag that Mr Nadda

waved. If the reaction

shook up the "leader of a

national party," it ought

not to have surprised

him. The BJP leader-

that West Bengal is, like

many other places, a

mass of contradictions.

Its people write and recite poetry even as

they make bombs, per-haps plan to attack the

convoys of VIPs and cre-

ate chaos. In West Bengal, politics, peace-ful demonstrations that

are always edgy with the

possibility of violence,

ship needs to get it -

fostering

ullets, bombs, bricks; broken glass, bruises, broken bones, blood and death. The BJP's offensive in West Bengal has not been a peaceful, orderly and rapid occupation. It has been a laborious endeavour, with the party's popularity waxing and waning.

To sustain the 40 per cent votes it polled in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP will have to deal with the physicality of the political space it so ardently wants to capture. And West Bengal's political culture, its history and traditions require the BJP to do much more than verbally assault the Trinamul Congress bastion. It will have to find the resources and the skills to match the confrontational capability of the

state's ruling party.
Claiming that it is the victim of the Trinamul may not be enough for the saffron party. The bricks that were hurled at the party's president J.P. Nadda on his way to a meeting in Diamond Harbour may have shocked the BJP and shaken Mr Nadda who, incidentally, was not injured because he was travelling in a bullet-proof car, but the response to the obviously pre-planned attack is sadly feeble.

Bricks hurled at VIP convoys are par for the course in Indian politics. In August 2017, Rahul Gandhi's convoy was attacked with bricks in BJP-ruled Gujarat when he was vice-president of the Congress. The BJP did not apologise for the incident; it was dismissed as "unfortunate" and Mr Gandhi was verbally attacked for making the visit.

Warning that the

The BJP needs to reread the history of Mamata's hard labour before she became Chief Minister. She fought the CPM on the streets for decades.

poetry and piety coexist in perfect harmony. A familiarity with Rabin-dranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda is not apough. The B.IP. not enough. The BJP needs to delve into Sri Aurobindo's evolution to begin getting a glimmer of an understanding of what is a Bengali. For that matter, the BJP needs to know that Swami Vivekananda had a brother, Bhupendranath Dutta, who was a member of the "Jugantar", an organisa-tion that believed in armed opposition to British imperialism, and who joined the Ghadar Party, toyed with the Comintern, met Vladimir Lenin, and then joined the Congress on his return from travels in the US, Germany and the Soviet Union.

The BJP in West Bengal needs to create a playbook that is in sync with the political culture of the state. Using the Government of India as a bogeyman or a shield can be effective only in very limited ways. Having imported many workers from the Left Front and Trinamul Congress, it has to know how to deploy these resources most effectively.

And the BJP has to work out how politically useful it is to constantly trash Mamata Banerjee. She is a grassroots leader. If the BJP really thinks that encouraging the governor to publicly reprimand the bureaucracy and the police in West Bengal for being an extension of the ruling party and then amplifying the message is savvy politics, it does badly need to have a rethink. However deplorable and however cynical it may be, voters are unlikely to scandalised about

non-specific accusations of the police-politician nexus in Bengal, or even across India. It is passé. Taking on Mamata by

publicly discrediting her shortcomings as Chief Minister or making personal attacks about her probity can be the frills on something much more substantial. By itself, accusing the TMC of corruption does

not work.
The BJP needs to reread the history of Mamata's hard labour before she became Chief Minister. She fought the CPM on the streets for decades. She was relentless in her criticism of the Left. In 2001, Mamata Banerjee thought that she would win. In 2006, she again thought she would win. She finally won in 2011 and what a spectacular victory it was — chief minister Buddhadeb tacharya lost the elections as did droves of his Cabinet colleagues and of course sundry CPM and other Left party can-didates. It was a bloody, pitched battle that Mamata fought to oust the CPM-led Left Front. And she did not have the limitless resources that the BJP seems to as a party and the resources it has as the ruling party

of the country. The signs of disenchantment with the Trinamul Congress and disappointment Mamata are growing

But that does not make West Bengal any easier for a BJP takeover. The BJP's baggage is its performance as the ruling party at the Centre. The farmers' protest, now into its third week and iust as robust, spontaneous and united as it was on the first day, November 27, is a challenge that the BJP has to be able to win with laurels. What happens in New Delhi will certainly have an impact in West Bengal, which is as politically conscious as it is culturally proud.

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist based in Kolkata

Congress president Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi should ponder seriously about the assessment made by our former President, the late Pranab Mukherjee, about the reasons behind the Congress' defeat in the 2014 general election in his soon-to-be released autobiography, The Presidential Years. Speculation is rife that not Rahul, but NCP president Sharad Pawar will eventually replace Mrs Gandhi as

the Congress chief. Though Mr Pawar himself denied such talk, perhaps it is the only way to revive the moribund Congress.

> Sridhar V. Kulkarni Kalyan, Maharashtra

ACTS OF MALICE

BACK-TO-BACK vandalisations of memorials of peace icons in the United States have sparked a wave of concern among a lot of right-thinking people. While swastikas were found painted onto Anne Frank's memorial in Idaho last week, this weekend those at work at the Indian embassy in Washington DC were shocked to see the Gandhi statue in front defaced and draped with a "Khalistani" flag during the pro-farmer protests. We condemn these "mischievous acts" by hooligans masquerading as prote embassy has raised a complaint with the police and taken up the matter with the US state department.

Bhagwan Thadani

NADDA IS WRONG

BJP PRESIDENT J.P. Nadda may be the aggrieved party in the recent stone-throwing incident in West Bengal but his remark hinting that a state of emergency be declared in the state is completely unwarranted. Aside from governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, he seems to be the only person who feels this way. There are millions living peacefully in West Bengal. Mr Nadda has also needlessly threatened to send chief minister Mamata Banerjee "on leave". Such comments are unparliamentary and only reveals the BJP's underhand design to destabilise the state.

> S. Kamat Alto Santa Cruz, Goa

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Bidyut Chatterjee (Dec. 13). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.



Modi govt's real eco strategy: To let Big Biz grow & forget the rest

he head of the Niti Aayog had said something the other day 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 was 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 word that he had 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

That second bit is the thing that got ignored. The head of the Niti Aayog, which is the Prime Minister's think tank, was explaining the strategy of the Narendra Modi government on the economy. It has not been articulated as clearly as it was in this statement 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 the small and medium sized 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, November 8, 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 metropolitan areas managed with their credit cards.

The second stroke against the small and medium sector 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 the 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 businesses

was again the large ones. The third stroke was the lockdown of this year, which broke the back of the small and medium sector, who had neither the cash

reserves to be able to deal with such a blow or the ability to get their 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 the government's data, and has continued for three years. The finance ministry's chief economic adviser last week urged that a survey the Narendra Modi government had refused to release be finally released. 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 as well. Not all Indians, of course — some were making much more precisely because of the fact that the others were making less.

Everything that appears to be puzzling to many people about the Modi government's economic policy makes sense after we consider what it is deliberately doing to this nation. Mr Modi's former adviser and enthusiast Arvind Panagariya had complained about the "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" programme, saying that it was merely import substitution and had failed before. What does that mean? It means that Mr 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.

"Atma Nirbhar" privileges the industrialist over the consumer, but that is not the way that it is advertised. Who does the policy seek to make "Atma Nirbhar"? 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.

> The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist











fix the problem.

The FBI and the Department of Homeland

Security's cybersecurity arm are investigating. The hacks were revealed just

days after a major cyber-

security firm disclosed

that foreign government hackers had broken into

its network and stolen the company's own hacking

Many experts suspect Russia as responsible for

the attack against FireEye, a major cyberse-curity player whose cus-

tomers include federal,

state and local govern-

ments and top global cor-

porations. There was no

immediate connection between the attacks, and it

wasn't immediately clear

if Russia was also respon-

sible for the hack of the Treasury Department, which was first reported

John Ullyot said in a state-

ment that the government was "taking all necessary

steps to identify and remedy any possible issues

related to this situation.'

The government's Cybers-

ecurity and Infrastructure

Security Agency said sep-

arately that it has been

working with other agen-

cies "regarding recently

has long been considered

mostly a formality for confirming the will of the

people expressed at the

polls. But this year the

somewhat arcane proce-

dure is at the center of an

unprecedented — and

many warn dangerous —

challenge to the credibili-

ty of US democracy led by

Biden on November 3, Trump continues to cl-

beaten by

Security

spokesperson

by Reuters.

National

SHORT TAKES

RAWALPINDI BLAST: 3 ULTRAS HELD IN PAKISTAN

Lahore, Dec. 14: Three Taliban terrorists, involved in a blast in Rawalpindi, were arrested on Monday by Pakistan's security agencies.

At least 25 people, including women and children, were injured in the grenade attack in the Ganj Mandi area near a police station in the garrison city of Rawalpindi on Sunday.

The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of the Punjab police said in a state-ment on Monday that a CTD Rawalpindi team got information that three terrorists were hiding on Adyala-Kharakan Road along Swan River Rawalpindi. "On this information and evidence collected from Pir Wadhai crime scene, CTD raided the place on Monday and arrested three terrorists. Explosives, detonators, cell phones and other articles recovered," it said.

U.S. REMOVES SUDAN FROM TERROR LIST

Khartoum, Dec. 14: The United States has formally removed Sudan from its state sponsor of blacklist, terrorism said Khartoum embassy Monday, less than two months after the East African nation pledged to normalise ties with

The move opens the way for aid, debt relief and investment to a country going though a rocky political transition and struggling under a severe economic crisis exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. US President Donald Trump

had announced in October that he was delisting Sudan, 27 years after Washington first put the country on its blacklist for harbouring Islamist mili-

"The congressional notification period of 45 days has lapsed and the Secretary of State has signed a notification stating rescission of Sudan's State Sponsor of Terrorism designation," the US embassy in Khartoum said on Facebook.

GUNMAN SHOT BY POLICE IN NEW YORK CATHEDRAL

New York, Dec. 14: A man has been shot by police on the steps of a landmark New York City cathedral after he began firing a gun at the end of a Christmas choral concert

Police said there was no indication anyone but the suspect ed gunman was shot. The man was taken to a hospital in critical condition.

The shooting happened just before 4 pm on Sunday at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, mother church of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. The 45minute concert had just concluded and people were starting to walk away when a series of shots was heard, sending people running down Amsterdam Avenue screaming

and diving to the sidewalk. Officers who had been on hand to provide security for the event quickly moved in and shot the gunman, who police believe was armed with

ECLIPSE BLACKS OUT SOUTH CHILE,

Pucon, Chile, Dec.14: A solar eclipse that lasted around two minutes plunged southern Chile and Argentina into darkness on Monday.

Heavy rain had threatened to prevent thousands of star gazers in Chile from seeing the eclipse but at the last moment the clouds parted just enough for the phenomenon to be partially visible.

"It was beautiful, unique. The truth is that no-one held much hope of seeing it due to the weather and clouds, but it was unique because it cleared up just in time. It was a miraan emotional Matias Tordecilla, 18, said from the town of Pucon on the shores of Lake Villarrica.

"It's something that you don't just see with your eyes but also feel with your heart," added Tordecilla, who traveled 10 hours with his family to see the eclipse.

In Argentine Patagonia, several families and foreigners had set up camp between the towns of Villa El Chocon and Piedra del Aguila hoping to

see the eclipse. While there was no rain there, strong winds had threatened to impact visibility of the second total eclipse for Chile in the last 18 months.

Hackers infiltrate US fed networks

Experts suspect Russian hand in attack on FireEye, major cybersecurity player in US

Washington, Dec. 14: Hackers broke into the networks of federal agen-cies including the Trea-sury and Commerce departments as US gov-Data leak exposes China in top firms ernment officials said Sunday that they were working to identify the scope of the breach and to

Melbourne, Dec. 14: Amid simmering tensions simmering tensions between Australia and China, the media here on Monday reported a major data leak containing official records like party position, birthdate, national ID number and ethnicity of nearly two million alleged members of the Communist Party of China (CPC) living and

working across the world. The data leak obtained by 'The Australian' news-paper has revealed how the alleged CPC members are employed with some of the world's biggest corporations in the areas of defence, banks and pharmaceutical giants manufacturing Coronavirus vaccines.

Among the companies

discovered activity on gov-

ernment networks. CISA is providing technical assistance to affected entities as they work to identify and mitigate any potential compromises." President Donald Trump last month fired the director of CISA, Chris Krebs, after Krebs vouched for the integrity of the presidential election and disputed Trump's claims of widespread electoral fraud. Federal governm

government agencies have long been identified as having alleged CPC members as their employees Boeing and Volkswagen, pharmaceutical giants Pfizer and AstraZeneca, and financial institutions including ANZ and HSBC, according to the reports.

The leak has exposed details of 1.95 million CPC members after being extracted from a Shanghai server whistleblowers. An investigation by 'The Australian' has found that at least 10 consulates in the eastern Chinese metropolis Shanghai have CPC members employed as senior political and government affairs specialists, clerks, economic advisers and executive assistants.

eign hackers. Hackers linked to Russia were able to break into the State Department's email system in 2014, infecting it so thoroughly that it had to be cut off from the internet while experts worked to eliminate the infstation. Reuters earlier reported that a group backed by a foreign government stole information from Treasury and a Commerce Department age-ncy responsible for deciding internet and telecommunications policy. -AP

Electoral College to FORMER AIDE formalise Biden win **OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT** Washington, Dec. 14: Joe aim, without evidence,

Biden's march to the White House — overshadowed by President Donald New York, Dec. 14: A ner. Court after court has turned down his team's claims of election fraud Trump's frantic attempts to overturn the US elecaround the country and tion — is to be formalised last Friday the Supreme on Monday when the Court dealt a final legal Electoral College meets to blow when it threw out an confirm the Democrat's appeal lodged by Trump win. allies from Texas and of-Electors in all 50 states her Republican-led states. inappropriate were meeting to cast their Based on the aiready votes in a tradition that

legally certified state-by Electoral College representatives are expected to vote by 306 to 232 in favor of Biden over Trump — a process expected to take much of Monday. This will draw a thick

line under a contest that saw Biden make Trump a rare one-term president after campaigning on a message of vanquishing the Covid-19 pandemic.

ACCUSES CUOMO

former aide to New York Gov Andrew Cuomo who is now running for Manhattan borough president accused him of sexual harassment in a series of tweets Sunday, saying he made ments about ner appear

Lindsey Boylan tweeted that the Democratic governor "sexually harassed me for years. Many saw it, and watched." "I could never anticipate what to expect: would I be grilled on my work (which was very good) or harassed about my looks. Or would it be both in the same conversation? This was the way for years," she continued. -AP

EU's chief negotiator still hopes to clinch EU-UK trade accord

Brussels, Dec. 14: EU nego- imposed cut-off point to tiator Michel Barnier on Monday signalled there was a "narrow path" to a post-Brexit trade deal with Britain, as key sticking points remain after both sides abandoned a supposed make-or-break deadline.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and EU chief Ursula van der Leyen pledged to "go the extra mile" on Sunday as they side-stepped a self-

end talks if there was no progress towards a pact. Johnson insists it remains "most likely" that Britain will crash out of the globe's largest single market on World Trade Organisation terms by year's end as the two sides spar over regulating future standards and fishing. But von der Leyen on Monday said "there is movement. That is good".

"We are on the very last mile to go. But it is an essential one," she told a conference organised by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and

An EU diplomat said following a briefing from Barnier that "there might now be a narrow path to an agreement visible negotiators can clear the remaining hurdles in the next few days".

Development

time peak. Italy meanwhile overtook Britain as

Sandra Lindsay, a nurse at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, is inoculated with the Covid-19 vaccine by Dr. Michelle Chester, at Long Island Jewish Medical Center in the Queens borough of New York. US kicks off Covid-19 vaccine drive as Germany returns to partial lockdown

New York, Dec. 14: The United States kicked off a mass vaccination drive Monday hoping to turn the tide on the world's biggest Coronavirus outbreak, as the country's death toll neared a stag-

gering 3,00,000. A nurse in New York became the first person in the US to be vaccinated when she received the Pfizer-BioNTech shot live on television.

"I feel great. I feel relieved," said Sandra Lindsay, a critical care nurse at the Long Island Jewish Medical Center, imploring all Americans to "to do our part" by getting vaccinated.

"I hope this marks the beginning of the end of the very painful time in

our history," she added.

The landmark moment comes at one of the darkest phases of the pandemic, with infections in the United States and many other countries soaring, and health experts still struggling against vaccine lockdown skepticism, fatigue and uneven adher-

ence to safety rules. The US has the world's highest death toll of more than 2,99,000, and the largest number of reported cases, at 16.2 million -including more than 1.5 million new infection in

just the past week.
"First Vaccine Administered. Congratulations USA! Congratulations WORLD!" WORLD!" tweeted President Donald Trump.

The start of the US vaccination campaign came as Germany announced a partial lockdown from Wednesday, with non-essential shops and schools to close in a bid to halt an "exponential halt an "exponer growth" in infections.

The restrictions, agreed by Chancellor Angela Merkel and regional leaders, will apply through the holidays until January 10, companies also urged to allow employees to work from home or offer extended company holidays.

Europe's biggest economy has been severely hit by a resurgence of the Coronavirus, with daily new infections more than three times their spring-

European nation with the highest coronavirus death toll. -AFP

Santa infects 75 at Belgian care home Belgium, Dec. 14: A man visit, the man who dressed up as Santa fell ill and tested positive for

from Belgium, who dressed up as Santa Claus to spread Christmas joy, ended up being labelled as 'super spreader' after inadvertently infecting 75 people at an old age home with Covid-19.

According to reports, the unnamed man visited the Hemelrijck aged care home in the Belgian town of Mol to entertain its residents and staff. However, he had no idea that he was already infected with Covid-19.

The man was welcomed to spread joy among 150 residents at the care home. While everything went smooth during the visit, he ended up infecting 14 staff members and 61 residents, one of which required oxygen support

for breathing.

Fortunately, the other infected people only suffered mild to moderate symptoms, without any breathing troubles.

Mol's mayor, Wim Caeyers, told Belgian news organisation VRT News "Initially they said that the rules had been followed, but then straight away you receive photos from the families of resi-

dents where you can see

that this wasn't the case,

Covid-19. The aged care

home made it mandatory

for residents and staff to

wear face masks. But pic-

tures from the Christmas

event showed that not all

residents wore masks and

'Santa' and his helpers

stood very close to the eld-

erly people.
"It was made with the

best intent, but it went wrong. It has been a very

home. It is a very great

mental strain to bear for

the man that played Saint

Nicholas, as well as for the

organisers and the staff,'

day for the care

REMDESIVIR DRUG MAY BE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE: STUDY

London, Dec. 14: Remdesivir may be a highly effective antiviral against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, according to a new singlepatient study that contradicts previous research which found the drug had no impact on death rates from the disease.

The researchers from the University of Cambridge in the UK who gave the drug to a patient with Covid-19 and a rare immune disorder, observed a dramatic improvement in his symptoms and the disappearance of the virus. Scientists had previous-

ly pinned hope on remdesivir which was originally developed to treat hepatitis C and subsequently tested against Ebola. However, results from large clinical trials have been inconclusive, and the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced in October that the drug did not significantly reduce

SOUTH KOREA TO TESTING SITES

Seoul, Dec. 14: South Korea was opening dozens of free Covid-19 testing sites in the greater Seoul area, as the country registered additional 718 new cases on Monday amid a surge in infections. The Korea

Control and Prevention Agency said the additional cases took the country's total since the pandemic began to 43.484 infections with 587 deaths. It said about 65 per cent of the new cases were found in the Seoul area, which has been at the centre of a recent viral resurgence.

Observers say the lower figures for Monday are a result of fewer tests taken over the weekend and that the country's caseload is expected to surge again this week. The announcement comes two days after New Zealand said it planned a similar bubble with the Cook Islands. -AP

Pak flayed over overcrowded jails

Islamabad, Dec. 14: A human rights report released on Monday harshly criticized pakistan's response to the Coronavirus threat faced by tens of thousands of inmates stuck in overcrowded and often unsanitary prisons.

Instead of following through on promises to ease prison overcrowding made when the pandemic first hit, pakistan's government has actually increased its inmate population by over 6,000 between April and August, from 73,242 to

Some of the few who were freed were later rearrested. The joint report by London-based Amnesty International Justice Project Pakistan said inmates face a growing risk of infection, and called for renewed efforts to free

ularly the elderly, women and "prisoners of conbraves the second wave of Covid-19, prisoners remain dangerously exposed as the authorities not only failed to reduce overcrowding, they actually worsened it," said Rimmel Mohydin, South Asia regional campaigner for Amnesty International.

In the first weeks of the outbreak in February, the Islamabad High Court ordered the release of pretrial inmates charged with nonviolent crimes as well as those whose bail previously been denied.

In the southern Sindh province, 519 prisoners were to be released on bail. But in late March, the Supreme Court suspended all bail orders that were granted because of the virus.

END OF LAN ERA He wrote 25 novels, 1 memoir in a career spanning 6 decades, selling 60 million books

British spy thriller author John le Carre dies at 89

London, Dec. 14: John le Carre, the British writer best known for his Cold War espionage novels "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy" and "The Spy Who Came In From The Cold", has died aged 89, his agent and family said on Sunday. The author, a former

British intelligence officer whose real name was David Cornwell, wrote 25 novels and one memoir in a career spanning six decades, selling 60 million books worldwide.

His wife of nearly 50 years, Jane, and sons Nicholas, Timothy, Stephen and Simon, said in a statement that he died on Saturday night after a short battle with pneumonia.

"We all grieve deeply his passing," they said, thanking staff at the hospital in southwest Cornwall. England, for their care. "We know they share our sadness," they added. "Tinker Tailor Soldier

Spy" was adapted for television in 1979, with Alec Guinness starring as the enigmatic spycatcher George Smiley, and became a classic. Gary



Oldman reprised the role in the 2011 film, winning

an Oscar the following

"All who follow are in his debt," Oldman said in a statement. "His characters were drawn deftly and deeply... For me, inhabiting George Smiley remains one of the high-points of my life." His friend, the novelist Robert Harris, called le Carre "one of those writers who really was not only a brilliant writer but he also John le Carre penetrated popular culture — and that's a great rarity".

Harris told Sky News television "The Spy Who Came In From The Cold"

incredibly an engrossing tale and very deep, and it transformed the writing of spy fiction. It was a brilliant, psychological portrait of spying and of betrayal and of the decline of British power."

was a "masterpiece"

Carre "a literary giant and a humanitarian spirit". Jonny Geller, le Carre's literary agent, said: "His like will never be seen again, and his loss will be felt by every book lover,

everyone interested in the

heartbroken at the death of a "titan of English literature". Le Carre's life could have been the stuff of fiction and he once said he owed Stephen King, the best-selling US author, called le his career in the shadows and later literary success

> cent decision" to flee an unhappy home life. It involved a spell in Bern, Switzerland, learning German, where he took his first steps in British intelligence, doing

to an "impulsive adoles-

human condition."And historian Simon Sebag

Montefiore said he was

odd-jobs across the border

in Austria. From Switzerland, he returned to Britain to study at Oxford University, then went on to teach at the elite Eton school before joining MI5, the country's domestic intelligence agency, in the late

He later transferred to the overseas spy agency MI6, serving in the West German capital Bonn, where he witnessed the building of the Berlin

-AFP

SHORT TAKES

SHIP COLLIDES IN CHINESE RIVER, 3 DEAD, 5 MISSING

Beijing, Dec. 14: Rescuers in China were searching Monday for five sailors missing after a collision between two ships at the mouth of the Yangtze River that left at least three

State broadcaster *CCTV* showed dramatic footage of crews pulling 11 of the 16 sailors who had been on board the container vessel Xinqisheng 69 from the water, three of whom showed no signs of life. The Yangtze is China's most heavily traffiched view of the container ficked river and the point at which it meets the East China Sea, just north of the commercial hub of Shanghai, brings together ships from all directions. State media reported the container ship Oceana lost power shortly before midnight on Sunday, after which the Xinqisheng 69 collided with it, capsized and sank.

IRAN FIGHTS OIL SPILLAGE, FIRE IN SOUTHWEST

Tehran, Dec. 14: Iran on Sunday said a fire caused by the spillage from a ruptured oil pipeline in the southwest of the country has been brought under control, state news

under control, state news agency *IRNA* reported.

"The fire has been controlled and the oil spillage prevented from spreading" to farmlands around the pipeline, the head of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province's crisis management organisation, Khosro Kiani, told IRNA.

There were no casualties

There were no casualties from the fire, he added.

The agency said the rupture ocurred around noon on the Maroun pipeline, which was

shut off to stop the spillage.

The pipeline feeds the
Isfahan refinery — Iran's second largest, with a capacity of 3,75,000 barrels per day, according to IRNA.

Oil ministry official Ghasem Arab Yarmohammadi told the ministry's SHANA news agency that pipeline repairs and spillage cleanup were already underway.

ENDANGERED TAG FOR MONARCH BUTTERFLY SOON

Washington, Dec. 14: Trump administration officials are expected to say this week whether the monarch butterfly, a colorful and familiar backyard visitor now caught in a global extinction crisis. snould receive lederal design nation as a threatened

Stepped-up use of farm herbicides, climate change and destruction of milkweed plants on which they depend have caused a massive decline of the orange-andblack butterflies, which long have flitted over meadows. gardens and wetlands across

The drop-off that started in the mid-1990s has spurred a preservation campaign involving schoolchildren, homeowners and landowners, conservation groups, governments and businesses. Some contend those efforts are enough to save the monarch without federal regulation.

WTO FAILS TO **ENDORSE RULES TO STOP OVERFISHING**

Geneva, Dec. 14: World Trade Organisation negotiators have failed to reach a deal by a yearend deadline to cut subsidies that lead to overfishing, the chairman of the talks told delegates at a closed-door meet-

ing on Monday.
Colombia's Santiago Wills said it had been impossible to reach the UN target due to time lost due to the coronavirus pandemic, two sources at the meeting told Reuters. However. Wills said that a deal had been closer than ever, and the "tremendous" progress gave him confidence in a future deal.

World leaders committed in 2015 to a series of UN targets and one of them mandates the Geneva-based trade watchdog to strike a deal on ending government subsidies worth billions of dollars that contribute to over-fishing by 2020.

China, the European Union, the United States, South Korea and Japan are among the main

The failure is a significant blow to the world's fish stocks, since environmentalists say an ambitious deal could reverse a steep decline, and to the WTO, which faces questions about its ability to strike multilateral agreements.

It's ski time



Snowboarders sit on a chairlift at La Masella ski resort. Ski resorts in Spain's Catalonia region that borders France opened today, as a European debate rages over whether such sites should operate during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Biden weighs ex-EPA chief as domestic climate czar: Report

Czar expected to coordinate on climate policies across federal agencies

Wilmington, Del.co2, Dec. environmental agency, to 14: President-elect Joe run the EPA, the two **14:** President-elect Joe Biden is considering appointing Gina McCarthy, who headed the appointing U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in the Obama administration, as domestic "climate czar" in charge of coordinating climate policies across federal agencies, according to two people familiar

Biden is also considering Michael Regan, an team did not respond to African American who requests for comment. runs North Carolina's McCarthy, Regan and

Kuala (Malaysia),

Malaysian

history.

sources said.

If appointed, Regan would be a surprise choice over onetime front-runner Mary Nichols, who is retiring from the California Air Resources Board, as environmental justice activists and civil rights leaders push for more diversity in the incoming administration.

AUTHORITIES SAID

the man operating the

boat tried to flee when

he saw the patrol boat

and later jumped over-

off. There was no one

meter (41-foot) vessel.

found 2,118 kilograms

(4,669 pounds) of methamphetamines

aboard packed in Chinese

where the drug was pro-

duced, but Malaysia borders a number of coun-

tries where it is produced.

remote jungle area where

the borders of Myanmar,

Laos and Thailand meet.

was once a major source

of the world's opium and

In recent years it has

also become a major pro-

ducer of methampheta-mine. The United Nations

Office on Drugs and Cr-

ime said earlier in the

year that the cumulative

value of the methamphet-

amine market in Asia is

heroin.

The agency did not say

else aboard the 12.5-

board as his vessel sped

The Biden transition

Malaysia seizes

largest-ever meth

haul worth \$26m

Lumpur

authorities

Malaysian

Dec.

have seized more than

methamphetamine worth

more than \$26 million

aboard a small boat off

the country's western

coast, the largest ever

such haul in the country's

Maritime Enforcement

Agency said over the weekend that it made the

seizure on December 9 off

the coast of Penang. The

agency said in a state-

ment that a maritime patrol found the drugs on

a recreational boat that

was behaving strangely.

illicitly smuggled across

much of Southeast Asia,

China and Australia, part

of a multi-billion dollar

Authorities said the

man operating the boat

tried to flee when he saw the patrol boat and later

jumped overboard as his

vessel sped off. There was

no one else aboard the

12.5-meter (41-foot) vessel.

He was arrested and the

boat was seized. Officials

illegal trade in the drug.

Methamphetamine

tons of crystal

comment.

Biden has made tackling climate change a pillar of his upcoming administration, seeking to restore the United States as a global leader on the issue while forcing all federal agencies to rethink their roles in tackling the prob-

Biden, who was vice president under President Barack Obama, selected former Secretary of State John Kerry to serve as his

Nichols also did not global climate czar, makrespond to requests for ing him part of the US ing him part of the US national security team and charging him with coordinating with other counties on the environ-

> If selected, McCarthy, who currently serves as president of the Natural Resources Defense Counsel, a leading national environmental group, would serve as the domestic counterpart to Kerry.
>
> The position would not require U.S. Senate confirmation

Kerry and Brian Deese, Biden's pick to head the National Economic Cou-ncil, both worked under Obama and helped negotiate the Paris climate accord, which the United States exited under Republican President Donald Trump. Biden has

vowed to rejoin the pact. McCarthy was key to writing the Clean Power Plan, a signature Obamaera measure that imposed the first-ever limits on carbon pollution from U.S. power plants.

Temple of Hercules



Picture shows the Temple of Hercules at the Amman Citadel, in the Jordanian capital Amman. According to local media, the archaeological site was uncovered during works to install a water drainage system.

'External source' causes oil tanker blast off Saudi Arabia

Dubai, Dec. 14: A maritime group says an explosion has struck a ship off the Red Sea port city of Jiddah, Saudi Arabia.

The United Kingdom Marine Trade Operations, an organisation under Britain's royal navy, said happened blast Sunday,

It urged ships in the area to exercise caution. Dryad Global, a maritime intelligence firm, also reported the blast. Saudi Arabia's state-run media did not acknowledge the explo-

There was no immediate without word on what caused the

after a mine exploded and damaged a ship off Saudi Arabia last Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels have used sea mines before in their long war against a Saudiled coalition. However, the Houthis have not com-

talks with EDF for nuclear plant will be subject to thor-

UK to start fund

London, Dec. 14: Britain said on Monday it will hold talks with French energy giant EDF concerning the construction of a nuclear power plant on England's east coast, in a project reportedly worth 20 billion (\$26.4 billion, 22 billion euros).

EDF had submitted an application in May to build the 3.2-gigawatt Sizewell C nuclear plant, which is situated in Suffolk, but it ran into criticism from environmental campaigners — while plans were delayed by the pandemic.

"The government has... confirmed that it is to enter negotiations with EDF in relation to the Sizewell C project in Suffolk as it considers options to enable investment in at least one nuclear power station by the end of this parlia-ment" in 2024, it said in a statement.

"If the project proceeds, it could create thousands of new jobs during construction and operation.
The statement said the

negotiations will strive to secured before any final decision is taken on

ough scrutiny and needs to satisfy the govern-ment's robust legal, regulatory and national secu-rity requirements," said the statement.

EDF is working alongside long-standing part-ner China General Nuclear Power Corporation (CGN) to build nuclear power plants in Britain.

The French group said in May that Sizewell C will generate low-carbon electricity to power six million homes — but Greenpeace had argued that there were more cheaper and safer alter-natives than nuclear.

Construction of the plant would create 25,000 jobs and 1,000 apprenticeships, while the opera-tional power plant would employ 900 staff. Britain, which will host

the UN's next major climate summit COP26 in the Scottish city of Glasgow next year, announced the EDF talks in its Energy White Paper. The document set out the govwould ensure value for any money invested and that all relevent approvals would be secured before any financial stressed on Monday (1). EDF has not yet been given a "green light" for

China's Chang'e-5 completes first orbital correction

Beijing, Dec. 14: China's Chang'e-5 probe, that touched down on the moon and collected rock samples from the lunar surface to bring them back to Earth for the first time in nearly 45 years, completed its first orbital correction on Monday, the country's space agency announced.

The orbital correction was conducted at 11:13 am (Beijing Time) when the two 25N engines on the orbiter-returner combination were operational for about 28 seconds, National Administration (CNSA) said. The CNSA said all systems on the orbiterreturner combination that carries lunar samples are currently in good condition.

The Chang'e-5 probe, comprising an orbiter, a lander, an ascender and a returner was launched on November 24, and its lander-ascender combination touched down on the north of the Mons Rumker in Oceanus Procellarum, also known as the Ocean of Storms, on the near side of the moon on December 1.

After the samples were collected and sealed, the ascender of chang'e-5 took off from the lunar surface on December 3. The orbiter-returner combination entered the moon-Earth transfer orbit on Sunday.

When the time is right, the orbiter and returner will separate from one another, the state-run news agency Xinhua quoted CNSA as saying. The probe's returner is expected to land at the Siziwang Banner in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in

Chang'e-5 is world's first moon-sample mission in more than 40 years. The United States sent

astronauts to the moon to collect samples. In the Soviet Union's unmanned lunar sampling missions, the spacecraft took off from the moon and returned to Earth directly.
The Chang'e-5 probe,

named after the mythical Chinese moon goddess, is expected to bring about 2 kilogrammes of lunar samples back to Earth. China chose a complicated technological appro ach, including unmanned rendezvous and docking in lunar orbit, in order to bring back more samples and lay a technological foundation for manned lunar missions, Zhaoyu, deputy director of the Lunar Exploration and Space Program Centre of the CNSA, had said last week.

The chang'e-5 is one of the most complicated and challenging missions in Chinese aerospace history, as well as the world's first moon-sample mission in more than 40

The collected samples will now be put in a return capsule for the trip home, expected to land in Inner Mongolia. If the mission is successful, it will make China only the third country to return samples from the moon, more than 50 years after the US Apollo missions.

The last successful lunar sample return mission was the Soviet Union's Luna 24 mission in 1976. Beijing is looking to match its rivals' — the US and Russia — achivements and has poured billions into its military-run space programme. — PTI

Aerosols act like a launch vehicle for bacteria, may pose risk of disease transmission

Bacteria can travel from one continent to another: Study

London, Dec. 14: Some bacteria can travel from one continent to another 'hidden' in atmospheric dust, according to a new study which says these microbes may not only affect human and animal health, but also impact climate and

The research, published journal Research, Atmospheric deciphered the mystery of the transport of microorganisms across continents 'giant' atmospheric particles called iberulites

that could be inhaled by humans. According to scientists,

including those from the University of Granada (UGR) in Spain, these aerosols act like a "launch vehicle" for bacteria, and may pose risk of disease transmission across conti-

explained that Thev iberulites are giant atmospheric bioaerosols made of multiple minerals, measuring on average one hundred microns approximately. While these

bioaerosols were discovered in 2008, the scientists said the mechanism by bacteria involved in the formation of atmospheric iberulites remained unknown.

In the current study, the researchers analysed atmospheric dust deposits in the city of Granada in Spain. They found that the composition of these deposits was heterogeneous, comprising predominantly clay, quartz, and carbonate minerals and, iron oxides to a lesser

extent. In addition to these minerals, the scientists said bacteria, silicon-rich algae called diatoms, and other single-celled organisms made up the biological component. They said the aerosols

also contained brochosomes which are microscopic granules secreted insects such as grasshoppers. According to the study, the dust originated from the Sahara Desert in north-northeast Africa and local soils with evidence of atmospheric

interactions between these components and clouds. Analysing the iberulites, the researchers found that they formed as a result of chemical and physical interactions between dust grains, the microorganisms from Saharan soils which initiate the aerosol formation, and water-vapour molecules from clouds.

The droplet of water agglutinates dust particles different sizes in its interior together with bacteria in suspension, the

study noted. "Bacteria can survive in iberulites because these provide a nutritious medium, microhabitat rich in nutrients, and they protect the bacteria from ultraviolet radiation," said Alberto Molinero Garcia, a coauthor of the study from UGR. "This is demonstrated by the bacterial polyexudates meric rather like mucilaginous mucus, act as a 'glue' between the mineral particles, preventing their disaggregation and increas-

ing their resistance to fragility in the turbulent phenomena of the atmos-Garcia added. According researchers, the iberulites aid microorganisms to travel great inter-continental distances on atmospheric currents such as the Saharan Air Layer (SAL). believe these Thev

aerosols may exist throughout the world, primarily in those regions where dust is carried in from desert regions.

SHORT TAKES

Ex-Reds coach Houllier dies

Paris: Gerard Houllier, a Frenchman who won three titles in one season as coach of English club Liverpool, has died. He was 73. Liverpool announced the death on Twitter on Monday. French sports daily L'Equipe said Houllier died following heart surgery in France. "We are mourning the passing of our treble-winning manager, Gerard Houllier," Liverpool wrote on Twitter.

Houllier had a mediocre stint as coach of France's national team in the early 1990s, his shortlived journey ending with an embarrassing failure to qualify for the 1994 World Cup. His tenure at Liverpool was far more successful, leading the Reds to the FA Cup, League Cup and UEFA Cup treble in

2001. He is one of only three managers along with Alex Ferguson and Pep Guardiola to have won three trophies with an English club in the same season. - AF

Shuttlers alerted

about fake events

New Delhi: The Badminton Association of India on Monday again cautioned its players, coaches and technical staff and asked them to stay away from unauthorised tournaments after it came to light that a Goabased organisation is conducting such an event next month. According to a release issued by BAI. Goa-based organisation Youth & Sports Development Association of India is conducting the third National Federation Cup next month in Madgaon, Goa with the organisers claiming that it will be a selection trial for upcoming international championships. "Neither BAI nor its affiliated unit Goa Badminton Association is aware about such tournaments and organisation," BAI General Secretary Ajay Singhania said in the release. "Surprisingly the organiser have

Hockey may get foreign tour soon

mentioned that they will select

players for international cham-

pionships which is totally a false and misleading." — PTI

Bengaluru: His side's Olympic preparation hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic, Indian men's hockey team chief coach Graham Reid is hoping to resume international action from early next year. The Australian said the sooner

India gets to play international matches, the better will be their preparations for the Tokyo Games, which has been shifted to next year due to the globa pandemic.

"With the support of Hockey India, we have planned for matches from early next year. These matches will ideally show us the level we are truly at and the areas that will require work on leading into the Olympic Games." Reid said in a statement issued by Hockey India.

Injured Neymar stretchered off

Rio de Janeiro: Brazilian star Neymar gave fans a reassuring message on Monday after undergoing tests on the ankle he injured in Paris Saint-Germain's 1-0 Lique 1 defeat to Lyon at the weekend.

Neymar left the field on a stretcher in apparent agony on Sunday but on Instagram he said: "It could have been worse.

"These tears, it's the pain, the fear, the worry, the surgeries, the crutches and other bad memories," Neymar wrote on his Instagram story alongside a picture of him in tears clutching his ankle. - AFP

Live on TV

Big Bash League: Hobart Hurricanes vs. Adelaide Strikers from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Hyderabad FC

Star Sports 2, 3 Premier League: Wolves vs Chelsea

from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1. HD

Serie A: Udinese vs Crotone from 11 pm, Benevento vs Lazio from 1.15 am (Wednesday) on on Sony Ten 2,

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Finch wary of Virat

Aaron warns Aussies about 'ruthless' Kohli

Australia limited-overs captain Aaron Finch wants the home team players to strike a "fine balance" when they confront Virat Kohli in the opening Test as he believes, if provoked too much, the India skipper can be "ruth-less" against his oppo-

India and Australia have always shared an intense rivalry on the field, filled with verbal volleys, banters and controversies over the

The last time the two teams faced off in 2018-19 the Test series saw some heated exchanges between the two captains — Kohli and Tim

"I think there will be times when things boil over and when you have got strong characters on either team that's going to come to a head at some point," Finch was quoted as saying by 'Sydney Morning Herald'.

"(But) there is a fine balance there, isn't there? You don't want him (Kohli) to get up and about in the contest. When he does, he can be ruthless on an

opposition."
The first Test of the four-game series, a day-night contest, begins Thursday Adelaide and it gains prominence Kohli will be returning home after the match for the birth of his first

Finch, who was part of the last home Test series between the two teams, said the Indian skipper looks much calmer the way he goes about his job now.

"I think the change is in the way he goes about it now. I think as a person he is probably a bit more relaxed out on the field and understands the tempo of the

Finch, who had played under Kohli in

New Delhi, Dec. 14:

Wriddhiman Saha's far

superior glovework may

be given preference over

Rishabh Pant's blazing

blade in India's opening

day/night Test against

Australia, starting at the

Adelaide Oval from

One of the most hotly

debated topics going into

the first Test has been the

Indian team's probable

playing XI, with the jury

still out on whether the

better keeper in 36-year-

old Saha pips the better

batsman that the 23-year-

The Indian team man-

agement has kept its cards close to its chest with Hanuma Vihari terming it a "healthy

competition" that augurs

There is a school of thought in the team that

Saha's superior glove-

work and also safe batting

should be valued more at

Coach Ravi Shastri, cap-

tain Virat Kohli, assistant

coaches Vikram Rathour,

Bharat Arun and travel-

ling selector Harvinder

Singh will be assessing

well for the side.

this point of time.

Thursday.

old Pant is.



A file photo of India captain Virat Kohli (left) and Australia's Aaron Finch.

Australia's

the fitness Test on Monday

to return to the Test squad

after a gap of four years. The opening game, a daynighter, begins on

GAVASKAR FEELS THERE WILL BE NO

Ajinkya Rahane

that he has led the team.

he has won. He led Australia

Dharamshala and India

and the team could have

lost to Australia A, but he

guided a young Kartik

Tyagi, scored his runs

and saved the game.
The attack that Saha

had

Pattinson, Michael Neser

and Cameron Green, which was international

against

faced

Moises

nighter, begins o December 17 in Adelaide.

"All-rounder

strain.

Saha has an edge over Pant

Challengers Roval Bangalore, said he was "surprised" to see the Indian's confidence in this year's IPL.

"What really surprised me was how, he obviously does a lot of planning and preparation himself, and into the opposition, but he never focused more on the opposition than his own team," he said.

"At Bangalore, he was always confident in the XI players that were picked and knew that if you played well, you had every chance of winning.

As someone who had many on-field duels with Kohli, Finch said it was good to learn about his relaxed side.

New Delhi, Dec. 14:

Ajinkya Rahane will not

be bogged down by the

pressure of captaincy if

he leads India in the last

three Tests against

Australia in Virat Kohli's

absence, feels batting great Sunil Gavaskar.

With Kohli going on paternity leave after the

opening day-night Test

against Australia in Adelaide, Rahane is

expected to lead the team

in the remainder of the

"There is no real pres-

sure on Ajinkya Rahane,

because both the times

both Pant and Saha's per-

formance based on their

individual contributions

Saha's 54 came when India could have lost the

game and he bailed the

team out while facing a top-quality attack. The

score read 143 for nine

in match situations.

four-Test series.

is

Sydney, Dec. 14: All-roundtinues to be hit with injury," a report in *crick*er Moises Henriques was on Monday added to

HENRIQUES REPLACES INJURED ABBOTT

injury-hit et.com.au. said. squad for the opening Test against India while pacer Abbott became the latest Australian player to join Sean Abbott was ruled out the injury list after being of the match due to a calf picking up the strain during the second warm-up game here. He is, however, Henriques, who had missed the three-day secexpected to be available for ond practice game due to a second Test Melbourne, which begins hamstring strain, cleared

on December 26. Abbott, who had taken three wickets in India's first innings, will not travel with the team to Adelaide.

"Fast bowler Sean Abbott will not travel to Adelaide Henriques has been added with Henriques and the to Australia's squad for the first Test against India remaining Australia squad members from Sydney

won," Gavaskar said dur-

taincy is concerned,

there is going to be no

pressure because he

knows he is at the moment, only the stand-

in captain for the 3 Test

"So, I don't think the

fact about being a cap-

tain or carrying on as

captain is going to be part of his thinking at all."

Rahane had captained

Compared to that, Pant

came after India had

already taken control of

the pink ball dress rehearsal with leg-spin-

ner Mitchell Swepson and

Maddinson in operation.

the side during the two

matches.

won. He led against warm-up games which Afghanistan and India ended in draws. -PTI

James

'So, as far as his cap-

ing Star Sports show.

strain in the day-night tour match at the SCG on Saturday.

Henriques last played a Test more than four years ago in Sri Lanka. He made a comeback to the national set-up after three years by featuring in the limited-overs series against India. He is the second player after Marcus Harris to be added late to the Test

squad. Harris was included in the squad for the opening Test following a spate of injuries, including David Warner and opener Will Pucovski being ruled out of the first game due to a

NZ BEAT WINDIES IN SECOND TEST **TO SWEEP SERIES**

Wellington, Dec. 14: New Zealand joined Australia atop world cricket's Test rankings on Monday when they beat the West Indies by an innings and 12 runs in the second Test to sweep the two-match series.

West The resumed their second innings at 244/6 on the fourth day, trailing New Zealand by 85 runs after following on 329 behind.

The tourists were eventually out for 317, their highest innings total of the series.

New Zealand made a

positive start on Monday after a short rain delay, dismissing West Indies captain Jason Holder for 61 in the fourth over of the day and ending his 82run partnership with Joshua Da Silva.

Holder was bowled by Tim Southee with a fuller ball which straightened and beat the outside edge of the bat.

Brief scores: New Zealand 460 bt West Indies 131 & 317 (Jason Holder 61, da Silva 57, Wagner 3-54, Boult 3INDIAN | SUPER LEAGUE

Mumbai fail to crack open JFC

missed chances saw table-toppers Mumbai City FC settle for only a 1-1 draw against Jamshedpur FC in the Indian Super League at the GMC Stadium, here on

Monday.

Owen Coyle's men took
the lead through Nerijus
Valskis (9') before Mumbai
hit back through Bartholomew Ogbeche (15'). A red card for Aitor Monroy around the halfhour mark saw Jamshedpur reduced to ten-men but some dogged defending and a number of missed chances for Mumbai, saw the former

get away with a draw.

Mumbai dominated the early exchanges as Monroy had to dive to block Ogbeche's shot as early as the first minute. But it was Jamshedpur who drew first blood. Just nine min-utes had passed when Jackichand Singh found Valskis in the penalty box. The Lithuanian's first-time shot was unerring. Barely three minutes later, Monroy could only find the side netting from a free-

Monroy was in the thick of things a couple of min-utes later, hacking Cy Goddard down and getting himself in the referee's

Then, Mumbai found their equaliser. Adam Le Fondre made a run down the right before squaring the ball to Bipin Singh. The

HYDERABAD FACE EB IN TRICKY TIE

Vasco, Dec. 14: Hyderabad FC will be keen to continue their unbeaten run when they take on a struggling SC East Bengal in an Indian Super League fixture at the Tilak Maidan here on Tuesday.

Four games into the season, Hyderabad FC are one of just three teams that are yet to lose a game a win and three draws) and they will be eager to convert their efforts into a victory, against the ISL debutants.
SC East Bengal have not had the best of starts

to the season. They are yet to score a goal, but logged first point in the league table in a feisty clash against Jamshedpur Thursday. They remain bottom of the table but could prove to be one of the biggest tests for Hyderabad so far this

latter found Ogbeche and the Nigerian unleashed a powerful drive past Jamshedpur keeper T.P.



Barcelona's Lionel Messi (centre) vies for the ball with Levante players during their La Liga match at the Camp Nou in Barcelona on Sunday.

Messi comes to Catalans' rescue

Madrid, Dec. 14: Lionel Messi saved Barcelona from another embarrassing result by scoring the decisive goal in a 1-0 win over lowly Levante, while Real Sociedad returned top of La Liga on Sunday.

Messi struck with 14 minutes remaining of a lacklustre display from Barca at the Camp Nou which will do little to ease fan fears following their 3-0 hammering at the hands of Juventus midweek. Ronald Koeman's side are

still way off the pace in the title race, nine points behind Real Sociedad who reclaimed first place despite only drawing 1-1 with Eibar.

Barcelona do however have two games in hand on the Basque outfit. Atletico are level on 26

points with Sociedad and also have two games in hand while Real Madrid are now just three points behind the leaders having played one less after beating their local rivals 2-0 on Saturday. Villarreal are four points

off the lead in fourth after drawing 1-1 at Real Betis, who are one point behind Barca in ninth.

Barca managed to force several saves from Aitor Fernandez, with the Levante goalkeeper doing particularly well to push away a stinging shot from Martin Braithwaite in the 16th minute and Antoine Griezmann's header five minutes later.

However the best chance of the opening period fell to Jorge de Frutos in the 12th minute, the Spaniard somehow shooting straight at Marc-Andre ter Stegen after the ball broke kindly for him right in front of

them," said Klopp.
"I think in the first half

an hour we could have lost

the game, in the last 60 min-

utes we should have won it.

In the end we get a point

Leicester's James Maddison (right) celebrates his goal against Brighton in their Premier League match at the King Power Stadium in Leicester on Sunday. -AP

Leaders Spurs, Liverpool held

and Liverpool remain tied League after both were held to 1-1 draws at Crystal Palace and Fulham respec-tively, while Pierre-Emerick Aubamyeng's own goal condemned Arsenal to another shocking home defeat, going down 1-0 to Burnley on Sunday.

Leicester took advantage of slip ups by the top two to close to within one point of the leaders as James Maddison scored twice in a 3-0 rout over Brighton and Southampton are up to fourth as they also comfortably saw off Sheffield

United 3-0. Liverpool and Tottenham THE RESULTS

Crystal Palace (Schlupp 81) Tottenham (Kane 23)

Southampton (Adams 34, Armstrong 62, Redmond 83) **Sheffield United**

face each other at Anfield on Wednesday and, after Chelsea, Manchester City and Manchester United failed to win on Saturday, they both missed the chance to open up a gap at the top in the title race.

The champions needed a Mohamed Salah penalty 11

Fulham (De Cordova-Reid 25) Liverpool

Burnley

(Maddison 27, 44, Vardy 41) Brighton

minutes from time to avoid an embarrassing defeat at Fulham after a dreadful first-half performance left Liverpool manager Jurgen

Klopp seething on the touchline. "We needed half an hour to get our feet in the game, that's why I shouted a bit at

Bobby DeCordova-Reid's thunderous finish into the far corner to take the lead was no more than Scott

and that's it.

Parker's side deserved as the returning Alisson Becker kept Liverpool in the game before the break. Liverpool dominated the second-half to pin Fulham

back, but needed a penalty to salvage a point when Aboubakai penalised for handling Wijnaldum's free-kick.