THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI FRIDAY 18 DECEMBER 2020



SPORT | 8

Kohli hits a half century as India end Day 1 on 233 for 6 in 1st Test against Aussies



WORLD 6

President Putin denies involvement in Kremlin foe Navalny's poisoning **DELHI AGE** 16

Saif Ali Khan set to charm the OTT platform again with his upcoming series



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Saroj Pandey, wife of late Brig. K.P. Pandey, receives "Swarnim Vijay Mashal" in Gurgaon on Thursday during the felicitation ceremony as part of the golden jubilee year celebration of India's victory in the 1971 war against Pakistan.

₹28K-cr acquisition of military hardware is approved by DAC

New Delhi: The defence ministry on Thursday approved procurement of weapons and military equipment worth ₹28,000 crore for the three services, officials said. The procurement proposals were cleared at a time India and China are locked in a bitter border standoff in Ladakh. The officials said almost all the weapons and military hardware approved for procurement will be acquired from domestic industry. Officials said a total of seven acquisition proposals were approved by the Defence Acquisition Council.
Full report on Page 4

24,010 new Covid cases, tally at 99L

New Delhi: With 24.010 new cases in a day, the country's Covid-19 caseload crossed 99.56 lakh, while 94.89 lakh people have recovered so far. According to the Union health ministry, the total

coronavirus cases mounted to 99,56,557 and the death toll rose to 1,44,451 with 355 new fatalities in a day. Full report on Page 4

Top US general in

talks with Taliban

Kabul: US Gen. Mark A. Milley held unannounced talks with Taliban peace negotiators in the Persian Gulf to urge a reduction in violence across Afghanistan, even as American officials warned that stepped-up Taliban attacks endanger the peace negotiations with the Afghan government. - AP

COUNTERPOINT



Before you give it to me, test it on my bodyguard!



Max: 18°C Min: 6°C **RH:** 50% Rain: Nil

Forecast: Sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana Tithi: Margasira Shuddha Chavithi till 2.28 pm Star: Sravanam till 7.08 pm Varjyam: 11.14 pm to 12.53 am **Durmuhurtam:** 8.55 am to 9.39 am; 12.34 pm to 1.18 pm Rahukalam: 10.30 am to noon **SUNSET TODAY 5.27 PM**

SUNRISE TOMORROW 7.08 AM MOONRISE TOMORROW 10.26 AM MOONSET TODAY 9.15 PM



SC for 'pause' in implementing agri laws, but Centre reluctant

PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

Acknowledging the right of farmers to hold non-violent protests, the Supreme Court on Thursday suggested that the Centre put on hold the implementation of its new agricultural laws, putting forward the idea of setting up an impartial and independent committee to end the impasse. The Centre said the farmers would not come forward for negotiations if the implementation of the farm laws was put on hold.

The Centre told the court it was not possible to hold implementation of the laws. While solicitorgeneral Tushar Mehta said it couldn't be done, attorney-general K.K. Venugopal said he would come with the response of the government on the proposition.

Chief Justice S.A. Bobde asked Mr Venugopal to give an assurance that the laws will not be implemented in the interim period "till we hear the matter". The A-G, however, said this could stall the negotiations. To this, the CJI said a statement to this effect by the Centre



A farmer plays an instrument at "khap panchayat" at the Delhi-UP border near Ghazipur in New Delhi on Thursday during a protest against the Centre's farm laws.

PAGE 3

Tomar writes open letter to farmers in bid to clear confusion

could only enable the discussions with the protesting farmers and resolve the standoff.

Mr Venugopal then asked for time to discuss it with government offi-cials and come back during the vacation, when the CJI indicated a bench will be set up to hear the matter even during the winter break. Friday is the last working day for the court

before its 15-day winter recess, that ends on

January 3.

The Supreme Court also refused to order eviction of farmers from Delhi's borders, where they are camping for 22 days, without hearing them. The court said farmers have the right to protest, but without inconveniencing

other people.

The court said it would ask the Centre if the manner of protest could be slightly altered so it doesn't affect citizens' right of Turn to Page 2Modi to virtually address

farmers in MP today: Page 3

'Cannot betray farmers': Kejri tears copies of govt farm laws

SUNIL THAPLIYAL

The Delhi on Thursday Assembly passed a resolution against the Centre's three new farm laws in a special session. During the tabling of the resolution, CM Arvind Kejriwal said that he cannot betray the farmers and the soldiers of the country, and tore up copies of the three farm laws in the Assembly. The CM urged the Centre "not to become worse

than Britishers". He also asked the Centre what was the hurry to get the farm laws passed during pandemic'

"I am pained that I have to do this. I did not intend to, but I cannot betray the farmers of my country who have been sleeping on the streets in the cold when the temperature is just two degree Celcius,' he said.

■ More on Page 2

7 agreements inked as PM, Hasina hold meet

Modi will visit Dhaka in March; swipe at Pak over '71 atrocities

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday held a virtual summiť with Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina that included "comprehensive discussions covering all areas including connectivity and trade, development cooperation, border management and river water sharing", after which it was announced Mr Modi would visit Bangladesh in March 2021 to "join the celebrations on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence and 50 years of Bangladesh-India diplomatic relations"

It may be recalled the Pakistan Army surrendered to the Indian Army in Dhaka on December 16, 1971, marking the liberation of the erstwhile East Pakistan, which emerged as the independent nation of Bangladesh.

In response to a question at a special MEA briefing on the summit in the evening on Sheikh Hasina's recent reported statement that Bangladesh can never forget or forgive Pakistan for the



1971 atrocities and also that it demands an apology from Pakistan, India also took a dig at Pakistan, saying: "There is no denying that state-sponsored oppression against Bangladesh's just war of oppression led to the death of more than three million, more than two lakh women were raped and tortured. We deeply respect and understand the sentiments expressed by Sheikh Hasina. In his remarks, Mr Modi

Sheikh Hasina: "Following the Victory Day, our meeting today is of even more special significance. It is a matter of pride for us to celebrate the historic victory of Bangladesh over anti-liberation forces as the Victory Day with you. Today, when Bangladesh is celebrating 49 years of



independence, I pay homage to the martyrs of both countries who sacrificed their lives. On the occasion of Victory Day, yesterday I paid tribute at the National War Memorial in India and lit a 'Golden Victory Torch'. These four victory torch es will tour all over India and will be taken to all the villages of our martyrs. Since December 16, we are celebrating the 'Golden Victory Year', during which many events will be organised across India."

The two PMs "jointly unveiled a commemora-tive postal stamp issued by the Government of India on the occasion of birth centenary of Banga-bandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, while Mr Modi also "thanked the Government of Bangladesh for

■ Turn to Page 2

Latest communication sat launched by Isro

Mamata 'rejects' **Central posting** of 3 IPS officers

KOLKATA, DEC. 17

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has accused the Narendra Modi government of a "colourable exercise of power" after the Union home ministry officially ordered the Central deputation of three IPS officers of her government

on Thursday.
The TMC supremo refused to accept the Centre's order and sources said her government is likely to challenge it legally.

Ms Banerjee, who is now in North Bengal, "GoI's order of Central deputation for the 3 serving IPS officers of West Bengal despite the state's objection is a colourable exercise of power and blatant misuse of emergency provision of IPS Cadre Rule 1954. This act is nothing but a deliberate attempt to encroach upon state's jurisdiction & demoralise the serving officers in WB."

WEST BENGAL CM Mamata Banerjee has accused the Narendra Modi government of a 'colourable exercise of power' and sources said her government is likely to challenge the deputation of three IPS officers legally

She added: "This move, particularly before the elections, is against the basic tenets of the federal structure. It's unconstitutional & completely unacceptable! We wouldn't allow this brazen attempt by the Centre to control the state machinery by proxy! West Bengal is not going to cow-down in front of expansionist &

undemocratic forces. The IPS trio, who were posted in the West Bengal police, are Rajeev Mishra, IGP (South Bengal), Praveen Kumar Tripathi, DIG (Presidency Range), and Bholanath Pandey, SP at Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas.

More on Page 4

Adhikari, another MLA leave TMC

Party MP set to quit; all 3 may join BJP as Amit Shah begins Bengal visit on Sat

RAJIB CHOWDHURI

Former West Bengal minister Shubhendu Adhikari and his loyalist Jitendra Tiwari, Pandabeshwar's MLA. severed their long ties with Trinamul Congress in a span of a few hours on Thursday, setting a rare instance of two heavy-weights' exit over their revolt against chief minister Mamata Banerjee in her party's history.

After dealing the double blow to their party, the duo, along with two-time



Burdwan East TMC MP Sunil Mondal, are set to join the

Union home minister Amit Shah at a rally in Midnapore on December 19 when he comes on a two-day state tour this weekend. Mr Mondal, a follower of Mr Adhikari, revolted within the TMC recently over interference political strategist Prashant Kishor and his team Indian Political Action Committee

In the morning Mr Adhikari, who resigned as Nandigram's MLA on Wednesday, wrote to the Trinamul supremo politely in a letter: "I am writing to tender my resignation as a member of the All India Trinamool Congress as well as from all other positions held by me in the party and its associate organs with immediate effect. I am thankful for all the challenges and opportunities

that has been afforded to

me and I will always value

my time spent as a member of the party."

He, however, cancelled his Delhi visit during the day, fearing arrest by the police in a false case ahead of his induction into the BJP, though governor Jagdeep Dhankhar had urged the CM in a letter not to unleash a political vendetta through the police against her party's defectors.

In the afternoon Mr Tiwari, whom Banerjee called up a day before to placate him and also asked him to wait till her return to the city from her North Bengal visit,

Turn to Page 2



Kamal Nath bid for Cong-G23 thaw

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

As the Congress' internal elections draw close, the top leadership wants to bridge the gap with the 23 letter writers demanding a change in the party's working style and an
"active and present" leadership. Insiders claim a
meeting between Congress president Sonia Gandhi and some of the letter writers was expected by the coming weekend. Acting as a bridge between the two sides is former Madhya Pradesh CM Kamal Nath, who has in the last couple of days met the letter writers as well as Mrs Gandhi in a bid to find a middle path.

The parleys between the leadership and the letter writers had come to an abrupt end when senior leader Ahmed Patel contracted Covid-19 in early October and passed away

posed meeting will see Mrs Gandhi and some of the letter writers face to face for the first time in months. It's seen as an olive branch by the party leadership so that these leaders' concerns can be addressed. They have sought elections to the Congress Working Committee and other key party posts, and also called for strengthening the party at grassroots level.

in late November. The pro-

Several have said the time for introspection was over. The Congress leadership is keen to hold elections in January so that a full-time president can be appointed. It's keen on a that voting is unnecessary as in 2017 when Rahul Gandhi was elected party chief as there was no second candidate. The 23 leaders had writ-

ten to Mrs Gandhi in August this year

Macron tests Covid positive, in self-isolation for next week Paris, Dec. 17: French

Emmanuel President Macron tested positive for Covid-19 on Thursday, the presidency said, adding that he would now selfisolate for the next week. He is one of several world leaders who have contracted Covid-19, including British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and US President Donald

Trump.
Mr Macron was tested

after the "onset of the first

symptoms" and will now,

in accordance with national regulations, "self

isolate for seven days. He

will continue to work and

carry out his activities

remotely, office said in statement. As a result of the diagno-

sis, a trip next week by Mr Macron to Lebanon — where the President had been pressing for far-reaching political change after the giant Beirut port explosion in

August — has been cancelled, his office said. French Prime Minister Jean Castex will self-isolate after contact with Mr

Macron, his office said. It said the PM shows no symptoms but will no longer be going to the

French Senate on Thursday to outline his government's strategy to combat Covid-Mr Macron's wife

Brigitte will also be selfisolating but also shows no symptoms, her office

Parliament Speaker Richard Ferrand is also self-isolating after contact with Macron, his office said. Infections still high France earlier this week restrictions imposed to battle the second wave of the coronavirus but infection rates

nigh. — AFP

More on Page 6 remain high

Centre in Sriharikota, on Thursday. **Assam's new** party AJP picks leader

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, DEC. 17

Former AASU general secretary Lurinjyoti Gogoi, the face of the anti-CAA movement in Assam who recently joined active politics, was named president of the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), a regional party floated to challenge the BJP in 2021.

Mr Gogoi, who served AASU for five years, left it to work for a political alternative as people felt the AGP and other parties had failed to address

regional aspirations. Earlier Thursday, the AJP's first convention appointed former minister Jagdish Bhuyan as general secretary. Pabindra Deka, who joined it on Wednesday, was named working president.

The AJP blew the poll bugle against national and "communal parties" and aims to win power in 2021 by defeating the BJP and Congress-led





Tourists ice-skate as winter cold sets in at Lakkar Bazaar in Shimla on Thursday. Cold

ing sub-zero temperatures in the last 24 hours.

wave conditions prevailed in Himachal Pradesh, with Keylong, Manali and Kalpa record-



















COVID POSITIVITY BELOW 2% FOR 3RD DAY IN ROW

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

For the third consecutive day, the Covid-19 positivity rate remained below two per cent. Delhi recorded 1.363 new Covid-19 cases on Thursday with over 90,000 tests conducted, the highest till date, even as the positivity rate slipped to 1.51 per cent. With 35 new fatalities, the death count climbed to 10,182. According to the health department data, 1,363 fresh cases, lowest since August 31, came out of the record 90,354 tests conducted the previous day, including 49,102 RT-PCR tests and 41,252 rapid antigen tests. On August 31, the city had recorded 1,358 cases. The positivity rate from December 3 to December 7 had successively dipped to 4.96 per cent, 4.78 per cent, 4.2 per cent, 3.68 per cent, and 3.15 per cent respectively. On December 8, however, it had risen again to 4.23 per cent but fell to 3.42 per cent on December 9 and 2.46 per cent on December 10. It had risen to 3.33 per cent again on December 11 and fell again to 2.64 per cent on December 12. It rose marginally again to 2.74 on December 13 but fell to 2.15 per cent on December 14. On December 15 and 16, the positivity rates were 1.9 per cent and 1.96 per cent respectively. The active cases tally, on Thursday, dropped to 12,198 from 13,261 the previous day. The bulletin said that the total number of cases has climbed

BIZMAN TRACED, JOINED STIR TO ESCAPE LENDERS

Ghaziabad, Dec. 17: A debtridden businessman, who changed his appearance and joined the ongoing farmers' protests at one of the Delhi border points to escape moneylenders, was traced by police on Thursday. Praveen a resident of Murad Nagar town, had left his house on December 1 but did not return, police said. He was found at the Ghazipur-Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh gate) border. On a previous occasion too, he had gone missing but had returned some days later, therefore, his family did not lodge a police complaint till Prayeen was tracked with the help of his mobile phone which was put under surveillance and his car was found parked near the protest site, superintendent of police (rural) Iraj Raja told PTI. "He had grown a beard and looked like a Sikh man. However, we recognised him as was getting inside his car," a police officer said. Upon interrogation, he told the police that he was under debt and the lenders were mounting pressure on him to return their loans. To escape their harassment, he began camping at the protest site

Adhikari and another MLA leave Trinamul

and was getting free food

there, they said. - PTI

■ Continued from Page 1

announced his exit from the TMC after quitting the chairman's post as the outgoing mayor in the board of administrators of Asansol Municipal Corporation in protest against vandalism in his office.

"The leaders in Kolkata did not want me to be in the party. That is why they ordered the

"I have quit all posts of the party and left it too. In Bengal now Mr Adhikari is the most popular leader," he said. Mr Mondal also pledged his support to Mr Adhikari in his next political stint. His followers already circulated posters about him with Mr Adhikari. BJP sources said Mr Mondal's

defection is almost certain. The prospect of switchover by Mr Tiwari and Mr Mondal, however, arose at a meeting on Wednesday evening in presence of Mr Adhikari, who headed to Mr Mondal's residence at Kanksa straight from the West Bengal Assembly after tendering his resignation as Nandigram

Retired Army officer Col. Diptangshu Chaudhuri, who joined the TMC from the BJP, was also present there.

Kejriwal tears copies of Centre's farm laws

Delhi Assembly passes resolution against 3 new farm laws

SUNIL THAPLIYAL NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

The Delhi Legislative Assembly passed a resolution against the three new farm laws in a special session held on Thursday. During the tabling of the resolution, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said that he cannot betray the farmers and the soldiers of the country, and tore up copies of the Centre's three new farm laws. The CM urged the Centre "not to become worse than Britishers". He also asked the Centre "what was the hurry to get the farm laws passed during pandemic". Tearing the three farm

acts in the Assembly, CM Kejriwal said: "I support the resolution tabled in the Assembly today. I am in pain while I tear these three farm laws, as I did not intend to do this. But today, when a farmer of the country is sleeping on the road in 2°C temperature, I cannot betray the jawans and kisans of my country. I am a citizen of this country first, a chief minister later. This Assembly rejects the three laws and appeals to the Central government to



Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal tears copies of new farm laws as he speaks at Delhi Legislative Assembly.

meet the demands of farmers.

He said he was doing so because he cannot betray of the country. Highlighting the plight of farmers protesting at Delhi's various borders,

he said 20 farmers have so far lost their lives and appealed to the Centre to repeal the laws immedi-

Addressing the Delhi Assembly, the CM said: "I honour the martyrdom of Baba Ram Singh Ji. Even

there are people who are so troubled by the state of affairs, that they can do this supreme sacrifice for the people, for the society, and their country. The letter that they wrote depicted their plight and anguish, he wrote that he was not able to bear the pain of the farmers. He came to the Singhu border daily and brought jackets and quilts for the farmers. When he could not bear the plight of the farmers anymore, he decided to sacrifice his life. More than 20 farmers have lost their lives until now. It has been 20 days since this movement has started, which means one farmer is losing his life every day. I want to ask the Central government, how many lives will you take before you listen to the plight of the farmers?"

"Every farmer has become Bhagat Singh... government is saying they are reaching out to farm-ers and trying to explain benefits of the farm bills... The UP chief minister told farmers they will benefit as their land won't be taken away. Is that a benefit?" Mr Kejriwal asked.

HC rejects plea seeking aid, security to farmers

New Delhi, Dec. 17: The Delhi high court on Thursday declined to entertain a plea seeking aid, security and treatment of the farmers protesting on the borders of the national capital, saying a similar issue was before the Supreme Court.

A bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan also said that the high court's jurisdiction does not extend to areas outside the national capital territory and added that the same plea could have been filed in any of the high courts of Rajasthan, Punjab or Uttar Pradesh.

The bench also observed that the plea was filed without doing any research or preparation and dismissed it.

The court's order came after Delhi government additional standing coun-sel Sanjoy Ghose and advocate Rhishabh Jetley told the bench that a similar was being heard by the apex court.

The petition by a lawyer, Ashish, had sought direc-

▶ THE COURT observed that the plea was filed without doing any research or preparation and dismissed it

tions to the Centre and Delhi government to take steps to prevent the spread of Covid-19 among the farmers protesting at the borders of the national capital.

The plea, filed through advocate Rohit Jha, had also sought directions to the authorities to ensure the protests do not turn violent and to remove the road blockages caused by the agitation.

The farmers are protesting at several roads near Delhi borders against the three new farm laws -Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act. 2020, Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act 2020.

HC: Dharnas in residential areas could set wrong example

New Delhi, Dec. 17: The Thursday expressed con-cern over the continuing protest outside Chief Minister Kejriwal's here, saying permitting such demonstrations in a residential area could set a wrong precedent.

Justice Sachdeva said today the protest may be peaceful, but if a precedent is set, then anyone would come and squat there as they do in areas, like Ramlila ground or Jantar Mantar here, which are designated spots for

holding protests.
"There is no problem if you come, protest and then go away. But this is going on for 11 days continuously. Once you set a precedent, anyone will come and squat there. If this is permitted for all time to come, then you know what is the state of certain areas, like Ramlila ground and Jantar Mantar, where squatting and protests are permitted. We cannot have that kind of a

situation in a residential colony," the court said. The concerns were expressed by the court while hearing a plea by the Civil Lines Residents Association, represented by advocate Rohit Bhagat, against the 11day long protest outside the CM's residence there on grounds that it was blocking a road and causing inconvenience to residents there.

The association has contended that protest has been permitted in a residential area and roads leading there have been barricaded in violation of the high court's 2017 direction to restrict dharnas in residential areas and to keep the roads clear.

The mayors of the three corporations have been profesting outside Kejriwal's residence seeking release of funds and clearance of alleged pending dues payable to

The court, during the hearing, observed that tents have come up in the area and there were news reports which stated that the mayors were going to run their offices



Farmers raise slogans during a protest against the Center's new farm laws at the Singhu Border in New Delhi on Thursday.

Kejriwal indulged in cheap theatrics, says Harsimrat

Cnandigarn, Dec. Former Union minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal on Thursday accused Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal of indulging in cheap theatrics by tearing up copies of the farm laws.

She said his government in Delhi was among the first to notify one of the central laws related to agriculture.

The Delhi Assembly on Thursday passed a resolution against the Centre's three new agriculture laws with Kejriwal tearing up their copies, saying he cannot betray farmers of the country.

In a statement here, Bathinda MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal said the Delhi CM was known as a dramebaaz but this time he indulged in "cheap theatrics" and "unparalleled hypocrisy" by tearing up the same laws in the Vidhan Sabha, one of which he had notified on November 23.

Asking Kejriwal to have mercy on farmers, Badal said it is strange that the Delhi CM has suddenly



HARSIMRAT KAUR Badal said the Delhi CM was known as a dramebaaz but this time he indulged in 'cheap theatrics' and 'unparalleled hypocrisy' by tearing up the same laws in the Vidhan Sabha, one of which he had notified on November 23

discovered that farmers are sitting out in the open in cold wave conditions and over 20 of them have

The Delhi chief minister is only shedding crocodile tears in a desperate bid to wipe away the blot he has put on his name by rushing to notify the farm laws on the directions of the central government. These dramas however won't help, she said.

The Bathinda MP and the SAD leader said this is not the first time that Kejriwal has tried to befool farmers.

Earlier also the Delhi chief minister first notified the farm laws secretly and when this fact came out in the open, he tried to win the sympathy of

farmers by going in for a farcical inspection of a few toilets near the Singhu border, she said.

This latest antic of tearing up copies of the farm laws has also been done to save Aam Aadmi Party's 'sinking ship" in Punjab where the party has been thoroughly discredited and become redundant, said Ms Badal.

Meanwhile, Cabinet minister Vijay Inder Singla termed Kejriwal's act as nautan-ki. He said it is yet another desperate attempt of Mr Kejriwal to cover up his party's shocking Uturn on the farm laws and his government's abject failure to protect the interests of farmers.

MCD dues: Mayors start indefinite hungerstrike AGE CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

On the 11th day of their sit-in protest, all the three mayors along with other BJP councillors on Thursday started an indefinite hungerstrike against the AAP government for not releasing pending dues to the tune of ₹13,000 crore to the three civic bodies. The Delhi high court, however, expressed concern over the continuing protest outside chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence, saying permitting such demonstrations in a residential area could set a wrong precedent.

North Delhi mayor Jai Prakash, South Delhi mayor Anamika Mithilesh and East Delhi mayor Nirmal Jain started the indefinite hungerstrike outside the CM's

'For the last 11 days we nave been sitting on a



BJP workers led by Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta (unseen) try to cross the police barricades set up outside the Delhi Legislative Assembly on Thursday. -PTI

ter demanding release of outstanding dues of all three corporations but Mr Kejriwal neither tried to meet us nor is he ready to listen to us. The three mayors have decided to sit on indefinite hunger strike from today itself till the Delhi government releases the outstanding funds of dence of the chief minis- tions," said Mr Prakash.

The city BJP, meanwhile, held a protest near the Delhi Assembly under the leadership of its president Adesh Gupta, MP Ramesh Bidhuri and Pravesh Verma, along with other senior leaders demanding the release of ₹13,000 crore to the civic boates dharna outside the resi- the municipal corpora- detained the BJP workers

Man stabbed over extra salad

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

A man was arrested for allegedly stabbing a 60year-old labourer after an argument broke out between them when one of them asked the other for some extra onions for salad while having dinner,

the police said. The accused, Riyasat Ali (59), works as a daily wage labourer at different places in the city but originally hails from Badaun in Uttar Pradesh, it said.

On December 8, Ali along with his co-labourer, Pawan, came to SB Farm in South Delhi's Fatehpur Beri to work at a godown. After unloading the crockery items brought from Faridabad, they sat for their dinner along with a group during which a

Man shot at after quarrel over serving of omelette

New Delhi, Dec. 17: A 27year-old man was shot at by a person following a quarrel between them over serving of omelette at a food joint in central Delhi's Chandni Mahal area, police said on Thursday. Nafees, a resident of

Rakab Ganj area sustained a gunshot injury in his right thigh and is out of danger. The incident took place on late Wednesday night, police said.

police (central) Sanjay heated argument took

place between the two over

sharing an onion salad.

Deputy commissioner of

Bhatia, the victim and the accused along with his associates were at a shop selling omelettes at Chitli Qabar chowk when an argument broke between the two sides over who would be served first. Later, when the victim

was going to his house, the group approached him and one of them fired in the air and then shot at the victim twice, he said. Nafees was taken to a nearby hospital where he is being treated, he added.

While having food, accused Ali asked Pawan

salad but when Pawan refused saying there were hardly any left. A heated argument took place between them and in a fit of rage, the accused stabbed Pawan multiple times in his stomach with a kitchen knife, the police officer said.

While escaping from the spot, he hid the knife near the wall of a farm on the main road, he said.

'The injured was shifted to AIIMS trauma centre by CATS ambulance. The hospital informed that the patient was stabbed multinle times in the stomach due to which his intestine and other inner body organs were exposed completely," said DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur.

He was in a very serious condition but is stated to be out of danger, he said.

India, Bangla ink 7 pacts

■ Continued from Page 1 issuing a stamp in honour of Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of Gandhiji's 150th birth anniversary celebrations earlier in September 2020".

In all, seven agreements were signed at the virtual summit between the two countries on hydrocarbons, culture, agriculture and high-impact community development projects. A decision was also taken "to expeditiously conclude the ongoing joint study on the prospects of entering into a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

(CEPA)".
The joint statement said Mr Modi also "assured (Covid) vaccines

would be made available

when produced in India". Sheikh Hasina "high-lighted the need for early signing of an interim agreement for the sharing of Teesta waters, as agreed upon by both the governments in 2011", and Mr Modi "reiterated

India's sincere commitment and continued efforts of the Government of India in that regard", the joint statement said. The two PMs also

"stressed on full implementation of the ongoing Coordinated Border Management Plan" and "agreed that loss of civilian lives at the border is a matter of concern and directed the border forces concerned to enhance coordinate measures to

such border incidents to

They also "agreed to

facilitate completion of border fencing at all pending sectors at the international border between both the countries at the earliest beginning from Tripura (India) Bangladesh sector". Both sides also "agreed to hold an early meeting of the Boundary Joint Conference to prepare a new set of strip maps along the stretch of Icchamati, Kalindi, Raimongol and the Hariabhanga Rivers from Main Pillar 1 to Land Boundary terminus, with a view to finalising the delineation of the boundaries as fixed".

SC for 'pause' in implementing laws ■ Continued from Page 1 that had put up the barri-

movement. "Farmers have the right to protest. We won't interfere with it, but we will look into the manner of protest ... and slightly alter it so that it doesn't affect the citizens' right of movement," the

iudges said.

The farmers' unions remained adamant on their demand that the laws must be withdrawn first. Agreeing with the court that the issue must resolved Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesman Rakesh Tikait said the future course of action will be decided after discussions with panchayat leaders.

They noted that the protesters had not blocked roads, it was the police

cades.

The ongoing protests have already cost the lives of 22 farmers, including several women. Eight victims died due to accidents while returning home, 12 due to heart attacks, three due to cold and a Sikh priest killed himself in protest against the farm

Union minister Hardeep Puri said the government was willing to sit with the protesting farmers. He said: "It pains me many people sitting in protest probably are not aware of what they are protesting against... The government is still sending a message to all farmers that please

come and talk.' In the Supreme Court, as

solicitor-general insisted it was not possible to put the new farm laws on hold, an irked CJI said: "Don't pre-empt it. A-G says he will discuss. We are not staying the law. But you can just say that no action will be taken in

the meanwhile. The Centre, meanwhile, expressed its hesitation about the CJI's option of setting up a committee of neutral and independent people with expertise in agriculture to hear both the farmers and the government to suggest a way forward.

Mr Mehta said the talks between the government and the agitating farmers should take place in the presence of neutral and eminent people to ensure

reasonability in the positions of both sides. At one stage the CJI sug-

gested the name of P. Sainath, a Magsaysay Award-winning journalist focusing on social inequalities, as a member of the proposed committee.

The petitioners said in court that roads were blocked by protesters and border points closed, affecting vehicular traffic. This, they said, was causing hardship to people, including Covid-19 patients, preventing them from accessing emergency medical services.

The Centre argued that the blockade at the Delhi borders will have to be lifted as "it affects the right to movement and the damage is enormous".

SHORT TAKES

JD-U throws hat in

ring for Bengal poll

Patna: Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U) on Thursday asserted that it was looking forward to contesting a substantial number of seats in the West Bengal assembly elections, in which its ally BJP has high stakes. JD(U) national general secretary Ghulam Rasool Baliyavi said the party's unit in West Bengal wants to contest at least 75 seats and the number could go up, subject to the approval of the leadership. Elections to the 294-strong West Bengal Assembly are likely to be held in a few months and the BJP, which put up a stunning performance in the state in last year's Lok Sabha polls, is looking to unseat the rul-ing Trinamul Congress, headed by chief minister Mamata Banerjee. "We have contested assembly elections in West Bengal in the past. We would like to do so this time also. Our party has carried out massive membership drives in districts such as Malda, Murshidabad, Purulia and Bankura," Baliyavi said. - PTI

16-year-old girl

raped by 'friends' Pune: A 16-year-old girl was allegedly raped and another minor girl molested by their two male "friends" in Pimpri-Chinchwad in Pune district. According to the police, both the accused, who are in their early 20s, with the help oftheir three friends, kidnapped the girls and confined them after committing the crime. All the five accused have been arrested and booked under relevant sections of the IPC and theProtection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, they said. As per a complaint filed by one of the girls, their two male friends took both of them to a secluded place

on Tuesday evening. "While the complainant was raped by one of the two accused, the other, aged 14, was molested by the second accused. "The duo then kidnapped both the girls with

the help of three more friends and confined them till early next morning," said a police officer. — PTI

53-year-old on run since 1993 arrested

Latur, Maharashtra: The city police has arrested a 52year-old man who had been on the run after allegedly setting his wife ablaze nearly three decades ago. The accused was identified as Suresh Limbaji Kshirsagar (52), a resident of Vivekanandpuram here. Kshirsagar allegedly set his wife ablaze on December 16, 1991. A case under IPC sec-

tion 498 (A) (husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty) was registered against him, but he got bail in 1993 after which he absconded, said a police official. Acting on a tip-off, a police team arrested him from Mohamadwadi area in Pune on Wednesday. Probe revealed that he had settled down in Pune and worked in a laundry. - PTI

MAHA OPPOSES PLEA AGAINST RANAUT TWITTER

SHAHAB ANSARI MUMBAI, DEC. 17

The Maharashtra government on Thursday urged the Bombay high court not to entertain a petition filed by advocate Kashif Khan seeking directives to Twitter to permanently suspend the Twitter handle of actress Kangana Ranaut. The state contended that the reliefs sought in the plea are vague and cannot be granted in writ jurisdiction. The HC has however, adjourned the matter till Monday. Public prosecutor Javesh Yaqnik, on behalf of the state told the division bench of Justice S S Shinde and Justice Makrand Karnik, "The matter doesn't have any head or tail. It is a baseless petition as it is silent on how the tweets are affecting the petitioner or the public at large." According to him, the reliefs sought by advocate Kashif Khan are vague and cannot be granted in writ jurisdiction. He also argued that prayers sought are vague and vast, which cannot be granted under the writ jurisdiction of this court. Mr Kashif told the bench that Ms Ranaut has been "misusing" the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

Will not interfere with farmers' protest: SC

As long as the protests are peaceful, there should be no impediment, says top court

New Delhi, Dec. 17: Farmers agitation should be allowed to con-tinue without impediment and this court will not interfere with it as the right to protest is a fundamental right, the Supreme Court Thursday said on the ongoing stir of agricul-

turists on Delhi borders. "We are of the view at this stage that the farmers' protest should be allowed to continue without impediment and without any breach of peace either by the protesters or the police," the bench headed by Chief Justice of India SA Bobde said.

The apex court, which put a sole caveat that there should not be any breach of peace either by farmers or police, also mooted an idea of putting on hold the implementation of the laws to enable negotiations with the agitating farmers which was opposed by the Centre saying agriculturists would then not come forward for the talks.

The top court was told by attorney-general K.K. Venugopal that he would get back after taking instructions on the suggestions.

The bench, which said it was worried with the way things are going on, was told by both the Centre and one of the farmers union that the negotiations are not happening at the moment.

The bench said in its bid to resolve the impasse over the three contentitious agri laws, it wanted to set up of an "impartial and independent" panel of agriculture experts and farmer unions. However, it held it back as farmers unions, impleaded as par-ties by it on Wednesday, could not appear to give their views.

In order to bring about an effective solution to the present stalemate between the protesters and the Government of India, we consider it appropriate in the interests of justice to constitute a Committee consisting of independent and impartial persons including experts in the field of agriculture for

RABINDRA NATH

Hours after the Election

Madhya Pradesh govern-

ment to book 3 Indian

Police Service (IPS) offi-

cers and a state police offi-

cer for their alleged role in

the use of black money in

2019 Lok Sabha polls in

probe into it to "establish involvement" of former chief minister Kamal

State BJP president

Vishnu Dutt Sharma said

the state government

should initiate a probe into the alleged "poll cash" scam to nail down

Mr Nath, who was the

chief minister when the

reported scandal broke

out, in the case in the wake of the exposure of

Thursday demanded

Nath in the "scandal".

ruling BJP on

directed

CHOUDHURY

BHOPAL, DEC. 17

Commission



Farmers share a hookah at a khap panchayat during a protest against the new farm laws at Delhi-UP border near

'I come from farming family': Tomar writes an open letter

Minister has made effort to engage in dialogue, says PM

SANJAY KAW

Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar has written an open letter to farmers in a bid to clear confusion over the three farm laws as the farmers' protest entered 22nd day on Thursday. He said that the MSP and APMC mandis will continue and the government is

ready to give a written assurance in this regard.

In his "emotional" letter, Mr Tomar highlighted that he too belongs to a family of former ways it is family of farmers and it is his duty to clear the confusion being created by the opposition over the agragrian laws.

Moments after Mr Tomar released his open letter, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged farmers and common citizens to read the agriculture minister's note. "Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomarji has written a let-



ter to farmer brothers and sisters and expressed his feelings, he has made an effort to engage in a humble dialogue. I request all 'annadaatas' (farmers), do read it. I also request all the people of the country to ensure that this letter reaches more and more people," Mr Modi tweeted in Hindi.

Earlier in the day, Mr Tomar met Union home minister Amit Shah and railway minister Piyush Goyal at the BJP headquarters to discuss the farmers' issues.

In the letter, Mr Tomar said: "As the agriculture fice in Leh-Ladakh."

'Election cash' scandal rocks MP

BJP demands probe by state police into Kamal Nath's role in case

Lok Sabha polls

Kamal Nath funds to a political party

3 IPS and a state police officers were booked for their alleged role

in the use of black money in 2019

THE EC ordered the MP chief

electoral officer to lodge a criminal

case against the 4 bureaucrats for

their alleged role in the transfer of

against the guilty.
The EC late

Wednesday evening ordered the MP chief elec-

toral officer to lodge a

criminal case against the 4

bureaucrats for their

alleged role in the transfer

of funds to a political party during the 2019 gen-

eral elections in the state.

Sushovan

The bureaucrats includ-

Sanjay and V. Madhu

Kumar and state police

officer Arun Mishra.

IPS officers Banerjee,

minister of the country, it is his duty to clear the air over the three farm laws. As agriculture minister, it is my responsibility to break the conspiracy that is being spread in the name of the farm laws between the government and the farmer sitting on protest near Delhi's borders."

The minister said: "I belong to a farmer's family and since childhood, I have experienced the tough life of farmers. And I also know what it takes to grow or sell crops. It is very satisfactory that after implementation of the law, MSP procurement has set a new record this time

"Commission deliberate

ed upon a report, received

from the Central Board of

Direct Taxes (CBDT), inti-

mating its search opera-

tions in Madhya Pradesh

and its findings of exten-

sive use of unaccounted

cash during the General

Elections 2019 in Madhya Pradesh," the EC said.

engaged in unauthorised

and unaccounted cash

contributions to individu-

als on behalf of a certain

political party, which is

reported to be corroborat-

ed during searches by the

Income Tax depart-ment...", the communiqué

found actionable evidence

in the CBDT report," a sen-

ior officer of EC said,

unwilling to be quoted since he was not autho-

rised to speak to the media.

The commission has

by EC said.

"It is reported that these

individuals

around December 25," a Targetting the Congress, Mr Tomar said, "Congress source said. "Our driverless metro sat on recommendations train, which will be the first in the country, is ready to be flagged off. We made in the Swaminathan Committee report for eight have made all preparations on our part," the years. And these days, they are working again to cresource said. ate tension...They have Delhi Metro had begun its commercial operation on December 25, 2002, a

> spanning 8.2 km from Shahdara to Tis Hazari with just six stations. The DMRC now has 10

day after the then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had inaugurat-

ed DMRC's first stretch.

lines with 242 stations and on regular days, the average daily ridership of the Delhi Metro is over 26 had earlier said.

New Delhi, Dec. 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi may flag off the country's The Delhi Metro driver-

PM may flag off

driverless train

Delhi Metro's

first driverless metro

(Janakpuri West-Botanical Garden) of the

Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC),

they said.
"A proposal has been sent to the Prime Minister's Office to flag

off the driverless train

less trains are to operate on the Magenta Line and train later this month in the Pink Line, made as part of the Phase-III of the DMRC. The Delhi Metro in September 2017 had startthe national capital, official sources said on Thursday.
The train will be flagged off on the Magenta Line
West-

ed full signalling trials of its new 'driverless trains' along a 20-km-long stretch on the Pink Line, which was yet to be commissioned back then. The trials were to test

the automation of the metro equipped Train Unattended Operations (UTO) and CBTC (Communication Based Train Control) signalling systems, which will significantly increase their frequency.
The driver-less trains,

having six coaches, are equipped with several advanced features. These new trains of the Delhi Metro have undergone significant technological as well as eco-friendly upgrades and many additional features have been added to increase passenger comfort. They are designed for a maximum speed of 95 kmph and operational speed of 85 kmph, the Delhi Metro

If US can hold poll, why can't **India have Parl session? Sena**

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, DEC. 17

The Shiv Sena has slammed the Narendra Modi government's decision to cancel the Winter Session of Parliament owing to the coronavirus pandemic. "If America can hold Presidential elections during Covid times, why can't we hold even a four-day winter session of the parlia-Maharashtra's ruling party asked.

"The presidential election of the big democratic country in the world did not stop due to Covid-19. The polls were held and change of guard took place in a democratic manner. Donald Trump was replaced by Joe Biden. This is the strength of super power's democracy, but we have locked the supreme temple of the democracy," said the Sena in an editorial in the party mouthpiece Saamana.

The Centre announced that Winter Session will not be held this year due to the Covid-19 and the Budget Session will be convened in January 2021.

Another faction of **BKU** reaches Noida

group of farmers reached advised to opt the DND or Noida on Thursday and attempted to move to Delhi to join the bigger stir against the new agri laws but was prohibited by police deployed in a

chilla border.

Scores of members of the Bharatiya Kisan
Union (Ambavat) faction were stopped near Mahamaya flyover on the Noida-Delhi Link Road, with the development obstructing traffic movement on the key route, according to police offi-

"The Noida-Delhi Link Road via Chilla is partially closed. Movement from Ďelhi to Noida is allowed but not otherwise, due to the farmers" stir," a Noida Traffic Police offi-cial told PTI.

the Kalindi Kunj route for travelling to and from Delhi," the official said, adding that the route has been diverted from Dalit Prerna Sthal to the DND

While the bigger group of BKU (Ambavat) protes-tors was stopped from going to Delhi, the faction"s 22 members were taken to the police line where they submitted a memorandum of their demands to the sub-divisional magistrate of Dadri, according to an official statement.

These protestors were stopped in view of the law-and-order situation amid ongoing protests by other farmers unions at Noida-Delhi border, the statement issued by the district police read. — PTI



Narendra Modi

PM to address to MP farmers on new farm laws' 'benefits'

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

Narendra Modi will virtually address farmers in Madhya Pradesh on Friday even as some farmer unions have been protesting at Delhi borders against the three recently passed farm sector-related legislations. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will also distribute relief amount for crops loss to around 35 lakh farmers during the event which will be attended by around 20,000 farmers across the state.

cross the same Meanwhile, Union minister agriculture Narendra Singh Tomar, home minister Amit Shah, finance minister Nirmaia Sitharaman and railways minister Piyush Goyal held meeting with some BJP general secretaries at the party headquarters on farmers issue.

During the meeting, sources said, Shah reviewed the party's outreach programme through press conferences and "chaupals" across all districts of the country to allay fears on the new farm laws. The party has been holding chaupals at all districts across the country highlighting the three legislations and how they are aimed at benefitting farmers, mainly small and marginal farmers and countering the propaganda by some farmer unions and opposition parties against the legislations and how MSP and APMC will continue to exist. The meeting at the BJP headquarters was held on the day the Supreme Court heard a plea related to the farmers' protests.

TRP scam: Ex-COO of rating agency Barc held in Mumbai

the electoral malpractices

bureau (EOW) of MP

police should be handed over the probe into the

matter. The investigation

will unearth how money

from the state was being

sent to Congress leaders at

Delhi during the Kamal Nath government", he told

Čhief minister Shivraj

Singh Chouhan, however,

said the state government

was yet to receive the order from EC. He said

reporters here.

"The economic offence

during 2019 LS polls.

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, DEC. 17

The Mumbai police on Thursday arrested the former Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Broadcast Audience Research Council (Barc) in connection with the alleged TRP (Television Rating Points) rigging scam. He was produced before a local court, which remanded him to police custody December 19. This is the

14th arrest in this case. A team of Mumbai crime branch arrested Romil Rmgarhia, former of the Barc on Thursday afternoon. Post arrest the crime

branch officers produced

ACCORDING TO the Mumbai police, during the investigation, Romil Ramgarhia's alleged involvement in the case came to light, following which he was placed

under arrest on Thursday

him before a metropolitan magistrate and sought his remand on the ground that they needed to interrogate him in connection with the case. They also said that his custody was

required in order to retrieve electronic evidence from him. According to the police, during the investiga-tion, Ramgarhia's

alleged involvement in

the case came to light. following which he was placed under arrest on Thursday.

The police began a probe in the alleged TRP after raums Broadcast agency Research Audience Council (Barc) filed a complaint through Hansa Research Agency about rigging of TRP by some channels. TRP. measured by recording viewership data at sample households, is crucial for attracting advertisers.

The Barc engaged Hansa to install and maintain barometers which record TV viewerhouseholds.

BSF kills 2 Pakistani intruders

New Delhi/Amritsar, dec. 17: Two Pakistani "armed intruders" were on Thursday shot dead by the BSF along the International Border in Punjab as the force thwarted three bids of drugs smuggling at this front. In the first interception, two men in their 30s were killed near the Rajatal border post in Amritsar around 2.20 am after the troops on guard

detected suspicious movement ahead of the border fence in Indian territory, a BSF spokesperson said.

An AK-56 rifle, semi-automatic rifle, pistol, 90 bullets, five magazines and two PVC pipes, usually used to push drug packets across the border, of about ten feet each, have been seized after a search was conducted of the incident site, the DIG said.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

1st CORRIGENDUM NOTICE

Sub:- 1st Corrigendum for the work in the section Sr. DEN-IV/DLI to be opened on 08.01.2021.

This has the reference to the open tender notice No.128-W/260/Tender Notice/NI 39,40 &41-W-IV/20-21 dated 14.12.2020. Due to change in the tender schedule, name of work and special condition etc. with the tender schedule for the work at item no 3 viz "Hiring of artisans & Helper for day to day maintenance of colonies and service building under Sr. DEN-IV" has been revised. The revised tender document can be seen at railway website www.ireps.gov.in. Tender for the above work will be opened on its prescribed date i.e. 08.01.2021 at 15.00 hours. Other terms and conditions will remain same. No: 128-W/260/Tender Notice/NIT 41/W-IV/20-21

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NOIDA

nistrative Building, Sector-6, Noida G.B. Nagar, (UP

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened / downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on NOIDA Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & http://etender.up.nic.in Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/ amendments & corrigendum etc.

A) (1) 38/DGM(JAL)/AO/SM(JAL)-I/20-21 Village Development (P/L Water and Sewer Line in Shanker Singh wali Gali in Village Sorkha), Noida. Rs. 27.50 Lacs

(2) 39/DGM(JAL)/AO/SM(JAL)-I/20-21 M/o Water Supply (Two years Annual Repairing of Bowl Assly. and Tube Shaft Set of Network -112, 113, 115, 118 and Village-Sorkha), Noida.

The above tenders can be uploaded by date 31.12.2020 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 01.01.2021 at 11.00 AM.

Senior Manager (JAL)-I

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA







SHORT TAKES

ADHIKARI LOYALIST TIWARI QUITS TMC, TO JOIN BJP

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 17

Former West Bengal minister Shubhendu Adhikari and his loyalist Jitendra Tiwari, also Pandabeshwar MLA, severed their long ties with the Trinamul Congress in a span of few hours on Thursday, over their revolt against Chief Minister

Mamata Banerjee.
After dealing the double blow to their party, the duo, alongwith with two-time Burdwan East TMC MP Sunil Mondal, is now set to join the BJP in the presence of Union home minister Amit Shah at a rally in Midnapore on December 19 upon his arrival on a two-day state tour this weekend.

Adhikari, who resigned as an MLA of Nandigram on Wednesday, wrote to Banerjee politely in a letter, "I am writing to tender my resignation as a member of All India Trinamul Congress as well as from all other positions held by me in the party and its associate organs with immediate effect. I am thankful for all the challenges and opportunities that has been afforded to me and I will always value my time spent as a member of the party."

NCB ISSUES NOTICE TO KARAN JOHAR OVER VIRAL VIDEO

Mumbai, Dec. 17: The Narcotics Control Bureau has filmmaker Karan Johar over a viral video allegedly showing drugs being consumed at a party at his house last year, NCB sources said on Thursday.

The notice has been sent to Johar to check the video's veracity, an NCB official said.

The central agency is conducting an anti-drugs probe that began in connection with the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput in June this year.

The video, which also shows several top stars, is being investigated as part of NCB's probe, the official said.

The NCB had received a complaint regarding the video of a party, which was attended by top Bollywood stars last year, the official said.

The complaint was about movie stars apparently seen in a 'drugged' state in the video.

MISSING BIZMAN JOIN FARMERS' STIR **TO ESCAPE LENDERS**

Shaziabad, Dec. 17: A debt ridden businessman, who changed his appearance and joined the ongoing farmers protests at one of the Delhi border points to escape moneylenders, was traced by police on Thursday.

Praveen, a resident of Murad Nagar town, had left his house on December 1 but did not return, police said. He was found at the Ghazipur-Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh gate) border.

On a previous occasion too, he had gone missing but had returned some days later, therefore, his family did not lodge a police complaint till December 12, police said.

Praveen was tracked with the help of his mobile phone which was put under surveillance and his car was found parked near the protest site, superintendent police

(rural) Iraj Raja said. "He had grown a beard and looked like a Sikh man. However, we recognised him as was getting inside his car, a police officer said.

SC UPHOLDS HC **ORDER ON KAFEEL KHAN**

New Delhi, Dec. 17: The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to interfere with the Allahabad High Court verdict which had quashed the deten-tion of Dr Kafeel Khan under the National Security Act (NSA) and ordered his immediate release, saying it is "a

good judgement

We will not interfere in the judgement. However, the observation will not impact any other proceedings," said the bench comprising Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian. The bench was hearing the Uttar Pradesh government's plea challenging the high court's September 1 verdict. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the state, told the bench that observation made by the high court exonerates Khan in the criminal proceedings. "Criminal cases will be decided on their own merits," the bench observed.

Chilling out



Workers warm themselves around a bonfire amid the snow-laden area at Sonamarg in Ganderbal district of Central Kashmir on Thursday. The minimum temperature across Kashmir plummeted several degrees below the freezing point on Thursday owing to a clear sky as the valley reeled under cold conditions, with Srinagar experiencing the coldest night of the season -6.4.

No breach of info: India on China 'espionage' report

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

India on Thursday indicated that there had been no breach of any classified information, after media reports surfaced that Chinese communist party members had been hired as staff by foreign diplomatic missions in China, including one reportedly in the Indian consulate in Shanghai, a

few years ago.

According to these media reports, "at least seven branches of the Communist Party of China (CPC) have an India connection".

China, meanwhile, went on the offensive and sought to deny any espi-onage angle but interestingly did not explicitly that CPC members had indeed been recruited in foreign missions in

Stating that "such allegations hyping up the "CPC infiltration" is groundless out of ideological prejudice", a furious Chinese embassy in New Delhi said, "The members ne Communist Party of China (CPC) are not 'monsters or scourges'. They are all ordinary They are all ordinary the 'China Threat Theory' human beings who serve and 'demonising' the CPC the people with their

▶ **ACCORDING TO** media reports, 'at least seven branches of the CPC have an India connection'

CHINA. MEANWHILE. went on the offensive and sought to deny any espionage angle but interestingly did not explicitly deny that CPC members had indeed been recruited in foreign missions in China.

really anything to be afraid of?" It added, "It is absolutely ridiculous and wantonly smearing to maliciously label CPC members as 'espionage'. New Delhi, meanwhile,

maintained that in certain countries, hiring of local staff there by Indian missions requires the approval of the concerned local authorities there but that all Indian missions ensure "due security pre-cautions". Asked to comment on the purported "data" regarding the information cited by the media reports, the MEA said it was "not in a posi-tion to independently verify the data'

the CPC But defending members, the Chinese embassy said, "Hyping up members by certain anti-China forces is in essence

intending to provoke ideological confrontation, mislead the public with ulterior motives, and attempt to revive 'McCarthyism' in the 21st century. Such actions on the basis of ideology are very dangerous. Anyone with reason, conscience and a sense of justice will not accept it.'

It added, "The CPC is the vanguard of the Chinese working class, the Chinese people, and the Chinese nation. Thanks to the CPC leadership, the Chinese people have achieved independence, freedom, liberation and great achievements in national development. The CPC is such a political party striving for the well-being of the Chinese people, the peace of the world and the progress of

The Chinese embassy added, "When interacting with each other, states should follow basic norms governing international relations and respect each other's system and national conditions. China respects the system and national conditions of other countries, nopes the relevant media can also respect China's system and national conditions, uphold an objective and just position in China related reports and

DAC APPROVES 11 OFFSHORE **PATROL VESSELS**

PAWAN BALI NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by defence minister

the Indian Air Force.
These airborne early warning and control systems will be designed and developed by DRDO. These are reported to be deployed on six Airbus aircraft to be acquired from Air India. AĒW&C which are airborne help in detection and tracking of attacking enemy aircraft, missiles and drones much before ground based radars. They also provide crucial inputs during dogfights with the enemy fighter jets and give information on troops deployment by enemies on ground.

DAC also approved proposals for 11 next generation offshore patrol vessels for the Indian Navy and modular bridges for

Rajnath Singh on Thursday in a meeting grant-ed Acceptance of Necessity (AoNs) for proposals worth ₹28,000 crore including airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) systems for

the Indian Army.

In a major push to Make-in-India, six proposals out of seven for which AoNs were grant-ed will be sourced from the Indian industry.

BANERJEE SAYS Centre's order despite the

Centre's order; likely to challenge it legally

state's objection is a colourable exercise of power and blatant misuse of emergency provision of IPS Cadre Rule 1954.

She added, "This move,

Mamata Banerjee govt refuses to accept the

MHA transfers 3

WB IPS officers

particularly before the elections is against the basic tenets of the federal structure. It's unconstitutional & completely unacceptable! We wouldn't allow this brazen attempt by the Centre to control the state machinery by proxy! West Bengal is not going to cow-down in front of expansionist &

undemocratic forces.' The IPS officers are Rajeev Mishra, inspector general (South Bengal), Praveen Kumar Tripathi, deputy inspector general (Presidency Range) and Bholanath Pandey, superintendent of police (Diamond Harbour Police District) in South 24 Parganas.

In August last year a

the feet of the CM at Digha in East Midnapore went viral.

The Centre has assigned Mishra, a 1996 batch offi-cer, to the Indo-Tibetan Border Police. Tripathi, of the 2004 batch, has been sent to Sashastra Seema Bal while Pandey, from the 2011 batch, has been deputed to the Bureau of Police Research and Development. All the three organisations are under the ministry of home affairs headed by Amit Shah. The officers came under the MHA's scanner for security lapses after Trinamul workers attacked the convoy of BJP president J.P. Nadda last week at Diamond

Harbour. The MHA, the nodal controlling authority of the IPS cadre, requisitioned them for central deputation while asking the state government for their release. Furious, the Chief Minister then held them back which only prompted the MHA to act this time strongly.

39 Indians on board 2 stranded ships in

AGE CORRESPONDENT

RAJIB CHOWDHURI I DC KOLKATA, DEC. 17

Bengal

Banerjee has accused the Narendra Modi govern-ment of "colourable exer-cise of power" after the Union home ministry

ordered the central depu-

tation of three IPS offi-

cers of her government

on Thursday. The Trinamul Congress supre-mo also refused to accept

the Centre's order which

her government, accord-

ing to sources, may chal-

lenge legally.

Banerjee, who is now in
North Bengal, Tweeted,
"Gol's order of central

deputation for the three serving IPS officers of

West Bengal despite the state's objection is a colourable exercise of

power and blatant misuse

of emergency provision of IPS Cadre Rule 1954. This

act is nothing but a delib-

erate attempt to encroach upon state's jurisdiction & demoralise the serving officers in WB."

Mamata

Thirty-nine Indians have been on board two stranded ships in Chinese waters for the past few months and India is in regular touch with China on the matter as well as to ensure that their humanitarian needs are taken care of, according to the ministry of external affairs.

spokesperson istry Anurag Srivastava said on Thursday that bulk cargo vessel, MV Jag Anand, has been on anchorage near Jingtang port in Hebei province of China since June 13 and it has 23 Indian nationals as

Another vessel. MV Anastasia, with 16 Indian nationals as its crew, is on anchorage near Caofeidian port in China since September 20, waiting for discharge of its cargo, he

Chinese waters: MEA SRIVASTAVA SAID the owners of these shipping

NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

External affairs min-

companies as well as the receivers of the cargo have been made aware of the reasons for delay in unloading of the cargo

touch with the Chinese authorities. The Chinese authorities have conveyed that on account of various Covid-19 related restrictions imposed by the local authorities, crew change is not being permitted from these ports,' he said.
The MEA added, "The

owners of these shipping companies as well as the receivers of the cargo have been made aware of the reasons for delay in unloading of the cargo. The government continues to be in regular touch with the Chinese authorities to seek a resolution of these issues at the earliest and also to ensure that the said at a media briefing.
"Our embassy is in crew are taken care of." humanitarian needs of the

CORONAVIRUS CASELOAD CROSSES 99.56L

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

With 24,010 fresh cases in a day, the country's Covid-19 caseload 99.56 lakh, crossed while the number of people who have recovered from the infection surged to 94.89 lakh. According to the Union health ministry, the total Coronavirus mounted to 99,56,557 and the death toll rose to 1,44,451 with 355 new fatalities in a day.

As per the health min-

istry data, active recoveries outnumbering new cases on a daily basis have ensured a high recovery rate among patients. The total recovered cases are nearing 95 lakh (94,89,740). The recovery rate has improved to 95.31 per cent on Thursday. The gap between recovered cases and active cases is also increasing consistently, and presently stands at 91,67,374. The Covid-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.45 per cent.

Modi, like RSS, is not dogmatic on economy. But, he is close to a Gandhian socialist, claims author Sitapati

SRIRAM KARRI **HYDERABAD**

he economics of the Sangh parivar and of Prime Narendra Modi are not based on dogmas or ideology; the RSS is actually like a rainbow coalition of all kinds of economic views. Modi takes his decisions based more on politics than economics, per se, argues Vinay Sitapati in this concluding part of this

Reverybody today tries to guess the deep rooteconomic policy impulse, inclination and instinct of Narendra Modi. Some argue he is pro-free markets or pro-corporates. The farmer bill agitation currently hinges on it. You explore the evolution of RSS, the Jan Sangh and now BJP for hundred years. Is RSS, and conse-quently Modi, socialist or pro-free market?

As I trace in my book, the RSS is a loose umbrella coalition when it comes to economics. They do not have a fixed ideological view on it. Throughout its history Hindu nationalism has articulated so many different views of econom-In Deen Dayal Upadhya's work, *Integral Humanism*, which is very core to RSS thinking, a

uplift of the downtrodden

is strongly articulated. You have free market suplike Balraj Madhok and Dr. Subramanian Swamy as Madhok much as centrists like Vajpayee. It also included someone like Nanaji Deshmukh, whose personal honesty was peerless and who would raise funds from businessmen, including say Nusli Wadia, grandson of Jinnah.

Even though Prime Minister Vajpayee was one of the greatest economic reformer we ever had, he only continued the economic direction that P.V. Narasimha Rao started.

In essence, the Hindu nationalist ideology was around organising and uniting the Hindu society but had little view on the modern state, or issues that we refer to as 'governance'. The Sangh looks at economics as a flexible tactical political issue, in which the quest for votes is more significant. So Modi's assertion that least governed is best governed is his slogan rather than an RSS ideology.

Modi has a certain view of economics, certainly, but it is that state must play a role and it is crucial. A visceral Gandhian socialist view. In contrast to Modi's economic policies, you can see ideological fervour in Modi's changing of Article 370 or the Citizenship Bill. These vast welfare scheme and are in the ideological realm, with a long genealo-

Incidentally, they have no strong ideological view on foreign affairs either. Yes, there are vague asser-Kutumbikam or a goal of becoming a Vishwa Guru, but they are not substantial. And arguments of Akhand Bharat mean nothing in modern geopolitics.

Why does it look today that Modi's BJP with the backing of the RSS is so hard to defeat in elections?

They win for many reasons, but a big one is teamwork and unity. This RSS teamwork is a response to the history lesson that Indians are terrible team players. They fight among themselves and split into factions. RSS uses this simple but deep insight to organisational unity. Only one other man did it before them — Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. The RSS has created in a sense a very un-Indian ideal of unifying Hindus, to habituate them into team work as an ideal. BJP leaders too have lots of internal bickering and differences, but rarely divorce and split the

Vajpayee was able to use this trait to get rid of two of his earliest rivals – Subramaniam Swamy who were very individualistic and unafraid to air

their differences in public. Even Veer Savarkar was an opinionated individual, whereas Hedgewar and Golwalkar were committed to the sangh above all. This is what I call Hindu fevicol, and it is a hard bond to break. Congress in that sense is

typically Indian organisation. They fight it out in the open and sabotage their own larger cause for a pettier goal. Congress is not a uniquely nepotistic party but a typically Indian-minded family party. Every Indian wants to hand over their power to their son or daughter. In that sense there is a Nehru-Gandhi in all of us.

In contrast, when Indians see Narendra Modi, a man without a family to benefit, they are in respectful awe but it is so unlike them. That sense of sacrifice is what puts Modi above others in the minds of common Indians.

Talking of Gandhi, we can see a strand of commonality between him and Vajpayee and Modi... idea of Brahmacharya, extending the logic of sac-rifice of family and material concerns, at least in perception. Does this favour a Yogi Adityanath to inherit the mantle from Modi?

It is a very powerful appealing idea, the old Hindu tradition of adopting Brahmacharya. Our psyche puts those who accept the monastic life in

position of reverence. This coalition. is the appeal of Yogi Adityanath also. obscures many legitimate criticisms of his politics. It definitely gives him an upper-hand if he enters the race to become prime minister one day.

Many say that despite being from the RSS, Vajpayee was a moderate acceptable to all whereas Modi is a Loh Purush (iron man). Did the incarceration in Emergency play a role in giving the BJP leaders like Advani and Vajpayee a different experiential perspective in the issue of personal liberties?

Yes, while Modi was underground in Gujarat Emergency, Vajpayee and Advani (and a plethora of others), developed a strong view about personal liberties because they were the worst victims of state during atrocities Emergency. Had Modi been arrested then, who knows what kind of a different viewpoint he would have had?

But it was also about the coalitions. The participation of Vaipavee-Advani in the Janata Party government and their later leadership of NDA shows they were willing to engage with a range of people from a socialist like George Fernandes to aristocrat like Jaswant Singh. Modi has been electorally freed from the need for a

Coming to Vajpayee and Advani, your jugalbandi book, how did their relationship evolve? Advani began as a fan to the star Vajpayee. Their backgrounds personal were very different — Vajpayee was a communicator, poet, orator, very Hindi heartland, lower middle class, whereas Advani was from Karachi, highly cosmopolitan, very English, but introverted

and serious. Vajpayee, like Syama Prasad Mukherjee before him, had charisma and magic. He could mean different things to different people. Advani was also under-confident but he had other strengths. He was loyal, disciplined, always willing to make a self-sacrifice. He was for most part underrated. They were great friends too. They are the kind who would go watch Bollywood movies, cry over some scenes and eat pani puri on the roadside.

QDid Advani stick to Vajpayee through thick and thin because he was too scared by Partition and even the idea of a separation was

very heavy on him? (Hmm). I wish we had spoken before writing the book. Could be. But to answer another question of yours, Advani, the rich

scion was comfortable

complained of difficulties whereas Vajpayee despite being from a poor back-ground found it hard because of Partition. Advani lost everything, his home, his comfort and material wealth, his beloved Sindh... all in one go. Partition was an event for Vajpayee but a lifelong trauma for Advani.

In the end, What's your appraisal of Vajpayee and Advani? How do they differ from the Modi-Shah duo?

At heart, Vajpayee and Advani were both romantics, even children at heart. No one would say that about Modi and Shah. Their jugalbandi is very different. They won't be seen eating pani puri in public or crying while watching Bollywood movies.

The other difference is their understanding of India. Unlike Vajpayee or Advani, Modi and Shah have never served for a single day before taking power in 2014. They have no background of compromising with smaller and regional parties in Parliament. They were also not shaped by Partition or Emergency. They have been shaped by caste and religious politics in the Hindutya crucible of Guiarat. But the two jugalbandis share more than we imagine. All four of them why the BJP wins.



THE ASIAN AGE

18 DECEMBER 2020

Covid not a good reason to scrap Winter Session

Thile the Opposition parties have cried foul, and complained of not being consulted by the government on the decision to not hold the Winter Session of Parliament this year, the Constitution is clear that they cannot demand discussion or consultation as a matter of right. That right belongs to the government alone, and the President summons Parliament to meet when advised to do so by the government. The Narendra Modi government is absolutely in the clear on this score.

There is only one constraint under which the government labours, constitutionally speaking. It must ask the President to summon Parliament at least once every six months. While recently announcing that there would no Winter Session in 2020, the government has hinted that the Budget Session would be commenced in January. There is nothing out of the ordinary about that.

The minister for parliamentary affairs, Pralhad Joshi, has claimed that he has consulted leaders of the leading Opposition parties on the scuttling of the Winter Session, and there was general agreement that the session be given the go-by in view of the Covid pandemic. Apparently,

Even if the pandemic was seemed a matter of serious concern, the Winter Session could have been held online

go-by in view of the Covid pandemic. Apparently, MPs were chary of travelling to Delhi. Jairam Ramesh of the Congress claims no consultation was held with his party. None of this matters, however, since the decision rests with the government alone.

Nevertheless, giving Covid as the reason for skipping the traditionally three-week long Winter Session is hardly a persuasive argument. The government and the BJP had seemed eager to hold the Bihar election when it was due recently.

the Bihar election when it was due recently, rather than respect the sentiment of the Opposition parties to defer it by a few months. The election to the Hyderabad Municipal Corporation was also held recently. Covid-related considerations did not come in the way. The pandemic is raging in America but the US stuck to the schedule for its recently concluded election for President. The US Congress and the British Parliament have met as scheduled. The British Parliament did not skip meetings even during the Second World War. In November 1962, our Parliament was in session when the Chinese invaded in NEFA.

It is the widest impression today that the government has run away from the Winter Session because questions will be raised about the three-week old farmers' protest on Delhi's borders. Moreover, the Modi government has set a precedent in this regard. Future governments may also act similarly — skip a session whenever expedient. And this is hardly good for our democracy where important questions crop up all the time, often unexpectedly. A bloody-minded government may hold a session of Parliament only when it wishes to pass laws, not otherwise. This is the best way to avoid noisiness in Parliament and be an "orderly" country.

Even if the pandemic was seemed a matter of serious concern, the Winter Session could have been held online. This was done in Britain recently. MPs who could not be physically present attended on-line. India is technologically capable and this could have been organised if the government had the mind to make it happen

While the Winter Session stands scuttled, the government can still attest to its bonafides by holding a brief session of two or three days to go over proposals for "reform" of the farm sector with which all may be invited to engage. Whatever the outcome, it is not unlikely that the farmers' protest may be defused through such a denouement.

Post-pandemic bonding

The choice of Boris Johnson to be the chief guest at India's Republic Day celebrations is interesting, not the least because he will be the first British Prime Minister to be bestowed the honour since John Major in 1993. Much water has flowed down the Ganga and the Thames since the time India was just emerging as a fledgling player in the free markets after pathbreaking economic reforms. It might appear the UK needs its old friends as trading partners much more now as it seeks to exit the EU as soon as possible, deal no deal. The time to strike a trade deal with the UK in the form of a FTA is ripe enough.

The world has changed post-pandemic and the shared experiences of grief and economic woes should form a sombre backdrop to what should be more sober festivities in the coming R-Day. Johnson is not the dominant figure he was projected to be when he had just staged a notable coup in the Tory Party and emerged as the champion in British eyes who would steer the island on an independent course. Just as the shadow of Covid-19 on Christmas celebrations as the UK struggles to tamp down a second coronavirus surge, the Indian Prime Minister is challenged by striking farmers who expect a "fair deal" at home.

It would be presumptuous to believe mighty geopolitics is guiding the choice of guest at this time back to Britannia and the land of colonial masters. But, in a new world order shaped by the blows of the pandemic, of which BoJo has experience since he was personally pushed to the very brink, it would be realistic to examine ways of promoting ties, particularly as India might have much to contribute in IT and ITeS. Britain as well as India's ardour for Chinese goods and 5G technology has also dampened considerably and so even this crisis-ridden time smells of opportunity to get ties right.



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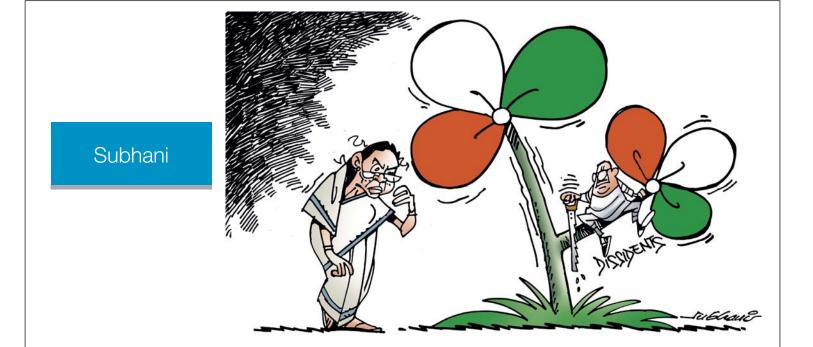
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How rise in inequality distorts Indian society



Mohan Guruswamy

n 2013 the French economist Thomas released Swenty-First Century, a magnum opus on income inequality. It was an event book very much like Stephen Hawking's A Brief History of Time. Hawking's book sold as many as 10 million copies, by comparison Piketty's tome had 2.4 million buyers so far. Such event books are more often than not read by only a fraction of the buyers. Speaking for myself, I still have somewhere a slightly read copy of James Joyce's Ulysses, still considered by the cognoscenti as the foremost work of modern literature. It is said that an analysis of Kindle readers of the Piketty book revealed that a typical reader got through 26 of its 700 pages. But have no fear, those first 26 pages have all you need to know. They encapsulate the rationale and results of Piketty's monumental

I once asked a wellknown economist who had reviewed Piketty's Capital about what the main proposition of the book was. He encapsulated it quite brilliantly. He just said that Piketty had set out to prove that R was greater than G, where R is the return on capital and G is the growth of the economy. There is much empirical evidence to back this up. In the eight years between 2006 and 2014, the US benchmark index S&P 500 gained 45 per cent, an average simple growth rate of 5.6 per cent, four times higher than the average GDP growth rate of around 1.5 per cent. The consequence of this, of course, the explosion in income inequality, which is the hallmark of the post-World War II era, and particularly after the

advent of globalisation. Oxfam has informed us that in the past two decades 73 per cent of the growth has been cornered by just one per cent of the population. Oxfam has a known tendency to exaggerate a bit to prove its point, but this proposition, that few people benefitted the most during this period of huge economic expansion, is undisputable.

Paul Krugman wrote: 'What excited them was Piketty's novel hypothesis about the growing importance of disparities in wealth, especially inherited wealth, as opposed to earnings. We are, Piketty suggested, returning to the kind of dynastic, 'patrimonial' capitalism that prevailed in the late 19th century. We only need to look around us to see that most of the wealthy today are inheritors, and without doubt many of them are building on those inheritances to further accentuate the income inequality. What is really troubling about this growing concentration of wealth is the concentration of political power in the hands of very few who are able to influence

politics and policies. According to Marx an individual's position position within a class hierarchy is determined by their role in the production process and argues that political and ideological consciousness is determined by class position. He saw a class as those who share common economic interests and are conscious of those interests. Classes, according to Marx, were inherently antagonistic and in a state of constant struggle.

In his new book *Capital* and *Ideology*, Thomas Piketty argues, with far greater validity, that inequality is driven by human institutions, which in turn reflect the

The nature of the institutions determines outcomes, not the means of production or processes

dominant ideology Piketty defines his thesis very succinctly thus: "Inequality is neither economic nor technological: it is ideological and political. In other words, the market and competition, capital and đebt, skilled and unskilled workers, natives and aliens, tax havens and competitiveness -- none of these things exist as such. All are social and historical constructs, which depend entirely on the legal, fiscal, educational, and political systems that people choose to adopt and the conceptual definitions they choose to work with. These choices are shaped by society's con-ception of social justice and economic fairness and by the relative political and ideological power of contending groups and discourses

Does this mean Marx was wrong? The times in which Marx and Piketty lived are very different. Marx saw the distortions inequity and wondered why? He came up with explanations. His prescriptions were limited by the knowledge and evidence available to him then. The world has moved on and moved very far since then. When Karl Marx began writing his first three volumes of Das Kapital (1867-1883). it was the early days of electricity. Marx couldn't contemplate the massive leaps of productivity made possible in the 1900s, when the world witnessed a monu-mental expansion of knowledge and, with it, capital. Piketty's study relates to how both capital and knowledge came to be inequitably allocated because of the instituarrangements tional

within societies.

To understand how institutional arrangements determine outcomes, just think of

possibly three parallel educational streams. The two urban upper classes largely benefit from a higher standard and quality of education imparted in English in schools with high quality teaching and facilities. This is the stream that produces India's managerial classes (both government and industrial). The working class stream flows out of our government schools, with its emphasis on vernacular education and indifferent standards. There is a third stream of rural education from which escape

even into the next higher

class becomes even more

difficult, if not impossible. The flow into the upper reaches of Indian society from these three

streams is vastly unequal. What Piketty is

saying is just this. The

nature of the institutions

determines outcomes, not

the means of production

tem. We now have two or

or processes. Ĉapital and Ideology is rich in references to India and draws inferences about the institution of castes (varnas) and the rising role of brahmins, after the advent of Muslim rule, leading to the diminution of the role of Kshatriyas. The role of to an even more dominant status under the British. Piketty lauds the determined "affirmative action" policies after Independence that vastly increased the upward mobility of the lower castes, like most of us do. He also notes that the benefits could not be fully realised due to the low standards of education and its unevenness in towns and the hinterland and between regions. So, what's new? Most Indians with even an elementary understanding of postindependence India know this. The question is -

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

what is to be done now?

LETTERS

MEET THEM HALFWAY

The Supreme Court (SC) proposing the setting up of a committee of farmer leaders and government representatives is laudable. The farmers' protests against agricultural laws are three weeks old, and both sides have failed to mend fences. **Protesting farmer** unions urged the Centre to stop "defaming" the ongoing agitation against the three contentious farm sector laws and holding "parallel talks" with other outfits even as it welcomed the SC's observations as a "moral victory". Both sides need to display a spirit of giving and taking to resolve the ongoing impasse.

N.J. Ravi Chander Bengaluru

TRAGEDY DURING STIR

SHOCKED TO READ that a Sikh preacher from Haryana's Karnal died by suicide near the Singhu border in Delhi. He was protesting against the three new farm laws. Sant Baba Ram Singh was a former office bearer in many Sikh organisations, including Haryana SGPC, and had his own following. In the handwritten suicide note found near his body, he said he was "hurt to see the plight of the farmers". The Modi government should take this incident with due seriousness.

Bhagwan Thadani

Mumbai

EAT MORE ONIONS

THE ONION, which is a staple kitchen item among others for an average Indian, is an essential ingredient for many cuisines and recipes. From spicy curries to tangy relishes, it is impossible to imagine cooking anything without it. But it also has high medicinal value. If folk remedies are to be believed, onions could treat cold, cough, asthma and bronchitis. The government relaxing curbs on onion imports is thus a welcome

Jubel D'Cruz Mumbai

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.



On 250th birth anniversary, Beethoven still holds his own

F music be the food of love, play on; Give me excess of it..."
The opening lines of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night might have entered the thoughts of the uniquely privileged Viennese audience that witnessed Ludwig van Beethoven premiering his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies in the Austrian capital on Dec 22, 1808.

For good measure, the artistic showcase also featured the first performances of his Piano Concerto No 4 and Choral Fantasy. A 20th-century equivalent would have entailed The Beatles, say, unveiling 'Sgt Pepper' and 'Abbey Road' simultaneously in a live performance. Incidentally, the latter album's Because is based on reversing the chords of the Moonlight Sonata. It wasn't the only time turned up in the poppantheon

pantheon.

By 1808, Beethoven was already viewed as the most fascinating composer of his age. He was born in Bonn, probably precisely 250 years ago today. He first visited Vienna as a teenage prodigy, and may have been tutored by Mozart. He was obliged to return to Bonn

to attend to his dying mother, but went back to Vienna at Haydn's invitation five years later and remained there for the rest of

I cannot claim to be an aficionado of Western classical music — the temporal investment it requires has always been a hard slog. Yet there are compositions that insinuate themselves into the subconscious, from Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik to Strauss's Blue Danube, Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake, Ravel's Bolero and Chopin's etudes.

I would make a particular exception, though, for Beethoven. It dates back, perhaps, to a presentation on the weekly Disney show featured on PTV in the early 1970s, where a dramatised biography of Beethoven showed the opening chords of the Fifth Symphony being inspired by a debtor banging on the door of the composer's rented accommodation. Those dramatic notes are more often described as the knocking of Fate.

The show was possibly more accurate in its depiction of a deaf Beethoven being swung around by

a soloist after inaugurating his Ninth Symphony to witness the rapturous response. The Ninth came almost a decade after the Eighth, which had been unveiled before an audience of international leaders at the Congress of Vienna in 1814.

That particular segment, now the official anthem of the European Union, has stood the test of time in more ways than one. Beethoven's death centenary in 1927 was widely commemorated across Europe, from Britain to the Soviet Union. As a German, though, he was also appropriated by the Nazi regime, which continued to honour him despite determining that he was 'mixed race'. Based on Beethoven's looks, the suspicion of African ancestry has persisted, albeit without any firm foundation.

His politics have also served as the basis of much conjecture. Beethoven famously rescinded the dedication of his Third Symphony, Eroica, to Napoleon after the latter emerged as a potential tyrant. And there is a tale, possibly apocryphal, about how he, while out for a walk in a park with Goethe, encountered a royal party and strolled right through it, even as Goethe stepped aside to bow and scrape.

For all his antipathy towards authority, Beethoven relied for much of his life on the sponsorship of European nobles, and many of his compositions were dedicated to princes, counts and barons. But he regularly fell out with patrons, and occasionally detested royals. Yet his Symphony No 8 was unveiled before the crowned heads of Europe at the Congress of Vienna in 1814.

at the Congress of Vienna in 1814. He never compromised his art, though, confessing at the turn of the century that his devotion to music had prevented him from suicide. His personal life was a shambles, littered with unrequited love or romances doomed by the social rules of the era. Yet, despite a handful of detractors, few who heard his compositions could fail to be moved

by them.
And the legend only grew after his demise in 1827, just three years after he had inaugurated his magnificent Symphony No 9, whose glorious final movement, a setting for

appropriated for political purposes throughout the past two centuries, and serves today as the European Union's official hymn.

Union's official hymn.

Not surprisingly, the German Nazi regime picked Beethoven as an avatar (despite concluding that he was mixed race). However, a century earlier Friedrich Engels had waxed eloquent about the Fifth Symphony, and some six decades later Vladimir Lenin declared he could listen to the Appassionata sonata every day. "What astonishing, superhuman music," he is quoted by Maxim Gorky as saying. "It always makes me proud ... to think that people can work such miracles."

But perhaps the pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim summed up Beethoven best a few years ago by pointing out that "he freed music from hitherto prevailing conventions of harmony and structure", and that much of his work could be paraphrased "by saying that suffering is inevitable, but the courage to fight it renders life worth living".

By arrangement with **Dawn**











SHORT TAKES

'21 BERLIN FILM **FEST MAY GO VIRTUAL**

Los Angeles, Dec. 17: The Berlin International Film Fe-stival might be held virtually for its upcoming 2021 edition.

Sources told Variety that the festival organisers are expected to delay the festival due to resurgence in Coronavirus cases in Germany. They will be announcing their plans later this week. As of now, the 71st edition of the film gala is scheduled to run as a physical event from February 11-21, but the organisers are now rethinking their strategy.

The festival is now looking to stage a competition section in a virtual format in early March, with the European Film Market running as a digital event at the same time. The organisers are also thinking of holding a mini-festival with a series of onsite world premieres for early June.

US JOINT CHIEFS CHAIRMAN MEETS TALIBAN

Kabul, Dec. 17: The top US general held unannounced talks with Taliban peace negotiators in the Persian Gulf to urge a reduction in violence across Afghanistan, even as senior American officials in Kabul warned that stepped-up Taliban attacks endanger the militant group's nascent peace negotiations with the Afghan government. Army Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met for about two hours with Taliban negotiators in Doha, Qatar, on Tuesday and flew Wednesday to Kabul to discuss the peace process with Afghan President

Ashraf Ghani. Milley's meetings came amid a new drawdown of US troops, although under current US policy a complete pullout hinges on the Taliban reducing attacks nationwide. "The most important part of the discussions that I had with both the Taliban and the government of Afghanistan was the need for an immediate reduction in vio-

CYCLONE YASA: FIJI IMPOSES EMERGENCY

Suva, Dec. 17: Fiji imposed a nationwide curfew Thursday after urging people near the coast to move to higher ground as the island nation prepared for a major cyclone to hit.

Cyclone Yasa was expected to hit the two main islands of /iti Levu and Vanua Levu later Thursday or early Friday. Authorities imposed an overnight curfew and declared a state of natural disaster. The National Disaster Management Office warned the cyclone could bring waves as high as 16 metres (52 feet) in some places and sustained winds of up to 250 kilometres per hour (155 mph), with gusts hitting 350 kph (217 mph).

In the capital Suva, many residents were experiencing

power cuts.
Michael Cheer, who owns the Samabula Cake Shop, was moving cakes into his car so he could take them home and put them into a cooler, rather than driving them across the island to deliver them to another town.

CHINA PROBE BRINGS HOME MOON SAMPLES

Beijing, Dec. 17: China's Change-5 probe successfully touched down on Earth in the early hours of Thursday, bringing home the first samples of the moon in over 40 years. The spacecraft landed in Siziwang Banner in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region at 1:59 AM (local time), according to the China National

Space Administration (CNSA). Zhang Kejian, head of the CNSA, declared the Chang'e-5 mission a success.

It marks a successful conclusion of China's current threestep lunar exploration programme of orbiting and landing, and bringing back samples which began in 2004, staterun Xinhua news agency reported.

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

Record cases, deaths in Calif.

Most of state's 40 mn residents under stay-at-home orders

Los Angeles, Dec. 17: California has reported more than 53,000 new Coronavirus cases and 293 deaths, setting new records as hospitals struggled to keep up with the surge.

State health officials said Wednesday a change in data processing added 15,337 previous cases to the count, but the new virus cases remained a daily record. The state has been grappling with soaring cases and hospitalisations. Most of California's 40 million residents are under stay-at-home orders because of dwindling intensive care unit capacity.

Hospitals are filling up so fast that officials are rolling out mobile field facilities and scrambling to hire more doctors and

2 health staff develop aller-gic reactions to Pfizer's Covid vaccine

New York, Dec. 17: Two healthcare workers, who received Pfizer's Coronavirus vaccine, developed "concerning reactions", even as the US rolled out the vaccine to frontline healthcare workers and high-risk individuals amid increasing Covid-19 infections across the country. A report in The New York Times said the two health care workers at Bartlett Regional Hospital in Alaska developed concerning reactions just minutes after receiving Pfizer's Coro-

navirus vaccine this week. One staff member was hospitalised for a few days. One of the healthcare workers, a middle-aged woman, had no history of allergies but had an anaphylactic reaction 10 minutes after receiving the vaccine. She experienced a rash over her face and torso, shortness of breath and an elevated heart rate, the NYT report said adding that anaphylaxis can be life-threatening, with impaired breathing and drops in blood pressure. The second worker received his shot on Wednesday and developed eye puffiness, lightheadedness and a scratchy throat 10 minutes after the injection, the hospital said. — PTI

lating for seven days. President Donald Trump



spread of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

Macron latest to test +ve for Covid

President Emmanuel Macron is the latest world leader to test positive for Covid-19, joining a growing list of others just as inoculation drives against the illness are beginning in a number of countries. Macron, 42, has repeated-

ly said he is sticking to strict sanitary protocols during the pandemic, including not shaking hands, wearing a mask and keeping distance from other people. The Elysee Palace announced on Thursday that Macron would be iso-

announced in October that

Melania Trump, tested positive for the Coronavirus. At 74, the US president was the oldest head of state to become infected with the virus to date, and his age put him at higher

risk of serious complica-tions from Covid-19.

British PM Boris Johns-on was the first major world leader confirmed to have Covid-19, after facing criticism for downplaying the pandemic. Prince Charles, the heir to the British throne, also tested positive in March and showed mild

Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro announced his released.

he and his wife, first lady illness in July and used it to publicly extol hydroxychloroquine, the unproven malaria drug that he'd been promoting as a treatment for Covid-19 and was taking himself.

president Juan Orlando Hernandez announced in June that he had tested positive, along with two other people who worked closely with him. Hernandez said he had started what he called the "MAIZ treatment," an experimental and unproven combination of microdacyn, azithromycin, iverbriefly hospitalised and

Alexander Lukashenko, who dismissed concerns about the virus as "psychosis" and recommended drinking vodka to stay healthy, said in July he had contracted it himself

but was asymptomatic. Others who were infected include Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Russian Prime Mikhail Mishustin, Prince Albert II of Monaco, Guatemalan president Alejandro Giammettei, Bolivian interim president Jeannie Anez, president of the Dominican Republic Luis

VACCINATION IN ASIA-PACIFIC BY MID/LATE '21: WHO

Jakarta, Dec. 17: The World Health Organisation said Thursday that countries in the Asia-Pacific region are not guaranteed to have early access to Covid-19 shots and urged them to adopt a long-term approach to the pandemic. "The development of safe and effective vaccines is one thing. Producing them in adequate quantities and

reaching everyone who

WHO Regional Director

Dr. Takeshi Kasai told re-

porters in the Indonesian

capital, Jakarta.

needs them is another.

Libya, which surrendered two intelligence officials for prosecution before a Scottish court sit-ting in the Netherlands. The New York-bound flight exploded over Lockerbie less than an hour after takeoff from London on Dec. 21, 1988. — AP

CHARLIE HEBDO HIT: 30 YRS' JAIL FOR I.S. WIDOW

Paris, Dec 17: The fugitive widow of an Islamic State gunman and a man described as his logisti-cian on Wednesday were convicted of terrorism charges and sentenced to 30 years in prison in the trial of 14 people linked to the January 2015 attacks in Paris against the satirical Charlie Hebdo newspaper and a kosher supermarket.

The verdict ends the three-month trial linked to the three days of killings across Paris claimed jointly by the Islamic State group and al-Qaida. During the proceedings, France was struck by new attacks, a wave of Coronavirus infections among the defendants, and devastating testimony bearing witness to bloodshed that continues to shake France.

All three attackers died in police raids. The widow, Hayat Boumeddiene, fled to Syria and is believed to still be alive. The two men who helped her out of France were tried in absentia, may be dead, though one received a sentence of life in

'88 LOCKERBIE **BOMBING: NEW CHARGES BY U.S.**

Washington, Dec. 17: The Justice Department plans to unseal new charges in the coming days in connection with the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jet that exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270 people, according to a person familiar with the case.

The bombing of Flight 103, whose victims included dozens of American college students, spurr-ed global probe and pro-duced sanctions against

RO KHANNA IS DEM VICE CHAIR OF INDIA CAUCUS

Washington, Dec. 17: Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna, who represents the Silicon Valley in the US House of Representatives, has been named as the Democratic Vice Chair of the Congressional India Caucus. The seat has been created for the first time since its formation in 1994.

Khanna, 44, who was recently elected for a third consecutive term from the congressional district representing Silicon Valley, is being considered as a potential contender to fill the US Senate seat from California that will fall vacant in January after Kamala Harris is sworn in as the

country's vice president. "I believe Ro Khanna would be an outstanding Democratic Vice Chair.' Congressman Brad Sherman, Democratic Co-Chair of the Caucus, said in an email. -PTI

Despite US sanctions, Turkey not to step back on Russian S-400s

Ankara, Dec. 17: Turkey won't step back from its decision to deploy Russian air defence systems despite US sanctions imposed on the country over the purchase, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Thursday. In an interview with

Turkey's 24 TV television, Cavusoglu also said Turkey was mulling steps it would take to reciprocate against the US sanctions. but did not say what the steps could entail. The US announced sanctions earlier this week over Turkey's procurement of Russia's advanced S-400 system, under a US law known as CAATSA, aimed at pushing back on Russian influence. The sanctions target Turkey's Presidencv of Defence Industries. the head of the presidency and three other senior officials. The penalties block any assets the four offici**GREECE TO PAY \$2.8 BN FOR FRENCH RAFALE JETS AMID TURKEY TENSION** Greece has earmarked

Athens, Dec. 17: Greece's government said on Thursday that it will pay 2.32 billion euros (\$2.8 billion) for the purchase of French-made Rafale fighter jets and an upgrade of compatible missiles, under a major military overhaul amid tensions with neighbouring Turkey.

Delivery of the 18 jets will begin in mid-2021 and be completed over two years, government spokesman Stelios Petsas said.

dictions and bar their en-try into the US. They also

include a ban on most

export licences, loans and

It is the first time that

credits to the agency.

11.5 billion euros (\$14.1 billion) to modernise its armed forces over five years amid deteriorating relations with NATO ally Turkey over offshore energy rights in the eastern Mediterranean. The Rafale iets will include 12 aircraft currently in service with the French military and six new planes to be built by Dassault Aviation.

penalise a US ally. "If we als may have in US juriswere to step back we would have done so before now." Cavusoglu said in response to a question on whether Turkey would cancel the S-400 deal with CAATSA has been used to Russia. Cavusoglu added:

"Now we are assessing the impact of these sanctions in great detail...and will

take steps accordingly." The minister also described the sanctions as "wrong both legally and politically," arguing that Turk-ey's purchase of the Russian system in 2017 predated the CAATSA law. Cavusoglu said that an improvement of relations between Turkey and the United States would be conditional on President-elect Joe Biden's ability to address Ankara's grievances.

Ties between the two have been plagued by numerous disputes, including the jailing of American citizens and local consular staff, US support for Syrian Kurdish fighters considered to be terrorists by Turkey and the continued US residence of a Muslim cleric accused of masterminding the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey. -AP

Navalny poisoning: No role, says Putin

Moscow, Dec. 17: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday rejected allegations that the Kremlin was behind the poisoning of his top political foe, opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and accused US intelligence agencies of fomenting the claims. Speaking via video call during an annual marathon news conference, the Russian leader countered the accusations by saving that if the Kremlin wanted to poison Navalny it would have pressed the attack home.

"If there was such a desire, it would have been done," Putin said with a chuckle. Navalny fell sick on Aug 20 during a domestic flight in Russia, and was flown while he was in a coma to Germany for treatment two days later. Labs in Germany, France and Sweden, and tests by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical

The other awardees are 29-year-old Nzambi Matee

Weapons, established that he was exposed to a Soviet-era Novichok nerve agent. Russian authorities have vehemently rejected the accusations of involvement in the poisoning.

On Monday, the investigative group Bellingcat and Russian outlet The Insider released a report alleging that operatives from the FSB, Russia's domestic security agency, which is a top KGB successor, followed Navalny during his trips since 2017, had "specialised training in chemical weapons, chemistry and medicine" and "were in the vicinity of the opposition activist in the days and hours of the time-range during which he was poison-ed." The investigation, conducted by Bellingcat and The Insider in cooperation with CNN and Der Spiegel, identified the supposed FSB opera-

UN I PRIZE Vidyut Mohan helps farmers earn extra by converting waste farm residues into value-added chemicals

Indian among 'Young Champions of the Earth' winners

United Nations, Dec. 17: A 29-year-old Indian entrepreneur is among the seven winners of the prestigious "Young Champions of the Earth" 2020 prize given by the UN environment agency to global change-makers using innovative ideas and ambitious action to help solve some of the world's most pressing environmental challenges.

Vidyut Mohan, an engineer, is the co-founder of "Takachar", a social enterprise enabling farmers to prevent open burning of their waste farm residues and earn extra income by converting them into value-added chemicals like activated carbon on-site, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) said in a

statement on Tuesday.

sionate about energy access and creating income opportunities for poor communities," Mohan was quoted as saying in the statement. "(That) is at the heart of finding answers to the difficult question of balancing economic growth and climate change mitigation in developing countries," he said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a message that in the middle of a global pandemic, with societies struggling, economies stretched to their limits and an escalating biodiversity and climate crisis, "we need to act boldly and urgently to repair our relationship with nature and take the path of sustainable development".

He said that the Young Champions of the Earth "inspire and mobilise". UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen said globally, young people are leading the way in calling for meaningful and immediate solutions to the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. "We must listen. As we

enter this decisive decade where we work to cut emissions and protect and restore ecosystems, UNEP Young Champions demonstrate that all of us can contribute, starting where we are with what we have. Every single act for nature counts, and we need the entire spectrum of humanity to share this global responsibility and this

UN SECRETARY-GENE-**RAL** Antonio Guterres said in a message that in the middle of a global pandemic, "we need to act boldly and urgently to repair our relationship with nature and take the path of sustainable development".

profound opportunity," Andersen said Takachar buys rice hus-

ks, straw and coconut shells from farmers and turns them into charcoal, saving the debris from the fires, which are also a driver of climate change. Since Takachar was launched in 2018, Mohan and its co-founder Kevin Kung have worked with about 4,500 farmers and processed 3,000

tonnes of crops, UNEP said. Mark Radka, chief of the energy and climate branch at UNEP's Economy Division, said the open burning of agricultural residues is a big source of air pollution in many parts of the world and "Takachar's innovative technology can help farmers turn what is currently thought of as waste into a valuable resource while helping clean up our environment.

Slowly and gradually all funding streams available and support services are turning towards sustainability. Companies are going to lose if they don't become sustainable in the long run," Mohan, a 2019 Echoing Green Fellow and a 2020 Forbes 30 Under 30 awardee, said.

from Kenya, a materials engineer and head of Gjenge Makers, which produces sustainable low-cost construction materials made of recycled plastic waste and sand; 29-year old Xiaoyuan Ren from China who leads MyH2O, a data platform that tests and records the quality of groundwater across a thousand villages in rural China into an app so residents know where to find clean water. Lefteris Arapakis, 26, from Greece founded the start-up Enaleia, through which the team trains, empowers and incentivises the local fishing

community to collect plas-

tic from the sea, allowing

both fish stocks and the

ecosystem to recover; 30-year old Max Hidalgo Quinto from Peru founded Yawa, building portable wind turbines that harvest up to 300 litres of water per day from atmospheric humidity and mist. Niria Alicia Garcia, 28, from the US coordinates the annual Run 4 Salmon event using virtual reality to bring to life the historical journey of the Sacramento chinook salmon along California's largest watershed, raising awareness of this invaluable ecosystem, the species and people it supports; 24-year old Fatemah Alzelzela from Kuwait started Eco Star, a non-profit recycling initiative that exchanges trees and plants for waste from homes, schools and businesses.

FRIDAY | 18 DECEMBER 2020 | NEW DELHI

quick

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	46,890.34	0.48
Nifty 50	13,740.70	0.42
S&P 500*	3,717.43	0.44
Dollar (₹)	73.58	0.01
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.96	0.50
Euro (₹)	89.98	-0.15
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,455▲194	0.39
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	51.38	0.30
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.952	0.008
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.895	-0.025
* As of 8:30 PM IST		

Economy seems bottoming out: **Credit Suisse**

After years of downgrades to the country's medium-term growth outlook, the estimates are likely to be upgraded now, Credit Suisse said in a report. The country's economy is showing signs of bottoming out, it said. The consensus forecasts of GDP growth for FY22 over FY20 stopped falling after October 2020 (currently at (-) 1 per cent). Analysts at Credit Suisse expect these estimates to be revised upwards.

Puravankara to get ₹556 crore from IFC, EAF



IFC, a member of the World Bank group, and IFC Emerging Asia Fund (EAF) will invest Rs 556 crore in an affordable housing platform of Puravankara Ltd to develop up to four projects. IFC and IFC EAF have partnered with the Puravankara Group to invest in the development of up to four residential projects under ne Puravankara group's afford able housing brand 'Provident'. Two of these four projects are planned in Kochi and Bengaluru.

Redmi 9 Power smartphone sales from next week

Redmi India unveiled Redmi 9 Power which will be sold online from Dec. 22. Redmi said the new smartphone comes with a 6.000 mAh battery that last for two days after a single charge. Redmi business head Sneha Tainwala said the year has been phenomenal for Redmi India, and the company is further pushing boundaries with Redmi 9 Power. Redmi 9 Power's two variants are priced at Rs 10,999 and Rs 11,999.

Blockchain-led solar power trading in UP

US-based tech services firm Abjayon Inc has partnered with India Smart Grid Forum (ISGF) to support the integration of blockchain platform with UP Power Corporation's (UPPCL) billing system. UP has launched India's first blockchain-enabled peer-to-peer trading of rooftop solar power on a pilot basis in Lucknow. UPPCL, Madhyancha Vidyut Vitran Nigam and UP New & Renewable Energy Dev. Agency will host the project.

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■ Fallout of US placing India on watchlist

RBI may go slow on forex interventions

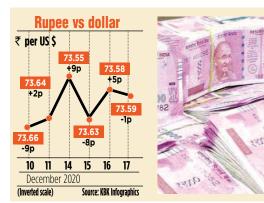
FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, DEC. 17

The US adding India to the watchlist for currency manipulation could keep the Reserve Bank of India guarded on aggressive forex intervention and may help the rupee gain, according to experts.
The United States Treas-

ury report once again included India in its monitoring list of countries with potentially "questionable foreign exchange policies" and "currency mani-pulation" after the RBI relentlessly bought dollars to forcibly keep the rupee weak to boost

exports.
Abheek Barua, chief economist at HDFC Bank told Financial Chronicle, "The RBI will have to consider the ramifications of continuing with their action (of massive dollar buying), what possible penalties or the cost of ignoring the US altogether be? It's a difficult call but I believe that the RBI will have to take their foot off the intervention pedal a little going forward given this new develop-

"This is rupee positive and bond yields should go down theoretically, but sentiment is a critical factor in the very short term and let's see how that is perceived. There will be pressure on the RBI to stop buying dollars at the rate they have been both in the spot and in the forward market...So we will just have to see. I don't think it will have a major



impact but certainly it will have some near-term impact from tomorrow onwards," added Barua.

Ashutosh Khajuria, executive director at Federal Bank told FC, "In case the RBI takes the development seriously then it will reduce or stop the intervention and so the rupee may have a tendency to appreciate against the dollar unless the foreign flows reduce or stop.

The rupee is headed for the third yearly decline against the US dollar. So far this year, the rupee has depreciated 3 per cent to 73.52 a dollar, the worst performance among Asian currencies.

The underperformance was on the back of the central bank's dollar buying and weaker domestic economic activities fol-lowing the Covid out-

India's forex reserves have increased by \$117.4 billion to a record high of \$ 574.82 billion from April till date against the previous year's \$457.47 billion. Part of this increase can be attributed to dollar weakness against other currencies such as ster-

ling, euro, yuan and yen. In the first nine months of 2020, the RBI bought a whopping \$57 billion just in the spot market. Its purchases through forward contracts are around \$12.6 billion. The US Treasury Department's report said that the Indian central bank's interventions added up to 2.4 per cent of the country's GDP, breach-ing one of the thresholds that the US monitors.

India was last included in the currency watchlist in October 2018, but removed from the May 2009 list. A currency manipulator tag is given by the US to countries that deliberately keep their currency low against the dollar to gain export advantage. The treasury report, published twice a year, warns of any unfair currency practices. The US has included India, Taiwan and Thailand to its monitoring list.

Mrs Bectors Food IPO subscribed 198 times

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD

After the grand listing success of initial public offerings by Burger King India and Gland Pharma in the recent past, Rs 540-crore public issue of biscuits and bread maker Mrs Bectors Food Specialities has also received overwhelming ponse, getting subscribed over 198 times on the last day of the

public offer.
In fact, the public issue got oversubscribed on the very first day after opening for subscription

Tuesday.
As per details made available by stock exchanges and sources working closely with the merchant bankers. total subscription as per the last update was . 198.02 times shares on

The qualified institutional buyers portion has been subscribed 176.85 times, non-institutional investors or high net worth investor portion was subscribed 621 times and the retail individual investors portion was subscribed more than 29 times.

Earlier on Monday, the company raised Rs 162 crore from the anchor investors.

The price band for Mrs Bector Food Specialities public offer has been fixed at Rs 286-288 per share of Rs 10 face value.

In rare move, Japan sells gold to fill budget hole

TETSUSHI KAJIMOTO

Japan has sold 80 tonnes of gold used for minting coins to another arm of the government to fund part of its huge stimulus package to combat the coronavirus crisis, government officials told

Reuters.
Saddled with public debt twice the size of its economy and tax rev-enues hit by the pandemic-induced recession, the finance ministry is under pressure to find non-tax revenues to cover the rising cost of spending to deal with the health cri-

The ministry usually taps reserves set aside as special accounts, and profits the Bank of Japan (BOJ) and other agencies return to state coffers after they close their annual books.

This time, the ministry resorted to a rare



arrangement involving the central bank.

Under the move, the ministry's division in charge of international affairs sold a portion of dollar reserves to the BOJ. With the yen it received, the division bought gold from another division of the ministry in charge of debt manage ment.

From the gold sale, the division in charge of debt management gained proceeds worth 500 billion yen (\$4.84 billion) that would be used to finance a

ing research and development at universities, two officials told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

The BOJ announced on Wednesday it would buy dollars from the ministry as a precaution against any market disruptions caused by the pandemic. But some analysts say

the arrangement may have been initiated by the finance ministry, which wanted to avoid issuing too much debt or using taxpayers' money for the

"From the standpoint of fiscal consolidation, this deal may be described as effective use of state properity," said Yoshimasa Maruyama, chief market economist at SMBC Nikko Securities. "It sounds reasonable for the BOJ to top up dollar funds. But it was probably the government, not the BOJ, that pulled the

Smartphone market up 42% in Oct.

New Delhi, Dec. 17: India's smartphone market grew 42 per cent, with shipments of 21 million units in October-the second highest for a monthdriven by multiple online sale events, research firm

IDC said on Thursday.
IDC said it expects the smartphone market to see a single-digit decline in final consumer sell out in

2020 on a full-year basis. According to IDC, the growth in October was driven by multiple online sale festivals and continuing pent up demand from the third quarter of 2020,.

'This is the highest ever October shipments and second highest for a month, following 23 million units in September 2020, an all-time high for a single month," it added.
Online platforms acc-

ounted for 51 per cent share of the shipment, and the channel grew 53 per cent year-over-year (YoY). Offline channels, especially in smaller towns and cities, also saw a healthy 33 per centYoY, IDC said.

The low-mid range segment (\$100-200) grew by 60 per cent YoY and its share increased to 58 per cent of the total market in the said month, it added.

The premium segment (\$500-700) witnessed multifold growth with high shipments of the iPhone XR, 11 and OnePlus 8 drivaffordability schemes/offers.

Agarwal gets partner to join govt's selloff with \$10 billion

DINESH NAIR

Commodities tycoon Anil Agarwal is planning to invest \$10 billion through a new partnership target ing government privatisa-The billionaire is team-

ing up with London-based Centricus Asset Management Ltd to seek investments in Indian companies offering substantial growth opportunities, according to a statement on Thursday. They will look to turn around companies being sold off as part of the country's Rs 2.1 lakh crore (\$29 billion) divest-

ment programme. Agarwal made a fortune buying state companies and fixing them up, building a metals and mining powerhouse under the umbrella of Vedanta Resources Ltd. He's now seeking to repeat that success, betting he can spot gems among the dozens of companies being put on block by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's



The entrepreneurial dynamism in India "can be harnessed to unlock incredible transformation in the public sector,' Agarwal said in the statement. "We believe that this strategy can, and will, play a crucial role in country's ongoing industrialisation.' The billionaire plans to

help former government accelerate companies their transformation into private-sector firms with professional management, according to the statement. Vedanta is among the parties that have expressed interest in acquiring India's stake in \$12 billion refiner Bharat Petroleum Corp. Agarwal and Centricus

have been seeking to raise capital from internationsuch turnaround opportunities. They have been planning a fund with a 10vear life span that will use private equity-type strategy, buying into com panies and boosting their profitability before seeking an exit, a person with knowledge of the matter has said.

A former metals trader, Agarwal built his business through a series of ambitious acquisitions over the past few decades. including a 2001 deal to take control of govern-ment-owned Bharat Aluminium Co in one of the first tests of India's efforts to offload state holdings. He now has a net worth of \$2.5 billion, according Bloomberg Billionaires

Index. Centricus oversees \$28 billion in assets, according to its website. It advised SoftBank Group Corp on the creation of its \$100 billion Vision Fund and also worked on its \$3.3 billion takeover of Investment -Bloomberg

Soaring LNG prices worsen gas crunch in Asian nations

JESSICA JAGANATHAN

Surging spot prices for liquefied natural gas (LNG) are exacerbating a gas supply crunch in key fastrowing emerging mar kets in Asia just as a cold spell in other parts of the region boosts demand for the fuel.

Companies from Pakistan to China have cancelled a flurry of LNG tenders this week, several trade sources said, as lofty prices risk pushing up the input costs of industries. which could make energy more expensive for con-Benchmark Asia spot

LNG prices have soared seven-fold since May to sixyear highs, driven by pro-Malaysia, Australia, Norway and Qatar combined with accelerating use in China, India and

elsewhere. 'Buyers with no alternatives are now paying topdollar for prompt cargoes in January," said Chong Zhi Xin, a director at consultancy IHS Markit.

The state buyer Pakistan—one



fastest growing LNG markets-did not award an emergency tender seeking three cargoes for delivery in January after it received high prices, according to sources.

Power plants may opt to burn dirtier but cheaper fuel oil instead, the sources said, but are also facing rising prices in that

In India, Gujarat State Petroleum Corp (GSPC) and Indian Oil Corp did not award tenders seeking cargoes for January to February delivery, trade sources said.

In Bangladesh, gas short-ages are already apparent. "We don't have gas for cooking until (the) afternoon during the winter season. There is hardly

any gas. I can't even boil water, let alone cook food," said Sumi Akter, a mother of two in Dhaka. Bangladesh has only imported one spot cargo

this winter despite issuing several tenders over the past few months, an energy ministry official said. "We have started import-ing from the spot market

but the effort was not successful because of the abnormally high prices," the official added.

Buyers in China, the world's second largest LNG importer after Japan, are also feeling the pinch, with one steel trader reporting a rise of around 2 per cent in billet prices in steelmaking hub Tangshan, due to the rise of natural gas prices.

Higher prices combined with a gas supply crunch have seen operations at liquefaction plants in some areas in northern China being cut by 20 to 40 per cent, sources added. "The LNG prices have

reached a point where I don't think it's viable for some price-sensitive buy-ers," a Singapore-based LNG trader said.

₹300-crore IPO from Monday **RAVI RANJAN PRASAD**

Antony Waste's

MUMBAI, DEC. 17

Antony Waste Handling Cell's Rs 300-crore IPO opens on December 21 in tne price range of Rs 313 to Rs 315 per equity share of

Antony Waste Handling is the second largest player in the Rs 5,000-crore municipal solid waste management industry, with a 19year track record.

The company has undertaken more than 25 projects, of which 18 were ongoing as at November 15, including projects for the municipal corporations of Greater Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Thane, Pimpri Chinchwad, Nag-pur, North Delhi and Mangaluru, besides Noida Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority.

The company had a fleet of 1,147 vehicles and close to 7,400 full time employees to handle municipal solid waste management.

The public issue comprises a fresh issue of Rs 85 crore and an offer for sale worth Rs 215 crore by financial investors.

Locust swarms in Africa, Yemen prompt UN appeal for funds

SAMUEL GEBRE

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization is seeking \$40 million to help fight desert locusts, with new swarms seen in the Horn of Africa and

The funds will support surveillance and control operations in the mostaffected countries including Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen, the FAO said on Wednesday.

More than 1,500 people have been trained in surveillance and control of the pests. The operation currently has about 20 aircraft and 110 ground-vehicle sprayers.

The arrival of the new swarms means the biggest plague of the insects in seven decades will continue into the new year,

threatening the food security of millions of people in parts of Africa and the Middle East. The World Bank in May approved \$500 million to help combat the pests. A single swarm contains as many as 80 million locusts that can destroy crops sufficient to feed 2,500 people for a year. "Locust

swarms are forming and alreadv threatening to re-invade northern Kenya," the FAO said in the statement. "Breeding is also underway on both sides of the Red Sea, posing a new threat to Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and Yemen.

The FAO is leading efforts to fight the locust invasion and has helped clear more than 1.3 million hectares of the pests in 10 countries this year. —Bloomberg

VIRUS FATIGUE **Ticket sales in Japan have reached pre-Covid levels in last 3 months** Imax doubles down on China as theatres buzz again

SHIRLEY ZHAO

Imax Corp sees the potential to add at least 400 theatres in China by 2023, as the cinema chain operator looks to expand its footprint in a country that's emerged as the largest movie market this year.

The Ontario, Canadabased firm known for massive screens in its movie halls, has signed a deal with its Chinese partner Guangzhou Jinyi Media Corp for five new locations and upgrades at seven existing ones, it said in an email. Imax, which has about 700 theatres in China, sees the possibility of expanding its network by 50 per cent over the next three years, it added.

The theatre chain is stepping up its commitment in China as the Asian country rebounds strongly from the coronavirus pandemic-induced slowdown while the outbreaks continue to ravage the US and Europe. While both US and China contributed about a third of Imax's global box office in 2019, the latter has surpassed the US as the world's top film market this year,

"One big vote of confidence in the Chinese market is that a number of our Chinese leading exhibitors are adding more theatres to their Imax footprint," Imax chief executive officer Rich Gelfond

underscoring its impor-

tance for movie hall opera-



Chinese films," he said.

China's box-office gross revenues touched 16.4 billion yuan (\$2.5 billion) this year, compared with about \$2 billion ticket sales in the US, according to data from ticketing platform Maoyan Entertainment



said in an interview. The company has also "been on a trajectory to release more local language

and market tracker Box Office Mojo. "Imax's exposure to China's quick box office rebound gives it a leg-up

against regular theatres that have a greater presence in North America and Europe, where the recovery has been tepid," Bloomberg Intelligence analysts Geetha Ranganathan and Amine Bensaid wrote in a Nov. 17 note.

Box office revenues in China are now at 75 per cent of the levels seen last year, owing to local-lan-guage blockbusters such as "The Eight Hundred," -also the world's top-grossing movie this year --Gelfond said. The pandemic has also accelerated the company's commitment to releasing more Chineselanguage films, he said. While China has become an increasingly important movie market, it has also become a tricky one as it witnesses a heightened sense of nationalism.

As people get fatigued with social distancing and vaccine initiatives become more widespread, Imax expects movie watchers to return in hordes. And not just in China. Ticket sales in Japan in the past three months

have reached the same level in the year before while South Korea too has seen a strong comeback, according to Gelfond.
"When people feel safe going to the movies, they

are coming back in very large numbers," he said. — Bloomberg



WRESTLING | WORLD CUP

Belgrade, Dec. 17: Young Anshu Malik was the lone

Indian woman wrestler to

win a medal at the individ-ual World Cup, grabbing a silver in the 57kg category,

Anshu, who is coming up

from the junior ranks, clinched her third medal at

the senior level from as

many tournaments. She lost the gold medal bout 1-5

to Moldova's Anastasia

Nichita on Wednesday

Anshu began with a 4-2

win over Azerbaijan's Alyona Kolesnik and fol-

lowed it up with 3-1 victory

over Germany's Laura

Mertens in the quarterfi-

In the semi-final, she outplayed Russia's Veronika

. Chumikova, recording a

victory by fall.
Another Indian grappler
Pinki also did well to reach

the 55kg semi-finals, where she lost to Belarusian

She later lost the bout for

bronze to Russia's Olga

Khoroshavtseva by technical superiority. Sarita (59kg), Sonam Malik (62kg) and Sakshi

Malik (65kg) could not go

beyond quarterfinals in

their respective categories. Later, Narsingh Pancham

Yadav's much-anticipated

return to the mat after a

four-year doping ban ended

with a Qualification round defeat while Tokyo

Iryna Kurachkina.

night.

nals.

Silver for Anshu,

big names flop

SHORT TAKES

Australian Open

moved to February

Melbourne: The Australian Open was pushed back to February 8 on Thursday after weeks of negotiations as coronavirus disruption hits a second Grand Slam tennis season. Men's qualifiers will be held in Doha but Australia will host a series of build-up events including the flagship ATP Cup, the men's ATP Tour said, announcing its early 2021 schedule. The three-week delay to the season's opening Grand Slam comes after this year's Wimbledon was cancelled - for the first time since World War II - the French Open was postponed and the US Open was played behind closed doors. Fans are expected to be allowed at Melbourne Park, the tournament's venue, as the coronavirus is under control in Australia, but players will need to undergo 14 days of quarantine. - AFP

Silva, Chhetri propel Bengaluru

Goa: Bengaluru FC piled on further misery on Odisha FC with a 2-1 win in the Indian Super League at GMC Stadium, Bambolim, on Thursday. Cleiton Silva (79') scored the match-winner for Bengaluru after Steven Taylor (71') had cancelled out Sunil Chhetri (38') first-half lead for the Blues, who remained unbeaten in their six matches this season. Bengaluru were dominant from the start but were lucky not to fall behind early in the game. Diego Mauricio played a delightful through ball for Manuel Onwu, who managed to get the ball past Gurpreet, but his celebrations were curtailed, as the assistant referee signaled

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

Cavani charged by FA over racist post

London: Edinson Cavani has been charged with misconduct by the Football Association for a now-deleted social media post containing a Spanish phrase that is offensive in some contexts and for which the Manchester United star apologised.

The 33-year-old Uruguayan striker's Instagram post thanked a friend for his congratulations after scoring twice as United came from 2-0 down to beat Southampton 3-2 last month and included the Spanish word "negrito" (small black person).

He later deleted the post and apologised when it was pointed out the meaning that could be attached to it.

Both United and the player said at the time that the word was clearly used in an affectionate manner and has different connotations in South America.

Lakers edge Suns

in pre-season bow

Los Angeles: LeBron James and Anthony Davis eased into the NBA's pre-season on Wednesday as the Los Angeles Lakers scored a 112-107 victory over the Phoenix Suns. James, who barely two months ago led the Lakers to their NBA Finals triumph in Orlando, bagged 11 points with two rebounds and two assists during 15 first half minutes in Phoenix. Davis added 10 points with four rebounds in 18 minutes on court. Both James and Davis were rested for the second half. New Lakers signing Marc Gasol added three points in a 21-minute appearance. Kyle Kuzma led the scoring for the Lakers with 23 points. - AFP

Live on

Australia vs India: First Test - Dav Two from 9.30 am on Sony Ten 1,

Big Bash League: Sydney Sixers vs Adelaide Strikers from 5.40 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

3, Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: North East United vs Jamshedpur from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

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AUSSIES GET A GRIP

India end Day One at 233/6 after Kohli runout

deserved but also from

time to time, played those shots to drive home a

point. His 88-run partner-

ship with Rahane (42 off 91 balls) during the final

session nearly put India on even keel but fortunes tilted once Kohli was back

Rahane was soon snapped with the second

in the pavilion.

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

Thursday.

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

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

SCORECARD

India 1st Innings: Prithvi Shaw b Starc O, Mayank Agarwal b Cummins 17, Cheteshwar Pujara c Labuschagne b Lyon 43, Virat Kohli run out 74, Ajinkya Rahane Ibw Starc 42, Hanuma Vihari Ibw Hazlewood 16, Wriddhiman Saha (not out) 9, Ravichandran Ashwin (not out) 15. Extras (b-2, lb-7 nb-7, wd-1) 17. Total (For 6 wkts, in 89 overs) 233. FoW: 1-0, 2-3, 3-100, 4-188, 5-196, 6-206. Bowling: Mitchell Starc 19-4-49-2, Josh Hazlewood 20-6-

47-1, Pat Cummins 19-7-42-1, Cameron Green 9-2-15-0, Nathan Lyon 21-2-68-1, Marnus Labuschagne 1-0-3-0.

overs and also got a few his skipper gave opposi-

In conditions, which can't exactly be called bat-ting friendly, Kohli blend-ed the right amount of caution and aggression in his 180-ball innings, showing one and all that he is a few lightyears ahead of his peers when it comes to quality batsmanship.

If Cheteshwar Pujara (43 off 160 balls) let bowlers dictate terms with an ultra-defensive approach.

as India literally crawled during the first two ses-

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

In the morning, Prithvi

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

The Australian pace troika of Starc (2/49 in 19 overs), Josh Hazlewood (1/47 in 20 overs) and Pat Cummins (1/42 in 19 bowled a very steady line comprising new ball by Mitchell Starc mostly of fuller deliveries.

NUMBERS GAME

KOHLI'S SECOND RUN

• It was also Kohli's maiden run out in 91 innings of 56 Test matches as skip-

Kohli became the eighth Indian batsman to make 12 or more fifty plus scores against Australia in Tests. His 74 was his 12th fifty plus innings in 35 innings of 20 Test matches against Australia.

OUT IN TESTS

On the opening day of the first Test against Australia at Adelaide, India skipper Virat Kohli was run out for the second time in 146 innings of 87 Test match. He was dismissed run out for the first time against the same opponent at the same ground in January

- S. PERVEZ QAISER

Australia's Mitchell Starc (third from right) celebrates with teammates after bowling out India's Prithvi Shaw on the opening day of their first Test at the Adelaide Oval in Adelaide on Thursday.

Warne calls red-balls 'pathetic'

Adelaide, Dec. spin legend Australia Warne Thursday made a strong pitch for the pink ball to be used in all Test matches in place of the "pathet-

"nothing" to the bowler. The pink ball, as of now, is only used for Day/Night matches that became a part of the cricket in 2015.

ic" red cherry that offers

"I've been saying this for the last few years. I believe the pink ball should be used in all Test matches. Day games, not just day-night games,' Warne said on 'Fox Cricket'.

"The pink ball, you can actually see the ball easier, crowd can see the ball easier. It generally does more than the red ball and it looks fantastic on TV. So why not use a pink hall the whole time?

'Maybe change it at 60 overs because it goes soft, but I'd be using the pink ball for every Test match so more of it I would say,'

Geneva, Dec. 17: Russia was banned on Thursday

from using its name, flag

and anthem at the next

two Olympics or at any world championships for

Arbitration for Sport's ruling also blocked Russia

from bidding to host major sporting events for

Russian athletes and

teams will still be allowed

to compete at next year's

Tokyo Olympics and the

2022 Winter Games in

Beijing, as well as world

championships including

the 2022 World Cup in

Qatar, if they are not implicated in doping or

covering up positive tests. The punishments are

less than the four-year ban

the World Anti-Doping

Agency had proposed.

Čourt

the next two years.

two years.

KOHLI FEELS INDIAN FANS TAUNTING SMITH AT WORLD CUP 'WASN'T RIGHT

Kohli says Indian fans taunting Australian star Steve Smith at last year's World Cup in England "wasn't right" and that's why he famously plead-

ed with them to stop. The gesture during a pool game earned him plenty of admirers as Smith and David Warner suffered abuse from crowds all over Britain in their comeback tournament after serving bans for ball-tampering.

"People make mistakes and they learn from it and I felt like it's not fair

the Australian great said.

The Australian said the

red ball doesn't swing

much for the bowlers

with the exception of the Dukes ball in England

One small win for Russia

is the proposed team

name at major events. The

name "Russia" can be

retained on uniforms if

or

Team" have equal promi-

Still, the court's three

judges imposed the most

severe penalties on Russia

since allegations of state-

backed doping and cover-

ups emerged after the 2014

The case centered on

accusations that Russian

state authorities tam-

pered with a database

from the Moscow testing

laboratory before handing

tors last year. It contained

it over to Wada investiga-

likely evidence to prose-

cute long-standing doping

The CAS process was

"Neutral

"Neutral

words

nence, the court said.

Sochi Olympics.

violations

Adelaide, Dec. 17: Virat to target an individual personally, that's what I felt at that moment," said Kohli in a candid conversation released Thursday ahead of the

Adelaide. "Instinctively I told them not to boo you

because you were fielding there (on the boundary) for quite a bit. "As much as you play

against each other there's a human side to things as well and at the end of the day we're here chatting now, we do have

and gets soft very soon.

"No more red ball, it

doesn't swing, it doesn't

a chat a few times during the IPL as well.

"Yes, you're competitive on the field but you don't want to go nasty as

"Long-term you do realise the importance of things from a larger perspective and I felt that wasn't right to do that at that moment.'

Smith thanked Kohli and revealed he sent him a text message after the game about the "top class" gesture, but also said the crowd response only fired him up.

doesn't swing, it doesn't do anything, goes soft after 25 overs. It has been ball in Test cricket," he added. — PTI

Except for the Dukes ball in England, it has been

pathetic for so long now.

Rusada was also ordered

to pay \$1.27 million to

When a four-day hearing

was held in Lausanne last

month, Russian athletes

and their lawyers took

part as third parties argu-

In this Feb. 23, 2014 file photo the Russian national flag

(right) flies after it is hoisted next to the Olympic flag

during the closing ceremony of the 2014 Winter

Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

formally between Wada

and the Russian anti-dop-

ing agency. The Russian

agency, known as Rusada,

was ruled non-compliant

last year — a decision upheld Thursday by the

three judges.

TEST RETURN

Adelaide, Dec. 17: Star Australian Warner Thursday said he was aiming to play the Boxing Day Test against India in Melbourne, calling his injury-enforced absence from the opening clash in Adelaide "devastating". Warner limped out of second ODI last month

after straining his groin. "I am (hopeful), that's one that I never want to miss out on," Warner told Australian sports radio network *SEN* about the

Melbourne Test. "(Adelaide's) my first missed Test through injury so I'm obviously very disappointed with that. With the big series that it is, it's devastating to miss a Test but I know that the guys who are walking out there are going to put their best foot forward." -AFP

punished for misconduct

by state officials not work-

ing in sports. Giving Wada

the lab database by a December 2018 deadline

was a key condition for

Rusada being reinstated

three months earlier

when a previous expulsion from the anti-doping

Wada investigators in

Moscow eventually got the

data one month late. Evidence of doping tests

and emails appeared to

have been deleted or

changed, and whistleblow-

The ruling allows

Russian government officials, including President

Vladimir Putin, to attend

major sporting events if invited by the host

nation's head of state.

ers were implicated.

community was lifted.

London, Dec. 17: Furious Jose Mourinho had a heated exchange with Jurgen THE RESULTS Klopp after Roberto Firmino's last-gasp header Roberto Liverpool Russia to miss next two Olympics (Salah 26, Firmino 90) Tottenham

sent Liverpool to the top of the Premier League with a 2-1 win against title rivals Tottenham, while troubled Arsenal were held to a 1-1 draw by Southampton on Wednesday. Tottenham

Mourinho was incensed with the antics of Liverpool manager Klopp and his coaching staff, claiming they set out to influence the decisions of the officials with constant complaints on the touch-

the pitch at full-time.

before the interval.

Asked about his animatconversation with Klopp, Mourinho said: "I

IN FINAL OF BOXING WC New Delhi, Dec. 17: Amit Panghal (52kg) stormed into the final after three other Indian boxers were assured of

PANGHAL

medals at the World Cup in Cologne, Germany on Thursday even as a posi-tive Covid-19 case among the support staff caused some anxiety in the contingent.

Asian Games champion Panghal defeated Frenchman Billal Bennama, a bronze-medallist from the world championship 5-0 in the semi-final clash.

Earlier, three Indian women were also assured of medals after finding themselves in semifinals when draws were unveiled.

Pooja Rani (75kg), Manisha (57kg) and Simranjeet Kaur (60kg) made the last four due to the small size of their respective draws. — PTI

Olympics-bound Dahiya suffered a surprise opening-round loss at the individual World Cup, here. — PTI

Blue-haired Mbappe shines in Paris win

Mbappe scored a penalty as Paris Saint-Germain cruised to a 2-0 win over 10-Lorient

Wednesday, keeping the reigning champions just one point behind Lille ahead of their visit to the leaders this weekend.

Mbappe's second-half penalty, when Andrew Gravillon was sent off, and Moise Kean's strike helped PSG to victory after Lille, who host the Champions League runners-up on Sunday, beat Dijon by the same scoreline.

Lyon dropped to third place, a point behind PSG, after a dramatic 2-2 draw

three, slipped five points behind the leaders after a 2-1 defeat at Rennes. PSG coach Thomas Tuchel after the game said

that Neymar, who sprained his ankle last Sunday against Lyon, could return this weekend. "For Neymar we will do

everything — that is the good news," said the German.

"I can't say 'No, he's not playing against Lille'. It is possible. We can try, we will try everything."

PSG had 81 per cent of possession in the first half against struggling Lorient

without creating many clear-cut chances.



Paris Saint-Germain's Kylian Mbappe celebrates after scoring against FC Lorient during their French League match in Paris on Wednesday.

Mourinho fumes as Firmino sinks Spurs

After Klopp's wild celebrations of Firmino's 90th minute goal, Mourinho exchanged angry words with the German coach on

It was an incendiary end to an explosive clash that saw Mohamed Salah put Liverpool ahead, only for Son Heung-min to equalise

(Aubamevang 52) (Walcott 18) (Bamford 35, Rodrigo 61, Dallas 77. Alioski 85. Newcastle Everton (Richarlison 21, Holgate 72) West Ham Crystal Palace (Benteke 35)

told him the best team lost and he disagreed, but that's his opinion.

"If I behave the same way he does on the touchline, I do not stay there. That's animated? For some rea-

son I am different." — AFP