









SHORT TAKES

SC AGREES TO EXAMINE PLEA ON EMERGENCY

PARMOD KUMAR  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

The Supreme Court on Monday said that it will consider the “feasibility or desirability” of examining a plea seeking to declare 19-month-long Emergency that was declared in June 1975 and had witnessed a large scale preventive arrests and the freezing of the fundamental rights as unconstitutional.

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

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

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

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

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

GMAIL, OTHER GOOGLE SERVICES FACE OUTAGE

**New Delhi, Dec. 14:** Gmail and a host of other Google services faced disruptions on Monday evening and the tech major is in the process of fully restoring the services. The company, which faced a similar outage in August this year, is yet to specify areas on for the outage.

In an update on the Google work space status dashboard at 18:17 hours, Google said Gmail service has already been restored for some users, and “we expect a resolution for all users in the near future. Please note this time frame is an estimate and may change”. At around 17:25 hours, Google had said it was “aware of a problem with Gmail affecting a majority of users” and that the affected users are unable to access Gmail.

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

MAHA GOVT OFFERS HELP TO PRESERVE INS VIRAAT

SHAHAB ANSARI  
MUMBAI, DEC. 14

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

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

According to Mukesh Patel, chairman of the Shree Ram Group which bought *INS Viraat* as scrap, “About 5 per cent of the ship has already been broken.”

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



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

— PTI

India geared up for any China build-up: Rawat

CDS says armed forces can counter PLA’s constant moves

RAJIB CHOWDHURI  
KOLKATA, DEC. 14

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

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

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

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



Bipin Rawat

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

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

we may face on the northern border.”

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

Heavy voter turnout in last phase of Kerala polls

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC. 14

Heavy polling was recorded in the third and final phase of local body polls in Kerala.

More than 78.62 per cent polling was recorded till 8 pm in four northern districts Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasargod which went to polls on Monday.

Malappuram recorded 78.86 per cent, Kozhikode 78.98, Kannur 77.54 and Kasargod 77.14 per cent. A total of 89,74,993 voters were eligible to vote in the third phase in 6,867 wards across 354 local bodies. The polling was held strictly complying with Covid safety protocol. Voters turned out in masks, maintained social distancing while waiting in the queues and used sanitisers before and after casting their votes. Barring minor incidents of scuffle between the supporters of rival parties, no major violence was reported from any of the northern districts.

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



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

— PTI

clearly indicated the enthusiasm of the electorate.

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

It may be recalled that 72.67 per cent polling was recorded in the first

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

A higher voter turnout of 76.38 per cent was witnessed in the second phase when central districts of Kottayam, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad and Wayanad went to polls on December 10.

Rajnath lauds valour of forces deployed at LAC

PAWAN BALI  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

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

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

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

Defence minister pointed out that whenever there is a situation at LAC the most obvious outcome is comparison between India and China’s military strength.

“There can be a serious debate on who owns more military might but when it comes to soft power there is no scope of ambiguity

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

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

Kamal Nath hints at political retirement

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY  
BHOPAL, DEC. 14

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

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

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

Nath’s statement comes in the wake of reports of his running feud with veteran Congress leader and former chief minister Digvijay Singh.

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



Kamal Nath

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

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

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

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

Centre upgrades Vijayvargiya’s security with bullet resistant car

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

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

“The security of Vijayvargiya has been upgraded with the inclusion of a bullet resistant four-wheeler in the con-

voy. This has been done keeping in mind the security requirements of the protectee in the wake of the recent attack on his vehicle that was part of a convoy of BJP president J.P. Nadda,” an official source said.

The CISF has been providing ‘Z’ category VIP security cover to Vijayvargiya since February last year. The protection includes a mobile team of about seven armed CISF commandos as well as a pilot and an escort vehicle. Vijayvargiya’s vehicle was attacked with stones during a visit to Diamond Harbour area in the state’s South 24 Parganas district on December 10

when he was accompanying the BJP president.

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

“As per the order of the Union home ministry, I have been provided with a bulletproof vehicle,” he told the media at the airport. On December 10, several vehicles in Nadda’s cavalcade were damaged in the attack. Sources in the BJP said its leaders, including Vijayvargiya and vice president Mukul Roy, sustained injuries in the melee.

— PTI

WOMEN | SAFETY

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

Shakti Bill tabled in Maharashtra Assembly

BHAGWAN PARAB  
MUMBAI, DEC. 14

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

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

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

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

It has also proposed special courts ensuring speedy trial in cases of crimes against women and children, amendments in sections of Indian Penal

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

Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) to sternly deal with such crimes.

The bills have assured to bring down the investigation period from two months to 15 days, the trial period from two months to 30 days, and appeal period to 45 days from the present

officer. It also aims to establish institutions for providing services to victims, including medical or psychiatric support and care, counselling, facilitating legal and financial aid, and rehabilitation.

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

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

Several women’s groups had earlier urged Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to not table the Shakti bill, calling it draconian legislation that is fundamentally anti-women with the potential to negate the very offence of rape.



quick BITES

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

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

IIM-B achieves 100% summer placements

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

Hyundai gets 30,000 bookings for i20 in 40 days



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

UP plans medical colleges in every distt., woos PIOs

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

Godrej Properties tops global sustainability list

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

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Seek 51% stake with each staff putting in ₹1 L Employees bid for Air India

RAGINI SAXENA DEC. 14

A group of 219 Air India Ltd employees submitted a bid to purchase 51 per cent of the loss-making state-owned carrier. The remaining 49 per cent will be held by a financial partner, said Meenakshi Malik, Air India's commercial director. Each employee will have to contribute at least Rs 100,000 toward the bid, she said.

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

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

Air India has been unprofitable since its 2007



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— Bloomberg

Burger King more than doubles on debut



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 14

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

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

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

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

The market capitalisation of Burger King stood at Rs 5,282.10 crore, close to Rs 6,224.15 crore m-cap of Westlife Development, McDonald's India franchise.

Pharma funds outshine rest in YTD return

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 14

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

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

formance in 2020, when healthcare has become prime focus area for governments and individuals. DSP Healthcare Fund has given a YTD return of 73.69 per cent, outperforming the BSE Healthcare Index's return of 57.1 per cent. Sensex and Nifty's YTD return, in comparison, are over 12 per cent.

The Mirae Healthcare Fund has given a YTD return of 69.64 per cent while the UTI Healthcare

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

Analysts say more upside is likely for pharma and healthcare funds unlike Sensex and Nifty which are trading at their record highs.

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

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

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

Small-cap rally may run through 2021

NUPUR ACHARYA DEC. 14

The smaller stocks are beating their larger peers for the first time in three years, and some strategists say that outperformance will likely continue at least through next year.

The Nifty Midcap 100 Index has climbed 20 per cent this year, and the Nifty Smallcap 100 Index has advanced 17 per cent, outpacing the 11 per cent gain in the large-cap NSE Nifty 50 Index. While the

Nifty has set a series of new records this year, the smaller gauges remain below their peaks after two years of losses.

Broadly strong corporate earnings, efforts by the government and central bank to bolster the economy, and a surge in retail trading have helped smaller shares start to outperform since summer. And while the Nifty's price-to-earnings multiple has reached an all-time high, the small- and mid-cap gauges are trading at

similar valuations to late 2017, the last year they outperformed the larger index.

"Such turn in performance does not fizzle out so fast, especially when the valuation gap is still there," said Vinod Karki, head of strategy at ICICI Securities Ltd, the largest listed broker. "High liquidity and prospects of economic recovery are perfect recipes for relatively riskier assets such as smaller-sized companies."

Small- and mid-caps fell

over the last two years as concerns over slowing economic growth drove investors to the safety of their larger peers. Now there are hopes for a rebound.

"We believe that the lead current indicators on earnings and sentiment are supportive of a significantly new high over the next 18 to 24 months for the mid-cap and small-cap indexes," said Amit Khurana, head of equities for Dolat Capital Market Pvt Ltd.

— Bloomberg

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

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

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

The firm will lay pipelines and other infra-



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

ural gas to automobiles.

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

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

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

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 14

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

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

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

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

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

India aims to surpass China in mobile mfg

New Delhi, Dec. 14: India is now aiming to surpass China in the field of mobile manufacturing with the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme attracting global majors in this segment to the country, telecom and IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said on Monday.

He said the government is looking to make India a hub of other electronic products as well with the expansion of the PLI scheme to other sectors. "We wanted India to become the second largest mobile manufacturer in the world. Now I am pushing India to surpass China. That's my goal and I am very clearly defining it," Prasad said at a Ficci event.

India became the second largest mobile manufacturing country in 2017. The National Policy on Electronics 2019 (NPE) envisages electronic manufacturing turnover of more than Rs 26 lakh

crore by 2025, out of which Rs 13 lakh crore is expected to come from the mobile phone segment. PLI is designed to propel India's stature

and ease of doing business under the leadership of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to showcase India as an alternate manufacturing destination, Prasad said. "PLI is designed to enable global champion companies to come to India and make Indian companies national champion," he noted.

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

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

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



Dennis Muilenburg

JULIE JOHNSON DEC. 14

Former Boeing Co CEO Dennis Muilenburg is joining Monarch Tractor, a Silicon Valley startup that's angling to be the Tesla Inc of the agriculture world with an all-electric tractor that is "driver optional."

While Monarch isn't a household name, it combines longstanding interests for Muilenburg, an engineer by training who grew up on an Iowa farm and served on Caterpillar Inc's board for nine years. He is an investor and adviser as the Livermore, California-based company prepares to deliver the first of its \$50,000 tractors late next year.

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

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

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

APP | RIDE Firm plans to launch app-based ride-hailing service in select cities

Amazon's Zoox unveils driverless robotaxi

ED LUDLOW DEC. 14

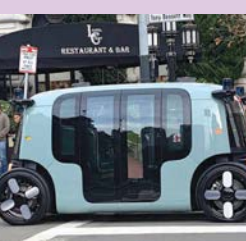
Zoox Inc, the self-driving startup owned by Amazon.com Inc, unveiled a fully autonomous electric vehicle with no steering wheel that can drive day and night on a single charge.

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

hailing service in cities like San Francisco and Las Vegas.

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

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



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

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

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

Despite being years from deployment, several of Zoox's quirky-looking mint-green vehicles are already being built at a facility in Fremont, California. The factory has the capacity to eventually produce 10,000 to 15,000 units annually, executives said. Suppliers send the major components — the drive unit, body, battery pack and so on—pre-assembled, and Zoox then does final

assembly in stages, a process it likens to building a Lego set. Executives declined to reveal the battery supplier.

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

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

— Bloomberg



# THE ASIAN AGE

15 DECEMBER 2020

## Vaccines only way out of Covid; shun politics

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

Indian drug regulators are yet to permit even emergency use of vaccines that have received approvals in Britain, the United States, Russia and China. The need for thoroughness in studying the trial data is a priority right now, considering how even minor ill-effects or side effects of the vaccine can prove inhibiting and erode people's confidence in taking the jab. Dedicated scientists have led international efforts to make various types of vaccines possible and their best efforts in giving "warp speed" to the projects have been beset not only by the logistics of distribution but also the politics injected into prioritising beneficiaries.

The United States and large parts of Europe, which are going through a nightmarish second Covid-19 wave in the autumn, are bracing for a winter of discontent, and they have found it necessary to fast-track the vaccination process. Their experience should prove useful as a case study for India to avoid the pitfalls and maximise the efficiency of what has been a truly international effort at finding vaccines. India, as the world's largest manufacturing hub, has a pivotal role to play in this as vaccines are the most effective route out of the pandemic as the production of monoclonal antibodies, which President Donald Trump might have been given, is painfully slow and mitigation of the disease is a complicated process that can overwhelm the health infrastructure.

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

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

## The greatest spy writer ever

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

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

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

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

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

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Aakar Patel

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

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

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

In brief, the theory is that India has too many small companies and this is inefficient. It should instead have only a handful of very large players running its economy, and these giants can then compete with the world. So, what will the government do to make this possible? It will try and make it difficult for the small and medium sized industrialists to compete. This is also called "formalisation".

It assumes that the small and medium sized entities in business are all tax thieves. They cheat the government by operating in cash. To make their existence difficult, if not impossible, the first step is to remove cash from the economy. This was done on Tuesday, November 8, 2016. Businesses that

depended on cash transactions, even if they were legitimate ones, were not able to operate for weeks and were hampered for months. The large businesses were not affected because they could do with electronic transfers just as the upper class in the metropolitan areas managed with their credit cards.

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

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

reserves to be able to deal with such a blow or the ability to get their staff to "work from home".

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

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

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

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

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

Subhani



## BJP in Bengal: Bruised, battered... still upbeat?



Shikha Mukerjee

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

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

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

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

Warning that the

Union home ministry would hear of it, orchestrating a media offensive on the "anarchy, lawlessness and intolerance" prevailing in West Bengal, declaring that orderly democratic politics was no longer possible, by the 2017 incident measure, is a serious overreaction. It falls short of a politically savvy response. Even with the state governor, Jagdeep Dhankar, weighing in and declaring that Mamata Banerjee was "playing with fire", that there was a "deterioration" in the law and order situation in the state, that he had written a special report and sent it to the Government of India because it was an attack on the "leader of the national party," the BJP missed its chance of using the situation to deliver a political punch. Having taunted both the "bhaipo" or nephew, Trinamul MP Abhishek Banerjee, and the "pishi" or paternal aunt, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, for an unholy nexus, accusing her of fostering "dynasty" by cutting out senior leaders of the Trinamul Congress who in their disenchantment were waiting to defect to the BJP, the visit to Diamond Harbour was a red rag that Mr Nadda waved. If the reaction shook up the "leader of a national party," it ought not to have surprised him. The BJP leadership needs to get it — that West Bengal is, like many other places, a mass of contradictions. Its people write and recite poetry even as they make bombs, perhaps plan to attack the convoys of VIPs and create chaos. In West Bengal, politics, peaceful demonstrations that are always edgy with the possibility of violence,

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

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

Taking on Mamata by publicly discrediting her shortcomings as Chief Minister or making personal attacks about her probity can be the frills on something much more substantial. By itself, accusing the TMC of corruption does not work.

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

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

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

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist based in Kolkata

### LETTERS

#### PAWAR CONG CHIEF?

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

Sridhar V. Kulkarni  
Kalyan, Maharashtra

### ACTS OF MALICE

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

Bhagwan Thadani  
Mumbai

### NADDA IS WRONG

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

S. Kamat  
Alto Santa Cruz, Goa

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



## SHORT TAKES

RAWALPINDI  
BLAST: 3 ULTRAS  
HELD IN PAKISTAN

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

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

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

U.S. REMOVES  
SUDAN FROM  
TERROR LIST

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

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

US President Donald Trump had announced in October that he was delisting Sudan, 27 years after Washington first put the country on its blacklist for harbouring Islamist militants.

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

GUNMAN SHOT BY  
POLICE IN NEW  
YORK CATHEDRAL

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

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

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

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

ECLIPSE BLACKS  
OUT SOUTH CHILE,  
ARGENTINA

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hackers infiltrate  
US fed networks

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

**Washington, Dec. 14:** Hackers broke into the networks of federal agencies including the Treasury and Commerce departments as US government officials said Sunday that they were working to identify the scope of the breach and to fix the problem.

The FBI and the Department of Homeland Security's cybersecurity arm are investigating. The hacks were revealed just days after a major cybersecurity firm disclosed that foreign government hackers had broken into its network and stolen the company's own hacking tools.

Many experts suspect Russia as responsible for the attack against FireEye, a major cybersecurity player whose customers include federal, state and local governments and top global corporations. There was no immediate connection between the attacks, and it wasn't immediately clear if Russia was also responsible for the hack of the Treasury Department, which was first reported by Reuters.

National Security Council spokesperson John Ullyot said in a statement that the government was "taking all necessary steps to identify and remedy any possible issues related to this situation." The government's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency said separately that it has been working with other agencies "regarding recently

Data leak exposes  
China in top firms

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

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

Among the companies

discovered activity on government networks.

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

Federal government agencies have long been attractive targets for foreign hackers.

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

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

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

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FORMER AIDE  
ACCUSES CUOMO  
OF SEXUAL  
HARASSMENT

**New York, Dec. 14:** A former aide to New York Gov Andrew Cuomo who is now running for Manhattan borough president accused him of sexual harassment in a series of tweets Sunday, saying he made inappropriate comments about her appearance.

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

Electoral College to  
formalise Biden win

**Washington, Dec. 14:** Joe Biden's march to the White House — overshadowed by President Donald Trump's frantic attempts to overturn the US election — is to be formalised on Monday when the Electoral College meets to confirm the Democrat's win.

Electors in all 50 states were meeting to cast their votes in a tradition that has long been considered mostly a formality for confirming the will of the people expressed at the polls. But this year the somewhat arcane procedure is at the center of an unprecedented — and many warn dangerous — challenge to the credibility of US democracy led by Trump.

Soundly beaten by Biden on November 3, Trump continues to claim, without evidence, that he was the real winner. Court after court has turned down his team's claims of election fraud around the country and last Friday the Supreme Court dealt a final legal blow when it threw out an appeal lodged by Trump allies from Texas and other Republican-led states.

Based on the already legally certified state-by-state vote tallies, the Electoral College representatives are expected to vote by 306 to 232 in favor of Biden over Trump — a process expected to take much of Monday.

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

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

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

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

imposed cut-off point to end talks if there was no progress towards a pact.

Johnson insists it remains "most likely" that Britain will crash out of the globe's largest single market on World Trade Organisation terms by year's end as the two sides spar over regulating future standards and fishing.

But von der Leyen on Monday said "there is movement. That is good".

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

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



Sandra Lindsay, a nurse at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, is inoculated with the Covid-19 vaccine by Dr. Michelle Chester, at Long Island Jewish Medical Center in the Queens borough of New York. — AFP

US kicks off Covid-19 vaccine drive as  
Germany returns to partial lockdownSanta infects 75 at  
Belgian care home

**Belgium, Dec. 14:** A man from Belgium, who dressed up as Santa Claus to spread Christmas joy, ended up being labelled as 'super spreader' after inadvertently infecting 75 people at an old age home with Covid-19.

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

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

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

visit, the man who dressed up as Santa fell ill and tested positive for Covid-19. The aged care home made it mandatory for residents and staff to wear face masks. But pictures from the Christmas event showed that not all residents wore masks and 'Santa' and his helpers stood very close to the elderly people.

"It was made with the best intent, but it went wrong. It has been a very dark day for the care home. It is a very great mental strain to bear for the man that played Saint Nicholas, as well as for the organisers and the staff," Mol's mayor, Wim Caeyers, told Belgian news organisation VRT News.

"Initially they said that the rules had been followed, but then straight away you receive photos from the families of residents where you can see that this wasn't the case," he added. — Agencies

SOUTH KOREA TO  
OPEN MORE  
TESTING SITES

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

The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said the additional cases took the country's total since the pandemic began to 43,484 infections with 587 deaths. It said about 65 per cent of the new cases were found in the Seoul area, which has been at the centre of a recent viral resurgence.

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

Pak played over  
overcrowded jails

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

Instead of following through on promises to ease prison overcrowding made when the pandemic first hit, Pakistan's government has actually increased its inmate population by over 6,000 between April and August, from 73,242 to 79,603.

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

certain prisoners, particularly the elderly, women and "prisoners of conscience." "As Pakistan braves the second wave of Covid-19, prisoners remain dangerously exposed as the authorities not only failed to reduce overcrowding, they actually worsened it," said Rimmel Mohyidin, South Asia regional campaigner for Amnesty International.

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

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

## END OF | AN ERA

He wrote 25 novels, 1 memoir in a career spanning 6 decades, selling 60 million books  
British spy thriller author John le Carre dies at 89

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

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

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

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

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

Oldman reprised the role in the 2011 film, winning an Oscar the following year.

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

Harris told Sky News television "The Spy Who Came In From The Cold" was a "masterpiece". "It's an incredibly engrossing tale and very deep, and it transformed the writing of spy fiction. It was a brilliant, psychological portrait of spying and of betrayal and of the decline of British power," Stephen King, the best-selling US author, called le Carre "a literary giant and a humanitarian spirit".

Jonny Geller, le Carre's literary agent, said: "His like will never be seen again, and his loss will be felt by every book lover, everyone interested in the



John le Carre

human condition." And historian Simon Sebag Montefiore said he was heartbroken at the death of a "titan of English literature".

Le Carre's life could have been the stuff of fiction and he once said he owed his career in the shadows and later literary success to an "impulsive adolescent decision" to flee an unhappy home life.

It involved a spell in Bern, Switzerland, learning German, where he took his first steps in British intelligence, doing

odd-jobs across the border in Austria. From Switzerland, he returned to Britain to study at Oxford University, then went on to teach at the elite Eton school before joining MI5, the country's domestic intelligence agency, in the late 1950s.

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



## SHORT TAKES

## SHIP COLLIDES IN CHINESE RIVER, 3 DEAD, 5 MISSING

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

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

## IRAN FIGHTS OIL SPILLAGE, FIRE IN SOUTHWEST

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

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

There were no casualties from the fire, he added.

The agency said the rupture occurred around noon on the Maroun pipeline, which was shut off to stop the spillage.

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

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

## ENDANGERED TAG FOR MONARCH BUTTERFLY SOON

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

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

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

## WTO FAILS TO ENDORSE RULES TO STOP OVERFISHING

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

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

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

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

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

## It's ski time



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

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

## Czar expected to coordinate on climate policies across federal agencies

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

Biden is also considering Michael Regan, an African American who runs North Carolina's

environmental agency, to run the EPA, the two sources said.

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

The Biden transition team did not respond to requests for comment. McCarthy, Regan and

Nichols also did not respond to requests for comment.

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

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

global climate czar, making him part of the US national security team and charging him with coordinating with other counties on the environment.

If selected, McCarthy, who currently serves as president of the Natural Resources Defense Council, a leading national environmental group, would serve as the domestic counterpart to Kerry.

The position would not require U.S. Senate confirmation.

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

McCarthy was key to writing the Clean Power Plan, a signature Obama-era measure that imposed the first-ever limits on carbon pollution from U.S. power plants. — Reuters

## Malaysia seizes largest-ever meth haul worth \$26m

Kuala Lumpur, Dec. 14: Malaysian authorities have seized more than two tons of crystal methamphetamine worth more than \$26 million aboard a small boat off the country's western coast, the largest ever such haul in the country's history.

The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency said over the weekend that it made the seizure on December 9 off the coast of Penang. The agency said in a statement that a maritime patrol found the drugs on a recreational boat that was behaving strangely. Methamphetamine is illicitly smuggled across much of Southeast Asia, China and Australia, part of a multi-billion dollar illegal trade in the drug.

Authorities said the man operating the boat tried to flee when he saw the patrol boat and later jumped overboard as his vessel sped off. There was no one else aboard the 12.5-meter (41-foot) vessel. He was arrested and the boat was seized. Officials

● **AUTHORITIES SAID** the man operating the boat tried to flee when he saw the patrol boat and later jumped overboard as his vessel sped off. There was no one else aboard the 12.5-meter (41-foot) vessel.

found 2,118 kilograms (4,669 pounds) of methamphetamines aboard packed in Chinese tea packets.

The agency did not say where the drug was produced, but Malaysia borders a number of countries where it is produced. The Golden Triangle, a remote jungle area where the borders of Myanmar, Laos and Thailand meet, was once a major source of the world's opium and heroin.

In recent years it has also become a major producer of methamphetamine. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime said earlier in the year that the cumulative value of the methamphetamine market in Asia is more \$60 billion. — AP

## Temple of Hercules



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

## 'External source' causes oil tanker blast off Saudi Arabia

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

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

elaborating.

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

There was no immediate word on what caused the

blast. However, it comes after a mine exploded and damaged a ship off Saudi Arabia last month. Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthis rebels have used sea mines before in their long war against a Saudi-led coalition. However, the Houthis have not commented. — AP

## UK to start fund talks with EDF for nuclear plant

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

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

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

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

The statement said the negotiations will strive to reach conditions that would ensure value for any money invested and that all relevant approvals would be secured before any final decision is taken on whether to proceed.

"The successful conclusion of these negotiations will be subject to thorough scrutiny and needs to satisfy the government's robust legal, regulatory and national security requirements," said the statement.

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

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

Construction of the plant would create 25,000 jobs and 1,000 apprenticeships, while the operational power plant would employ 900 staff.

Britain, which will host the UN's next major climate summit COP26 in the Scottish city of Glasgow next year, announced the EDF talks in its Energy White Paper. The document set out the government's plans to meet its goal of net zero emissions by 2050. Business minister Alok Sharma stressed on Monday that EDF has not yet been given a "green light" for construction. — AFP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The United States sent astronauts to the moon to collect samples. In the Soviet Union's unmanned lunar sampling missions, the spacecraft took off from the moon and returned to Earth directly.

The Chang'e-5 probe, named after the mythical Chinese moon goddess, is expected to bring about 2 kilograms of lunar samples back to Earth. China chose a complicated technological approach, including unmanned rendezvous and docking in lunar orbit, in order to bring back more samples and lay a technological foundation for manned lunar missions. Pei Zhaoyu, deputy director of the Lunar Exploration and Space Program Centre of the CNSA, had said last week.

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

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

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

## DUST TO DUST

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

## Bacteria can travel from one continent to another: Study

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

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

that could be inhaled by humans.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

They believe these aerosols may exist throughout the world, primarily in those regions where dust is carried in from desert regions. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Ex-Reds coach Houllier dies

**Paris:** Gerard Houllier, a Frenchman who won three titles in one season as coach of English club Liverpool, has died. He was 73. Liverpool announced the death on Twitter on Monday. French sports daily *L'Equipe* said Houllier died following heart surgery in France. "We are mourning the passing of our treble-winning manager, Gerard Houllier," Liverpool wrote on Twitter. Houllier had a mediocre stint as coach of France's national team in the early 1990s, his short-lived journey ending with an embarrassing failure to qualify for the 1994 World Cup. His tenure at Liverpool was far more successful, leading the Reds to the FA Cup, League Cup and UEFA Cup treble in 2001. He is one of only three managers along with Alex Ferguson and Pep Guardiola to have won three trophies with an English club in the same season. — AP

## Shuttlers alerted about fake events

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

## Hockey may get foreign tour soon

**Bengaluru:** His side's Olympic preparation hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic, Indian men's hockey team chief coach Graham Reid is hoping to resume international action from early next year. The Australian said the sooner India gets to play international matches, the better will be their preparations for the Tokyo Games, which has been shifted to next year due to the global pandemic. "With the support of Hockey India, we have planned for matches from early next year. These matches will ideally show us the level we are truly at and the areas that will require work on leading into the Olympic Games," Reid said in a statement issued by Hockey India. — PTI

## Injured Neymar stretched off

**Rio de Janeiro:** Brazilian star Neymar gave fans a reassuring message on Monday after undergoing tests on the ankle he injured in Paris Saint-Germain's 1-0 Ligue 1 defeat to Lyon at the weekend. Neymar left the field on a stretcher in apparent agony on Sunday but on Instagram he said: "It could have been worse." "These tears, it's the pain, the fear, the worry, the surgeries, the crutches and other bad memories," Neymar wrote on his Instagram story alongside a picture of him in tears clutching his ankle. — AFP

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

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

## FOOTBALL

**Indian Super League:** Hyderabad FC vs East Bengal from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

**Premier League:** Wolves vs Chelsea from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, HD

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

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# Finch wary of Virat

## Aaron warns Aussies about 'ruthless' Kohli

**Melbourne, Dec. 14:** Australia limited-overs captain Aaron Finch wants the home team players to strike a "fine balance" when they confront Virat Kohli in the opening Test as he believes, if provoked too much, the India skipper can be "ruthless" against his opponents.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Finch, who had played under Kohli in



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

— AFP

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

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

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

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

## HENRIQUES REPLACES INJURED ABBOTT

**Sydney, Dec. 14:** All-rounder Moises Henriques was on Monday added to Australia's injury-hit squad for the opening Test against India while pacer Sean Abbott was ruled out of the match due to a calf strain.

Henriques, who had missed the three-day second practice game due to a hamstring strain, cleared the fitness Test on Monday to return to the Test squad after a gap of four years. The opening game, a day-nighter, begins on December 17 in Adelaide.

"All-rounder Moises Henriques has been added to Australia's squad for the first Test against India

after the hosts' camp continues to be hit with injury," a report in *cricket.com.au* said.

Abbott became the latest Australian player to join the injury list after being picking up the strain during the second warm-up game here. He is, however, expected to be available for the second Test in Melbourne, which begins on December 26.

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

"Fast bowler Sean Abbott will not travel to Adelaide with Henriques and the remaining Australia squad members from Sydney

today after picking up a calf strain in the day-night four match at the SCG on Saturday."

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

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

## NZ BEAT WINDIES IN SECOND TEST TO SWEEP SERIES

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

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

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

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

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

**Brief scores: New Zealand 460 bt West Indies 131 & 317** (Jason Holder 61, da Silva 57, Wagner 3-54, Boult 3-96).

## INDIAN | SUPER LEAGUE

## Mumbai fail to crack open JFC

**Goa, Dec. 14:** A flurry of missed chances saw table-toppers Mumbai City FC settle for only a 1-1 draw against Jamshedpur FC in the Indian Super League at the GMC Stadium, here on Monday.

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

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

Monroy was in the thick of things a couple of minutes later, hacking Cy Goddard down and getting himself in the referee's book.

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

## HYDERABAD FACE EB IN TRICKY TIE

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

Four games into the season, Hyderabad FC are one of just three teams that are yet to lose a game (a win and three draws) and they will be eager to convert their efforts into a victory, against the ISL debutants.

SC East Bengal have not had the best of starts to the season. They are yet to score a goal, but logged first point in the league table in a feisty clash against Jamshedpur last Thursday. They remain bottom of the table but could prove to be one of the biggest tests for Hyderabad so far this season. — PTI

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



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

## Messi comes to Catalans' rescue

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

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

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

Barcelona do however have two games in hand on the Basque outfit.

Atletico are level on 26 points with Sociedad and also have two games in hand while Real Madrid

are now just three points behind the leaders having played one less after beating their local rivals 2-0 on Saturday.

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

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

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

— AFP



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

## Leaders Spurs, Liverpool held

**London, Dec. 14:** Tottenham and Liverpool remain tied at the top of the Premier League after both were held to 1-1 draws at Crystal Palace and Fulham respectively, while Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's own goal condemned Arsenal to another shocking home defeat, going down 1-0 to Burnley on Sunday.

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

Liverpool and Tottenham

## THE RESULTS

**Crystal Palace** (Schlupp 81)  
**Tottenham** (Kane 23)  
**Southampton** (Adams 34, Armstrong 62, Redmond 83)  
**Sheffield United**

**Fulham** (De Cordova-Reid 25)  
**Liverpool** (Salah 79-pen)  
**Arsenal** (Aubameyang 73-og)  
**Leicester** (Maddison 27, 44, Vardy 41)  
**Brighton**

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

The champions needed a Mohamed Salah penalty 11

minutes from time to avoid an embarrassing defeat at Fulham after a dreadful first-half performance left Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp seething on the touchline.

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

them," said Klopp. "I think in the first half an hour we could have lost the game, in the last 60 minutes we should have won it. In the end we get a point and that's it."

Bobby DeCordova-Reid's thunderous finish into the far corner to take the lead was no more than Scott Parker's side deserved as the returning Alisson Becker kept Liverpool in the game before the break.

Liverpool dominated the second-half to pin Fulham back, but needed a penalty to salvage a point when Aboubakar Kamara was penalised for handling Georginio Wijnaldum's free-kick. — AFP