



IMRAN KHAN  
TO SKIP  
SCO MEET



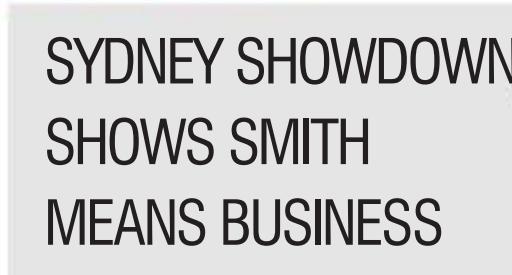
'PREFER NATIONS WITH  
TRANSPARENT TRADE  
MECHANISMS FOR FTAs'

P4



UK NAMES VACCINES  
MINISTER TO OVERSEE  
COVID INOCULATIONS

P8



SYDNEY SHOWDOWN  
SHOWS SMITH  
MEANS BUSINESS

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. Mist in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 26 and 09 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 93% Min: 42%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 26.4°C (+1) Min: 10.1°C (0)  
SUN RISES SUN SETS  
06:56 hrs 17:24 hrs  
MOON RISES MOON SETS  
16: 50 hrs 06:39 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Telangana Congress workers during campaigning for the GHMC elections, in Hyderabad's Banjara Hills on Saturday.

IANS

**Maritime security:** Top security officials of India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives on Saturday agreed to further strengthen cooperation and ensure peace for common benefit as they took stock of the current maritime security environment in the region during a high-level trilateral dialogue in Colombo which was held after a gap of six years. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval took part in the dialogue along with Sri Lankan Defence Secretary Major Gen (Retd.) Kamal Gunaratne and Maldivian Defence Minister Mariya Didi.

**Coal pilfering racket:** The CBI carried out multiple raids at about 45 locations, including in Kolkata and other parts of the state, across the country on Saturday in connection with a coal pilfering racket in which alleged kingpin Anup Majhi alias Lala is said to be cohorts with senior Eastern Coalfield Limited (ECL) officials and security personnel. An ECL security officer died after suffering a heart attack at his residence during one of the raids this morning.

## UP notifies law banning forcible religious conversion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LUCKNOW, 28 NOVEMBER

The Uttar Pradesh ordinance aimed at curbing forcible or fraudulent religious conversions including those for the sake of marriage has got the assent of state Governor Anandiben Patel with the new law providing for a jail term of up to 10 years for any violations.

The law, which has been published in the UP gazette, comes into force at once, an official spokesperson said on Saturday. The ordinance was promulgated by the Governor on Friday with immediate effect.

Under the law which deals with different categories of offences, a marriage will be declared "null and void" if the conversion of a woman is solely for that purpose, and those



wishing to change their religion after marriage need to apply to the district magistrate.

The Yogi Adityanath government on Tuesday approved the draft of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, which also bars religious conversions only for the sake of marriage, dubbed by BJP leaders as 'love jihad'.

"The way in which religious conversions are done using deceit, lies, force and dishonesty is heart wrenching, and it was necessary to have a law in this regard," Cabinet minister and UP government spokesperson Sidharth Nath Singh had said.

Conversion for the alleged purpose of marriage is, however, only one aspect of the ordinance.

The new law was opposed by the opposition Samajwadi Party.

Hours after the governor's nod, SP president Akhilesh Yadav said his party will oppose the Bill when it comes up in the state Legislature for passage.

"The Samajwadi Party is not in favour of any such law. We will oppose it (when it comes up in the assembly)," the former chief minister told a press conference.

The new law also has a provision under which if someone

returns to their original religion, it shall not be deemed a conversion.

The onus to prove that the conversion has not been done forcibly will lie on the person accused of the act and the convert, it said.

In cases of violations of the law, the ordinance stipulates that the court shall grant appropriate compensation payable by the accused to the victim of conversion which may extend to a maximum of Rs 5 lakh in addition to the fine.

The ordinance mainly envisages that no person shall convert, either directly or indirectly from one religion to another by use or practice of misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means or by marriage nor shall any per-

son abet, convince or conspire such conversion.

Minister Sidharth Nath Singh on Tuesday told reporters that the punishment under the new law is a jail term from one to five years, and a fine of Rs 15,000.

But if the woman involved is a minor or belongs to a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe, the jail term would range from three to 10 years, he said. The fine would increase to Rs 25,000.

In the case of mass conversions, the punishment is from three years to 10 years and a fine of Rs 50,000 on the organisations which indulge in it, he added.

An aggrieved person, his/her parents, brother, sister, or any other person who is related to him/her by blood, marriage or adoption may lodge an FIR about such conversion, according to the new law.

## 8 states, UTs reported 69 pc of new Covid cases in 24-hr span

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 28 NOVEMBER

Over 69 per cent of the 41,322 new Covid-19 cases reported in a span of 24 hours are from eight states and Union territories with Maharashtra recording the highest number of new infections followed by Delhi and Kerala, the Union health ministry said on Saturday.

With 11,57,605 tests conducted in a span of 24 hours, India's cumulative tests surged to 13.82 crore, while the number of tests per million population has crossed the 1-lakh mark and now stands at 1,00,159.7, the ministry said.

The active Covid-19 caseload of the country is 4,54,940, making up 4.87 per cent of the total coronavirus infections.

The ministry issued a statement saying "69.04 per cent of the daily new cases of Covid-19 are contributed by eight states/UT i.e. Maharashtra, Delhi, Kerala, West Bengal, Rajas-

than, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Chhattisgarh".

Maharashtra leads the tally with 6,185 new Covid cases.

Total Covid-19 recoveries have surged to 87,59,969 with 41,452 recoveries being registered in a day in the country, it said, adding 76.55 per cent of the new recovered cases are observed to be concentrated in 10 states and UTs.

India's Covid-19 case-load stands at 93,51,109 and the death toll has climbed to 1,36,200, the data updated at 8 a.m. showed.

**Delhi adds 89 deaths, toll nears 9K:** Delhi today logged 4,998 new coronavirus cases detected from 69,051 tests, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. The Covid positivity rate thus dropped to 7.24 per cent - the lowest since 23 October.

The city recorded 89 fresh coronavirus fatalities, which pushed its Covid toll to 8,998.



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A record 69,051 tests,

including 33,147 RT-PCR

ones - the highest till date - and 35,904 rapid antigen tests were conducted for detection of today's Covid cases.

SEE P22

## Sebi bars NDTV promoters, others in insider trading case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 28 NOVEMBER

Sebi has barred NDTV promoters Prannoy Roy and Radhika Roy from the securities market for two years and also directed them to disgorge illegal gains of over Rs 16.97 crore for indulging in insider trading more than 12 years ago, while the company denied the charges, saying it will appeal against the ruling.

Besides, the marketwatchdog has barred seven individuals and entities for insider trading in the shares of the company for a period varying from one to two years. Also, some of them have been asked to disgorge illegal gains made from trading in the shares

when they were in possession of Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSI).

NDTV in a statement on Saturday said Sebi's order against its founders Prannoy Roy and Radhika Roy is based on an inaccurate assessment of facts and that the company will immediately appeal against it.

It further said that the Sebi's ruling will not withstand scrutiny in appeal. "The appeal will be filed immediately," the statement said.

The statement was issued by the lawyers led by Fereshtha Sethna, Senior Partner at DMD Advocates, who represent NDTV founders Radhika Roy and Prannoy Roy.

The Sebi directions follow a probe conducted by the

markets regulator between September 2006 and June 2008 wherein various violations of insider trading regulations were found.

The amount has to be paid jointly or severally by them along with 6 per cent interest from April 17, 2008 till the date of actual payment. All the entities have violated Prohibition of Insider Trading (PIT) Regulations, Sebi said in three separate orders.

Sebi noted that Prannoy Roy and Radhika Roy together made a gain of Rs 16.97 crore while indulging in insider trading in the shares of New Delhi Television Ltd (NDTV) while in possession of UPSI relating to the proposed reorganization of the company.

## Enthusiastic turnout in J&K's DDC elections

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, 28 NOVEMBER



ries (UTs). This is also the first time that elections for the DDCs are being held under the Panchayati Raj in J&K.

As polling began at 7 a.m., the turn out was low but voting picked up later as the day progressed and the weather improved. Polling percentage in the first two hours was 5.25% but it increased to 39.69% at 1 p.m.

Terrorism-hit Shopian district in south Kashmir recorded lowest turnout of 6.83% till 1 p.m., an hour before close of polling. Srinagar and north Kashmir witnessed brisk polling.

Highest polling percentage was recorded in Samba district of Jammu where 59.29% votes were cast by 1 p.m.

The DDC election is being seen as a triangular contest between the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) and

led by Farooq Abdullah, BJP and Apni Party floated by former finance minister Altaf Bukhari. However, the Apni Party is considered in Kashmir as friendly towards BJP.

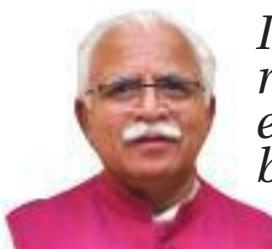
The PAGD has been claiming that the authorities were allowing only the BJP and its friendly parties to campaign for the election.

State Election Commissioner KK Sharma said 2,146 polling stations were set up for the smooth conduct of elections.

Sharma said there are total 280 constituencies in the UT (14 in each district) out of which voting was conducted in 43 constituencies from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. in phase I.

Polling for the last phase will be held on 19 December and counting of votes will be done on 22 December.





I personally made several calls to the Punjab Chief Minister but every time the request was denied. It is really unfortunate to say that this is the first time it has ever happened that one Chief Minister is trying to talk to another Chief Minister, but his counterpart is not ready to talk

MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR  
HARYANA CHIEF MINISTER

# Delhi logs 4,998 cases from record 69K tests

Coronavirus positivity rate drops to 7.24 per cent, even as the city sees 89 more deaths

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 28 NOVEMBER

**"Since 7 Nov, cases and positivity in Delhi are going down. Today, less than 5000 cases, 89 deaths and 7.24 positivity. Hope this trend continues. Delhites and Delhi govt together will win over this third wave also. Pl continue to observe all precautions," chief minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted.**



People wearing masks amid the Covid pandemic, in the Capital on Saturday.

DEEPAK

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"Since 7 Nov, cases and positivity in Delhi are going down. Today, less than 5000 cases, 89 deaths and 7.24 positivity. Hope this trend continues. Delhites and Delhi govt together will win over this third wave also. Pl continue to observe all precautions," chief minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted.

On 23 October, Delhi recorded a positivity rate of 6.98 per cent. It was 8.51 per cent yesterday, 8.65 per cent on Thursday, and 8.49 per cent on Wednesday.

A record 69,051 tests, including 33,147 RT-PCR ones - the highest till date - and 35,904 rapid antigen tests were con-

ducted the previous day for detection of today's 4,998 fresh Covid cases. As many as 64,455 coronavirus tests were conducted on Thursday.

Delhi's Covid caseload today climbed to 5,61,742, of which 5,16,166 have recovered.

The recovery rate mounted to 91.89 per cent. The tally of active cases was 36,758 - down from yesterday's 38,181.

The city recorded 6,746 cases last Sunday, 4,454 on Monday, 6,224 on Tuesday, 5,246 on Wednesday, 5,475 on Thursday, and 5,482 yesterday.

The number of containment zones in the national capital today rose to 5331 from yesterday's 5229.

The national capital had recorded its highest single-day

spike of 8,593 cases on 11 November. It had logged 131 Covid deaths on 18 November - the highest so far.

Meanwhile, Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain today said that more than 50 per cent of the beds reserved for coronavirus patients in Delhi were currently unoccupied.

"More than 1,200 ICU beds and around 9,500 normal ones are unoccupied at present. Overall, more than 50 per cent beds are available. So, we are in a slightly better situation," Jain told reporters.

He said there were some problems related to oxygen supply in the city yesterday, which have been resolved.

The national capital had yesterday logged 98 coronavirus fatalities.

Yesterday, Jain had said that Delhi has adequate infrastructure and equipment to vaccinate its entire population in a few weeks once a Covid vaccine is available.

"There is no need to worry about storage of vaccines. We have a large number of health care facilities, such as mohalla clinics, poly clinics, and hospitals etc., where Covid-19 vaccine can be administered to people," he had said.

Jain also said that Delhi should be given priority during the distribution of the vaccine as it is the national capital. A three-storeyed building at the premises of Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital has

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Gupta and Asha Menon said.

The court's observation came on a batch of 40 petitions challenging an order issued by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) granting the benefit of pro-rata pension only to Commissioned Officers of the Defence Services and not to the Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) / Persons Below Officer Rank (PBORs).

The petitioners -- NCOs/ PBORs who joined the Indian Air Force (IAF) as Airmen/ Corporals -- said the MoD's order is discriminatory and claimed pro-rata pension.

The high court observed that the oath required to be taken by the President, Vice President, Governors of the States or by the Judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts does not require them to lay down their lives in the service of the country.

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*It is a very saddening picture. Our slogan was of Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, but Modi government's arrogance made them stand against each other. This is very dangerous*



RAHUL GANDHI  
FORMER CONGRESS CHIEF

The Sunday Statesman  
NEW DELHI, 29 NOVEMBER 2020

03

# Farmers stir: Traffic thrown out of gear on Delhi roads

Traffic was affected on some key roads in the Capital as police kept the Singhu and Tikri borders closed for vehicular movement in view of farmers' agitation against the Centre's farm laws

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 28 NOVEMBER

**T**raffic was affected on key roads in Delhi on Saturday as police kept the Singhu and Tikri borders closed for vehicular movement in view of the ongoing farmers' agitation against the Centre's new farm laws.

The Delhi Traffic Police tweeted that traffic movement was not allowed from Azadpur and Outer Ring Road to the Singhu border.

"Tikri border is closed for traffic movement. Available open borders to Haryana are -- Jharoda, Dhansa, Daurala Jhatkara, Badusari, Kapashera, Rajokri NH 8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam vihar and Dundhera border," it posted on Twitter.

The traffic police said the Singhu border was still closed from both the sides.

"Please take an alternate route. Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba Chowk & GTK road. Traffic is very very heavy. Please avoid outer ring road from Signature Bridge to Rohini and vice versa, GTK road, NH 44 & Singhu border," it tweeted.

"We appeal to commuters to avoid travelling towards the Singhu and Tikri borders, Mukarba Chowk, NH-44, GT-Karnal Road and Outer Ring Road," Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Meenu Chaudhary said.

With Saturday being a



Farmers from Punjab during their protest against the Centre's farm laws, at Singhu border on Saturday.

Uttarakhand Guv recovers from Covid, discharged from AIIMS

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
DEHRADUN, 28 NOVEMBER

Uttarakhand Governor Baby Rani Maurya has recovered from coronavirus infection and was discharged from the Rishikesh-based All India Institute of Medical Sciences on Saturday.

The Governor was admitted to the AIIMS-Rishikesh on 23 November. Doctors have advised Baby Rani Maurya to remain under home isolation for one week.

A five member team of doc-



Uttarakhand Governor Baby Rani Maurya

tors were monitoring the

health of Uttarakhand Governor. After staying at AIIMS-Rishikesh for five days, the Uttarakhand Governor was discharged on Saturday morning.

U.B. Mishra, Dean of the Institute Hospital Affairs Professor at AIIMS-Rishikesh said, "Uttarakhand Governor was asymptomatic and in these bygone days she failed to develop new Covid-19 symptoms.

We have advised her to remain in home isolation for seven days."

## BUSINESS AS USUAL



Men riding mares hired for marriages, at Sector 22 in Chandigarh earlier this week.

PARDEEP SAINI

## HP announces new curbs to check Covid spread



HP CM Jai Ram Thakur holding a meeting Saturday to review the state's Covid situation.

Mandi hospital cures 2 newborns of Covid, carries out 52 deliveries

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 28 NOVEMBER

The Shri Lal Bahadur Shashtri Medical College and Hospital Ner Chowk in Mandi district has cured 2 newborn babies of Covid besides carrying out deliveries of 52 Corona positive pregnant women.

Informing about this, Ner Chowk Medical College Senior Medical Superintendent Jeevanand Chauhan said the facility is the only dedicated hospital in the state which had carried out successful deliveries of 52 pregnant women.

"In all the 52 cases, the mother and child are sound and healthy and two newborn babies who have contacted Covid infection, have also been cured of the disease," he added.

Chauhan said the hospital had handled highest number of Covid cases than any other hospital in the state and besides catering for Mandi district, the patients from Kullu, Bilaspur, Hamirpur, Kangra, Lahaul Spiti districts and Pangi in Chamba district were also being treated at the hospital.

## Fire at Oppo's warehouse in Noida

PTI  
NOIDA (UP), 28 NOVEMBER

A major fire broke out in the Noida warehouse of Chinese phone maker Oppo on Saturday, said officials.

Smoke billowing from the warehouse was visible from a distance during the fire that broke out around 5 pm.

Multiple fire tenders were deployed at the warehouse located in Ecotech 1 police station area and fire-fighting was underway, a police official said.

No person was harmed in the blaze and the cause of the fire was yet to be ascertained, the official said.

There was no comment yet from Oppo over the incident.

## Not wearing mask may land a person in jail for 8 days in HP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 28 NOVEMBER

All District Superintendent of Police have issued orders under section 111/115 Police Act, 2007 that any person found not wearing mask against the directions of government will be liable to arrest without warrant.

Pradesh Police Act, 2007.

The compounding fee for the offence committed for not wearing mask shall be Rs 1000 and congregation in public function in numbers more than allowed by the state government will be Rs 5000," he added.

Yadav said till date, 2,227 cases had been registered in the state against the violators for the violations of curfew/lockdown and other directives (23 March to 27 November) and 31,317 persons had been chalaned for not wearing the face mask during the period.

A fine of Rs 1.24 crore had been recovered from the violators and 3,70,938 persons had been sensitized by the police regarding Covid

protocols. "So far, 1,339 police personnel have been tested Covid-19 positive out of which 978 have been recovered while 360 are still undergoing treatment and 1 police personnel had died.

The health police personnel is being monitored regularly and pulse and BP monitoring equipment are being purchased while thermal screening of visitors/employees to the police offices is being ensured," he said.

Yadav further stated that 22,665 hoardings/posters had been placed at various places of the state indicating the norms to be followed to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Besides, police personnel(s) were being deployed regularly for the very purpose to aware general public as well as tourists for social distancing and wearing of face mask.

The awareness campaigns are being transmitted through social media platforms, radio and public address systems for not roaming without wearing face mask, to maintain social distancing and to have proper hand wash by using hand sanitizer," he added.

## HP task force for Covid vaccination holds meeting

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 28 NOVEMBER

Himachal Pradesh Task Force Committee for Covid-19 vaccination campaign held a meeting last evening for successful implementation of Covid-19 vaccination campaign in the state in the coming days.

Secretary Health Amitabh Awasthi presided over the first meeting of the State Task

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 28 NOVEMBER

As Himachal Pradesh recorded over 15,000 coronavirus cases in November alone, Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Saturday announced new restrictions to curb the spread of coronavirus in the state.

After a virtual meeting with Deputy Commissioners, Superintendents of Police, Chief Medical Officers, Principals and Medical Superintendents of Medical Colleges, Thakur directed to take effective steps to increase the bed capacities in their respective districts.

He expressed concern over the increase in the num-

working in offices while the sixth day will be work from home for all the government employees till 31 December to break the chain of this virus.

Besides, the state government will also consider imposing curfew from 9 pm to 6 am in the four districts of Shimla, Mandi, Kullu and Kangra and the Covid situation will be reviewed from time to time.

In addition, the bed capacity for treating Covid patients will be increased in all districts, zonal and civil hospitals to facilitate patients and to meet out any eventualities.

All the prefabricated Covid Centres coming up in the state would be completed at the earliest and the Union government has sanctioned seven oxygen plants for the state," he said, while directing DCs to identify land to set up these at the earliest.

Thakur further stated that to ensure proper and effective management of hospitals, the government had also decided to make foolproof arrangements in hospitals by designating a senior official as in-charge of Covid ward for better treatment of the patients.

Besides, all the political functions will be held virtually and restriction on numbers would be implemented in letter and spirit in such functions too," he added.

The Chief Minister said that the state government has decided to enforce five days

and laboratories for testing and treatment of Covid patients.

He directed for adopting proper protocol for treatment of the asymptomatic patients under home isolation and said such patients must be provided all required inputs for their proper medication.

Adequate arrangements of pulse oximeter must be made for these patients so that they could regularly monitor oxygen level in blood, he said.

"It has been felt that the change in climate was also resulting in the fast spread of this virus. The senior doctors must ensure at least three rounds of the wards of covid-19 patient to instill confidence in the patients.

The shortage of staff particularly in health institutions with more cases of Covid-19 patients would be met out by deploying adequate staff and adequate para medical staff will be made available to facilitate fast testing and tracing," he added.

He asked the officers to check the tendency of lax attitude of people in following Covid guidelines and take remedial measures in this regard by enforcing the instructions of the government issued from time to time.

We are taking all necessary COVID 19 Precautionary Measures

Hi-Fashion winter Collection 2020 Best Brands Sweaters, Jackets, sweat shirts & Lovers

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- PUNCHKUAN ROAD, Garwal Bhawan, (Near Jhandewalan, Gole Chkr.)
- WAZIRPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)
- JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
- NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing



Divisive forces are trying to enter Hyderabad

TELANGANA CHIEF MINISTER K CHANDRASHEKAR RAO

TAKING A JIB AT UP CM YOGI ADITYANATH'S CAMPAIGN IN THE GHMC POLLS FOR BJP

Search on for pilot missing in MiG-29K crash: Indian Navy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 28 NOVEMBER

The search is still on for pilot Cdr Nishant Singh who has been missing since a MiG-29K fighter aircraft of the Indian Navy crashed into the Arabian sea, a Western Naval Command spokesperson said on Saturday.

"More surface and air assets have joined the search for missing pilot Cdr Nishant Singh," the spokesperson said.

The Russian-origin jet had taken off from aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, and went down at around 5 PM on Thursday, officials had said.

One pilot of the aircraft had been rescued while a search operation is on for Cdr Nishant Singh, Indian Navy officials had said on Friday.

The MiG-29K is an all-weather carrier-based multi-role fighter aircraft developed by Russian aerospace company Mikoyan (MiG). The Indian Navy had procured a fleet of 45 MiG-29Ks from Russia over a decade back at a cost of around USD 2 billion to operate from INS Vikramaditya.

# Imran to skip SCO meet; Chinese Premier Li to attend

India will host SCO summit on Monday, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu to chair the meeting

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 28 NOVEMBER

**P**akistan Prime Minister Imran Khan will not participate in the 19th meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) heads of government to be hosted by India in the virtual format on Monday while Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has given his consent to take part in the key meet.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) today announced that Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu will chair the meeting. It will be the first time that a summit-level meeting of SCO will be held under India's chairmanship, since it gained full-membership of the organisation in 2017.

The summit is held annually at the level of prime ministers of SCO countries and deals primarily with the trade and economic agenda of the organisation. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had recently attended the SCO Summit hosted by Russia in the virtual format, also will not be attending the meeting on Monday due to his preoccupation with pressing domestic issues.

The MEA said the prime ministers from the SCO member-countries of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan will attend the meeting while Pakistan will be represented by its parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs. Islamabad's representation will be at the lowest level, given its relationship with India.

Apart from the SCO members, the four observer countries of SCO will also participate. They include the president of Afghanistan, the vice president of Iran, the prime minister of Belarus and the deputy prime minister of Mongolia. Turkmenistan has been invited as a special guest of the host and will be represented by the deputy chairman of the cabinet of ministers.

The two bodies of SCO will be represented by the SCO secretary general and the executive director of the SCO regional anti-terrorist struc-



ture (RATS).

The chairman of the SCO business council and the SCO interbank association will also be present. The 30 November will end with the adoption of a joint communiqué by the member countries.

By chairing the meeting, India hopes to further

strengthen greater trade, economic and cultural cooperation within SCO by putting human beings at the centre of SCO activities and to foster greater peace and prosperity in the region.

"We hope that India's initiatives will not only be helpful for SCO member states in overcoming the economic challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, but will also signal our continued commitment to strengthening the organisation," the MEA added.

India considers SCO as an important regional organisation to promote cooperation in the areas of peace, security, trade, economy and culture. India assumed the chairmanship of the SCO council of heads of government on 2 November 2019 as per rotation from the previous chair - Uzbekistan - and will complete its year-long tenure on 30 November.

## K'taka CM's political secy attempts suicide; stable

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BENGALURU, 28 NOVEMBER

Karnataka chief minister B S Yediyurappa's political secretary and relative N R Santosh who was hospitalised following alleged suicide attempt, is 'stable and cheerful', and may be discharged in a day or two, doctors treating him said on Saturday.

Responding to the incident, the state Congress demanded an investigation into the matter and claimed that some confidential matters are linked to it.

According to sources, Santosh is said to have attempted suicide by consuming sleeping pills on Friday night. On finding him unconscious at his Dolars Colony residence here, family members have rushed him to Ramaiah Memorial Hospital.

Santhosh(31) was brought at about 8.30 p.m. with an alleged history of consumption of sleeping tablets at around 7 p.m., the Hospital President Dr Naresh Shetty said in a statement. Noting that on admission he was drowsy, the doctor said appropriate treatment was administered immediately and all investigations were carried out.

"He has been taking sleeping tablets occasionally for his sleep disturbance as per past history. This morning, the patient is stable. He had his breakfast and is cheerful. The plan is to shift the patient to the ward post noon today. He may be discharged in a day or two based on his health status and recovery," the statement added. Yediyurappa had rushed to the hospital late last night to inquire about Santosh's health.

"This morning, we walked together for 45 minutes. Even yesterday I saw him, he was happy. I don't know why this happened. I will find out and talk to his family," he said.

Meanwhile, Sadashivangar police have registered an FIR against Santosh for allegedly attempting to kill himself and are investigating, police sources said. The case has been registered under section 309 of the IPC (Attempt to commit suicide), police said.

Speaking to reporters, Jahnavi rejected reports about any marital issues and said there was some "political imbalance," which he had taken to his heart. Santosh, was appointed as the CM's political secretary in May this year.

## TENDER

### HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

E-Procurement Notice  
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

1. The Executive Engineer, Una Division HPPWD Una H.P. on behalf of Governor of H.P. invites the online bids on item rate, in electronic tendering system, in 2 Cover System for the under mentioned works from the eligible and approved contractors / Firms registered with HPPWD Department.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated cost	EMD	Time Limit	Cost of tender	Eligible class of contractor	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1.	Construction of 30 Bedded C.H.C. Building (Upgraded) at Basudera, Tehsil & District Una (H.P.) (SH:- C/O Building Portion i/c demolition, dismantling, repair work, painting, distempering of existing building portion, Water Supply and Sanitary Installation, Rain Water Harvesting Tank, Septic Tank , Soak Pit and Solar etc.)	2,52,17,10/-	2,85,000/-	Twelve Months	5,000/-	Class-A	

2. Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 09.12.2020.

3. Cost of Bid Form:- As per detail in column No. 6 in form of demand draft in favour of Executive Engineer, Una Division HPPWD, Una payable at Una.

4. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted online on website <http://htenders.gov.in>. Bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). "Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in HPPWD may obtain the same from the website: <http://htenders.gov.in>. Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the digital signature issued from authorized CAs can use the same in this tender.

5. Key Dates:

1. Date of Online Publication	09.12.2020 (10:00 HRS)
2. Document Download Start and End Date	09.12.2020 (10:30 HRS up to 17.12.2020 (09:00 HRS)
3. Bid Submission Start and End Date	09.12.2020 (10:30 HRS up to 17.12.2020 (09:00 HRS)
4. Physical Submission of EMD and Cost of Tender Document	17.12.2020 up to 10:30 HRS
5. Date of Technical Bid opening; Evaluation of Technical Bid followed by Opening of Financial Bid;	17.12.2020 (11:00 HRS).

6. TENDER DETAILS:

The Tender Documents shall be uploaded online in 2 Cover:

a. Cover 1: shall contain scanned copies of all "Technical Documents/Eligibility Information."

b. Cover2: shall contain "BOQ/Financial Bid", where contractor will Quota his offer for each item.

7. Submission of Original Documents: The bidders are required to submit (a) original demand draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security/Earnest Money (EMD) duly pledged in favour of undersigned and other Technical Documents in Executive Engineer, Una Division, HPPWD, Una H.P. as specified in Key dates Sr. 4 on Tender Opening Date, failing which the bids will be declared non-responsive.

8. Key Dates:

1. The work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than 120 days after the deadline date for bid submission.

10. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The officer inviting tender shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders' responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

Executive Engineer  
Una Division, HP: PWD, Una.  
On behalf of Governor of H.P.

4666/2020-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

### HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

e-procurement Notice  
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Engineer,HP.PWD. Division Sarkaghat H.P. on behalf of Governor of HP.invites the item rate bids,in electronic tendering system,for construction of each of the following works from the eligible and approved contractors registered with HP.PWD.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated cost	EMD	EMD	Time limit	Eligible class of contractor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Construction of Chamanu Bath via Maira Kushari Road Km. 0/0 to 6/0 (SH:- Providing and laying Prime Coat Tack Coat 20mm permix carpet and seal coat in Km. 0/0 to 1/0)	667801	13400	350	Two Months	Class-D
2.	Construction of Nai More to Upper Barot Badoh Road Km. 0/0 to 3/500 (SH:- Providing and laying WBM G-II and Metalling at Tarring at Km. 0/200 to 1/0) SCSP	734775	15000	350	Two Months	Class-D
3.	Construction of JE Office Cum Residence Building at Upper Bhambia tehsil Baldwin Distt. Mandi (SH:- Construction of Building Portion i/c W.S. & S.I.)	2467791	44550	350	One Year	Class-D

1. Date of release of invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 18.12.2020

2. Cost of Bid Form:- As Shown against work above (non-refundable)only in form of demand draft in favour of Executive Engineer,HP.PWD. Sarkaghat, payable at Sarkaghat.

Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission:- The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted online on website <http://htenders.gov.in>. Bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certified Authorities (CA). "Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in HPPWD may obtain the same from the website: <http://htenders.gov.in>. Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the digital signature issued from authorized CAs can use the same in this tender.

Non-registered bidders may submit bids,however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.

3. Submission of Original Documents:- The bidders are required to submit (a) original Demand draft towards the cost of bid document pay able at Sarkaghat (b) Earnest Money - indicated in Schedule F (FDR duly pledged in favour of Executive engineer HPPWD Sarkaghat (c) Contractor Registration - Gen. Rule Sr. No. 23 and 26.3 (d) GST Registration- Ref. Gen. Rule Sr. No. 21 and 26.4 (e) Labour License (f) Permanent Account No. (PAN No) (g) Employees Provident Fund Number (h) Proof of Mandatory Machinery Tool and Plant as per Gen Rules 25 and Schedule F Sr. No. 6. (i) Similar nature of work done Certificate on prescribed format given in bidding Document without as per General Rule 19. (k) List of Both Gazetteed and non Gazetteed Officer HPPWD employees related to him (General Rule No. 28.1) (l) Bidder should be uploaded regarding no litigation with the department. (m) An affidavit that the contractor has not more than two work in (General Rule No. 28.1) (n) Any other information bidder / firm may like to provide. (p) Affidavit regarding seen the site as per general rules and direction No. 29 (q) The radius distance of hot mix plant to site of work should be within 25 Km. (r) Those contractor who are having requisite machinery such as paver hot mix plant and vibratory road roller etc. on production of those documents on BC only works. The contractor should have completed the similar nature/ double lane standard road work not less than 40% of estimated cost with Executive Engineer HP.PWD. Sarkaghat prior to the time of opening of technical qualification, failing which the bids will be declared non responsive. Financial turnover for the last five years duly certified by the chartered Accountant be uploaded 9Condition for more than (Fifty Lakh) only.

4. Last Date/Time for receipt of bids through e-tendering: w.e.f. 18.12.2020 at 11:00 A.M. to 28.12.2020 up to 11:00 A.M.

The site for the work is available.

5. Only online submission of bids is permitted, therefore bids must be submitted online on website <http://htenders.gov.in>. The bids shall be opened on 28.12.2020 at 11:00 A.M. in the office Executive Engineer,HP.PWD. Division Sarkaghat,HP. by the authorized officer. In the interest of tenders are advised to be present along with original documents at the time of opening of tenders. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

6. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than ninety days after the deadline date for bid submission.

7. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The officer inviting tender shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders' responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

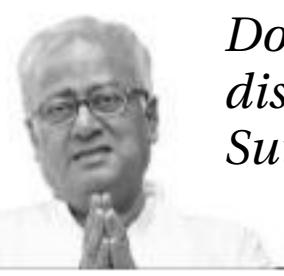
8. The bidder shall submit the details of HMP & others machinery required for tarring along with Bid.

Executive Engineer,  
Sarkaghat Division,  
HP.PWD.Sarkaghat.  
For behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh

4648/2020-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

### JAL SHAKTI VIBHAG NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Off line tenders form PWD 6 & 8 are hereby invited for the following works and contractors/Firms of appropriate class enlisted with H.P. & PH department will be eligible for participating in the tender on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh, so as to reach in this office on or before 08.12.2020 up to 03:00 PM and same will be opened on the date of tender at 3:30 PM in presence of intending Contractor/firm or their authorized representative who may wish to be present at the time of opening of the tender. The tender documents can be had from this office on or before 08.12.2020 up to 12:00 Noon Conditional telegraphically tender will not be entertained. The earnest money will be received at the time of application in the shape of NSC/Time Deposit (FDR) duly pledged in the name of Executive Engineer, Phina Singh medium irrigation



*Doors are still open for talks with Suvendu. There should be discussions with him. I am hopeful of dialogue between Suvendu & party leadership*

AFTER SUVENDU ADHIKARI RESIGNED FROM HIS POST AS A WEST BENGAL CABINET MINISTER

## THUMBNAILS



Sikh devotees participate in a 'Nagar Kirtan' procession organised ahead of the 551st birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev, at Golden Temple in Amritsar on Saturday.

**ED attaches assets worth over ₹27 cr of former IAS officer:** Assets worth over Rs 27 crore of Chhattisgarh-based former IAS officer Babulal Agrawal have been attached by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the central agency said on Saturday. PTI

# 'Protest has a pro-Khalistan connection'

Haryana CM says there are some 'unwanted elements' among the farmers who are raising slogans against the Central government

**STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**  
CHANDIGARH, 28 NOVEMBER

**E**n as farmers continued their protest against the new farm laws on the outskirts of Delhi, the bitter spat between Haryana and Punjab chief ministers continued on Saturday with Manohar Lal Khattar accusing Captain Amarinder Singh of playing politics by supporting the ongoing agitation and the latter seeking the former's apology for attacking Punjab farmers.

Addressing a Press conference at Gurugram, the Haryana CM said Punjab farmers are protesting while Haryana farmers have stayed away. He said his Punjab counterparts responsible for the thousands of farmers marching to Delhi.

"Punjab CM is responsible and fanning this protest. Office

bearers of the Punjab chief minister's Office are leading the protest," Khattar told reporters.

Going further, the Haryana CM said the ongoing farmers' protest has a 'pro-Khalistan' connection and there are some 'unwanted elements' among the ranks of the farmers who have been raising slogans against the Central government and demanding entry into Delhi.

He said authorities have received "inputs" of there being "unwanted elements" in the crowd. "More details will be disclosed once the received inputs are concrete," he said.

Citing videos circulated on social media, Khattar said in those videos, some protestors are heard saying if they can assassinate former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, why can't the same be done to current PM



Farmers protesting against the farm laws prepare food while staging a demonstration at Delhi's Nirankari ground on Saturday.

Narendra Modi. He said the movement was started by farmers of Punjab. However, there is some connection with certain political parties and some unions. Farmers of Haryana did not take part in these protests.

Khattar also accused the Punjab CM of avoiding his telephonic calls despite repeated

attempts. Speaking about Amarinder's criticism of Haryana Police, Khattar said, "I made continuous effort to get in touch with Amarinder Singh. We tried to get in touch with him but we could not get hold of him. This has never happened in my political career ever."

This comes after the Punjab CM on Friday slammed the Haryana government, accusing the state Police of taking a "confrontational approach" against the farmers.

Hitting back at his Haryana counterpart, Amarinder said he will not speak to CM Khattar till he apologises to the farmers whom he attacked. "Khattar's police fired tear gas and attacked my farmers. Farmers broke through the barricades when they got angry but who can stop them from getting angry?" the Punjab CM said.

Uniting with the farmers of Punjab and Haryana, hundreds of farmers from western Uttar Pradesh under the aegis of Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) reached Ghazipur Border of Delhi to strengthen the movement of farmers against the controversial farm laws.

Farmers began their march to Delhi from Sivay toll plaza of Meerut under the leadership of BKU leader Rakesh Tikait on Saturday morning to extend their support to farmers of Punjab and Haryana who are camping at Delhi borders in protest of the farm laws introduced by the union government recently.

## UP farmers under BKU join protest

**STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**  
MEERUT, 28 NOVEMBER

Uniting with the farmers of Punjab and Haryana, hundreds of farmers from western Uttar Pradesh under the aegis of Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) reached Ghazipur Border of Delhi to strengthen the movement of farmers against the controversial farm laws.

They entered Delhi from UP border for which additional security arrangements of police were made in advance. "In order to ensure smooth movement of traffic adequate arrangements were made in advance so that people do not face any problem at Uttar Pradesh border," said ADG Meerut Zone Rajeev Sabharwal.

Before leaving for Delhi,

Rakesh Tikait who is also younger son of Mahendra Singh Tikait, founder of BKU, lead the caravan of tractors and cars with hundreds of farmers. He drove his tractor from toll plaza of Sivay while the farmers raised slogan 'kala kanoon vapeslo' (withdraw black law) and started their journey for Delhi to join the farmers of Punjab and Haryana.

Targeting the government, Tikait said that government should respond to those who are calling protesting farmers as "Khalistani" and "Pakistani".

"If these are Khalistani and Pakistani, than what the Central intelligence agencies are doing. They should trace out such elements", he quipped.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that the timings of the following Special Trains will be revised due to operational constraints/speed enhancement as under:-

### REVISED TIMINGS OF SPECIAL TRAINS

Sl. Train No.	Station From	Dep. Time	Station to	Arr. Time	Days of Run	Revised Timings Effective From
02424	New Delhi	16:20	Dibrugarh	06:55	Daily	01.12.2020
02423	Dibrugarh	20:35	New Delhi	10:30	Daily	01.12.2020
02454	New Delhi	16:10	Ranchi	10:30	Wed, Sat	02.12.2020
02453	Ranchi	17:15	New Delhi	11:10	Thu, Sun	03.12.2020
02438	Hazrat Nizamuddin	15:35	Secunderabad	13:35	Sunday	06.12.2020
02437	Secunderabad	12:50	Hazrat Nizamuddin	10:30	Wednesday	09.12.2020
02432	Hazrat Nizamuddin	06:16	Thiruvananthapuram Central	23:45	Tue, Wed, Sun	29.12.2020
02431	Thiruvananthapuram Central	19:15	Hazrat Nizamuddin	12:25	Thu, Fri, Tue	31.12.2020
02434	Hazrat Nizamuddin	15:35	Chennai Central	20:45	Wed, Fri	30.12.2020
02433	Chennai Central	06:05	Hazrat Nizamuddin	10:30	Fri, Sun	01.01.2021
02419	Lucknow	05:45	New Delhi	15:00	Daily	01.12.2020
02420	New Delhi	12:20	Lucknow	21:25	Daily	01.12.2020
02407	New Jalpaiguri	08:15	Amritsar Jn.	17:35	Wednesday	09.12.2020
02408	Amritsar Jn.	09:25	New Jalpaiguri	18:35	Friday	04.12.2020
04010	Anand Vihar (T.)	23:45	Bapudham Mothari	19:45	Saturday	05.12.2020
04009	Bapudham Mothari	21:12	Anand Vihar (T.)	18:15	Sunday	06.12.2020
02220	Anand Vihar (T.)	18:50	Ghaziupur City	09:30	Tue, Thu, Sat, Sun	01.12.2020
02219	Ghaziupur City	17:20	Anand Vihar (T.)	07:55	Wed, Fri, Sun, Mon	02.12.2020
02234	Anand Vihar (T.)	20:20	Ghaziupur City	09:30	Fri, Mon	04.12.2020
02233	Ghaziupur City	15:00	Anand Vihar (T.)	05:35	Sat, Tue	05.12.2020
04674	Amritsar Jn.	13:05	Jaynagar	00:30	Tue, Thu, Fri, Sun	01.12.2020
04673	Jaynagar	07:20	Amritsar Jn.	16:40	Thu, Sat, Mon, Wed	03.12.2020
04650	Amritsar Jn.	13:05	Jaynagar	00:30	Wed, Sat, Mon	04.12.2020
04649	Jaynagar	07:20	Amritsar Jn.	16:40	Fri, Sun, Tue	04.12.2020
02004	New Delhi	06:10	Lucknow	12:50	Daily	01.12.2020
02003	Lucknow	15:35	New Delhi	22:20	Daily	01.12.2020
02436	New Delhi	06:00	Varanasi Jn.	14:00	Tue, Wed, Fr, Sat, Sun	01.12.2020
02435	Varanasi Jn.	15:00	New Delhi	23:00	Tue, Wed, Fr, Sat, Sun	01.12.2020
02466	Anand Vihar (T.)	12:45	Madhupur Jn	05:35	Wednesday	02.12.2020
02465	Madhupur Jn	12:00	Anand Vihar (T.)	06:25	Thursday	03.12.2020
04006	Anand Vihar (T.)	18:00	Sitamarhi	20:20	Daily	01.12.2020
04005	Sitamarhi	02:30	Anand Vihar (T.)	04:30	Daily	01.12.2020
02428	Anand Vihar (T.)	22:05	Rewa	11:10	Daily	01.12.2020
02427	Rewa	16:40	Anand Vihar (T.)	06:40	Daily	01.12.2020
02414	Hazrat Nizamuddin	06:16	Madgaon	07:10	Fri, Sat	04.12.2020
02413	Madgaon	10:00	Hazrat Nizamuddin	12:25	Sun, Mon	06.12.2020
02226	Delhi Jn.	20:25	Azamgarh	10:55	Daily	01.12.2020
02225	Azamgarh	16:25	Delhi Jn.	07:05	Daily	01.12.2020
02040	New Delhi	06:20	Kathgodam	11:40	Daily	01.12.2020
02039	Kathgodam	15:30	New Delhi	20:50	Daily	01.12.2020
02442	New Delhi	15:25	Bilaspur	12:00	Tue, Sat	29.12.2020
02441	Bilaspur	14:00	New Delhi	10:40	Thu, Mon	31.12.2020
02555	Gorakhpur	16:35	Hisar	10:00	Daily	01.12.2020
02556	Hisar	17:00	Gorakhpur	09:45	Daily	01.12.2020
02559	Manduadih	22:15	New Delhi	08:25	Daily	01.12.2020
02560	New Delhi	20:05	Manduadih	06:25	Daily	01.12.2020
02571	Gorakhpur	18:45	Anand Vihar (T.)	08:25	Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun	01.12.2020
02572	Anand Vihar (T.)	20:00	Gorakhpur	09:30	Mon, Thu, Sat, Sun	01.12.2020
02065	Ajmer	05:40	Delhi Sarai Rohilla	11:35	Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat	01.12.2020
02066	Delhi Sarai Rohilla	16:15	Ajmer	22:15	Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat	01.12.2020
02964	Udaipur City	18:40	Hazrat Nizamuddin	07:10	Daily	01.12.2020
02963	Hazrat Nizamuddin	16:40	Udaipur City	05:20	Daily	01.12.2020
02481	Jodhpur	18:45	Delhi Sarai Rohilla	05:20	Daily	01.12.2020
02482	Delhi Sarai Rohilla	23:20	Jodhpur	10:05	Daily	01.12.2020
04724	Bhiwani	19:40	Kanpur Central	11:35	Daily	01.12.2020
04723	Kanpur Central	17:15	Bhiwani	09:25	Daily	01.12.2020
09609	Udaipur City	13:05	Haridwar	08:45	Mon, Thu, Sat	03.12.2020
09610	Haridwar	19:00	Udaipur City	15:55	Tue, Fri, Sun	01.12.2020
05005	Gorakhpur	21:15	Dehradun	13:50	Wed, Fri	02.12.2020 to 30.12.2020
05006	Dehradun	15:20	Gorakhpur	07:55	Tue, Thu	03.12.2020 to 31.12.2020
05001	Muzaffarpur	14:00	Dehradun	13:50	Monday	07.12.2020 to 28.12.2020
05002	Dehradun	15:20	Muzaffarpur	16:29	Saturday	05.12.2020 to 26.12.2020
05023	Gorakhpur	08:55	Yesvantpur	11:30	Tuesday	01.12.2020 to 29.12.2020
05024						

## Hubris

There is an unmistakable sense that hubris may be upon her. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, once the stormy petrel of Bengal politics, has now declared herself "the sole custodian" of the Trinamool Congress, the political party she founded. For those who have seen her remarkable ascent to the top of the pile in state politics having dislodged the long-ruling Left Front in 2011 after two decades of persistent activism, it is confirmation if any were needed that the determined onslaught of the Bharatiya Janata Party on her political citadel has shaken her. It may be too early to say what the outcome of the 2021 state assembly election is, but it would be fair to say it is no longer a foregone conclusion.

The immediate trigger for the chief minister's statement made in Bankura a couple of days ago was to pre-empt the fallout of state transport minister and TMC strongman Subhendu Adhikari's resignation. In the event, the resignation happened on Friday and may well lead him to the BJP if he follows in Mukul Roy's footsteps. Adhikari would be the second major party leader ~ with a mass base of his own and organisational clout in key south Bengal districts ~ to switch sides. His departure would deal a significant blow to the Trinamool's electoral prospects in several key districts including Midnapore East and West, Bankura and Purulia.

Miss Banerjee's default position in the face of growing disenchantment in the TMC is that she is the 'supremo' and that going over the heads of influential leaders to directly address the party rank-and-file to shore up support is the way forward. But such has been her style of functioning all along despite a short-lived attempt to showcase collective leadership when she first came to power. It is no secret, for example, that there is growing resentment among party leaders over the role of political consultant Prashant Kishor, who is reported to be micro-managing organisational changes and taking the final call, with Miss Banerjee's blessings, on deciding poll-related responsibilities. Her response has been to dismiss veteran leaders' angst as a "misunderstanding" and reinforce her personality-driven leadership style: "I will be the 'lone (election) observer in every block. For a considerable time, I kept myself busy in administrative work, but I am back and will be keeping a watch on leaders, especially those who are secretly in touch with the BJP. And I will treat them 'properly.' This is a surprising response to the most serious challenge to her political authority in over a decade.

While her continued promotion of her nephew as a 'youth leader' ~ par for the Indian political course ~ may be ignored by those who owe their positions and perks to her in line, those with ambition and a popular base of their own may not be as accommodating. And finally, there is the Asaduddin Owaisi factor to contend with, as the AIMIM threatens to cut into the Muslim vote that Miss Banerjee has so carefully nurtured.

## Glamourised gambling

The legal nitty-gritty apart, if you are inclined to think that risking money to make money, presumably more of it, is gambling, plain and simple, you are in agreement with those who believe that gaming is precisely that. Its online platforms have spurted in India recently, with sanitised descriptions of the way they go about their business given the sort of spin that stresses a participant's cricketing insight and the faculty of imagination for his, or her, hopes to be fulfilled. So far so bad. But the Internet also records variously observant references to the association of three of India's iconic presences ~ Sourav Ganguly, Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli ~ with as many commercial entities specialising in what is being subliminally projected as a recreational pursuit, akin to watching films or listening to movies or gardening.

A few journalistic offerings reflect a certain disappointment that the chief of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, one of the world's finest-ever batsmen often compared with Don Bradman and the captain of the senior national team have decided that it is worth their while to be in this, with the concomitant, if unstated, suggestion that the liaison is actually worth a great deal more. While it may be a matter of personal choice to have a pop at gaming where it is permitted, seemingly much in the same way as, perhaps, what shoes you go out in, the fact that there is money to be aimed at in gaming probably widens its scope significantly. And when such stalwarts as the triad already referred to in essence advocate it, with a dash of glamour, a very special variety of unease is quite likely to result, given that the market of sport is mostly peopled by youngsters in their salad days who are, therefore, green in judgment. Also to be reckoned with, along with this, is the rapid expansion achieved by the entrepreneurial acumen of the captains of the gaming industry, with the Eden Gardens currently hosting a Twenty20 tournament in league with a gaming venture.

Cricket Association of Bengal-insiders, of course, do not mind telling people their side of the story: that, for obvious, Covid-19-related reasons, a lot of the money that the Indian Premier League yields has eluded them in this catastrophic year. Apparently, funds from the cricket board are late in coming. But not everyone can be expected to agree with the fundamental proposition ~ as sport now appears to think ~ that being choosy when it comes to a source of money will not do in these extraordinary times.

Gambling outfits' bounty is an unresolved question in many countries, but India preferring to stay, euphemistically speaking, in the nebulous zone where things may not quite be all right will surely revive a lot of uncomfortable questions that we thought we had buried.

# Legislative overreach

Most new enactments are not very effective because they are at odds with the basic principle of law making; namely, laws should be lenient but enforcement should be strict

Societal norms are changing rapidly with impatience, intolerance, jingoism and religiosity informing everyday life. No one should grudge such changes; after all, the majority is the best judge for the norms that society should follow. However, the transposition of these newer norms into legislative enactments is creating problems for all, not necessarily only for those at whom such provisions are aimed.

For example, Excise Duty on liquor was one of the pillars of the Bihar State budget contributing Rs 4,000 crore to the exchequer before prohibition was introduced in April, 2016 by the Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act 2016 that prescribed a minimum of 10 years of jail for alcohol consumption (which could extend to imprisonment for life) besides a minimum fine of Rs 1 lakh (which could extend to Rs 10 lakhs). It has been a downhill journey since then.

So far, over 2.7 lakh people have been arrested under the new Act, and more than 30 lakh litres of hooch has been confiscated, of which 3 lakh litres was confiscated during the just concluded elections. Interestingly, in May 2017, the Bihar police claimed that rats had polished off 9 lakh litres of alcohol seized by them. Between April 2016 and September 2020, the Excise Department conducted 488,450 raids, arresting 67,367 people. Consequently, courts in Bihar were flooded with more than 2 lakh cases filed against prohibition violators and the Chief Justice of the Patna High Court was constrained to write to the Chief Minister to change the prohibition law because prohibition cases were clogging the Courts, leaving little time for judges to hear more important cases. A somewhat similar situation obtains in Gujarat where the amended Gujarat Prohibition Act provides a 10-year jail term for consuming liquor.

Then, many States have enactments that prescribe long prison sentences ~ up to life imprisonment for cow slaughter and consuming beef. The latest trend is that of making inter-faith marriages punishable. The Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Bill, 2020 provides for five years of rigorous imprisonment to those involved in love-jihad i.e., marrying a person of a different faith by concealing one's religion. Significantly, there is no prohibition in the Constitution or any existing Act for inter-faith marriages and the Special Marriage Act 1954 (and before that the 1872 Act) was specifically enacted to legitimise marriage between people following different religions. UP, Karnataka and Bihar are set to follow the MP example. Thus, it would appear that the sovereign power of legislatures is being used to criminalise personal preferences in matters of diet and sex. While modern jurisprudence has progressed to the stage of decriminalising actions that do not harm anyone other than the perpetrator (like suicide or sexual relations between consulting adults) it seems that our legislatures are caught in a time warp, unwilling or unable to appreciate the fine



distinction between a social or moral wrong and a legal wrong, often enacting laws criminalising social or moral evils, that have an immense potential for misuse. Cow vigilantes wreak havoc in the guise of enforcing the ban on cow slaughter so often that the Supreme Court had to come to the rescue of the victims.

The Dowry Prohibition Act, that was enacted to curb the evil practice of dowry, was so widely misused to settle scores that the Supreme Court was constrained to nullify the provision of instant arrest for dowry related offences.

Most new enactments are not very effective because they are at odds with the basic principle of law making; namely, laws should be lenient but enforcement should be strict.

The only way to deter criminals is to catch them and bring them to justice rather than enhancing punishment for crimes but making no additional efforts to catch criminals. Lord Macaulay, while drafting the Indian Penal Code desisted from providing the death penalty for rapists because he reasoned that if punishment for rape and murder was the same then rapists would also murder their victims.

The amount of thought and preparation required for a criminal enactment like the Indian Penal Code is totally missing in the newer enactments, which often results in persons charged with the newly created offences walking free on technical

grounds.

Moreover, most of the new enactments are knee-jerk reactions to public resentment to the generally worsening law and order situation. The horrific rape and murder of a veterinary doctor in Hyderabad prompted the Andhra Pradesh Government to

enact the Disha Act which provides capital punishment for rape and envisages the completion of investigation in seven days and the subsequent trial in fourteen days. Little thought, however, appears to have been given by the lawmakers, as to how within this short period the culprits would be identified and caught, legal formalities under the Criminal Procedure Code complied with and a fair trial conforming to the requirements of the Evidence Act, could be completed.

It may be noted that trial in the Nirbhaya Case, which had the public, police and the judiciary in overdrive, was completed only after nine months. Under Indian criminal jurisprudence, one of the essential elements of a criminal offence is a guilty mind (*mens rea*). No wonder, the Courts take a dim view of legal provisions which criminalise everyday actions, done without any criminal intent. The really draconian sections of many new Acts, like some penal provisions in the Bihar Prohibition Act or the more stringent provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act were

struck down by the Courts for their unconstitutionality.

Encomiums have been showered on the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly for passing the Disha Act but if our law makers had been really serious about women's safety, they could have initiated serious action after the publication of the Thomson Reuters Foundation Report, that had ranked India as the most dangerous place on earth for women. Sadly, the Union Government rejected Thomson Reuters Foundation Report in its entirety.

Another emerging disturbing trend is the propensity of the Executive to act as judge, jury and executioner by providing for preventive detention for common crimes, though, by definition preventive detention is not intended to punish the criminal, but to prevent the criminal from committing further crimes. For example, the Gujarat Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act provides for preventive detention of one year for, *inter alia*, dangerous persons, drug offenders, bootleggers, gamblers, and cow slaughterers ~ a wide list of offences. The situation in many states is not much better; till August 19, the UP Police had invoked the NSA against 139 people, 76 of them for cow slaughter.

An inescapable corollary to the criminalisation of ordinary actions is that police are often called in cases which are civil in nature; witness the trend of filing an FIR for rape when a love affair goes awry. Instead of curbing the involvement of police in cases of a civil nature, there are a number of instances where Governments itself gets innocent persons arrested for tangential purposes. Needless to say, the police revel in the unbridled power made available to them.

In such circumstances, criminal cases have multiplied and the burden of investigating and prosecuting a large number of trivial cases has made the police force lose focus on more substantial ones. Our overburdened judicial system is not able to handle the additional burden created by the new enactments. The sheer volume of trivial cases eats away precious judicial time. For example, 60 lakh cheque bounce cases are pending in our courts. Our jails, that are already full, do not have the capacity to accommodate any more inmates. Therefore, there is an overwhelming need not to criminalise ordinary acts and create new categories of offences.

Ayn Rand had succinctly observed: "There's no way to rule innocent men. The only power any government has is the power to crack down on criminals. Well, when there aren't enough criminals, one makes them. One declares so many things to be a crime that it becomes impossible for men to live without breaking laws."

Who wants a nation of law-abiding citizens? What's there in that for anyone? But just pass the kind of laws that can neither be observed nor enforced or objectively interpreted ~ and you create a nation of law-breakers ~ and then you cash in on guilt." (Atlas Shrugged)

Let us not allow our lawmakers to turn us into a nation of law breakers.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**  
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

ASIAN VOICES

**A 'pandemic world' needs multilateral solutions**

Covid-19 has pushed the world into the worst global crisis since World War II, affecting all aspects of life, with consequences for health, economics and security, triggering social stress and political unrest.

The crisis has accelerated pre-existing trends, such as rising inequalities and geopolitical tensions. It is a commonplace that the pandemic is reshaping our world. But what form and how different the world will become depends on the choices we make.

Looking back to the beginning of the pandemic, we saw a tendency to "turn inward" ~ a tendency that regularly comes with crises. But as the EU, we realised quickly Covid-19 could only be defeated with a global approach and cross-border coordination.

Internally, our reaction and coordination was bumpy at the very beginning ~ EU member states were inclined to let everyone fend for themselves.

But genuine acts of solidarity soon followed, with many countries taking patients from other EU member states, and sending emergency equipment to those most in need. In the summer, EU leaders agreed on an unprecedented 1.8 trillion (\$2.13 trillion) "Next Generation EU" package.

For the first time, it was agreed to issue large-scale common debt and allow fiscal transfers to cope with the economic impact of the pandemic and

**The Jakarta Post**

to prepare funding for a green transition and securing Europe's digital future.

While fighting the virus and its consequences at home, Europe also stepped up efforts to support partner countries in the fight against the pandemic.

In what we call "Team Europe", the EU and its member states helped our partners to respond to the immediate health crisis, to strengthen health and sanitation systems, and to mitigate socioeconomic consequences.

Our actions were based on a key recognition: no one will be safe until everyone is safe and a "pandemic world" needs multilateral solutions. We lived by this motto even when others were going it alone. And we will continue doing so now, at the moment we hear encouraging news on the vaccination front.

To benefit from these promising achievements, we must avoid "vaccine nationalism" and "vaccine diplomacy". Like the "mask diplomacy" of early 2020, some countries may link access to much-needed medical treatments to political compliance or obedience.

The EU will insist on the opposite approach: vaccines must be treated as a global public good and distributed based on medical needs.

In times of Covid-19, Europe is determined to develop a stronger partnership and cooperation with multilateral actors at global, regional and national levels. But the EU cannot be multilateralist on its own.

We see like-minded countries in Asia as key partners for Europe to design the rules-based international order of the future.

Because we share together a desire to take our future in our own hands. To be a player and not a playground in a world of increasing geopolitical competition.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

## The Left's antics

SIR, 26 November 2020 will go down in the history as a black day just like 26 November 2008 when Pakistani terrorists killed around 168 people in Mumbai. The entire country bore the brunt, but particularly our hapless state yesterday during the Left-sponsored bandh. Since independence, the Left has always indulged in disruptive politics which included gherao, raising offensive slogans, manhandling of senior executives of companies and even political leaders who dared to oppose the Left's style of functioning. The Left was instrumental in driving out industries from West Bengal because of its violent trade union activities which included demonstrations and continuous bandhs. The Left was instrumental too in driving out computers. They abolished the English language from curriculum of schools up to class 5 and did incalculable loss to this hapless state during 34 years of misrule. During the 34 years of its rule, the Left called bandhs at the drop



of a hat almost twice a month. Using administrative machinery it ensured that no vehicle could come out on the roads and no shop or office remained open. This led to poor economic condition of the state. However this did not deter

Jyoti Basu from going on his once-a-year England tour at taxpayers' expense. Regarding the bandh of yesterday, as an eye-witness, I noticed processions of Left supporters thronging the streets, forcing shopkeepers to close their shutters and throwing stones at public and private vehicles, disrupting train movement by sitting on the railway tracks and violating all norms of social distancing. I was astonished that police in most cases played the role of mute spectators. Perhaps our ruling party supported the bandh in principle and hence directed the police not to use force on bandh supporters.

My question to Alimuddin Street mandarins is what did they achieve by inflicting such a huge economic damage on a state already reeling under Corona pandemic? When will you be able to come out of bandh politics? Politically, the Left is not even counted as a major opposition. It has no MP from West Bengal.

Yours, etc., Purushottam Chatterjee, Kolkata, 27 November.

## OUR LOSS

SIR, Football lost its joy, passion and verve with the passing away of Diego Maradona. One of the greatest players on the pitch, his life off the pitch was equally colourful, amid battles with drug and alcohol addiction. He not just inspired a generation, he defined it. Maradona was an antidote to upheaval for Argentina as it suffered an economic crisis and humiliating defeat to England after the conflict over Falklands island. He was balm for the wounded soul of his nation, as in 1986 Argentina defeated England in the World Cup quarter final. In that match Maradona defined himself, the devil and the angel, genius and the rogue. In a space of few minutes, Maradona provided the most divine and the most divisive memories of World Cup history.

The first was a brazen, reckless, desperate move, him rising above the towering England goalkeeper to meet a high ball with his fist, the "Hand of God". His second simply became the "goal of the century" never to be eclipsed in collective memory for its sheer audacity and its improbable skill. An Uruguayan commentator describing the goal said, "Oh God, I want to cry. The cosmic kite, which planet did you come from? Thank you God, for football, for Maradona, for these tears." He was uttering our words.

Yours, etc., Shovonlal Chakraborty, Kolkata, 26 November.



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NEHGINPAO KIPGEN AND  
DISHANT CHOWDHARY

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade deal was signed on 15 November 2020 via a video-conference by leaders of Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, and all the ten Asean member countries.

The deal effectuates a regional multilateral free trade agreement involving Beijing's existing trade partners as well as close allies of the United States (US) such as Japan and South Korea. This is an indication of China's growing power, and among others, the deal will bolster Beijing's economic dominance in the Asia-Pacific region. RCEP creates the most populous trade zone with a combined GDP of US\$26.2 trillion, which is equivalent to 30 per cent of the total world economic output. The trading bloc embodies an overall population of 2.2 billion people.

Given its significance and potential global ramifications, it is crucial for the US to maintain some influence in order to ensure stability and political balance in the region. It is also critical for the US to have stronger ties with its allies in the region because in the long run, this will shape how countries and governments look at issues related to environmental protection, labour laws and human rights.

RCEP essentially provides for reduction or elimination of tariffs on goods and services to be manufactured, transported, and sold in member states. Once the deal is implemented, the partnership will cut out a seamless supply chain throughout the trade zone.

This will be possible due to the pact's rules of origin provisions that will set a criteria for how much goods can be produced in the bloc for the final product to ultimately qualify for concession. After that is ascertained, companies will be able to swiftly buy and sell products with one certificate of origin across the region.

China will largely benefit from this arrangement as the deal will proliferate its economic base by bringing together the Northeast and Southeast Asian countries under its orbit. Production and export will sig-

## US must respond to RCEP trade deal



nificantly improve once the pact is fully functional.

RCEP is relevant as Washington is gradually losing its economic ground in the Asia-Pacific region following its withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in 2017. The TPP was devised during President Barack Obama's administration to counter China's growing economic clout in the region. The TPP had comprehensive provisions on environment, intellectual property, labour regulations and human rights norms which would have challenged China's business practices and instigated its neighbors to join hands for a more flexible and structured trade system.

When President Donald Trump pulled out of the multilateral trade deal, China saw it as an opportunity to fill the gap. It rigorously started campaigning and endorsing the RCEP. The present agreement does not comprise the same standards that were envisaged in the TPP, and

at the moment, the US does not seem to carry much command over policies related to free trade in the Asia-Pacific region.

The actions of the world's two greatest economies have somehow resulted in two things. First, it sends a major signal to investors and companies around the world that China and its Southeast Asian allies are strongly committed to multilateral trade and ease of doing business in the region. Second, even though there may be political differences between the US and China, allies of the US are willing to condone it for economic progress and infrastructure development in the region.

This speaks volumes about China's increasing clout amongst its Asia-Pacific counterparts. It is interesting to see this development, especially given the fact that Beijing has been heavily criticised for its mishandling of information during the initial outbreak of Covid-19, as well as the criticism of its nonchalant

attitude toward rule of law and the rights of other states at the international level. Moreover, RCEP will make it difficult for the US to regain its strong foothold in the region and correspondingly onerous to push for free and fair-trade norms that include international obligations of all nation states with respect to environmental protection, human rights and labour regulations.

Although there have been some reactions from the US, there is no immediate action plan as to how Washington will respond to it. President-elect Joe Biden spoke at a news conference in Wilmington, Delaware on 16 November 2020, where he stated that there is an urgent need for the US to deliberate and negotiate with its allies in the Asia-Pacific to reset the terms of global trading in order to combat China's supremacy in the bloc.

But Biden has remained silent on whether he intends to rejoin the Comprehensive and Progressive

Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership or join RCEP in the future.

It will, therefore, be crucial to observe the approach that will be adopted by the new administration in the coming months. In this regard, it is important that the Biden administration reconciles with its allies and proves that Washington is committed to trade deals.

The US can also persuade India, which was initially part of the RCEP negotiations but later decided to withdraw, to keep a check on China's dominance in the region by possibly striking an alternative deal with Asean member states and other trade partners in the region.

Therefore, to restore economic and political equilibrium in the region, the US must act in consonance with its allies.

The writers are, respectively, Executive Director at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSAES), Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University and a fourth-year law student at Jindal Global Law School.

### NOW AND AGAIN

## A lesson from the Ramayana

BUDDAHEV NANDI

The soil of our garden is extremely fertile. Trees do not need much care to grow and bear fruits and flowers. Several fruit trees including a variety of mangoes, jamun, chiku, papaya, orange, jackfruit, banana, berry, guava, coconut etc have turned the plot into a coveted fruit garden.

But it was not so a couple of years ago. Our garden being the permanent habitat of a troop of monkeys, the taste of almost all fruits except the coconuts, would be predominantly relished by the monkeys.

Our efforts to cultivate a kitchen garden and a flower garden met the same fate. I applied several methods to chase them away. But in vain. If I scrambled with a long stick or stones in hand, the monkeys would just climb up to the top of the highest trees to keep themselves out of range. Once we had to compensate our next-door neighbor as the stone I hurled shattered their glass window pane.

Then I shifted to crackers. It, at first, worked magically. But to my disappointment, this method also failed leaving me with a painful experience. The monkeys soon realized that there was no need to be scared of the chocolate bombs that created a crackling sound and released puffs of grey smoke.

I sensed that the monkeys had perhaps started enjoying the bursting of crackers. They would neither run away nor even shudder. And soon, they got aggressive, chasing us away when they anticipated a cracker attack. The bolder ones broke into the kitchen to steal containers filled with snacks, vegetables from the baskets and even salt. One day I became desperate and decided to teach a lesson to the troop. A monkey sitting on the boundary wall of the garden seemed unaware of my presence. I lit the long wick of a cracker and held it in my right hand waiting until almost the last moment, I planned to throw the cracker directly at the monkey sitting on the wall to cause hurt.

But my attempt turned into a misadventure. No sooner had I stretched my right hand back to throw, the cracker burst in my palm. My breath stopped for a moment in excruciating pain. I had to dip my hand into ice water for about half an hour to get relief. The monkey though seemed delighted at my mishap.

When we had all but given in to the torture perpetrated by the troop, a new idea flashed in my mind. I remembered a mythological story of the Ramayana that I had heard from an old man.

When Lakshmana was severely wounded during the battle against Ravana,

Hanuman was entrusted with the task of fetching the Sanjivani, a powerful life-restoring herb, from Dronagiri mountain in the Himalayas, now in Uttarakhand near the Chinese border. On his way back, carrying the Dronagiri mountain from the Himalayas to Lanka, his huge shadow fell over Lord Rama's 'paduka' (sandals made of wood). It enraged Bharata and he ordered his brother Shatrughna to hit Hanuman with a catapult. Hanuman fell to the ground unconscious with pain. Later Bharata repented for his misdeed of hitting Hanuman, an earnest devotee of Lord Rama.

The story clicked in my mind. Besides, in my losing battle, I had run out of ideas. I went to the market and bought a catapult and a packet of hundred glass marbles. The catapult had a magical effect. It was enough to take aim to disperse the monkeys. And soon, the troop left our garden, leading me to wonder if the innate fear of a catapult is the mythological legacy of the Ramayana story. For I was sure that most of the monkeys especially the young ones had never tested the bitter experience of getting hurt by this weapon before.

### 100 YEARS AGO

#### THE EXCHANGE OUTLOOK

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR,- By hesitating to define their policy and to adopt a bold line of action, the Government have placed themselves in an untenable position and have added considerably to the uncertainties of the money market. Reverse Councils have been sold at preposterous rates in the teeth of an acrimonious protest and no one seems the wiser why it was necessary to fling away nearly fifty millions of India's sterling reserves. The avowed intention of the Government was to force down the sterling exchange to the two-shilling rate at which the rupee was to have been stabilised. Even if such an intention can be held to justify so huge a loss, the apparent failure of the whole policy of Government has engendered a feeling of dismay in the public mind. The fetish of stabilisation has cost us immensely though we have not enjoyed even such problematical advantages as it offers.

A. DHARA.  
Calcutta.

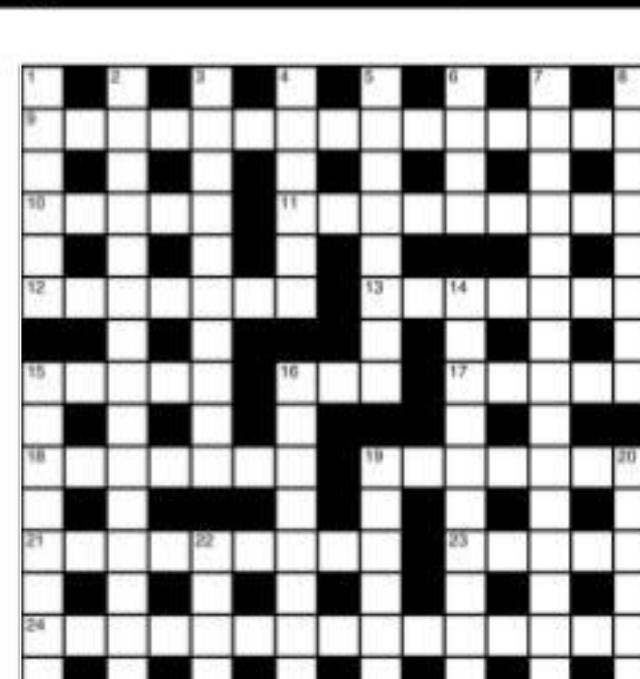
#### HOUSES FOR GOVERNMENT SERVANTS

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR,- In connection with the scheme of housing middle class men in Calcutta by providing them with ready-made houses at cost price, will you kindly refer to the rules under which cash advances are made by Government to their servants for purchasing houses? These rules which are of uniform application to all places in India are prima facie unsound, for the concession of the advance of a year's salary which may suffice to enable an officer to purchase a house, say at Patna or Allahabad or Nagpur, is manifestly inadequate to enable his conferees at Calcutta to buy or build a house of his own to avoid the clutches of the rack-renting landlords. Yet it is desirable that the officer serving at Calcutta where prices of land and houses have risen to the highest pitch should be placed in a position to buy or build houses.

A PUBLIC SERVANT.

CROSSWORD



#### SOLUTION FOR 22 NOVEMBER

##### ACROSS

- 9 Volunteer involved with region in Persian protests (5,10)
- 10 Vote to exclude leader's share (5)
- 11 Accountant with vivacity allowed in carriage (9)
- 12 Thorn at the start to be in red, red rose (7)
- 13 State emphatically cleared out disreputable Irish county (7)
- 15 Legally land aquatic reptile losing leg (5)
- 16 Have some tomorrow night (3)
- 17 Scornful sort called out for coffee (5)
- 18 Warned a recording contains issues regularly avoided (7)
- 19 Confusion as base guards left gate

##### DOWN

- 21 Stop woman receiving fine for misleading statement (4-5)
- 23 The girl alas in retreat releasing the odd cry (5)
- 24 Spar with clever dicky over money for PM (7,8)
- 1 Horror-struck scallywag has turned to bottle (6)
- 2 Thought one would snarl about contemptible supporter? (6-9)
- 3 Believers in AA run it out, initially sceptical (10)
- 4 Protected church — provide walls (6)
- 5 Badly need job — one installed as

- 6 Democrat (3,5)
- 6 Amazonian people in one place to the north (4)
- 7 First from Christopher Marlowe, living deceptively: English dramatist (7,8)
- 8 Answer found in song to lift a curse (8)
- 14 Mad comic panel doing what's expected (10)
- 15 Leaves box and coaches close to street (3,5)
- 16 Reactionaries one used to give protection on train? (3,5)
- 19 Man first to recover without heroin: he used to score (6)
- 20 Puff away: not fit any more? (6)
- 22 Flab-tightening procedure for corpulent friar (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

NO 28149



07

The Sunday Statesman

NEW DELHI, 29 NOVEMBER 2020

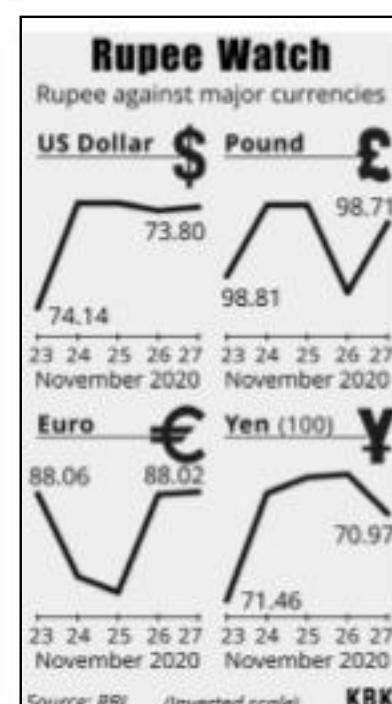


Almost 65 pc of domestic air travel is back to pre Covid-19 level. Now there is a need to evolve a strategy to bring the tourism industry back to its feet

PRADEEP SINGH KHAROLA  
CIVIL AVIATION SECRETARY

**business**

THUMBNAILS



**Economic Forum World Summit:** The fourth edition of United Economic Forum World Summit along with Trade Expo is scheduled to be held from 4 December. The three-day event would see participation of more than 80 speakers from 30 countries, organisers said on Saturday. The summit to be held online would be on the theme-'Imagine-Impact-Inspire'.

**Retirement of TTKM's Vice-Chairman:** Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TTKM) on Saturday said its Vice-Chairman and whole-time director Shekar Viswanathan would retire with effect from 30 November. Viswanathan led TTKM as the Vice-Chairman and Whole-time Director for over seven years. He was associated with the company for over 20 years and helped build TTKM in the country. He joined the company's board in 2008 as the Whole-time Director and as the Vice-Chairman and Whole-time Director in 2013.

**Ram Dev Puchi Soya board member:** Yoga guru Ram Dev, his younger brother Ram Bharat and close aide Acharya Balkrishna will be on the board of soy food brand Nutrela-maker Ruchi Soya that was recently acquired by Patanjali Ayurved. Ruchi Soya Industries Ltd in a notice to shareholders sought approval for appointment of Ram Bharat, 41, as the Managing Director of the company.

**Share transfer:** Max Financial Services Ltd (MFSL) said IRDAI has approved the proposed transfer of 39.47 crore shares constituting 20.57 per cent of the paid-up equity share capital of Max Life Insurance held by Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance to MFSL. This is in exchange for issuance of 7.54 crore shares of MFSL, constituting 21.87 per cent of issued and paid-up share capital of MFSL.

**Ather electric scooter:** Electric two-wheeler start-up Ather Energy said it has decided to replace its first product, Ather 450, with Ather 450X and Ather 450 Plus, which have been built on the same platform, with improved hardware and software capabilities. The company had launched the Ather 450 in 2018. The company will stop the sale of Ather 450 on 28 November in both Bengaluru and Chennai, Ather Energy said in a statement.

# Q2 GDP shows surprising resilience; but can it last?

Second quarter figures could be the result of massive purge in costs by businesses, says SBI report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 28 NOVEMBER

The surprise resilience shown by the manufacturing sector that restricted GDP contraction to only 7.5 per cent in September quarter could be a result of massive purge in costs such as employee cost by corporates and businesses, which could turn a potential headwind in future, economists at SBI wrote on Saturday.

India's July-September (Q2 of 2020-21 fiscal) GDP growth showed surprising resilience with contraction of only 7.5 per cent in real terms, while the market consensus was higher, wrote Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Adviser, State Bank of India, in Ecowrap.

With improvement in manufacturing, due to lifting of lockdown measures GDP contraction has slowed down significantly. Agriculture sector continued to perform well with growth at 3.4 percent. Services remained in the negative territory, although the



decline was contained as trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting showed recovery. "The most astonishing number is the positive growth in manufacturing Q2. Despite being the worst affected sector in Q1 (due to lockdown), it is quite puzzling how manufacturing turned itself around," he wrote in the Ecowrap issue.

The IIP manufacturing and manufacturing GVA growth are highly correlated (almost more than 0.90) and this correlation collapsed in Q2 when IIP manufacturing declined by 6.7 per cent (average of July-September) while manufacturing GVA grew by

0.6 per cent.

"We believe one possible reason for this could be stellar corporate GVA numbers in Q2 on the back of massive purge in costs. Further, we observed small companies, with turnover of up to Rs 500 crore, are more aggressive in cutting cost, displaying reduction in employee cost by 10-12 per cent," Ecocrap said.

This, it said, could turn a potential headwind in future in terms of a drag on consumption. Additionally, there is evidence of inventory buildup that could act as a drag on future manufacturing growth."

Interestingly, government consumption expenditure

has also nosedived in Q2, that is difficult to explain, as such expenditures are typically pro cyclical, Ecocrap said.

SBI economist said the absolute numbers of services sector in Q2FY21 is Rs 17.19 lakh crore, while in Q3FY20 it was Rs 17.35 lakh crore, only Rs 15,000 crore less. This indicates that the services sector has reached the pre-COVID-19 level.

"It is because of behavioural changes during pandemic like massive transport of goods once the economy opened up and a massive boost to communication and broadcasting with people mostly working from home?" it asked.

One good thing is that the investment demand has improved with resumption in COVID-19-induced stalled projects. However, the patchy growth across sectors reflects in domestic demand figures, which are showing modest recovery sequentially.

The falling imports and continued contraction in investment suggest a poor domestic absorption and intermediate demand.

"The reading of Q2 GDP suggests that the output gap has not corrected to the point that it will be a concern for demand pull inflation. Further, the inflationary pressure in agriculture goods despite expanding output has further capped policy option."

"It is because of behavioural changes during pandemic like massive transport of goods once the economy opened up and a massive boost to communication and broadcasting with people mostly working from home?" it asked.

The economist said the recent measures that the government has taken are in the right direction and should be pursued to further spur the economic momentum.

Economic momentum as given by the business activity index shows steady improvement in the latest week after a temporary blip witnessed during the Diwali week owing to holidays. The SBI Business Activity index has jumped to the highest level since March 9.

the highest share in FDI inflow. The sector, which includes financial, banking, insurance, outsourcing, R&D among others, received 17 per cent of the FDI equity inflow during the period under review. Computer software and hardware segment got 12 per cent FDI share while the telecom sector received 7 per cent.

Among the states, Gujarat attracted the highest FDI equity inflow -- 35 per cent of the overall funds coming in during April-September -- followed by Maharashtra (20 per cent), Karnataka (15 per cent), and Delhi (12 per cent).

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal tweeted: "Despite COVID, Foreign Direct Investment doubles year-on-year; indicating global investors' preference for India's enabling environment under PM Narendra Modi, FDI increased from \$14.06 billion to \$28.1 billion in the July-September quarter."

Inflow of foreign investments has been on the rise after the governments around the world, including in India, announced liquidity measures in the wake of the pandemic.

## Total FDI inflow during Q2 stands at \$28.1 billion

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 28 NOVEMBER

The total foreign direct investment (FDI) during the second quarter of financial year 2020-21 stood at \$28.10 billion, out of which FDI equity inflows were \$23.44 billion.

"This takes the FDI equity inflows during the financial year 2020-21 up to September 2020 to \$30,004 million, which is 15 per cent more than the corresponding period of 2019-20," said an official statement.

In rupee terms, the FDI equity inflows of Rs 2,24,613 crore are 23 per cent more than the last year.

August 2020 was a significant month when FDI equity inflow of \$17.48 billion was reported in the country.

According to data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Mauritius and Singapore were the biggest sources of FDI in India with 29 per cent and 21 per cent contribution respectively. The US, Netherlands and Japan followed with 7 per cent contribution each.

Among the sectors, services sector continued to lead with

## Retail inflation for industrial workers rises to 5.91 pc in Oct

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 28 NOVEMBER

**Year-on-year inflation based on all-items stood at 5.91 per cent for October, 2020 as compared to 5.62 per cent for the previous month and 7.62 per cent during the corresponding month of the previous year, a labour ministry statement said. Food inflation stood at 8.21 per cent in October against 7.51 per cent in September**

Workers (CPI-IW) for October 2020 increased by 1.4 points and stood at 119.5 points.

On one-month percentage change, it increased by (+) 1.19 per cent between September and October, 2020 compared to (+) 0.93 per cent increase between corresponding months of the previous year.

The maximum upward pressure in the current index came from the food & beverages group contributing (+) 1.29 percentage points to the total change.

At item level, arhar dal,

poultry (chicken), eggs (hen), goat meat, mustard oil, sunflower oil, brinjal, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, chillies green, gourd, lady finger, onion, peas, potato, electricity domestic, doctor's fee, bus fare, etc.

are responsible for the increase in index.

However, it said that this increase was checked by wheat, fish, fresh, tomato, apple, etc., putting downward pressure on the index.

At centre level, Doonmata Tinsukia, Patna and Ramgarh recorded the maximum increase of 4 points

each. Among others, 3 points increase was observed in 9 centres, 2 points in 24 centres and 1 point in 33 centres. Rest of 19 centres' indices remained stationary.

Commenting on the index, Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar said, "The increase in CPI-IW will have a positive effect on wages/salaries of industrial workers engaged in the organized sector besides government employees and pensioners."

The CPI-IW is the single-most important price statistics which has financial implications.

It is primarily used to regulate the dearness allowance of government employees and workers in industrial sectors. It is also used in fixation and revision of minimum wages in scheduled employments besides measuring the inflation in retail prices.

## Punjab accepts Centre's borrowing option to meet GST shortfall

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 28 NOVEMBER

Congress-ruled Punjab has accepted the Centre's borrowing proposal and will get Rs 8,359 crore through the window to meet GST revenue shortfall.

"Government of Punjab has communicated acceptance of option 1 to meet the revenue shortfall arising out of GST implementation. The number of states which have chosen this option has gone up to 26. All the 3 Union Territories with Legislative Assembly (i.e. Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir and Puducherry) have also decided in favour of option 1," a finance ministry statement said.

The Centre has already borrowed Rs 24,000 crore on behalf of the states in four instalments and has passed it on to 23 states and three Union Territories on October 23, November 2, November 9 and November 23.

From the next round of borrowings, Punjab, Kerala and West Bengal too would receive funds raised through this window. Earlier this week, Kerala and West Bengal had communicated to the Centre about accepting the borrowing option to meet GST revenue shortfall.

States that have opted for option 1 - Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand and West Bengal, along with the three Union Territories of Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir and Puducherry.

However, states like Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand are yet to opt for the borrowing plan proposed by the Centre saying the central government should borrow the entire Rs 1.83 lakh crore shortfall.

## Petrol price crosses ₹ 82-mark, diesel sells above ₹ 72 a litre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 28 NOVEMBER

**This is the eighth increase in rates since November 20 when oil companies resumed daily price revision after a nearly two-week hiatus.**

daily price revision after nearly two-week hiatus.

In nine days, petrol price has gone up by Rs 1.07 per litre and diesel rate has risen by Rs 1.67.

Prior to the November 20 hike, petrol prices had been static since September 22 and diesel rates hadn't changed since October 2.

Diesel rates went up from Rs 71.86 to Rs 72.13 per litre.

This is the eighth increase in rates since November 20 when oil companies resumed

Corporation Ltd and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd - revise rates of petrol and diesel daily based on benchmark international oil price and foreign exchange rate.

They have, however, resorted to calibrating the rates since the pandemic broke out with a view to avoiding volatility in retail prices.

The 58-day hiatus in petrol price revision and 48-day status quo on diesel rates were preceded by no change in rates between June 30 and August 15 and a 85-day status quo between March 17 and June 6.

In Mumbai, the petrol price on Sunday was raised to Rs 88.81 per litre from Rs 88.58, while diesel rates went up from Rs 78.38 to Rs 78.66.

## JNPT says it's adhering to all green norms for Vadhavan port development

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 28 NOVEMBER

The country's leading container port JNPT on Saturday said it is adhering to the terms of reference issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change for prior environmental clearances for development of Vadhavan port.

The government had in February approved a proposal to set up a new major port at Vadhavan near Dahanu in Maharashtra at an investment of Rs 65,544 crore.

The new port will be developed on a landlord model under a special purpose vehicle (SPV) with Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) as the lead partner with equity participation equal to or more than

50 per cent to implement the project.

Of this, Rs 16,140 crores will be implemented by the SPV in constructing basic infrastructure like breakwaters, rail line/yard and road connectivity, power and water line, internal roads and common amenities, as per JNPT.

At present, JNPT and Maharashtra Maritime Board (MMB) are development partners for the prospective port with JNPT holding 74 per cent and MMB the remaining 26 per cent in the SPV.

Maharashtra currently has two major ports in the state - JNPT and Mumbai Port.

"The port is acting in accordance to provide ground reality and take all measures for environmental sustainability

port development with all preventive and mitigative measures for port services which are in wider interest of the nation and in particular to Maharashtra," JNPT said in a release.

JNPT is "committed" to preserve, protect and promote the environment in and around Vadhavan port while implementing as well as operating the project. All environment laws, rules and regulations will be fully regulated with oversight from the pollution control board, it said in the release.

The environment ministry has approved the Terms of Reference for conducting environmental impact assessment study and instructed JNPT to comply with all the conditions under Standard Terms of Reference as a part of envi-

ronment clearance process which includes public hearing and approval of State Coastal Zone Management Authority (SCZMA).

Beside, it also emphasised for additional Terms of Reference, it added. "In compliance with the TOR, JNPT has assigned works to reputed government agencies for conducting multiple technical studies."

Likewise, the Central Water Power Research Centre is directing the impact of flooding in the creeks and dredging. Similarly, the National Institute of Oceanography, Goa is managing the effect of dredging on the marine ecology, biodiversity impact assessment and by setting up an environmental management plan, said the release.

## 'Prefer FTAs with countries with transparent mechanisms'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 28 NOVEMBER

Free trade agreements are good for the nation and India must look to leverage these pacts with countries having transparent trading mechanisms and business systems, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Saturday.

He said India should focus its energy on FTAs initially with developed countries that are looking for market access in the large Indian market and which can open their doors for domestic goods as well.

"I believe, per se FTAs are not bad, FTAs are good for the nation and we must

# BJP creates ruckus in Odisha Assembly

Govt accepts Cong demand for HC monitored SIT probe into Pari muder case

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 28 NOVEMBER

Odisha Assembly witnessed uporous scenes for the third successive day today with the BJP members tried to climb the podium, snatch the mike of the Speaker demanding resignation of Agriculture Minister Arun Sahoo and a CBI probe in to the murder of a five year old girl 'Pari'.

Pandemonium prevailed despite the announcement of a High Court monitored SIT probe by the state government as had been demanded by the Congress. Leader of Opposition, P

Naik (BJP) accused Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik of protecting Minister Sahoo. Sack the Minister, stated Naik.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Bikram Kesari Arukh intervened to categorically state that the CM had already accepted the demand for a SIT probe yesterday and today the necessary request to the Orissa High Court will be sent.

But this did not quell the storm raised by the BJP.

The Congress which was upbeat as the CM had conceded to their demand, lashed out at the BJP reminding them that the party had suspended several Opposi-

tion MP's in parliament for the ruckus and here it was the BJP which was stalling proceedings.

The BJP is protecting the BJD, both are together charged Congress MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati while noting that in the process discussion on law and order situation was being stalled.

Talking to media persons outside the Assembly, veteran Congress leader Narasingha Mishra said the BJP does not seem to have faith in a High Court monitored SIT investigation.

The government yielded to our demand for a court monitored SIT probe and one has to wait for the probe

rather than stalling debate on other important issues including the mining scam, law and order situation which would further expose the BJD government, he said.

It was the BJP which had demanded a debate on the mining scam in the monsoon session, now it is stalling such a debate, remarked Mishra before posing the question whether the BJP had been gained over by the mining lobby or the government.

Mishra appealed to the BJP to participate in the Appropriation Bill and expose the state government.

In a related development the state government today

proposed the SIT headed by IG Police Arun Bothra. The others in the team are R K Dora, R C Thamba, N Kumar Behera and Mamatarani Panda.

A request has been sent to the High Court for a siting judge monitored probe.

It may be noted here that the Pari murder case has outraged people since 23 November when the parents of the child attempted self-immolation in front of the Assembly. The parents had alleged police inaction for over four months since the murder. They alleged that one Babuli, close to Agriculture Minister Sahoo is involved in the murder.

## Odisha reports 550 new COVID-19 cases

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 28 NOVEMBER

Maintaining its downward trend in virus infections, Odisha on Saturday reported 550 fresh COVID-19 cases, while twelve fresh fatalities pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 1,730.

The state's contagion positivity rate has now dropped to below 5 percent.

Angul reported the highest number of new cases at 53, followed by 49 at Cuttack, Sundargarh at 47 and Mayurbhanj (40).

Khurda district has so far reported the highest number of coronavirus fatalities at 291, followed by Gan-

jam (240) and Cuttack (134). Fifty-three coronavirus patients have died due to other ailments so far.

The recovery rate (97.46%) is marginally higher than the country's 93.68 percent.

Odisha currently has 6,259 active cases.

A total of 58,19,584 sample tests have been conducted in the state so far, including 42,014 on Friday.

The pandemic's growth rate in October is to the tune of 23% while it was at 49% growth in September. A total of 24,673 positive cases have so far been added in the current month at a growth rate of 7.76% growth rate.

## Active COVID cases in Bhubaneswar drop

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 28 NOVEMBER

Odisha's capital city Bhubaneswar on Saturday reported 43 fresh COVID-19 positive cases while the active cases at 483 have dipped to 1.55%, marking a steady slowdown of the pandemic.

Of the fresh infections, 34

were local contact infections while the remaining 9 cases were sourced from quarantine.

Till date 29,975 persons have recovered from the contagion. A total of 218 patients from the city have succumbed to the virus.

Bhubaneswar has reported an impressive recovery rate of almost 97.66 percent.



Organ donation campaign in Bhubaneswar by Rotary Club.

## Case against BJP national spokesperson Aparajita Sarangi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BARIPADA, 28 NOVEMBER

The police registered a case against BJP national spokesperson and MP Ms Aparajita Sarangi following widespread resentment and allegations that she had walked over images of deities made by rangoli here yesterday while interacting with several women.

The public resentment led to several women and devotees lighting 108 diyas (earth-lamps) in front of the Jagannath Temple here to pray for forgiveness.



Arun Kumar Behera of Bangiriposi area who took the lead in the act and later lodged a police complaint against Ms Sarangi.

A case under section 270, 298, 269 of IPC had been registered in the police station against the BJP national spokesperson Ms Sarangi.

## Odisha govt provides financial assistance to MSMEs

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 28 NOVEMBER

Odisha government extended financial incentives to 278 MSME units during the current fiscal, taking the total incentivized units to 639 from April, 2019, informed official sources today.

The amount of incentive is around Rs.69.99 crore noted principal secretary MSME Satyabrata Sahu at a meeting convened by chief secretary Asit Tripathy.

Two new proposals to provide almost three crore capital investment to two small

scale units were cleared.

Tripathy directed the concerned departments to "facilitate the process by providing proactive planning, technical and handholding support to the sector". Field level officers were asked to be in "constant touch with local entrepreneurs and instill confidence in them".

The chief secretary considered the proposals of Kurpalu Solvent rice bran oil producing enterprise set up at Panikoli in Jajpur district with an investment of Rs.5.26 cr; and, Sri Ram Oil rice bran oil producing enterprise set

up in Attibira panchayat of Barghark district with investment of around Rs.4.87 cr for sanction of capital investment (CI) subsidy.

They were sanctioned CI of around Rs.1.73 cr and Rs.1.21 cr respectively. Director Industries Reghu G. said,

"with this sanction the total amount of financial incentives sanctioned during current year has crossed 25.47 cr extended to 278 units".

Satyabrata Sahu said, "three types of direct financial incentives viz. capital investment subsidy (at two slabs of 25% and 33%), interest sub-

vention @ of 5% per year for five years and VAT reimbursement for five years are provided to the MSMEs under different policies".

Besides, the government departments and PSUs have been directed to procure at least 20 percent of their requirements from local MSMEs.

These units are spread over the sectors like fly ash brick making, paper egg trays, corrugated papers, plastic molded products, milk and milk products, bakery, paper cup & plates, cotton ginning plant , shrimp processing etc.

## Odisha offers incentives to fishermen to save Gharials

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 28 NOVEMBER:

In an attempt to curb the fatality of critically endangered 'Gharial' crocodiles, the Odisha forest department has announced incentives to inland fishermen in Mahanadi river system to save the fishing-nets-induced death of these reptiles.

The population of Gharials is alarmingly dwindling in Odisha despite the conservation initiatives launched over the years in their habitats in Satkosia gorge of Mahanadi river system in Angul district.

"There are reports of the gharials getting stuck into the



fishing nets. Later they perish either due to asphyxiation and getting killed by fishermen. The fishing nets in the process get damaged following the entanglement of the Gharial", said Hari Shankar Upadhyay, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife).

We have decided to replace the damaged fishing nets with new ones. The incentive of this nature has been launched to deter the fishermen from resorting to unlawful activity like killing the crocodiles, he added.

Incidentally Odisha is the only state in the country having all three species — gharial, mugger and saltwater crocodile in the wild.

The State government had launched a conservation programme of these crocodile species in 1975. While the conservation initiative had yielded positive results as far as saltwater and mugger is con-

cerned, it had failed in the Gharial conservation programme.

The forest department had earlier adopted captive rearing of these animals so that their population could

register growth. But the experiment had earlier failed to yield the desired result. Though around 800 gharials artificially bred in captivity were released in the wild since, these reptiles could not be spotted later on.

Last year the Odisha forest department had launched a pilot telemetry transmitter project to conserve the endangered Gharial crocodiles by releasing seven transmitter-fitted reptiles into the wild.

However two gharials fell prey to poachers' nets this year. The post mortem of the carcasses had found external injury resulting in the death of the reptiles. The inland fishermen had apparently

killed them after they were entangled in the fishing nets, said forest officials.

A total of seven gharial crocodiles were released in Satkosia gorge in the Mahanadi river system with biotelemetry transmitters fitted into their bodies to track their migratory movement. The transmitter experiment had been undertaken as these species were fast disappearing from their habitats in Satkosia gorge in the Mahanadi river system in Odisha's Angul district.

Despite conservation measures launched in the past, only, 10 gharials were sighted in the wild by the enumerators, the official said.

## Mob ransacks health centre in Bhograi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BALASORE, 28 NOVEMBER:

A mob ransacked a community health centre in Bhograi alleging the duty doctor didn't attend a patient properly yesterday night.

As the tension escalated further the local tehsildar along with the police force rushed to the spot and controlled the mob.

The incident relates to the death of a three year old daughter of one Anil Kamila of Maheswarpur village who fell into a pond. The doctor declared her dead after examining the girl. The parents

and others however alleged that the doctor did not attend to the girl and the delay resulted in her death.

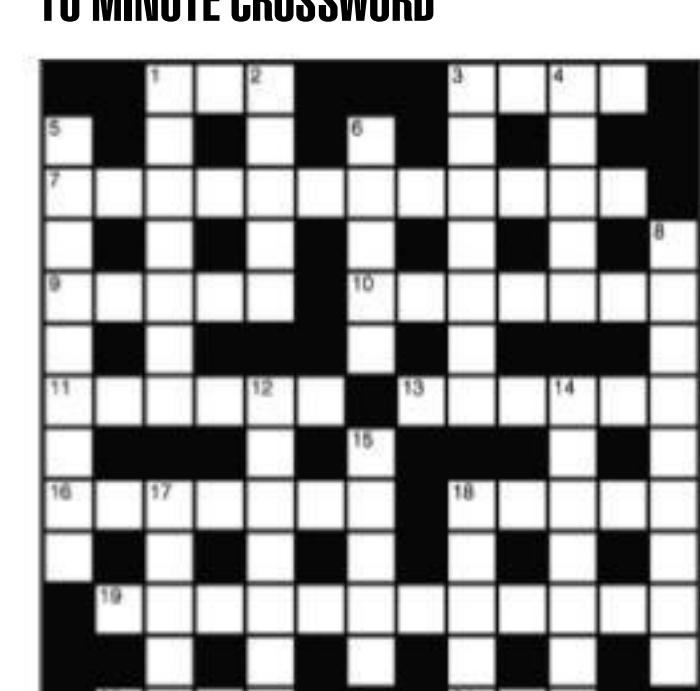
The allegations sparked angry reactions and the mob damaged the doors, windows and furniture of the health care centre. They also staged a road block by burning tyres.

The tehsildar Kamalanta Panda and the IIC Bhograi Sujata Khamari reached the spot and pacified the mob.

An ex-gratia amount Rs10,000 was given from the Red Cross fund. The officials assured the bereaved family of assistance.

## LEISURE

### 10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS 1 Little devil (3), 3 Fur, for example (4), 7 Ancient Roman priestess (6,6), 9 Rear (5), 10 Predicament (7), 11 Deep ditch (6), 13 Cold dessert (6), 16 Stiff silky fabric (7), 18 Time off (5), 19 Skinned joinder (12), 20 Curved structure (4), 21 Rowing blade (3). DOWN 1 Winning post, 2 Forgiving, 3 Quay (Flaky), 7 Large, 8 In a word, 10 Broche, 12 Reign, 13 Insolvent, 14 Angst, 15 Quadruple, 16 Hibernation, 17 Preen, 18 Eyeot, 19 Gnaw, 20 Constrict, 21 Grate.

DOWNS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS 1 Flay, 2 Post, 3 Quay (Flaky), 7 Large, 8 In a word, 10 Broche, 12 Reign, 13 Insolvent, 14 Angst, 15 Quadruple, 16 Hibernation, 17 Preen, 18 Eyeot, 19 Gnaw, 20 Constrict, 21 Grate.

DOWN 1 Forgiving, 2 Axe, 3 Quadruple, 4 Ado, 5 Flab, 6 Hibernation, 7 Dune, 8 Constrict, 9 Duff, 10 Broche, 11 Constrict, 12 Reign, 13 Insolvent, 14 Angst, 15 Quadruple, 16 Hibernation, 17 Preen, 18 Eyeot, 19 Gnaw, 20 Constrict, 21 Grate.

By arrangement with The Independent. Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

### BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



### RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



### DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



### NEED TO KNOW

#### HOSPITALS

- AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (Formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 24000447
- Vidyasagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur

#### RAILWAY INQUIRY

- General Inquiry 139
- Toll Free Nos. 1800125151
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

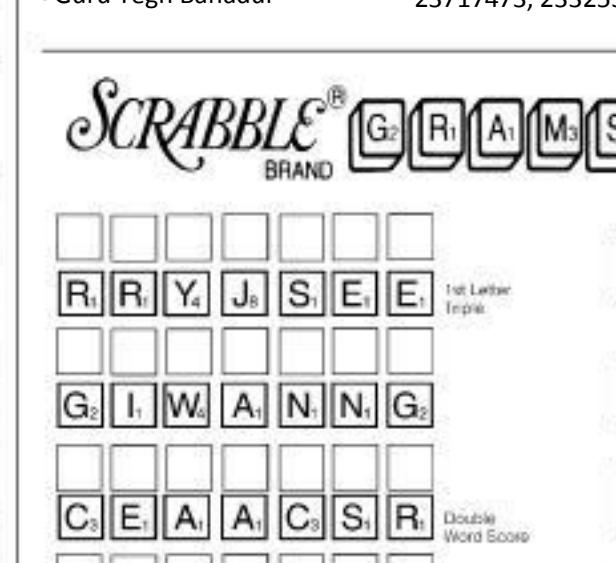
#### ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
- Haryana Roadways 23861262
- Himachal Roadways 23717473, 23325320

#### FLIGHT INQUIRY

- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 1800180407
- INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09918038388, 18001803838, 25656421/25656431 Reservation 41528181
- Air France Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City)
- 25652294 (Airport)
- Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373

### SCRABBLE® BRAND





Biden will be a president who represents the best in us. A leader the world will respect and our children can look up to

US VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT KAMALA HARRIS  
IN A POST ON TWITTER

## WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	29°C	25°C H
HONG KONG	26°C	20°C H
TOKYO	18°C	12°C CL
LONDON	17°C	9°C S
DUBAI	30°C	25°C S
SAN FRANCISCO	13°C	04°C C H
NEW YORK	10°C	07°C C S
MOSCOW	16°C	09°C H

S=sunny, CL=clear, H=hazy, R=rainy...

## THUMBNAILS



A masked Teddy bear is pictured in front of a souvenir shop on a square in Frankfurt, Germany on Saturday.

IANS

**Georgia Aquarium's largest female whale shark dies:** The largest female whale shark at the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta has died. Trixie, who had been at the aquarium since 2006, died on Friday, the aquarium said in a statement on its Facebook page. She was having difficulty navigating the habitat earlier in the day and then her health rapidly declined, the aquarium said.

AP

## UK, EU resume trade talks with time running out

LONDON, 28 NOVEMBER

Teams from Britain and the European Union resumed face-to-face talks on a post-Brexit trade deal Saturday, with both sides sounding gloomy about striking an agreement in the little time that remains.

EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier returned to London to meet his U.K. counterpart David Frost. Talks have been held virtually for the past week as Barnier completed a spell of self-isolation after a member of his team tested positive for the coronavirus.

Covid is just one complication in negotiations that remain snagged over key issues including fishing rights and fair-competition rules. Barnier said Friday that the remote talks had made little progress and the same significant divergences persist.

The U.K. left the EU early this year, but remained part of the bloc's economic embrace during an 11-month transition as the two sides tried to negotiate a new free-trade deal to take effect Jan. 1. Talks have already slipped past the mid-November date long seen as a deadline to secure a deal in time for it to be approved and ratified by lawmakers in UK and the EU.

If there is no deal, New Year's Day will bring huge disruption, with the overnight imposition of tariffs and other barriers to U.K.-EU trade. That will hurt both sides, but the burden will fall most heavily on Britain, which does almost half its trade with the EU.

While both sides want a deal, they have fundamental differences about what it entails. The 27-nation EU accuses UK of seeking to retain access to the bloc's vast market without agreeing to abide by its rules, and wants strict guarantees on level playing field standards the U.K. must meet to export into the EU. The U.K. claims the EU is failing to respect its independence and making demands it has not placed on other countries with whom it has free trade deals, such as Canada. To reach a deal the EU will have to curb its demands on continued access to U.K. fishing waters, and Britain must agree to some alignment with the bloc's rules - difficult issues for politicians on both sides.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson told Irish leader Micheal Martin on Friday that he remained committed to reaching a deal that respects the sovereignty of the U.K., Johnson's office said.

## US virus nos could be erratic after Thanksgiving

Johns Hopkins University reported a high of more than 2 million tests a few days before Thanksgiving as people prepared to travel

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MILWAUKEE, 28 NOVEMBER

The coronavirus testing numbers that have guided much of the nation's response to the pandemic are likely to be erratic over the next week or so, experts said Friday, as fewer people get tested during the Thanksgiving holiday weekend and testing sites observe shorter hours.

The result could be potential dips in reported infections that offer the illusion that the spread of the virus is easing when, in fact, the numbers say little about where the nation stands in fighting Covid. The number of Americans who have tested positive passed 13 million Friday, according to Johns Hopkins University.

"I just hope that people don't misinterpret the numbers and think that there wasn't a major surge as a result of Thanksgiving, and then end up making Christmas and Hanukkah and other travel plans," said Dr. Leana Wen, a professor at George Washington University and an emergency physician. A similar pattern unfolds on many weekends. Because some testing centers, labs and state offices are closed on Saturdays and Sundays, Covid case numbers often drop each Sunday and Monday, only to peak on Tuesday.

Dr. Mark Rupp, professor and chief of infectious diseases at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, said the effect of Thanksgiving is likely to be a magnified

## Biden to let health experts decide who will get a vaccine first: Gounder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON, 28 NOVEMBER

US President-elect Joe Biden will let health experts decide who will get a Covid vaccine in the country first, according to Dr. Celine Gounder, a member of his coronavirus advisory board.

Since the risk for Covid can vary among different groups of people, prioritisation for a vaccine will be tricky, and Biden will leave those decisions to health experts, the Indian-American infectious disease physician said.

It is expected that there will likely be a limited supply of coronavirus vaccine doses available immediately after a vaccine is authorised by the US Food and Drug Administration.

"Other than health care workers, others who will be first in line to get it will be people who do have chronic underlying medical conditions who are older, as well as communities of colour who have

version of the weekend figures. The Thursday holiday will exacerbate the record-keeping discrepancies over the long weekend, artificially depressing the reported numbers for four or five days before spiking as test results catch up.

Johns Hopkins University



been disproportionately impacted by this pandemic," Gounder told CNN on Friday. The country's death toll since the pandemic's start is now more than 264,000. And nearly another 60,000 people could lose their lives over the next three weeks, according to an ensemble forecast published by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) this week.

"Now among those groups is where it starts to get a little bit more contentious," she added. "How do you prioritise between the 85-year-old woman in a nursing home, versus the 65-year-old African American -- especially when that 65-year-old may be as just

reported a high of more than 2 million tests a few days before Thanksgiving as people prepared to travel, but that number had dropped to less than 1.2 million tests on Thanksgiving Day. The latter number, as well as positive case numbers, which had dropped by about a third Friday, could

be adjusted as more results are returned. In several state and cities, officials reported sharp drops in testing Friday and reminded people not to read improvements into them. Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson said the drop means that residents might not know for weeks how much their efforts

as high-risk of significant disease?" The CDC's Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) will recommend groups to receive the vaccine first. "That's where it gets a bit more political and frankly, this is where the President-elect is leaving it to the public health experts and scientists to figure out how best to allocate the limited supply first," Gounder, who was named by Biden earlier this month to his coronavirus advisory board.

The ACIP called an emergency meeting for December 1, where they will vote on the very first group to get a vaccine. "Because we know that the vaccine will be available in very limited doses, even if they prioritise health care workers and older people in their population, it's going to be really important to be a little more granular," said Rick Bright, another member of Biden's coronavirus advisory board.

Cities and states generally use hospitalization and intensive care numbers, which lag behind virus case reporting, to determine when to increase or ease public health restrictions and recommendations. But the public is more likely to look at testing numbers or case counts, which might be misleading, Wen said, and waiting until hospitals are overwhelmed is risky.

"Where we are now is a completely unsustainable place. I think it's extremely frustrating to those of us in health care to see our calls are not being heeded," Wen said. "And the level of alarm that we have is not reflected in individuals' behavior."

## LA orders restrictions

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LOS ANGELES, 28 NOVEMBER

Los Angeles County announced a new stay-home order Friday as coronavirus cases surged out of control in the nation's most populous county, banning most gatherings but stopping short of a full shutdown on retail stores and other non-essential businesses.

Indoor retail businesses, which make much of their profits during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday seasons, are allowed to remain open but with just 20 per cent of capacity, including nail salons and other personal care services. Stores considered essential will be allowed 35 per cent capacity. Outdoor fitness centers, museums and outdoor amusements such as mini-golf can operate at 50 per cent of capacity. Restaurants in the county already were recently barred from in-person dining. They can still offer pickup, delivery and takeout services.

Beaches, trails, and parks will remain open, with safety requirements. Schools and day camps can remain open except for those that have three or more Covid cases over 14 days. Those should close for 14 days, the order said. The order, which runs through 20 December, is more modest than a statewide closure order issued by Gov. Gavin Newsom in mid-March. That order closed schools and most businesses and severely restricted movement except for essential workers or to perform essential chores such as buying groceries or picking up medications.

## President Trump suffers another jolt as US court rejects Pennsylvania lawsuit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON, 28 NOVEMBER

## Biden's win means some Guantanamo prisoners may be released

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 28 NOVEMBER

The oldest prisoner at the Guantanamo Bay detention center went to his latest review board hearing with a degree of hope, something that has been scarce during his 16 years locked up without charges at the US base in Cuba.

Saiifulah Paracha, a 73-year-old Pakistani with diabetes and a heart condition, had two things going for him that he didn't have at previous hearings: a favorable legal development and the election of Joe Biden.

The President has said that he would leave the White House if the Electoral College declares Biden as the winner, but made clear he is not prepared to "concede" the election. He has launched a slew of lawsuits in key states, but has not provided any evidence to back his claims of electoral fraud. Many of the

lawsuits have been dismissed by courts. The three-judge panel of the 3rd US Circuit Court of Appeals on Friday upheld a previous ruling that dismissed the Trump campaign's request for an injunction in the case in Pennsylvania to challenge the election results and slammed the election.

"Free, fair elections are the lifeblood of our democracy. Charges of unfairness are serious, but calling an election unfair does not make it so. Charges require specific allegations and then proof. We have neither here," Judge Stephanos Bibas said in his order. "The campaign cannot win this lawsuit," said Bibas, as well, saying at his age 86 he couldn't take on the responsibility.

The ceremony was taking place against the backdrop of the Covid pandemic, which erupted in Italy in February and has seen a resurgence this fall. The Vatican is under a modified lockdown, with the Vatican Museums shuttered and Francis' public general audiences cancelled. Instead he holds them in private, livestreamed.

The cardinal candidates and other who came to Rome from afar for Saturday's service were required to undergo 10 days of Vatican-mandated quarantine at the pope's hotel, where meals were brought to their rooms. Zoom calls provided contact with the outside and the cardinals' new red robes were handed over by Rome's famed ecclesiastical tailors.

Francis visited Chiapas in 2016 and has long championed

who was appointed by Trump.

He authored the order along with two other judges on the bench, Chief Circuit Judge Brooks Smith and Judge Michael Chagares, who were appointed by former Republican president George W Bush.

Trump has refused to concede the November 3 election to Biden and has filed multiple lawsuits challenging the poll results in several states.

Former vice president Biden was declared the winner of the US presidential election on November 7 after flipping Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin to the Democrats' column.

Biden has 306 electoral votes to Trump's 232 votes. To win the race to the White House, the successful candidate should have at least 270 electoral votes out of the 538-member Electoral College.

Biden's tally is far more than the 270 needed to win the race for the White House, and he also leads the popular vote by more than six million. In his Thanksgiving Day remarks, Trump, however, said it will be a mistake if the Electoral College were to elect Biden.

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Britain has ordered 40 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, enough for 20 million people, and 100 mil-

lion doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine.

In all, the U.K. government has agreed to purchase up to 355 million doses of vaccine from seven different producers, as it prepares to vaccinate as many of the country's 67 million people as possible. Decisions about which, if any, vaccines to authorize will be made by the independent Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

Pfizer and BioNTech say their vaccine is 95 per cent effective, according to preliminary data. It must be stored at ultra-cold temperatures of around minus 70 degrees Celsius.

The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine can be stored at conventional refrigerator temperatures, and is also cheaper than its main rivals. But

the half dose was administered because of a manufacturing error, and they plan a new clinical trial to investigate the most effective dosing regimen.

The British government hopes a combination of vaccines and mass testing will end the need for restrictions on business and everyday life it imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

The prime minister said this week that officials hope to inoculate the vast majority of the people who need the most protection by Easter. But he warned that we must first navigate a hard winter of restrictions.

A four-week national lockdown in England is due to end Wednesday, and will be replaced by three-tiered system of regional measures that restrict business activity, travel and socialising.

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the half dose was administered because of a manufacturing error, and they plan a new clinical trial to investigate the most effective dosing regimen.

Critics of proposed French security law that would restrict sharing images of police are gathering across the country with 22 voting-age pretenders.

Francis has continued the trend of naming cardinals from the peripheries of the Catholic Church: Brunei got its first-ever cardinal with the Vatican's ambassador to the country, Cardinal-designate Cornelius Sim.

Rwanda also got its only cardinal with the archbishop of Kigali, Antoine Kambanda, whose family was slaughtered during the Rwandan genocide. Kambanda made the trip to Rome for the ceremony, Sin stayed home due to COVID-19 restrictions.

History's first Jesuit pope has also increased the number of cardinals who belong to religious orders, naming three Franciscans this time around in a year in which the pope, who named himself after St. Francis of Assisi, released an encyclical inspired by the saint's call to fraternity and solidarity with the weakest.

Video that surfaced Thursday showed the beating, days earlier, of music producer

Latin America and the Caribbean.

Saturday's consistory is unusual for the high number of Italians who have been named, though three of them are over age 80 and thus ineligible to vote. But Italy still leads the college with more cardinals than any other country, with 22 voting-age pretenders.

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROME, 28 NOVEMBER

## Pope elevating new cardinals in ceremony marked by Covid

and fidelity that we represent.

Gregory's appointment comes after a year of racial protests in the U.S. sparked by the latest killing of a Black man by a white police officer. Francis has endorsed the protests and cited the American history of racial injustices.

There is awareness now of the need for racial reconciliation, an awareness that I have not seen at this level and at this intensity before," Gregory said.

Another social justice-minded cardinal is the retired archbishop of Chiapas, Mexico, Cardinal-designate Felipe Arizmendi Esquivel, who has championed the rights of Mexico's indigenous peoples and spearheaded efforts to translate the Bible and liturgical texts into native languages.

Francis visited Chiapas in



The US mission in Pakistan is committed to working with local partners to support conservation and preservation of sites of great cultural significance across Pakistan

US CONSUL GENERAL GREGORY MACRIS

AS PAKISTAN, US JOINTLY COMPLETE RESTORATION WORK OF TAKHT-I-BAHI BUDDHIST MONASTERY

The Sunday Statesman  
NEW DELHI, 29 NOVEMBER 2020

11

## THUMBNAILS



People wearing face masks ride escalators in Tokyo, Japan on Saturday PTI

**Villagers killed in Indonesia:** Indonesian police said on Saturday that suspected militants killed four people and burned seven houses in a village in Sulawesi province. National Police spokesperson said they believe the assault in Lemban Tongoa village was carried out by the East Indonesia Mujahideen group. PTI

**Mass raids on gangs:** The Central American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras have rounded up hundreds of suspected street gang members as part of a US-backed effort known as Operation Regional Shield. The attorney general's office in El Salvador has taken the lead, reporting that it obtained arrest warrants for 1,152 suspects, of whom 572 had been arrested by Friday. PTI

**Iraq clash:** Supporters of a firebrand Iraqi cleric shot dead five people on Saturday, according to medical officials, in overnight clashes with anti-government protesters in southern Iraq. The anti-government demonstrators attempted to bloc the path of a rally supporting Shiite Muslim leader Mottada al-Sadr. Followers of the populist cleric also wounded 40 others in the clashes, according to two medical officials. PTI

**Outcry as Cuba removes protesters defending rapper**

HAVANA, 28 NOVEMBER

Cuban authorities have cleared more than a dozen artists and activists from a home they have used as a centre for anti-government protests that have gained unusually wide attention.

Police and health authorities raided the house in Old Havana on Thursday night, removing the protesters and taking at least most to their homes.

The group known as the San Isidro Movement, which periodically stages performance art and music events, has repeatedly criticised the Communist government and is demanding the release of a musician member recently convicted of insulting a police officer.

There were no immediate reports of arrests, but Amnesty International and the head of the Organisation of American States expressed concern about the operation against the group.

Almost 300 Cuban intellectuals and artists this week had issued a statement urging the government to engage in dialogue with them.

Officials said the gathering violated COVID-19 safety protocols, alleging that one of those inside was a Mexican resident who had recently returned from the United States and should have been quarantined. They also said he had given a different address when arriving in Cuba.

The activists called it an attempt to quash a protest, which they said included a hunger strike, that has drawn international attention to the debate about freedom of expression in Cuba. Rapper Maykel "Osorbo" Castillo told The Associated Press that the artists and activists were taken to a police station and then to their homes as he rejected COVID-19 concerns for the reason to raid the home.

# Iran's supreme leader vows revenge over slain scientist

Iran says Israel behind killing, Rouhani says Fakhrizadeh's death would not stop its nuke programme



This photo released by the semi-official Fars News Agency shows the scene where Mohsen Fakhrizadeh was killed in Absard, Iran. AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
TEHRAN, IRAN, 28 NOVEMBER

**I**ran's supreme leader on Saturday called for the "definitive punishment" of those behind the killing of a scientist linked to Tehran's disbanded military nuclear program, a slaying the Islamic Republic has blamed on Israel.

Speaking to a meeting of his government's coronavirus task force earlier Saturday, President Hassan Rouhani blamed Israel for the killing.

Rouhani said that Fakhrizadeh's death would not stop its nuclear program, something Khamenei said was well. Iran's civilian nuclear program has continued its experiments and now enriches uranium up to 4.5%, far below weapons-grade levels of 90%.

But analysts have compared Fakhrizadeh to being on a par with Robert Oppenheimer, the scientist who led the U.S. Manhattan Project in World War II that created the atom bomb. "We will respond to the assassination of Martyr Fakhrizadeh in a proper time," Rouhani said.

He added: "The Iranian nation is smarter than falling into the trap of the Zionists. They are thinking to create chaos." Friday's attack happened in Absard, a village just east of the capital that is a retreat for the Iranian elite. Iranian state television said an old truck with explosives hidden under a load of wood blew up near a sedan carrying Fakhrizadeh.

As Fakhrizadeh's sedan stopped, at least five gunmen emerged and raked the car with rapid fire, the semi-

punishment of the perpetrators and those who ordered it." He did not elaborate.

The US has imposed sanctions on four companies from China and Russia for supporting Iran's missile programme that remains a "significant proliferation concern," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has said.

The announcement was made on Friday as the US continues to take tough measures against Iran for continuing their activities related to nuclear arms.

The US has sanctioned four entities in China and Russia for their support of Iran's missile programme, which

official Tasnim news agency said.

Fakhrizadeh died at a hospital after doctors and paramedics couldn't revive him. Others wounded included Fakhrizadeh's bodyguards.

Photos and video shared online showed a Nissan sedan with bullet holes in the windshield and blood pooled on the road.

Hours after the attack, the Pentagon announced it had brought the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier back into the Middle East, an unusual move as the carrier already spent months in the region. It cited the drawdown of U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq as the reason for the decision, saying "it was prudent to have additional defensive capabilities in the region to meet any contingency."

The attack comes just days before the 10-year anniversary of the killing of Iranian nuclear scientist Majid Shahriari that Tehran also blamed on Israel.

That and other targeted killings happened at the time that the so-called Stuxnet virus, believed to be an Israeli and

American creation, destroyed Iranian centrifuges.

Those assaults occurred at the height of Western fears over Iran's nuclear program. Tehran long has insisted its program is peaceful. However,

Fakhrizadeh led Iran's so-called AMAD program that Israel and the West have alleged was a military operation looking at the feasibility of building a nuclear weapon. The International Atomic Energy Agency says that "structured program" ended in 2003.

IAEA inspectors monitor Iranian nuclear sites as part of the now-unraveling nuclear deal with world powers, which saw Tehran limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

After Trump's 2018 withdrawal from the deal, Iran has abandoned all those limits.

Experts now believe Iran

has enough low-enriched ura-

nium to make at least two

nuclear weapons if it chose to

pursue the bomb. Meanwhile,

an advanced centrifuge assem-

bly plant at Iran's Natanz

nuclear facility exploded in July

After withdrawing from the Iranian nuclear deal, Trump has asked all countries to reduce their purchase of oil from Iran to zero or face secondary sanctions.

Tigray TV announced

shelling in Mekele, a city of a

half-million people. A report

from the city confirmed it.

The Tigray leader could not

immediately be reached.

Ethiopia's government did

not immediately comment.

Ethiopia's government had

warned Mekele residents

there would be "no mercy" if

they didn't move away from

the leaders of the Tigray Peo-

ple's Liberation Front in time.

Communications remain

largely severed to the Tigray

region of some 6 million peo-

ple, making it difficult to ver-

ify claims by the warring sides

in the conflict between

Ethiopia's government and

the TPLF, which once domi-

nated the country's ruling

coalition but was sidelined

under new Prime Minister

Abiy Ahmed. Abiy has reject-

ed dialogue with the TPLF. Each

government regards the other

as illegal. The offensive on the

densely populated city, and

the threat of civilian deaths,

has alarmed the international

community. The United

Nations said people were

fleeing Mekele as forces closed

in. Abiy's government has

said it will take care to avoid

harming civilians in the tank-

led assault. As Ethiopian forces

moved in, Maj. Gen. Hassan

Ibrahim vowed to capture the

city "on all fronts."

"It is possible that some of

the wanted people may go to

their families or neighboring

areas and try to hide for few

days. But our armed forces

after seizing the control of

Mekele city will be tasked to

hunt down and capture these

criminals one by one where-

ever they may be," he said in

comments carried by the

Ethiopian News Agency.

The Tigray region has been

almost entirely cut off from

the outside world since Nov. 4, when Abiy announced a military offensive in response to a TPLF attack on a military base. Humanitarians have said at least hundreds of people have been killed. The fighting threatens to destabilize Ethiopia, which has been described as the linchpin of the strategic Horn of Africa.

With transport links cut, food and other supplies are running out in Tigray, home to 6 million people, and the United Nations has asked for immediate and unimpeded access for aid.

Multiple crises are growing. More than 43,000 refugees have fled to Sudan, where people struggle to give them food, shelter and care. One humanitarian agency says hospitals in Tigray are running out of drugs. And fighting near camps of Eritrean refugees in northern Ethiopia has put them in the line of fire.

U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi on Saturday visited Sudan's Umm Rakuba refugee camp, which was housing some 10,000 refugees. He said about \$150 million is needed over the next six months to help Sudan manage the influx.

Worryingly, refugees in Sudan have told The Associated Press that Ethiopian forces near the border are impeding people from leaving. Reporters from the AP saw crossings slow to a trickle in recent days. Ethiopia's government has not commented. "We have seen the figure of people decline but continuing. Five to 600 per day is not a small figure, let's make no mistake. It is true there were days in which they were in their thousands, but it depends also on the difficulty of moving around their country and on the border," Grandi said. Access to Tigray is "the main obstacle at the moment," the U.N. commissioners say, urging Abiy Ahmed's government to "grant us corridors or whatever they call it to provide assistance."

## Oli submits separate document, rejects rival Prachanda's allegations in meeting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KATHMANDU, 28 NOVEMBER

**Chinese defence minister to visit Nepal on Sunday:** Chinese defence minister Gen. Wei Fenghe will visit Nepal on Sunday and meet the country's top leadership, the foreign ministry here announced on Saturday. During his one-day working visit, Wei, also a State Councillor, will pay a courtesy call on President Bidhya Devi Bhandari and Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli. "The Chinese Defence Minister will also meet Chief of Army Staff General of Nepal Army Purna Chandra Thapa. Wei will return Beijing the same evening wrapping up his brief visit," the ministry said in a statement.

The ministry's announcement comes a day after India's Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla wrapped up his maiden two-day visit to Nepal. Wei's visit also comes amidst an ongoing political rift in the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) that resurfaced following a meeting between Oli and his rival Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'. China's political profile in Nepal has been on the rise in the recent years with billions of dollars of investments under Beijing's multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), including the building of the Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network.

against him by Prachanda while submitting the separate report, according to a senior Standing Committee member of the party.

Oli, in his response, has accused chairman 'Prachanda' of non-cooperation in handling the party's affairs, as well as steering the government. According to party Spokesperson Narayan Kaji Shrestha, the meeting took place at the Prime Minister's official residence in Baluwatar. The next meeting has been

scheduled for December 1 at the party headquarters in Dhumbarahi on the outskirts of Kathmandu.

The tussle between the two warring factions of the ruling CPN surfaced after the dissident group leaders, including 'Prachanda' and senior leader of the party Madhav Kumar Nepal, demanded Oli's resignation from both as the party's chairman and as Nepal's prime minister after he accused them of conspiring against him to topple his

government.

In June, Oli claimed that efforts were being made to oust him after his government redrew the country's political map by incorporating three strategically key Indian territories.

India termed as "untenable" the "artificial enlargement" of the territorial claims by Nepal after its Parliament unanimously approved the new political map of the country featuring Lipulekh, Kalapani, and Limpiyadhura areas which India maintains belong to it.

The Nepal Communist Party, formed after the merger between Oli-led CPN-UML and Prachanda-led CPN (Maoist Centre) in May 2018, is divided along the two factions led by Oli and Prachanda.

The Prachanda faction enjoys majority in the nine-member Secretariat, the highest decision-making body of the party. After several rounds of negotiations, the Standing Committee of the party on September 11 endorsed a 15-point decision drafted by a six-member task force which was formed to resolve the long-standing dispute between the two factions.

## Lanka willing to meet its debt obligations, says govt after Fitch downgrades country's ratings

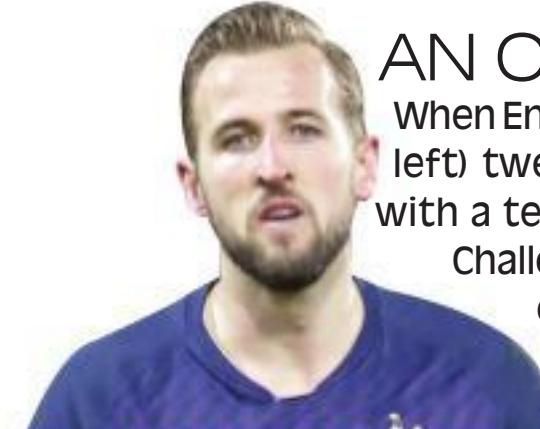
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
COLOMBO, 28 NOVEMBER

the budget was lacking a credible fiscal consolidation strategy and provides only limited details on the potential revenue impact of some of the measures announced, raising uncertainty about the government's planned reduction in government debt and budget deficit.

The Government has repeatedly expressed its ability and willingness to meet all its debt obligations falling due in the period ahead," the finance ministry said in a statement.

The government wishes to reaffirm to foreign investors that have put faith in Sri Lanka continuously over the past

presented in the 2021 Budget regarding deficit financing in



## AN OPENING?

When England's football captain Harry Kane (in photo, left) tweeted a video of his batting skills dealing with a tennis ball and tagged Virat Kohli and Royal Challengers Bangalore, the India skipper responded: "Haha good skills mate. Maybe we can get you in as a counter-attacking batsman."

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

## THUMBNAILS

**Bilardo unaware:** Carlos Bilardo, coach of Argentina's 1986 World Cup-winning team now in poor health, was still unaware on Thursday of the death of Maradona because of his family's wish not to upset him. "I cannot tell him Diego is dead," Carlos' brother Jorge said.

**Trio dismissed:** Three funeral home workers were fired after they posed for photos alongside the coffin of Maradona just before his funeral. Claudio Fernández told Radio Diez he had lost his job at the funeral home, along with son Ismael and Diego Molina.

**Legal legacy:** Diego Maradona's tormented private life, with its tangled relationships and paternity suits, suggests distributing his inheritance will be a complex task for lawyers bracing for claims from a slew of children - those he recognised and those he did not.

**In doubt:** Pakistan's tour of New Zealand for three Twenty20 Internationals and two Test matches is in doubt with another member of the team testing positive for Covid-19, taking the number of affected players to seven. They have been unable to train.

**OZ Open:** Tennis Australia has been granted permission by the Victoria state government to allow players to train during their 14-day quarantine ahead of the Australian Open. Organisers have been in lengthy discussions with authorities over Covid-19 protocols.

**2-0 win:** Late goals by Callum Wilson and Joelinton earned Newcastle United a 2-0 win at Crystal Palace on Friday as they got back to winning ways after consecutive Premier League defeats. Initially, it looked as though the points would be shared on the chilly night.

**Pogba injured:** Paul Pogba is set to miss his third consecutive Manchester United game with an ankle injury. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer confirmed Pogba was unlikely to be on Sunday's trip to Southampton, having not trained at Carrington on Friday morning.

**Test events:** Tokyo Olympics test events will resume in March and a decision on fan attendance will come in the spring, an official said as preparations continued for the postponed Games despite coronavirus fears. The comments were from a senior official.

**Boxing meeting:** The Boxing Federation of India has said its annual general meeting and elections will be held in Gurugram on 18 December. Jay Kowli, BFI secretary, was said to have sent out a notification on this to all units on Friday, setting the process in motion.

**Formula One:** Ferrari will express their support of a freeze on Formula One engine regulations beginning in 2022, team principal Mattia Binotto has said. Such a move would enable Red Bull to use their Honda power units even after the manufacturer leaves F1.



**Bahrain F1 practice:** Max Verstappen beat Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton's leading time to go fastest in the final practice for the Bahrain Grand Prix ahead of qualifying later Saturday. The Red Bull driver was .26 ahead of Hamilton and .37 ahead of Hamilton's Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas.

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## AN OPENING?

When England's football captain Harry Kane (in photo, left) tweeted a video of his batting skills dealing with a tennis ball and tagged Virat Kohli and Royal Challengers Bangalore, the India skipper responded: "Haha good skills mate. Maybe we can get you in as a counter-attacking batsman."

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

## THUMBNAILS

**PULAKESH MUKHOPADHYAY**

**I**t is quite amusing that those who somewhat argumentatively rank India-Pakistan Tests above the Ashes - even if we have not seen one in a long while - do not seem equally enthusiastic about our team's confrontations with Australia in the conventional format. Many of them, truth to tell, affect indifference. One reason for this reluctance may have had something to do with the fact that, until Virat Kohli and his peers pulled it off the last time around, India had not won a Test series

Down Under.

There had been serialized contests with Indian purple patches but an eventual triumph was elusive. The increasing frequency of India-Australia matches, in either country, serve to lessen our players' unfamiliarity with the conditions there, though, and our bowling got better in terms of its pace-spin balance. Other, easily imaginable factors, like drop-in wickets, helped too. When the inevitable happened, it quite aptly came to be described as historic.

lighted in this land, have been characteristically dismissive of the visitors' chances, though the fact that a lot of the comments have been made to Indian media entities may occasionally have induced moderation in the celebrities' got hold of this. Also, certain Australian advantages seem quite obvious. They are at home and that is always a big thing.

They now have both the batsmen they could have done with in the series they lost. When captain Virat Kohli, allowed paternity leave, comes home after the first Test, Australia, regardless of the result of the first Test, will feel addi-

tionally bucked up. But, in spite of it all, India will know that what they already have done once can be repeated.

They have played no tune-up games but by the time the Adelaide Test is gone into, they will have acclimated well enough, though changing formats will call for adjustments, given that the white-ball matches precede the longer-format ones. India will not really be quaking in their boots, for they know they have the better bowling attack. If the batsmen, a protected, even coddled, lot at home, stand up to Australia's pace and bounce, the competition should be keen.

## Test series battles Down Under could be grim

## SHORT POINT

Just how much Australia smacked from the affront could be surmised from the way they lamented the absence from the series of Steve Smith and David Warner, then banned for ball-tampering in South Africa. And now that cricket awaits another India-Australia Test series, with the southern Asians fetching up there, hardly a day passes without an Australian stalwart of yesteryear combatively claiming an area of supposed advantage for the hosts. Some of the observations, duly high-

## With no Plan B in place, India need their 'A' game to save series

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SYDNEY, 28 NOVEMBER

**I**ndia's battered bowling unit will have little time to regroup and limited resources at its disposal in a desperate bid to perform a redemption act and save the ODI series against a turbo-charged Australia in the second game here on Sunday.

It wasn't just about the margin of defeat -- by 66 runs -- but the manner in which the home team exposed India's vacant cupboard of all-rounders that will give Virat Kohli and Ravi Shastri numerous points to ponder.

Hardik Pandya's 76-ball-90 was at best a good innings but just like the Champions Trophy final in 2017, the sparkling knock was never going to help India win the contest.

Adding insult to injury the was Pandya's frank admission that he is not bowling anything soon and even if he rolls his arm over, it is likely to be in 20-over World Cups. So with no back-up all-rounders or a plan B in place, India will have to execute their plan A perfectly.

That leaves Kohli with bowlers who can't bat and a top-order where none can bowl. Kohli did bowl an over or two but that is history as far as the skipper is concerned. With Australia's top three



-- captain Aaron Finch, David Warner and Steve Smith -- hitting the straps right away, Jasprit Bumrah and company will have no option but to pick up the pieces and give a better account of themselves on a strip that promises to be a belter.

It is highly unlikely that India's combination will change unless both Yuzvendra Chahal and Navdeep Saini are declared unfit.

The duo collectively conceded 172 runs in 20 overs between them and the wiry wrist-spinner did leave the field after sustaining an on-field injury just after the completion of his spell.

Saini, on the other hand, has back spasms and Thangarasu Natarajan has been inducted in the 50-over squad as a cover. In case they are ruled out, Shardul Thakur, with decent batting abilities could replace Saini and Kuldeep Yadav's inclusion will be a forced change.

For Australia, it is possible that highly-rated all-rounder Cameron Green will be rewarded with an ODI cap as Marcus Stoinis picked up a side strain during the first game.

Both skipper Finch and Smith hinted that Green is in line for an ODI debut.

While a five-bowler theory is certainly hurting India,

some of the shot selections at the top of the order left a lot to be desired.

Especially Shreyas Iyer, whose dismissal was an embarrassing sight as he fended awkwardly to a well-directed bouncer from Josh Hazlewood.

For Mayank Agarwal too, extra bounce became his undoing but he is too good a player to fail consistently.

Skipper Kohli, the man who is revered by the Australian team, media and public at large, would love to play a signature ODI knock, glimpses of which were on display during his 21 in the first ODI.

"From the batting point of view, we had a chat briefly

after the game - all of us committed to playing positively and that's why you saw everyone go out there and play with intent," Kohli had said after the match.

The lack of a sixth bowling option will put tremendous pressure on Umran, whose erstwhile ODI form has deserted him since he came back from his stress injury.

While he was brilliant in the IPL, just like the New Zealand series in February, the Gujarat slinger looked pedestrian at best at the start of the summer.

An equaliser on Sunday will be easier said than done.

**SCUDS:**

India: Virat Kohli (captain), Shikhar Dhawan, Shubman Gill, KL Rahul (vice-captain & wicket-keeper), Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Hardik Pandya, Mayank Agarwal, Ravindra Jadeja, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohd. Shami, Navdeep Saini, Shardul Thakur, T Natarajan.

Australia: Aaron Finch (captain), David Warner, Steve Smith, Marnus Labuschagne, Glenn Maxwell, Marcus Stoinis, Alex Carey (wk), Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Adam Zampa, Josh Hazlewood, Sean Abbott, Ashton Agar, Cameron Green, Moises Henriques, Andrew Tye, Daniel Sams, Matthew Wade.

Match Starts: 9:10 am.

ously, Finch (captain Aaron Finch) played very well, Davey (David Warner) played very well, set the platform, enabled guys (Marnus Labuschagne) to play with freedom.

Steve Smith spent extra time in the nets in quarantine and reckons he has got a good handle on his peak technique in time to face India. In Australia's victory yesterday in the first One-Day International here, he made a smash-hitting start.

The 31-year-old said that he had had the luxury to build on a good start and picked his bowlers on the day.

"I was not thinking about scoring. It was just -- see ball, hit ball. Obviously, the foundation had been set. I could be quite aggressive. Picked my bowlers, where I could hit them, played some good shots -- the areas to my strengths. It was nice to hit a few in the middle, spend some time out there and hopefully it helps me in good stead for the rest of the summer," Smith said, and added that the team had got all bases covered.

In September, Australia won a one-day series in England 2-1 without Smith.

"The past few days I have found my hands, which I am extremely excited about," Smith told an earlier, online video conference. "It's taken me about three and a half or four months to do it ... a lot longer than usual."

## Smith comes to grips with style for India series

AGENCIES

SYDNEY, 28 NOVEMBER

Steve Smith spent extra time in the nets in quarantine and reckons he has got a good handle on his peak technique in time to face India. In Australia's victory yesterday in the first One-Day International here, he made a smash-hitting start.

The former Australia test cricket captain had a disappointing run in the Twenty20 format of the Indian Premier League. An enforced break has been a good remedy.

"There wasn't a whole lot of pressure. The other times I have batted with the team being under pressure, I had to play an almost anchor's role to help us get a total. Today was different from my normal strike rate, the balls were hit differently from the middle of the bat. I felt good out there. Hopefully, I can keep taking that forward and keep contributing to wins like tonight," Smith told reporters after the match.

The Australia batsman said that they had not discussed any score as a target while batting.

"We actually didn't really talk about scores. We actually talked just about playing the game, taking them on. Obviously, it was a good start.

Match Starts: 9:10 am.

## Upbeat Chennaiyin FC take on Kerala Blasters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BAMBOOLIM (GOA), 28 NOVEMBER

Two-time champions Chennaiyin FC will eye a second straight win when they take on Kerala Blasters FC in an Indian Super League match here on Sunday.

The Csaba Laszlo-coached CFC rode on goals from Anirudh Thapa and Isma to beat Jamshedpur FC and begin their campaign on a winning note.

The Chennai-based side will be keen to keep the momentum going while the Blasters will look to notch up their first win.

Thapa was the star of the Chennaiyin side in the first match and the coach would look up to him once again to provide the thrust upfront. CFC played an attacking game in that match

and it is to be seen if they continue with a similar strategy.

The CFC midfield also functioned well to thwart Jamshedpur's attacks and will again hold the key to success against the Blasters.

Laszlo would, however, be aware that Kerala Blasters will be eager to open their account after letting go to the opportunity against North East United FC despite seizing the early advantage.

The CFC coach has said that his team would play high-intensity football this season and going by the way the two-time champions started, the Men in Blue will look to carry on in the same vein.

He has said he expected more from Lallianzuza Chhangte who created plenty of chances in front of goal but failed to convert them.

While Odisha FC were beaten

on 0-1 by Hyderabad FC in their tournament opener on November 23 at Bamboolim, Owren Coyle's Jamshedpur FC lost 1-2 against Chennaiyin FC a day later here.

And come Sunday, both the sides would be desperate to log their first three points of the season.

Both Odisha FC and Jamshedpur FC had targeted fresh beginnings in the ISL season 7 with a new coaching team and new recruits.

Having suffered defeats, both the teams will know the importance of stopping the run before it turns into an uncontrollable downward spiral.

Odisha will be concerned that they are yet to solve their defensive issues that plagued them last season, after looking shaky at the back against Hyderabad.

## Late penalty leaves Liverpool with draw at Brighton

AGENCIES

BRIGHTON, 28 NOVEMBER

A stoppage time penalty from Pascal Gross left Liverpool frustrated as they were forced to settle for a 1-1 draw at Brighton on Saturday after a Diogo Jota goal looked to have secured a win for Juergen Klopp's side.

Gross drilled home his spot kick after a pitchside monitor review saw Andy Robertson punished for kicking the foot of Danny Welbeck. Liverpool had earlier seen two goals ruled out by VAR.

The defending champions still moved a point clear at the top of the table with 21 points from 10 games while Tottenham, who play at Chelsea on Sunday, have 20 points from nine.

Aaron Connolly wasted a great chance to put Brighton

ahead in the 10th minute when he was put through clear on goal by Neal Maupay but with only Alisson Becker to beat he placed his shot wide.

The home side had an even better opportunity 10 minutes later when Liverpool right-

back Nico Williams brought down Connolly in the box, but Maupay put his penalty kick well wide.

Having had those two let-offs, Liverpool thought they had taken the lead when Firmino fed Salah, who burst goal-



with the short ball on a slow wicket.

Quinton de Kock (30 from 23 balls) and Rassie van der Dussen (37 from 28 balls) also provided useful runs for the home side. England were in early trouble in their reply, losing Jason Roy (0) second ball to George Linde as South Africa took pace off the ball at the start of the innings.

When Jos Buttler (7) and

## SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA INNINGS		ENGLAND INNINGS	





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