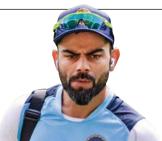
# THE ASIAN AGE

**NEW DELHI WEDNESDAY 23 DECEMBER 2020** 



NATION 4

TMC is a company now, don't need MLA ticket to defeat it, says Adhikari



SPORT 8

After pep talk with team, expectant father Kohli leaves Australia for India

**DELHI AGE** 11

Sussanne Khan, Suresh Raina among 34 held in Mumbai police's bar raid



Vol. 27 No. 307 | 16 pages | ₹5.00

Airport surveillance intensified, SOPs issued on new virus strain

8 coming from

UK found +ve,

#### www.asianage.com

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

New Zealand's captain Kane Williamson holds the T20 series trophy at the end of the third match with Pakistan at McLean Park in Napier on

#### 'Prachanda' removes **PM Oli as Nepal's** ruling party chairman

Kathmandu: The ruling Nepal Communist Party's Central Committee faction led by Executive Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" on Tuesday removed Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli from the post of chairman and decided to take disciplinary action against him, virtually splitting the party more than two years after its formation. The Central Committee unanimously nominated senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal as the party's second chairman in place of Mr Oli. — PTI

#### **Sharif likely to head Pak mission in Delhi**

New Delhi: The Pakistan government has moved for an agreemo for the appointment of Mr Salman Sharif as the new Chargé d'affaires (CDA) for its high commission in New Delhi. Mr Sharif is currently posted as coun-Pakistan embassy in Washington. Full report on Page 4

#### Kerala gov says no to

session on farm laws

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala governor Arif Mohammed Khan declined approval for a special Assembly sessionplanned on Wednesday by the Left front government to discuss and pass a resolution against the Centre's new farm laws, against which farmers have been protesting near Delhi. - PTI

#### COUNTERPOINT



Double bonanza... you will get party ticket and Cabinet berth if you bring 2 MLAs along with you!

#### MEATHER



Max: 22°C Min: 7°C **RH:** 61% Rain: Nil

Forecast: Sunny

#### **ASTROGUIDE**

Sarvari: Dakshinayana Tithi: Margasira Shuddha Navami till 8.40 pm Star: Revati till 4.32 am **Varjyam:** 3.05 pm to 4.52 pm **Durmuhurtam:** 11.53 am to 12.36 noon

Rahukalam: Noon to 1.30 pm

SUNSET TODAY 5.30 PM **SUNRISE TOMORROW 7.10 AM MOONRISE TOMORROW 1.16 PM MOONSET TODAY 12.58 AM** 

## **Put politics aside for development: PM**

'Ideological differences should take a back seat, no religious bias in schemes for poor'

AGE CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that for the sake of development, ideological differences should take a back seat and these should not be seen through a political

Addressing the Aligarh Muslim University's centenary celebrations via video conferencing, Mr Modi said that the nation was on a path today where everyone, irrespective of

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, DEC. 22

The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration

(PAGD), a conglomerate of J&K's mainstream regional Opposition par-ties and their allies from

the national Left parties,

is poised to win big in the

Union territory's first-ever District Develop-ment Council (DDC) elec-

However, its arch-rival, the BJP, has also per-

formed well, mainly in

the Jammu region. What is also spectacular for the

saffron party is that it has

won an election for the

first time from any seat

in the predominantly Muslim Kashmir Valley.

The PAGD led by former

chief minister Farooq Abdullah won 70 of the

177 seats the results of

which were declared till

this report was filed and

is leading in over 40 seats.

A total of 48 seats have

gone to the BJP, while its

candidates have a com-

fortable lead over their

The Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party

rivals in over 30 seats.

■ Major gains made by BJP too

**Gupkar alliance** 

set to win J&K's

first DDC polls

their constitutional rights and their future, and where no community was left behind. The government's schemes for the poor were reaching all sections of the people "without any religious bias", he claimed.
"Whatever religion we are born in, it is important to see how to blend

aspirations with national goals. There can be ideological divides in society but when it comes to the nation's development, everything else is secondary. When it comes

Kashmir Apni Party

circles as the BJP's

seven seats and the

Congress 14 seats

tacit ally, has bagged

(JKAP), known in local

political circles as the

bagged seven seats and

the Congress 14 seats. One seat has gone in favour of the National Panthers

Party. The Independents

ies of the BJP — and others too have made a mark by winning as many 38

Former chief minister

Omar Abdullah termed

the results an eye-opener

for the BJP and its "proxy

political party" (an obvious reference to JKAP),

and said the people had

move to strip J&K of its

special status and split-ting it up into two Union

territories in August last

year. Earlier, in a tweet,

he also said: "The trends

that have emerged in the

DDC polls in J&K are Turn to Page 4

seats so far.

- some known to be prox-

known in local political

question of ideological differlogical for

me to say this here because AMU produced many freedom fighters they had their ideological differences but they set that aside for freedom. Like freedom united them, we have to work on a common ground for 'Naya Bharat'," he said.

The PM said that "when

our thoughts are focused on a new India foremost, then such elements will have diminished space. Politics and society can wait, but the country's development cannot wait. In the last century, a lot of time has been lost over differences. There is no more time to lose"

Mr Modi also referred to the law banning triple talaq. "There was a time when the dropout rate of our Muslim daughters was over 70 per cent. This was a big impediment to development

Muslims. For 70 years, over 70 per cent of Muslim daughters were forced to drop out. The government got toilets made in schools. The Muslim girls' dropout rate is now reduced to 30 per cent," he

The AMU, which was known as the Muhamma-College initially, was renamed Aligarh Muslim University on December 1, 1920. However, it was formally inaugurated as a university on December 17 that year.

Anglo-Oriental

These passengers had arrived on different flights from London in Delhi (5), Kolkata (2) and Chennai (1), and have been sent for institutional quarantine. The Central health agencies are close-ly monitoring their health and their samples have been picked up for genome sequencing to see if they are infected with the new mutated virus detected in the United Kingdom. Several states have quarantined all those with recent travel history to the UK and collected their swabs for test-India has intensified its

**VINEETA PANDEY** 

Eight passengers were found to be Covid-19 positive upon their arrival

from Britain in late

Monday night flights in

different Indian cities.

airport surveillance in view of the new, fastspreading mutated strain of the Sars-CoV-2 (novel coronavirus) detected in the United Kingdom. The Centre on Tuesday also issued a Standard Operating Procedure for Epidemiological Surveillance and Response in the context of a new SARS-CoV-2 virus variant detected in

in quarantine

**COVID WATCH** 

1,00,75,116 **CASES ACROSS NATION** 

the UK. The new SOPs say that all positive cases of incoming passengers have to be sent for genome sequencing, and if the report of the sequencing is consistent with the current SARS-CoV-2 virus genome circulating in the country, the ongoing treatment protocol including home isolation, treatment at facility level as per case severity may be followed. However, if the genomic sequencing indicates the presence of a new variant of SARS-CoV-2 then the patient will continue to remain in a separate iso-lation unit. "While necessary treatment as per the existing protocol will be given, the patient shall be tested on the 14th day, after having tested positive in the initial test. In case the sample is found positive on the 14th day, further samples may be taken until his two consecutive samples taken 24 hours apart are tested negative," the SOP said.

Turn to Page 4



Farmers block the national highway at the Delhi-UP Ghazipur border in Ghaziabad on Tuesday during their ongoing agitation against the Centre's new farm laws.

■ Decision on talks today ■ Black flags shown to Haryana CM

## Farmers ask UK MPs to stop Boris' trip to India for R-Day

**SANJAY KAW** 

The farmers' leaders protesting against the Centre's three agricul-ture-related laws have decided to write to British political leaders and MPs to ask them to stop Prime Minister Boris Johnson — who has been invited to be the chief guest at next month's Republic Day celebrations — from travelling to India till their demands are met.

is scheduled to visit India writing to British MPs asking them to stop him from visiting India till the time the farmers' demands are not met by the Indian government," one of the farmers' leaders, Kulwant Singh Sandhu, said.

Mr Johnson has accepted India's invitation to be the chief guest. He will become the second British PM at the event,

Mr Johnson has invited India to join the G-7 summit in Britain next year. The agitating farmers have so far given a sense

that they will not accept anything other than a complete rollback of the three laws. The farmers' leaders on Tuesday decid ed to take a call on the Centre's letter inviting them for another round of talks after a meeting on

Wednesday.

Turn to Page 4

#### Japan backs India against China over LAC standoff

**PAWAN BALI** NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

In a message to China, India and Japan on Tuesday strongly opposed any attempts to unilaterally change the status quo in the region by coercion or any activities that escatensions. Defence minister Rajnath Singh had a telephonic conversation with his Japanese

counterpart Nobuo Kishi and discussed issues related to bilateral defence and security cooperation.

This is seen as a strong backing of India's position that China should restore status quo at the LAC in Ladakh where both armies are involved in a military stand-off from last eight months.

■ More on Page 3

**US Congress** 

\$900bn Covid

stimulus deal

**Washington, Dec. 22:** The US Congress passed a \$900 billion

pandemic relief package that would finally deliver long-sought cash to businesses

and individuals and resources to vaccinate

a nation confronting a

**finalises** 

#### **Shah will visit Bengal again** Jan. 12, induct more TMC men

YOJNA GUSAI NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

After his recent visit to poll-bound West Bengal when former Trinamul Congress heavyweight Suvendhu Adhikari along with over a dozen ruling party MLAs joined the BJP, Union home minister Amit Shah is likely to visit the state again on January 12, which is Swami Vivekananda's

anniversary.
Some more Trinamul leaders are likely to be inducted into the BJP

Mr Shah is expected to address a public meeting and a "yuva rally" in Howrah during his twoday visit, when he will also deliberate on poll strategies with local

Later, Mr Shah is likely to visit the state again on January 23, when the state celebrates iconic INA hero Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's birth-

day. Mr Shah, who exudes confidence about the BJP's victory in the April-May Assembly elections, plans to spend almost a week there every month.
February.

More on Page 4

### 'Bunker hospitals' planned along India-China border

**RAJNISH SHARMA** NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

The security agencies are constructing under-ground state-of-the-art "bunker hospitals" with operation theatres, weather-proof dormitories and storage for arms, ammunition and other equipment along 3,500-km India-China border, which will be "explosion-proof" and harder to detect by enemy surveillance, sources said. So far, bunkers were used at other borders — Pakistan and Bangladesh — for surveillance purposes at forward locations.

The location of these bunkers is a closely guarded secret, so that they can't be targeted

The project's implementation is being monitored at the highest levsupervising it.

Work on the security personally supervising it.

started days after the Galwan incident in June when 20 Indian soldiers were killed by Chinese PLA troops.

More on Page 3



US vice-president-elect Kamala Harris campaigns for Democratic US Senate challengers in Columbus, Georgia, on Monday.

## Trump gives top US honour to Modi, Abe, Oz PM

KUMARASWAMI

Sending a strong signal to China, US President Don-ald Trump on Tuesday conferred the "Legion of Merit", America's highest military decoration, on three leaders of the "Quad" countries, includ-ing Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The other two were Australian PM

Scott Morrison and Japan's former PM Shinzo

Abe. Mr Modi was con-

ferred the award for his

"steadfast leadership and

vision for India's emergence as a global power, and exemplary contribution made by him for the advancement of the India-US strategic partnership and promoting global peace and prosperity".

The award was received on the PM's behalf by India's ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu. Earlier, in September, it had been conferred on the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Prior to that, the honour was last conferred nearly decades ago, in 1991. This comes at a time **PM MODI** was conferred the award for

his 'steadfast leadership and vision for India's emergence as a global power, and exemplary contribution made by him for the advancement of the India-US strategic partnership'

when President Trump has just about a month left in office, after which he will be succeeded by President-elect Joe Biden. It is a prestigious decora-tion bestowed by the President, mostly to heads of state or government. In a statement Tuesday,

the MEA said: "The President of the United States of America conferred the highest decoration, the Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander, to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 21 December 2020. The award is in recognition of the Prime Minister's steadfast leadership and vision for India's emergence as a global power, and exemplary contribu-tion made by him for the advancement of the India-

The Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander, is a "domed five-pointed American white star plaque of heraldic form bordered in purplish-red enamel 215/16 inches circumscribing diameter with 13 white stars on a blue field emerging from a circle of clouds; backing the star, a laurel wreath with pierced, crossed arrows pointing outward between each arm of the star and the wreath". The reverse is engraved with the words "United States of America".

US strategic partnership.

#### frightening surge in Covid-19 cases and deaths. Legislators tacked on a \$1.4 trillion

#### catchall spending bill and thousands of pages of other end-ofsession business in a massive bundle of bipartisan legislation as Capitol Hill prepared to close the books on the year. The bill approved

Monday night went to President Donald Trump for his signature, which was expected in the coming days.

The relief package, unveiled Monday, sped through the

House and Senate in a matter of hours. The Senate cleared the massive package by a 92-6 vote after the House approved the package by another lopsided vote, 359-53.

#### SHORT TAKES

#### Teen dies after duo beat him with stick in road rage

**Noida:** A 15-year-old, class 8 student who doubled up as a vegetable vendor to help his family, was beaten to death by two men in a case of road rage in Noida, police officials said on Tuesday. The teenaged student was beaten up on Friday night after which he was hospitalised first in Noida and then in Delhi, where he died on Sunday, police said. The two accused, identified as Likhit Raghay and Ashish Singh. were arrested on Monday, Central Noida's Deputy Commissioner of Police Harish Chander said. An argument broke out between the accused duo and the boy after their motorcycle and his vegetable cart collided on a road, he said. The two sides had come to blows after which the boy was admitted to Yatharth Hospital here and later referred to Delhi for treatment. We subsequently got to know that the boy died at the hospital in Delhi, Chander said. The officer said an FIR was lodged in the case on Friday itself and the two accused have been arrested. After the body's death, new charges are being added to the FIR and further proceedings are being carried out, the DCP said. The FIR was lodged at the local Phase 2 police station under sections 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 323 (volun-

#### member of either community, the officials added. 40-year-old man arrested in ₹3cr

tarily causing hurt), 504

(intentional insult), among

Code, said officials. The duo has also been booked under

others of the Indian Penal

Section 3(2)5 of the

**Scheduled Tribes** 

Scheduled Castes and

(Prevention of Atrocities)

Act, 1989, which draws a

punishment of 10 years for an IPC offence against a

cheating case New Delhi: A 40-year-old man was arrested for allegedly cheating Religare Finvest Limited (RFL) to the tune of over ₹3crore, police said on Tuesday. The accused has been identified as Ashish Gupta, a resident of Rana Pratap Bagh, they said. One Mukesh Kumar from RFL alleged that Gupta availed two loans of ₹2.90 crore and ₹86 lakh on the basis of forged conveyance deed of mortgaged property · 76, Harsh Vihar, Pitampura and sold the same without intimating the lender, a senior police officer said. Gupta had to repay interest of ₹7 to 8 lakh per month on the loans availed from PNB and PSB to the tune of ₹12 crore. For this purpose, he availed loan from RFL hiding the facts that property was already mortgaged with Punjab and Sind Bank, C P. In order to cheat the NBFC, he later sold the property to Bhatia Estates, who cleared the loan of PSB. Accused defaulted the loan amount and ran away from Delhi, police said. A case was registered on April 5, 2014 at Rani Bagh police station and later, transferred to economic offence wing in 2020. "During investigation, it was found that Gupta took loans of Rs six crore each from Punjab and Sind Bank,

Connaught Place, against 76, Harsh Vihar, Delhi and from PNB, Shalimar Bagh, against 396, MIE, Bahadurgarh, Haryana respectively. He defaulted in both the loans," Joint Commissioner of Police

(EOW) O P Mishra said. The accused was arrested on Monday, he said.

#### **Journalist robbed at**

gunpoint in E. Delhi

New Delhi: A 30-year-old journalist of a news agency was allegedly robbed at gunpoint by three bikeborne men in east Delhi's Shakarpur area, police said on Tuesday. According to police, they received information regarding the incident on Tuesday around 12.30 am. Police rushed to the spot and found the victim. The victim said that three persons on a bike robbed his mobile phone and ID card at gunpoint and he also got injured. A case under relevant sections has been registered at Shakarpur police station, a senior police officer said. The investigation is underway and they are checking the nearby CCTV footage to identify the accused person, police added.

# **Ex-MLA held after** 2 years on the run

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

The Delhi police on Tuesday arrested former MLA Rambeer Shokeen, a close associate of gangster Neeraj Bawana. He had escaped from the Uttar Pradesh police custody in 2018 while being brought to Safdarjung hospital for treatment. The police said that he has been sent to judicial custody till January 4.

Shokeen, who was elected to the Delhi Legislative Assembly in 2013, was found using the clout of criminals of this syndicate for contesting MLA



efits. "He was also run-Rambeer ningShokeen syndicate

in Delhi-NCR along with Neeraj Bawana and other associates to create havoc by committing a series of sensational crimes including gruesome and inimical murder, extortion from some businessmen, obstruction of government servants to deter

offences under the Arms ambi-Act," said the police.

In August 2015, he was declared a proclaimed offender in a MCOCA (Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act) case. On November 27, 2016, he was arrested with an illegal 9-mm pistol and two live cartridges, the police said. On December 1, 2016, he

was arrested in the MCOCA case and on March 8, 2017, a charge sheet against him was filed. On September 26, 2018, he escaped from the custody of the Uttar Pradesh police them from discharge of Safdarjung hospital.

## Pollution deaths in India rose to 1.67 million in 2019: Lancet New Delhi, Dec. 22: Toxic

air killed more people in India in 2019 than in 2017, the Lancet said in a report shared by the government on Tuesday, with 1.67 million deaths accounting for 18 per cent of all fatalities.

India, whose cities top global pollution lists, faces a growing economic as well as human toll from bad air quality, which was linked to 1.24 million, or 12.5 per cent of total deaths in the previous such study for 2017.

The analysis found pollution led to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, respiratory infections, lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, dia-

THE ANALYSIS found pollution led to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, respiratory infections, lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, neonatal disorders and cataracts. Land-locked New Delhi, the world's most polluted capital whose winter skies are often obscured by its filthy air, recorded the highest per-capita economic hit.

and cataracts.

Land-locked New Delhi, the world's most polluted capital whose winter skies are often obscured by its filthy air, recorded the highest per-capita economic hit, the journal

The fatalities in 2019 led to a total loss of \$36.8 billion, or 1.36 per cent of India's gross domestic product (GDP), with Uttar Pradesh and Bihar experiencing the highest economic loss as a percentage of their GDP.

Although the death rate due to household air pollution fell 64.2 per cent from 1990 to 2019, that due to ambient particulate matter pollution more than doubled, the Lancet said. "The improvements in air quality across India during the COVID-19 lockdown period, and its upsurge again with

provide interesting pointers to the extent of air pollution reduction that is possible with reduced human activity," it added.

The government said in a statement that India would need to invest more in state-specific pol-lution control programmes if it were to meet its goal of becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2024, from around \$2.9

trillion now. India's three main cities, New Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai, were on the list of the world's 20 worst polluted cities, Swiss air quality technology company IQAir reported on Tuesday.

# BJP-ruled MCDs' mayors sit on protest outside AAP office

'Delhi govt not releasing ₹13,000cr dues to civic bodies willfully'

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

The Delhi BJP leaders including three mayors and municipal councillors of party ruled civic bodies on Tuesday staged a sit in protest near AAP office on DDU Marg demanding release of due funds for civic bodies from the Delhi govern-

Addressing the party councillors and leaders, Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said Arvind Kejriwal government has never fulfilled its "moral responsibility" towards the municipal corporations but "hampering" development work by holding back the due funds of ₹13,000 crore.

ADDRESSING THE party councillors and leaders, Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said Arvind Kejriwal government has never fulfilled its "moral responsibility" towards the municipal corporations but "hampering" development work by holding back the due funds of `13,000 crore. The AAP government has been alleging the BJP ruled municipal corporations of corruption and inefficiency

The AAP government has been alleging the BJP ruled municipal corporations of corruption and inefficiency with Chief Minister Mr Kejriwal saying in recent special session of Delhi Assembly that all due funds have been paid to them.

Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, north Delhi mayor Jai Prakash, South Delhi

mayor Anamika, East Delhi mayor Nirmal Jain and other BJP leaders also attended the day-long protest (Satyagrah).

North Delhi mayor, Mr Prakash said that Delhi Government is willfully not releasing the dues of ₹13,000 crore to make corporations financially cripple so that corporations can neither do any development work for the citizens nor can pay salaries to their employees on

"This is our constitutional right and we will take it. We will continue with this fight till the Delhi government releases the due funds of the corporation," Mr Prakash

Recently, the three may-ors and leaders of civic bodies staged a 13-day dharna outside the chief minister's residence but failed to evoke any response on their demand for payment of ₹13,000

The AAP has started a door to door campaign against the BJP alleging a ₹2,400 crore misappropriation at municipal corporations ruled by them.

## Delhi riots accused Ishrat Jahan alleges beating by inmates in jail dent of Mandoli jail

New Delhi, Dec. 22: Former Congress councillor Ishrat Jahan, arrested under the Unlawful stringent Activities (Prevention) Act in a Northeast Delhi riots case. alleged before a court here on Tuesday that she was beaten badly by inmates at

Mandoli jail and was continuously facing harassment in prison. sessions Additional judge Amitabh Rawat directed the jail authori-

ties to take immediate steps to ensure Jahan's security and see to it that she is not harassed fur-The court sought a detailed report from the

prison authorities on Wednesday on the steps that have been taken to address the issue and to also state if shifting her to another jail was necessary. When the judge asked the assistant superinten-

whether such an incident had taken place, she confirmed it and said necessary steps have been taken.

produce her before the court on Wednesday through video conferenc-While making the sub-

continuous harassment, both physical and verbal.

them. I have submitted a

The court also directed the prison authorities to

missions directly to the court, Jahan said it was the second incident in one month and she was under immense stress due to the

"This is the second incident in a month. On Tuesday, at around 6.30 am, they (inmates) beat me badly and abused me verbally. One of the inmates even slit her hand

so that I was punished on a false complaint. urge Fortunately, the jail offi-cials did not listen to bar.

written complaint as well. They keep calling me a terrorist. They also demanded money from me in the canteen," Jahan alleged.

She further alleged that she has been facing harassment in the jail for the past four months and requested to be shifted to Tihar prison but it was refused due to the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Advocate Pradeep

Teotia, appearing for Jahan, further alleged that previously also she was beaten up by her inmates, following which one of the inmates was shifted to another jail.

Advocate Misbah Bin Tariq, who was also present at the hearing, requested the court to take immediate action and view her situation with urgency as Jahan was a member of the advocates

#### JNU PhD scholar assaulted by boyfriend

**BHASKAR HARI SHARMA** 

A woman, who was a student Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), was brutally by her after she assaulted boyfriend found him with another female friend.

According to information, the victim is a resident of Northeast and on the basis of her complaint the police has lodged an FIR in this connection.

"She is a JNU scholar and has been living in the campus for several years. She became friends with one Liaquat Ali, who is also a JNU student. She told us that she was in a relationship with him and both frequently visited each other," said a source.

The victim said that she was suffering from acute pain and decided to visit him in his hostel room and get a painkiller.

'She was shocked to find another girl in his room. She inquired about the girl, which infuriated boyfriend. He told her to leave. Subsequently, he thrashed her," the

source said. The victim tried to run but the accused closed the door.

'The man, along with his new friend, punched the girl in her stomach. They hit her on her head. Liaquat's friend slapped The victim sustained some injuries and later went to AIIMS, where she was made to undergo a medical test," said the source.

The police said that it has recorded the statement of the victim and has lodged an FIR under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The police said that the accused has not been arrested as of now as it is a bailable

offence. probe is Further underway.



Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta, Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, state office-bearers along with all councillors stage a protest near AAP office in New Delhi on Tuesday.

#### Cold wave to continue for next 4 days: IMD

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

Cold wave conditions are predicted in parts of Delhi over the next four days as the minimum temperature is expected to drop to three to four degrees Celsius, the India Meteorological Department said on

Moderate to dense fog is also predicted during the period, it said. Safdarjung

Observatory, which pro-

for the city, recorded a minimum of 5.3 degrees Tuesday, theIMD said. The observatory had recorded a minimum of

3.4 degrees Celsius on Sunday, the lowest this season so far. The minimum tempera-

ture had increased slightly to 5.5 degrees Celsius on Monday under the influence of a fresh Western Disturbance (WD) affecting the upper reaches of the

AGE CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

vides representative data Himalayas.The maximum temperature settledat 23.5 degrees Celsius, two notches more than normal.

After the WD withdraws on Tuesday, the temperatures are expected to drop again, Mahesh Palawat, an expert at Skymet Weather, a private forecasting agency, said.

The WD led to light to moderate snowfall in the upper reaches of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh, he

#### Delhi records 939 Covid-19 cases, 1.14% positivity

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

Delhi recorded 939 fresh Covid-19 cases and 25 fatalities 'uesday, even as the pos itivity rate slipped to 1.14 per cent, authorities said. The infection tally in the city mounted to over 6.18 lakh and the death toll rose to 10,329, they said.

This is the second consecutive day when the daily cases count has remained below the 1,000mark. On Monday, 803 cases were reported, the lowest since August 17.

These 939 cases came out after the 82,386 tests conducted the previous day, including 39,843 RT-PCR tests and 42,543 rapid antigen tests, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department. On August 17, Delhi had recorded 787 cases. The active cases tally on

Tuesday stood at 8,735. The bulletin said that the total number of cases has climbed to 6,18,747.

#### **Passengers from UK being tested at Delhi airport: Jain** AGE CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

Amid mounting concern over a new strain of Covid-19 detected in the UK, the Delhi government on Tuesday said it will check the health condition of passengers, who have arrived here recently from the UK, by visiting their houses. All passengers arriving from the UK are now being tested for Covid-19 at Delhi airport, health minister Satyendar Jain

"The Delhi government is on alert in the wake of a mutated coronavirus strain detected in the UK. The situation is being closely monitored and mandatory tests are being conducted at the Delhi airport for all passengers arriving from that country," he said. Mr Jain said Delhi has

fought difficult battles with COVID-19 and all efforts will be made to ensure that the improvement made in the management of the pandemic is "not reversed". The Civil Aviation Ministry on Monday said all flights from the UK to

India and vice versa will remain suspended from Wednesday to December 31, in view of the emergence of a mutated variant of the coronavirus there. In the last two weeks, about 6000-7000 people have landed at Delhi airport, many of wnom would nave trav elled to other places like Punjab from thereon, Jain said.

"We will go house-to-house and do check-up of passengers to assess their condition, and also advice them to isolate themselves for some time," he said. Sources said passengers coming from the UK are being administered RT-PCR tests at the airport. Anyone testing negative but with symptoms will be kept in institutional isolation and those testing negative will also be asked to go into self-isolation for seven days, they

Jain has also appealed to those who have recently come from the UK to monitor their health and go for tests at the slightest of Covid-like symptoms, and inform the gov-

#### **'Home Dept. told** to withdraw FIRs against migrants'

New Delhi, Dec. 22: Delhi home minister Satyendar Jain said on Tuesday that instructions have been issued to the department to withdraw all FIRs and complaints lodged during the coronavirus-induced lockdown against

migrant workers. Cases were registered by the police for violations of prohibitory orders during the lockdown announced on March 24 by Prime Narendra Minister Modi.

"As per the directions of Hon'ble CM Arvind necessary instructions issued to Home department to withdraw all FIRs/complaints lodged during lockdown against labourers,' migrant

During the Covid-19 era, one of the health profes-

the

sionals amongst many others, who have come out shining, is Dr. Sunali Khanna. Her keen interest in public health addresses issues that need to be dealt with. In the wake of Covidorphanages. 19, Dr. Khanna feels public health infrastructure of rural areas should be focussed upon more, along with places where marginalised people live, old-age homes, homes for differently-abled and orphan-

Addressing a panel discussion of Covid-19 challenges and opportunities, Dr Khanna said while Covid-19 has been the most serious challenge of 2020, it should be converted into an opportunity. Infrastructure expansion, its optimal utilisation, and the functional challenges should focussed upon, urged Dr

DR SUNALI Khanna feels that in the wake of Covid-19, public health infrastructure of rural areas should be focussed upon more, along with places where marginalised people live, oldage homes, homes for differently-abled and

Khanna, vice president of Indian Academy of Oral Medicine Radiology. Khanna is youngest person to chair

the 12th Asian Congress of Oral & Maxillofacial Radiology as president in 2018 in Mumbai. Being a keen environmental health scientist and activist, who was awarded PhD by Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, Khanna's research highlights importance of environmental health issues in the public sphere. She is convener



Dr. Sunali Khanna

International Conference on Environmental Health Research held in 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018 and

The conferences attracted over 450 delegates and were aimed at development of environment health indicators to establish better links and improvement in the cumulative burden of environmental change and its impact on society. It also focused on development of approaches to integrating public concerns and precautionary principles into public policy on

surveys on tobacco related diseases and cessation practices. She has coauthored HIV/AIDS manual for health professionals in association with Mumbai District AIDS Control Society which is a big step towards developing community awareness particularly among doctors in interior and remote

As we see certain gaps in the health apparatus in the country, Dr. Khanna has been arguing that presenty it is the right time to fill those gaps so we are wellequipped in non-Covid times too. Apart from public health, she is an eminent educationist serving as a faculty member of the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences.

She teaches and also undertakes research in the areas of oral medicine, maxillofacial elements oral cancer

Turn Covid-19 into an opportunity: Khanna health. She has conducted Hospital Dental College, a institute

Mumbai During the earlier years, she won academic distinctions and was recognised the International College of Dentists. She has also contributed towards development of curriculum for under and post-graduate dental surgery courses. She has been instrumental in designing training modules and suggesting reforms in higher education especially the prevailing examination system. She is on the expert panel of University Grants

Commission. Dr Khanna became the first and only candidate to the (Diplomate of National Board Examination) in Medicine Radiology till now. Dr Khanna has worked extensively towards the healthcare of elderly and marginalised sections of

IN BRIEF

#### **PAK ARMY SHELLS MORTARS ALONG LOC IN POONCH**

Jammu, Dec. 22: Pakistani troops opened fire and shelled mortars at forward posts along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Tuesday, a spokesperson said.

There was no report of any damage on the Indian side, he said. "At about 09:30 hours today, Pakistan Army initiated unprovoked ceasefire viola tion by firing with small arms and intense shelling with mortars along LoC in Mankote sectors in Poonch district", the spokesperson said.

He said the Indian Army retaliated befittingly. On December 1, Pakistani troops restored to unprovoked ceasefire violation by shelling mortars at forward areas of

Rajouri sector along the LoC, killing a BSF sub-inspector. Two army jawans, Naik Prem Bahadur Khatri and rifleman Sukhbir Singh, were killed when Pakistan Army violated ceasefire in Sunderbani sector of Rajouri district on November 27.
On November 26, Subedar

Swatantra Singh was killed and a civilian injured in Pakistan shelling along the LoC in Kirni and Qasba sec-tors of Poonch district.

An army havildar was killed at Laam sector in Rajouri district on November 21, while 11 people, including five security personnel, were killed after multiple ceasefire violations by Pakistani troops along the LoC in north Kashmir on November 13. — PTI

TWO ARMY jawans, Naik Prem Bahadur Khatri and rifleman Sukhbir Singh, were killed when Pakistan Army violated ceasefire in Sunderbani sector of Rajouri district on November 27.

#### **VIT STUDENTS GET 7,403 JOB OFFERS DESPITE COVID-19**

AGE CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Though it is Coronavirus pandemic times, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) has emerged as the top educational institution in India getting 7,403 job offers at campus recruitments conducted by 382 companies. All campus recruitments at the institute's four locations have been conducted virtually and 4.503 students have received multiple offers.

IT majors Cognizant, Infosys, Wipro and TCS held their annual campus recruitments VIT's four campuses in Vellore, Chennai, Amaravati and Bhopal. Results of the recruitments were announced by Dr. G. Viswanathan, chancellor of VIT. Other IT service companies like Virtusa, Hexaware, CapGemini and Mindtree also recruited in big numbers from VIT.

TCS and Wipro, like earlier, have recruited students with high CTCs ranging over ₹6.5 lakh to ₹10 lakh per annum. Microsoft has recruited several students with a highest CTC

of ₹44 Lakhs per annum. Wipro and VIT hold Limca Book of Records for highest number of Dream offers (278 offers from 2020 batch). Wipro and VIT broke their own record by having 419 offers from the 2021 graduating batch. VIT has already entered into Limca Book of Records 10 times for highest number of placements. VIT started its campus placements with post graduate (PG) internship and placements in May 2020. 144 companies have already completed their remote hiring process and have selected 1,028 PG students from 2-year M. Tech, MCA and M. Sc courses.



A health worker guides passengers to a quarantine centre on their arrival from the United Kingdom at the Chennai International Airport on Tuesday. The Indian government has temporarily suspended all passengers flights from the UK in the

## Japan backs India against China over LAC standoff

PAWAN BALI NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

In a message to China, India and Japan on Tuesday strongly opposed any attempts to unilaterally change the status quo in the region by coercion or any activities that escalate tensions, during defence minister Rajnath Singh telephonic conversation with his Japanese counterpart Nobuo Kishi.

This is seen as a strong backing of India's position that China should restore status quo at the line of actual control (LAC) in Ladakh where both armies are involved in a military stand-off from last eight months.

In recent years there has been an increase in defence co-operation between India and Japan both of which are dealing with an aggressive China in the region. India and Japan are part of the Quad which Beijing sees as an anti-China alliance. Indian Japanese navies have been conducting exercise bilaterally and were also part of "Malabar Naval exer-cise" along with US and Australia.

During the conversation, Singh and Kishi shared their views on highlighting the impor-tance of a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law, said a statement by Japanese defence ministry.

The two ministers also exchanged views on regional situations, including the East China Sea and the South China Sea, and reaffirmed their continued close coopera-

"In this context, the ment issued by Japanese

## Underground hosp along China border

RAJNISH SHARMA NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

In a first and an unprecedented ramping up of security infrastructure development along the Indo-China border, security agencies are con-structing underground state-of-the-art bunker hospitals complete with operation theatres, weather proof dormitories and ries and storage for arms, ammunition and other equipments.

What is significant is that all these facilities will be in underground "explosion proof bunkers" that are being constructed all along 3,500 km long Indo-China border. Sources claim what makes this hugely strategic project even more unique is that these "bunker facilities" will not be easily traceable by enemy surveillance. So far bunkers are normally used on other borders like along with Pakistan and Bangladesh for merely surveillance duties at forward location. But the security infra-

ministers affirmed their intention to continue exchanging views in light of the current events occurring in the region and concurred in sending a clear message that they strongly oppose any attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by coercion or any activities that escalate tension," said the state-

kept as a closely guarded secret, specially the location of these bunkers, so that they cannot be targeted. Even the implementation of the entire project is being monitored at the highest levels in the

structure being developed along the China

border is going to be unique and different as

not only will it be extremely state-of-the-

art but also would be underground so that these "assets and the

security personnel using

them can be well protect

Considering the highly

strategic nature of the entire project it is being

ed from enemy forces.

officials from multiple security forces personally supervising it. weather bunkers will also promuch needed respite to the troops who have to face harsh and adverse weather conditions, with temperature

at times dropping to -30

degrees, in forward loca-

tions at high altitudes.

Government with senior

defence ministry. Singh and Kishi affirmed that they would continue to vigorously promote defense cooperation and exchanges to uphold and reinforce the and open Indo Pacific while maintaining close communication between respective defense authorities, said Japanese defence min-

New Delhi, Dec. 22: Union education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank" on Tuesday ruled out conducting board examinations for Classes 10 and 12 till February next year in view of Covid-19 situa-

He said a decision on when the exams will be conducted will be taken later after due consultations and assessment of the situation. "Keeping the current situation in mind. it has been decided that the board exams for classes 10 and 12 will not February 2021. A decision

taken later after assess ment of situation and more consultations,"

Pokhriyal Nishank said in an online interaction with teachers. The CBSE had earlier this month announced that board exams in 2021 will be conducted in written mode and not

Schools across the country were closed in March to contain the spread of the pandemic. They were partially reopened in

some states from October 15. However, a few states have decided to keep them closed in view of a spike in the number of

be postponed mid-way in March. They were later cancelled, and results announced on the basis of an alternative assessment scheme.

students 10 and questions ■ In UP, farmers heading to join protesters clash with cops

# Farmer unions defer till Wed. decision on govt's talks offer

Protesting farmer unions deferred a decision on the central government's offer for fresh talks to Wednesday, even as Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Tuesday expressed the hope that they will soon resume the dialogue to resolve the impasse over the new agri laws.

In Uttar Pradesh, a group of farmers who were heading to join the protesters clashed with police when they were stopped at Rampur-Moradabad toll

ylaza.

While a couple of farmer unions have been on a sitin on the Delhi-Noida border against the farm laws, a group of protesters, mainly residents of Jewar and Dadri in Greater Noida, came out on roads in sup-port of the laws and was stopped by police at Mahamaya Flyover.

Farmers camping at UP Gate on Delhi-Ghaziabad border on Tuesday blocked all 14 lanes of the National Highway 9 for eight hours



Farmers block the national highway at Delhi-UP Ghazipur border in Ghaziabad on Tuesday.

ly manhandled a journalist and photographer. In Kerala, the Opposition

Congress-led UDF took out a march to the Raj Bhavan to express solidarity with the protesting farmer unions while Governor Arif Mohammed Khan declined approval for a special session of the state Assembly on Wednesday proposed by the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front Government to discuss and pass a resolution against

from 9 am and also alleged- the three contentious central farm laws.

Addressing a press conference at Delhi's Singhu Border, farmer leader Sandhu Singh Kulwant said that 32 farmer unions from Punjab held a meeting on Tuesday and discussed the next course of action.

The farmer leader said that a meeting of farmer leaders from across India will be held on Wednesday where a decision on the government's talks offer will be taken.

#### **Cong to meet Prez with 2cr** signatures

New Delhi: The Congress on Tuesday President Ram Kovind's intervention for withdrawal of the three farm laws and said a memorandum signed by two crore farmers would be handed over to him on December 24 by a party delegation led by Rahul

The Congress has been supporting the farmers agitation and seeking the withdrawal of the Central farm legislations. A delegation of Opposition leaders, including Rahul, had met the President with the same demand a few days ago. AICC general-secretary K.C. Venugopal said the delegation of Congress leaders led by the former party chief will meet the President on Thursday.

#### Arhtiyas go on 4-day strike over I-T raids

**Chandigarh, Dec. 22:** Arhtiyas in Punjab on Tuesday started their four-day strike against income tax allegedly conducted to intimidate them for supporting the farmers' stir against the Centre's agriculture laws.

According Federation of Arhtiyas president Vijay Kalra, crop was neither sold nor purchased at grain markets in the state.

All arhtiyas went on a four-day strike. They kept their shops shut, said Ravinder Singh Cheema, president of the Punjab Arhtiya Association. Mr Cheema accused the Centre of taking revengeful action against commission agents for supporting the farmers' agitation.

Premises of six agents were raided by the I-T department recently. A total of 14 commission agents had received notices from tne department before the raids. We are not going to be scared with this action of the income tax department, said a commission agent in Bathinda. — PTI

S.N Equipment/ Tender Id o. Ref. No.

#### **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

This is notified for the information of passengers that Railways has decided to change the timings of Train No. 02413 Madgaon-Hazrat Nizamuddin Rajdhani Superfast Special (Bi-Weekly) & Train No. 02283 Ernakulam Jn.-Hazrat Nizamuddin Duranto Superfast Special (Weekly) at Vadodara Railway Station as under:-

Rajdhani Superfast Special (Bi-Weekly) at Vadodara Railway Station							
STATION	TRAIN No. 02413				With Effect From		
	Existing Timings		Revised Timings		00.04.0004		
	ARR.	DEP.	ARR.	DEP.	03.01.2021		
VADODARA JN.	23:42	00:02	00:01	00:06	(Sunday)		

Revised Timings of Train No. 02283 Ernakulam Jn.-Hazrat Nizamuddin **Duranto Superfast Special (Weekly) at Vadodara Railway Station** TRAIN No. 02283 With Effect From

**Existing Timings** STATION 22.12.2020 ARR. DEP. (Tuesday) VADODARA JN. 05:31 05:03 05:13 05:13 **Always Buy Train Tickets from Railway** 

Counters/Authorised Railway Travel Agents only NOTE: All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., must be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

Note:- Please always check and verify the revised train timings pertaining to your rail journeys well before commencement of journeys, either with Integrated Enquiry No. 139 or Indian Railways website https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in or NTES App or by approaching authorized person in the nearby reservation counters/railway stations.





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GOVERNMENT MEDICAL COLLEGE, SECTOR 32, CHANDIGARH E-TENDER NOTICE

## No board exams till Feb. next year: Edu minister



on the exam

schedule infections.

online.

The board exams had to

The education minister had a live interaction December answered about various concerns regarding the conduct of upcoming board exams.

Due date of Opening of tender 14.01.2021 receipt of EMD & Bid 13.01.2021 Double Distillation Plant 2020\_GMCH\_57066\_1 GMCH/PA-VIII-ET/20/Bio(91) Reagent kits for Elisa under Rate Contract for 03 Reagent kits for Elisa under Rate Contract for 0 years
2020\_GMCH\_57048\_1
GMCH/PA-VIII-ETI/20/Bio(42)
LC-MS/MS along with reagent kits and consuma
2020\_GMCH\_57379\_1
GMCH/PA-VIII-ETI/20/Bio(77)
Reagent Kits for Random Access Chemistry
Analyzer Rx-Imola Under Rate Contract for 03 y
2020\_GMCH\_57595\_1
GMCH/PA-VIII-ETI/20/Bio(109)
System for multiplexed Genomic and Proteomic
Analysis and regent Kits
2020\_GMCH\_57583\_1
GMCH/PA-VIII-ETI/20/Bio-92
Flashback Needle with stopper Transparent size Rate 73156/-13.01.2021 14.01.2021 13.01.2021 13.01.2021 14.01.2021 150000 Biochemistry 20000/-13.01.2021 14.01.2021 G 2020\_GMCH\_57591\_1 GMCH-PA-VIII-ET/20/Bio(20) Scrub Typhus IgM Elisa kit under Rate Contract fo 2020\_GMCH\_57591\_1
GMCH-PA-VIII-ET/20/Bio(20)
7. Scrub Typhus IgM Elisa kit under Rate Contract foi 03 years 2020\_GMCH\_57059\_1
GMCH/PA-VIII-ET/20/Micro(05)
8. Bioelectric Impedance Body Composition Analyzer 2020\_GMCH\_57456\_1
GMCH/PB-II-PA-VIET-GM-20/701
9. Phacoemulsification System 2020\_GMCH\_57067\_1
GMCH/PA-VIII-ET/20/3(97)
10. Echocardiography Machine 2020\_GMCH\_5708\_1
GMCH-PB-II-PA-VIII/20/Neo(5)
11. Bench Top Tube Sealer 2020\_GMCH\_57372\_1
GMCH-PB-II/PA-VI-ET-TM-20/1024
12. 300 License of End Point Security / Anti Virus with 03 years subscription 2020\_GMCH\_57372\_1
GMCH-PB-II/PA-VI-ET-17-20/2011
13. Polythene Bags of various sizes 2020\_GMCH\_57370\_1
GMCH-PB-II/PA-VI-ET-10/630
14. Inj. Midazolam 1mg/ml, 5ml vial 2020\_GMCH\_57362\_1
GMCH-PRO/Med-374/2020
15. Inj. Nor-Adrenaline 2mg/ml, 2ml amp 2020\_GMCH\_57362\_1
GMCH/PH-PRO/Med-274/2020
16. Surface Disinfectant-in Spray Form 250ml bottle (100gm contains ethanol 10gms, 2-Propanol 9 gms, 1-Propanol 6gms) 1. Propanol 6gms) 1. ORCH\_PRO/Med-174/2020
17. Inj. Heparin 25000IU, 5ml vial 2020\_GMCH\_57362\_1
GMCH/PH-PRO/Med-174/2020
18. Hydroxy Ethyl starch (130/6.4) 6% w/v, 500ml 2020\_GMCH\_57261\_1
GMCH/PH-PRO/Med-130/6.4/2020
19. Total Parental Nutrition (TPN) 2000ml (I/V) 2020\_GMCH\_57261\_1
GMCH/PH-PRO/Med(3)-464/2020
20. Inj. Potassium Chloride 0.15gm/ml, 10ml amp (I/V) 2020\_GMCH\_57861\_1
GMCH/PH-PRO/Med(2)-273/2020
20. Inj. Potassium Chloride 0.15gm/ml, 10ml amp (I/V) 2020\_GMCH\_57861\_1
GMCH/PH-PRO/Med(2)-188/2020 14.01.2021 120 kits 13.01.2021 24000/-14.01.2021 13.01.2021 13.01.2021 14.01.2021 14.01.2021 13.01.2021 25000 kg 14.01.2021 14.01.2021 39000 13.01.2021 12000 bottles 13.01.2021 14.01.2021 6000 vial 26210/-13.01.2021 14.01.2021 1200 vial 11424/-13.01.2021 14.01.2021 1050 packs 70495/-13.01.2021 14.01.2021 24000 amps 13.01.2021 14.01.2021

## Maoists force Odia family to flee home

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO** BHUBANESWAR, DEC. 22

A family of Totaguda village, a part of Swabhiman Anchal in Odisha's Malkangiri district on Tuesday left their home after the Maoists threatened them to go away from the village suspecting them to be police informers. According to reports, the Maoists suspected Manu Galeri as a police informer and asked him to leave the village along with his wife and daughter in a praja

court held on Monday. The extremists alleged that Manu is passing information to the police about their movement in the area. They also hold him respon-



Manu Galeri and his family

sible for the encounter by the security personnel in the area on November 26.

The Left-Wing Extremists (LWEs) threatened him of death punishment against disobeying their decision. Following the development Manu and his family took refuge in one of their relative's house at Kaimati on Monday night.

"The Maoists asked me about my role as a police informer. When I refuted their allegation, they didn't

no other option but to leave my home," said a crestfallen Manu. On Monday, the Maoists had given a day-long bandh call in Malkangiri protesting the recent police encounter at Alampakka area under 'Swabhiman Anchal' in the district in

pay any heed and threatened me of dire conse-

quences if I didn't leave the

village immediately. I had

On December 13, two Maoists including a woman cadre had been gunned down during an exchange of fire with the special operations group and district voluntary force personnel at Swabhiman Anchal.

which two red ultras were

Terms & Conditions:

Tender documents for the above items can be obtained from websites.

The Competent authority reserves all rights to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason.

Tender Document of GMCH, after duly signed & stamped, along with original brochure of the manufacturer and EMD, in the shape of FDR /DD /Bankers Cheque/bank Guarantee, (separate for each item), must be submitted in physical form, in the office of Procurement Branch, Room No. 228, Block — D, first Floor, GMCH, Sector 32, Chandigarh on or before the dates as noted against each item by 1400 hours on any working day. Tenders without submission of EMD and Tender Document in physical form shall be rejected straightway.

The tenders must be submitted online on or before the dates as noted against each item by 1400 hours. The bid guarantee and technical bid will be opened on due date at 1500 hours. No tender shall be accepted in physical form.

Opening of Price Bid to be intimated to all the qualified bidders separately.

The tenderer can approach the Computer Programmer-cum-Nodal Officer, e-tendering, GMCH-32, Chandigarh on any working day, in case any query/clarification regarding e-tendering process (Ph. No. 0172-2601023-27 Extn, 2112) or (Ph. No. 0172-2740641) of IT Dept., UT, Chandigarh.

The information regarding these tenders are also available at the following web sites:-http://gmch.gov.in http://etenders.chd.nic.in/nicgep/app

#### **DELAY IN FILING PLEAS: SC PULLS UP GOVT OFFICERS**

New Delhi, Dec. 22: The Supreme Court has said it is an "irony" that despite its repeated observations deprecating the practice of government authorities filing appeals before it belatedly to complete a "mere formality", no action has ever been taken against officers who sit on file and do

The apex court, which dismissed the plea filed by Deputy Conservator of Forests against the Bombay High Court's February last year order on grounds of delay and imposed a cost of ₹15,000 on the petitioner for "wastage of judicial time", observed that it has repeatedly deprecated such a practice.

"The irony is that despite observations, no action was ever taken against officers who sit on the file and do nothing," a bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul

"The matter is further aggravated in the present case and even the present petition is filed with a delay of 462 days and once again the excuse is of change of counsel. We have repeatedly deprecated such attempts of the state governments to approach this court only to complete a mere formality," said the bench, also comprising justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Hrishikesh Roy.

The top court noted in its order that it has dealt with the issue of government authorities approaching courts belatedly as if the statute of limitation does not exist for them. The special leave petition has been filed after a delay of 462

#### Gupkar alliance set to win

■ Continued from Page 1

very encouraging for the @JKPAGD. The BJP had made this election a prestige issue about Art 370 & J&K's special status. The people have now spoken & it's for those who believe in democracy to pay heed to these voices'

Among the PAGD winners is Waheed Ur Rehman Parra, a youth leader of its constituent People's Democratic Party (PDP), who was arrested by the National Investigation Agency on charges of helping separatist militants on November 25, a day after he filed his nomination papers from home district Pulwama. Mr Parra polled 1,323 votes. defeating his nearest BJP rival Sajad Ahmad Raina by a margin of 1,002 votes. PDP presi former CM and Mehbooba Mufti tweeted: "Couldn't be prouder of PDP's @parawahid who won his maiden election by a huge margin of votes. Despite being arrested on baseless charges right after filing his nomination people have shown their love & trust for Waheed. Hope justice prevails."

The BJP's victors from the Valley are Aijaz Hussain (Khonmoh-II seat in DDC Srinagar), Aijaz Ahmad Khan (Tulail seat in Bandipora district) and Minha Latief (Kakapora (Pulwama). After being declared winner, Mr Hussain told reporters outside the counting centre: "This is a win for the BJP. The propaganda has been bust as people have shown their faith in the Prime Minister and his policies. This is a message that nationalists are prospering in Kashmir."

However, among the BJP's prominent losers is its spokesman Altaf Thakur, who finished third in Dadsara segment of Pulwama DDC. Mr Thakur bagged 235 votes as against 246 polled by Independent Avtar Singh, whereas PAGD nominee Ali Muhammad Butt secured 243

Voting for 280 DDC seats — 14 in each of J&K's 20 districts took place in eight phases over days and ended on December 19. Nearly 4,200 candidates, including over 450 women, had joined the fray.

These are the first elections held in J&K after the abrogation of Article 370. PAGD was formed initially by seven mainstream parties to seek restoration of the erstwhile state's special status. However, the BJP termed its launch as a 'conspiracy" against the peo-

ple of J&K Omar Abdullah, after the PAGD's fabulous performance in the DDC elections, said it is an alliance that emerged out of the betrayal of the people of J&K on 5th Aug 2019. We have faced every obstacle -illegal detentions, agency threats & pressures, our candidates were locked up to stop them campaigning & from all this we are emerging victori-

# TMC works like private company, says Adhikari

Trinamul 'opportunist', took bjp help in early days, says BJP leader

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI** 

Calling the ruling Trinamul Congress a "private company", newly-inducted BJP leader Shubhendu Adhikari on Tuesday said that he would not need an "MLA ticket" to defeat\_chief\_minister Mamata Banerjee's party in the next year's Assembly election in West Bengal.

Mr Adhikari, while addressing his first public meeting at Purbasthali in East Burdwan after joining the saffron party last Saturday, claimed, "TMC is no more a political party. It has become a private company, which does not believe in upholding democratic principles.'

"When I spoke to Union home minister Amit Shah and senior leaders Dilip Ghosh and Kailash Vijayvargiya before joining the BJP, I set no condition

Sharif may

head Pak's

embassy in

New Delhi

The Pakistan government has moved for an

agreemo for the appoint-

ment of Mr Salman Sharif as the new Chargé d'affaires (CDA) for its High Commission in New Delhi. Mr Sharif

is currently posted as

counsellor political-1 at

Pakistan's embassy in the United States of America in Washington.

The post of CDA in

Pak HC has been lying

vacant ever since the last CDA Syed Hyder Shah left for

charge as Pakistan's

new ambassador to Nepal. Mr Aftab Hasan

Khan since then has been acting as the CDA

India and Pakistan have scaled down their diplomatic relations ever since India scrapped Article 370

from Jammu and Kashmir.

In a diplomatic tussle,

both sides have recalled

their high commission-

ers and cut down on the

number of diplomatic

India's new CDA in Islamabad will be

Suresh Kumar, who has

been given a green signal by the Pakistan gov-

ernment to take charge.

He will relieve current

CDA Gaurav Ahluwalia

who is expected to return to India on

Pakistan Commission in India.

Kathmandu September to

VINEETA PANDEY NEW DELHI, DEC. 22



Shubhendu Adhikari

except to save Bengal from tolabaj bhaipo (extortionist nephew)," he added.

He underscored that the TMC would not have lasted beyond 2001, had it not taken help from the BJP after coming into existence in 1998.

Digging up Ms Banerjee's past with the NDA to reply to the TMC's campaign of betrayal, Mr Adhikari said, "Those who have been branding me as a traitor and calling me 'Mirzafar' for the past three days, I want to ask them who were with the

TMC, after its foundation Adhikari said, "After mass panchayat and Lok Sabha polls and Lok Sabha polls in 1999? Had the then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani not offered shelter to the TMC, the party would have vanished before 2001. ished before 2001.

He added, "When Chhoto Angaria killings took place, the NDA government at the Centre sent a team led BJP leader and then Union minister Vijay Goyel to Garbeta and stopped the attackers. In 2004, the TMC contested Lok Saha elections as an NDA partner, and I had held the TMC flag in one hand and BJP flag in another," the 50-year-old leader said.

Stressing that none but the BJP had extended support to the TMC during the Nandigram agitation over land acquisition, Mr

BJP delegation of Rajnath Singh, Sushma Swaraj had visited the area. On March 16 Mr Advani, the then Leader of the Opposition, and

Sushma Swaraj and Rajnath Singh entered Sonachura via Khejuri and Heria. The saffron party had stalled parliamentary proceedings for over 60 days in protest against the firing. Today you are denying every-thing. Mr Singh had fed you the juice at the site of fast during the Singur movement." Similarly,

the TMC (Mamata supremo Banerjee) had taken help of the Congress in 2011 Assembly polls to defeat the Left, forgetting that she had deserted the same grand old party to form her own outfit earlier, he

## Will BJP leaders quit if party fails to get 200 seats, asks PK

New Delhi, Dec. 22: A day after claiming that the BJP will struggle to cross double digits in the West Bengal Assembly polls, strategist Prashant Kishor challenged its leaders to say on record that they will quit their positions if the party

failed to get 200 seats.
"BJP will struggle to cross double digits and will get less than 100 seats in West Bengal. Will quit my work if they do," Mr Kishor said, reiterating his assessment. He also clarified that if the saffron



**Prashant Kishor** 

party does any better than what he has predicted, he would quit his work. Mr Kishor, who managed Narendra Modi's successful campaign for prime ministership in 2014, has been roped in by TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee to boost her party's prospects in the assembly polls likely in April-May next year.

On Monday, he tweeted that the BJP would strug-gle to cross double digits in West Bengal, setting off a war of words with BJP leaders on the microblogging website. His remarks came after Union minister Shah's visit to West Bengal during which political heavyweight Suvendu Adhikari, nine MLAs and a TMC MP joined the saffron party.

## Amit Shah's next visit to Bengal likely on Jan. 12

**YOJNA GUSAI** NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

After his recent visit to the poll bound West Bengal when former TMC heavyweight Suvendhu Adhikari along with more than a dozen of ruling party's MLAs joined the BJP, senior BJP leader and Union home minister Amit Shah is expected to visit the state again on January 12, which is Swami Vivekananda's

birth anniversary.
In West Bengal, where an aggressive BJP is countering TMC's poll plank of 'Bengali pride' with its vision of 'Asol poribortan,' Shah is expected to address a public meeting and a 'mare rella' is and a 'yuva rally' in Howrah during his two day long visit when he will also deliberate poll strategies with the party leaders. Shah is expected to visit the state again on January 23, when the state celebrates freedom fighter and 'Bengali icon' Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's birthday.

Aggressively campaigning against the TMC government's "bad governance," deteriorating law and order situation, poor economic indicators, corrections and incomplete and incomplete and incomplete and incomplete and incomp ruption, anti-incumbency and Covid-19 mismanage-ment, the BJP is confident of ousting Mamata Banerjee led TMC and even Shah had expressed confidence about ĥis party's win in the assembly polls scheduled early next year. While Shah will be visit-

## Shah owes me a treat, says Didi

AGE CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, DEC. 22

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday sought a treat of dhokla or any other Gujarati delicacy from Union home minister Amit Shah after claiming her achievement in proving his allegations wrong with facts and figures about her government's performance.

"Mr Shah owes me a treat. I love Dhokla and other Gujarati delicacies the Trinamul also." Congress supremo said at the state secretariat Nabanna after countering Mr Shah's charges. She pointed out that the state has not only ranked the top position in the country for eradicating poverty but also created more

than one crore jobs. To justify her statement,

ing the state every month till the assembly polls, he would be spending almost a week in the poll bound state from February. Since 2014, the BJP has

significantly increased its vote share and organisation base in the state. With the two other Opposition parties — Left and the Congress — losing their

WASHINGTON, DEC. 22

An American financial

corporation on Tuesday

announced that it will

invest \$54 million in India

to support the develop-

ment of critical infra-

structure projects in the

country in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

india is one of the

fastest growing countries

million in equity for the

National Investment and

(NIIF) in India to support

the development of criti-

cal infrastructure proj-

The financing is part of

NIIF's final round of

fund-raising for the fund. NIIF will work to

mobilise capital to sup-

port economic growth and address critical devel-

opment challenges in the

country, according to a

"DFC's investment will

statement.

Infrastructure

US body to invest

\$54m in India to

support infra plans

Ms Banerjee quoted "Government of India" data. The CM added, "Bengal is No 1 in the eradication of poverty in India, in 100 days work, rural housing, rural road, MSME sector, e-tendering and e-governance. GSDP of Bengal has increased 2.6 times.

Taking a dig at Mr Shah, Ms Banerjee said, "The home minister said a lot of things. But I think when someone in the stature of the Prime Minister or home minister talks about something, they need to get facts right. He painted a very sorry picture about Bengal. Where was he ten years ago when we came

to power here?" Rejecting Mr Shah's claims on the poor law and order situation, Ms Banerjee said even suicides were being termed as "political killings".

political grip in West Bengal, the BJP has emerged as a credible contender against the ruling TMC, which has been marred by anti-incumbency as a result the BJP made a sizable dent in its vote bank during the last Lok Sabha polls by bagging 18 of the total 42 par-liamentary seats.

#### Massive fire at slum near Kolkata's EM Bypass



Fire-fighters attempt to douse a fire that broke out at a locality near Bengal Chemicals at EM Bypass near Ultadanga, Kolkata, on Tuesday. While no injuries have been reported so far, several shanties were gutted in the EM Bypass fire. According to local authorities, around 30-35 shanties have been destroyed in the fire.

## MP varsity introduces course on Ramcharitmanas

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, DEC. 22

December 26.

Even as the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh is expected to commence on January 15, a university in Madhva Pradesh is all set to spread the story of 'Ram' across the globe through a short-term online and offline course.

The first of its kind initiative by an educational institution in India, Vikram University in

Ujjain has launched a 6month certificate science and culture course on Ramcharitmanas, the epic poem narrating the story of Lord Ram by the 16th century devotional poet Tulsidas, in the current academic session, the university vice-chancellor Dr A.K. Pandey told this newspaper on Tuesday.

"This is the first time a university in India is launching a certificate course on an ancient Indian epic. The objective course is to highlight the science behind the epic, which has hitherto been viewed as merely a work of literature," Prof. Pandey added. Research Ayodhya

Institute in Uttar Pradesh has designed the syllabus of the course. The course will be taught both online and offline and minimum edu-

cational qualification for admission into the course is 12th pass. There is no age bar for

According to him, the epic has been a source of inspiration for people for centuries in terms of value of life, religion, spirituality, philosophy and devotion.

The work variously acclaimed as 'the greatest book of all devotional literature' has also made references related to physics, chemistry, biology, environment science, and

medicinal science. "The students interested to pursue the course will

of science, technology, and pharmaceutical heritage of ancient India to help them to do further research on ancient Indian culture and heritage", head of department of Hindi in the uniprofessor versity Shailendra Kumar

Sharma said. The course will also help the scholars to do research on the holy cities of India such as Chitrakoot. Ayodhya, Prayagraj, Varanasi and Ujjain, the Ayodhya,

support the growth and development of a key partner in the Indo-Pacific and allow DFC to facilitate investment in strategic infrastructure

\$54 million in equity for the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund in India to support the development of critical infrastructure projects. The financing is part of NIIF's final round of fundraising for the fund.

IT SAID it will invest

India, said DFC CEO

in the previous three Adam Boehler. decades, but it suffers DFC brings its commitfrom a significant inframent to high standards in structure deficit, holding all of our projects, and we back further growth for are excited to establish the country especially in this partnership with NIIF. We are pleased to the wake of Covid-19, announce that NIIF has International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) said. completed fund raising for its Master Fund, said It said it will invest \$54 NIIF CEO Sujoy Bose.

We are delighted that DFC is investing in this final round. Their invest-ment will strengthen infrastructure ment across India. We are excited at all that DFC brings to the table, including its high standards such as the Blue Dot Network and commitment to best practices with respect to transparency and management of environmental and social risks, he said.

DFC said its investment will help NIIF invest in infrastructure projects that are important for the long-term sustainable growth of the Indian supporting economy, development and the US

## Farmers ask UK MPs to stop Boris' trip to India

■ Continued from Page 1 Meanwhile, at the Singhu border, a group of farmers wrote a letter with their blood to the Prime Minister urging him to immediately repeal the new laws. The letter said: 'Good morning Narendra Modi ji, we are writing this letter with our blood. You are the Prime Minister of our country, elected by our votes. By passing these three laws, the farmers have been betrayed. We request you to take back these laws." Besides the letter, some even wrote messages with their blood, that read: "We reject black laws... take

back black laws" In a letter to 40 farmers' leaders on Sunday, agriculture ministry joint sec-

retary Vivek Aggarwal had asked them to specify their concerns over the government's earlier proposal of amendments in the laws and to choose a convenient date for the next round of talks so that the ongoing agitation could end at the earliest.

Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar said the Centre was ready to continue talks with the protesting farmers, clause by clause, with an open mind". Interacting with the foreign media, he said the agriculture sector was the backbone of India's economy and under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi the focus was on doubling farmers' income by 2022.

The minister also said

enacting the reform laws was not an overnight move but had been done after more than two decades of deliberations, suggested by numerous experts and recommendations by various commit-

As the agitation entered the 27th day, a group of farmers showed black Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar when his convoy was passing through Ambala city. Some farmers reportedly tried to block the CM's convoy, but the police managed to provide safe passage to Mr Khattar.

Mr Khattar had come to Ambala to address public meetings in support of the BJP's mayoral and ward candidates for the coming

civic polls. The farmers waived black flags at the CM's convov as it was crossing Agrasen Chowk. They also raised slogans against the government and said they would continue to protest till the three farm laws were not repealed. The farmers had also tried to block the

Ambala-Hisar highway. The ongoing agitation has caused a lot of traffic disruptions in the Delhi-NCR region.

Vehicular movement on the Delhi-Meerut expressway was completely halted at around 7.30 am Tuesday as the protesters blocked all its carriageways. The Delhi traffic police used its Twitter handle to update the public about the closure of the carriageways

at the Ghazipur-Ghaziabad border. The sudden blockade of the expressway prompted the Delhi and Uttar Pradesh police to divert traffic to alternate borders, such as the ones at Anand Vihar, Bhopra and Apsara.

As the blockade may lead to traffic chaos during morning office hours, officials from the Uttar Pradesh administration and the Delhi police are discussing the reopening of at least one carriageway with the protesting farmers. Those protesting at the UP Gate border have occupied the expressway's carriageway and service roads going towards Delhi from Ghaziabad since they began their agitation last

## 8 coming from UK...

■ Continued from Page 1 (health) V.K. Paul said on Tuesday that though the mutation found in the UK is an "adverse development" as it enhances the transmissibility or the spread of the Covid virus by 70 per cent and acts as a super spreader, the mutated virus is of no immediate threat terms of affecting the disease's severity or increasing deaths of Covid patients.

He added there was no need to panic as the mutated virus was yet to be traced in India. He said government had taken the samples of all the passengers from the UK testing positive and sent them for genome sequencing. "There is no

reason for panic, though there is cause for us to be more vigilant. The government is closely monitoring it, but the virus' mutation will have no impact on the potential of the vaccines," Mr Paul said, adding so far 17 mutations in the Sars-CoV-2 were found so far. India for the first time

had less than 20,000 fresh Covid cases (19,556) — the lowest in 173 days — as overall cases rose to 1,00,75,116. The health ministry said for the first time India's active caseload fell below three lakhs and was the lowest in 163 days. Union health secretary Bhushan said the deaths

among Covid-19 patients was largely due to the delays in hospitalisation.

## THE ASIAN AGE

23 DECEMBER 2020

## Act quickly to stave off new virus strain threat

The decision of the Union government to take pre-emptive steps against the spread of a mutated version of SARS-CoV-2 that plunged Britain into an unprecedented crisis and the rest of the world into the fear of another wave is welcome. The stoppage of the air traffic to and from Britain till December 31 and the strict conditions on those who travel to India after a visit to that country should be able to help India save itself from another devastating attack of the virus. Several other European nations, which are already into the second phase of national lockdown due to surge in the Covid numbers, are also taking early steps to keep the new virus off its limits by virtually stopping all contacts with the island nation.

India has of late been witnessing a steady decrease in the daily number of caseload though states such as Maharashtra and Kerala show no signs of a thaw. In fact, Maharashtra, which has the highest total caseload, has imposed night curfew and tightened some other controls. Kerala, which

impose restrictions on gatherings wherever gets too late; political, social and religious events and festivals offer no excuse to be lax

managed to contain the virus in the initial The governments stages and has kept the fatality rate low should not hesitate to even now, has already warned of a major spike in the coming days. The state government fears that the elections to the local bodies held last week could turn a super spreader event. Delhi government has already imposed a slew of controls and augmented the healthcare facilities to successfully ward off a major outbreak. Fortunately, India looks like having averted a major outbreak which experts feared would visit us after the festival season.

It is in this background that the new threat has emerged. The mutant version, now referred to as VUI (Variant Under Investigation) 202012/01 or known as B.1.1.7, is not more dangerous than the original one but can spread faster, according to experts. Scientists are yet to decode the virus, first noticed in Southern England in December, whether the mutation makes it spread faster. According to Public Health England, the executive agency of the British department of health and social care, the mutations in the spike protein of the virus can change how the micro-organism interacts with human cells. Scientists insist that the vaccines, which have been given emergency authorisation, and those which are in the pipeline, will work against the new variant, too.

While science and scientists grapple with the pandemic and its causes, the non-medical measures come into the focus more than ever. Public health experts insist on the importance of Covid-appropriate protocols such as social distancing, wearing of masks and washing of hands to keep the virus away. The governments should not hesitate to impose restrictions on gatherings wherever necessary before it gets too late; political, social and religious events and festivals offer no excuse to be lax. The message the mutated virus would like to pass on to humanity is that no amount of caution is too much until such time when vaccines have been made available and a sufficient number of people are inoculated to attain

## Tumble and roll

he reports of the emergence of a new highly-transmissible strain of coronavirus in the United Kingdom and a resultant suspension of air connec-L tivity to London by several countries, including India, sent shockwaves across the global financial world. Being a part of the global financial system, India's key stock market indices — the Sensex and the Nifty — too suffered blow-backs, wiping out over ₹6.5 lakh crore worth investor wealth in just one day.

For the general public, the market reaction may appear insane. Having grown phenomenally after the worst crash during the pandemic, one may wonder as to why should investors be so panicky. However, since the investors bet their money on the foreseeable future, the investors always react ahead of the curve. Similarly, the Monday mayhem in the stock markets too could be a premature panic-driven reaction to the new strain of coronavirus. They may return to the stock markets soon as reports suggest that the new strain may be highly transmissible, but it is not more virulent than the previous versions.

While the world's toughest lockdown had wiped out nearly a quarter of economic productivity in the April-June quarter, the country's economic growth showed a robust recovery in the quarter ending in September. While full recovery of the Indian economy may take some more time, the green shoots have the talk of doomsday scenarios since the economy is domestic consumption. While the developments in the UK may not have an immediate impact on India, full economic recovery, however, is predicated on the successful containment of coronavirus. Until normal economic activity remains unchecked in the country, external developments may not have a lasting impact on the economy. The government and people, therefore, must not lower their guard against the highly-transmissible pathogen.



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# Bhoomi putra for Bengal: Has BJP made a mistake?



Shikha Mukerjee

ne man for all election Union home minister and the BJP's craftiest came to West and radically revised the strategy for conquest. The state's saffronisation has been Mr

Shah's goal for years.
With the acquisition of a "bhoomi putra" — an experienced, violencehardened, mass leader with charismatic appeal in Suvendu Adhikari from Trinamul Congress, Mr Shah has found a face to challenge Mamata Banerjee. Bengali identity, Mr Shah has had to acknowledge, transcends all the different ways in which the BJP slices and splices Hindutva issues to produce electoral victories with remarkable reg-

It's a belated realisation that neither the communal card, nor polarisation, verbal assaults against dynastic politics, would pose a serious political war veteran Mamata Banerjee, who has charisma in loads and local knowledge that can outmatch the collective brains of the BJP machine. It's also an admission that lightweight Bengalis as proxies for Narendra Modi would be dismissed with contempt by a culturally and politically fanatically proud people. From one visit to the

next in the space of a month, Mr Shah has finally realised that he has to back away from two issues he had identified as bestsellers in the West Bengal election market. The first is aggressively selling the Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens as a cleanup mechanism to weed out Muslim illegals on the plea that it will be "considered" for action only after the Covid-19 vaccines are rolled out. The second is shooting down the idea that President's

Rule was being seriously considered before the West Bengal elections. Pulling no punches, Mr Shah seems to have told BJP state party chief Dilip Ghosh and West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar to pipe down.

These are sure signs that Mr Shah is only now beginning to gauge that West Bengal is the most complex undertaking he has ever had to handle. There is no template in the BJP's playbook that can be copied and pasted over West Bengal.

To convince the voter that the BJP is not indeed an "outsider", Mr Shah had to roll out Mr Adhikari and set him to work, the day after Christmas. The speed with which Mr Shah and the home ministry approved "Z" category security for Mr Adhikari even before he was formally inducted into the party at the Midnapore rally is an indication that it has a lot of catching up to do.

placent that its formula of communal polarisation, identity politics, homogenisation and main-streaming within the Hindutva fold would be enough to convert the Bengali into a loyalist and thus reliable voter, the Trinamul Congress was just as smug. Obviously Mamata Banerjee can read the pulse of the people better than the BJP, which has inadequate leaders in West Bengal and out of state bosses who are clueless about fiercely proud

For both the TMC and the BJP, the defection of Suvendu Adhikari and nine other MLAs and MPs, as well around 100 lesser functionaries, is a turning point. As a young leader who led the Nandigram movement against the CPI(M)-led Left Front's strategy for industrialising West Bengal, Mr Adhikari shot into the limelight. He became known for his capacity to

Bengalis can be a fanatically proud and snooty people. Suvendu Adhikari may be too local, too small time as a CM face. Every chief minister of West Bengal has been a national leader first and a local leader as well. Most were at loggerheads with the Centre, including Siddhartha Shankar Ray on occasion. Has the BJP made a mistake in stooping to conquer?

lence and for his capacity to mobilise, equip and deploy the small army of TMC loyalists. He was rewarded for his work and elevated as a youth leader, as part of the successor generation to be groomed for the party after Mamata Banerjee. So indispensable was he, that in the 2016 Assembly elections, when Mamata Banerjee needed a robust organisation to win her seats in Purulia, Bankura and Jhargram and she felt Mukul Roy, now with the BJP, would not be as effective, Mr Adhikari was given responsibility for 60-plus seats. It was also her way of placating Mr Adhikari after the induction of Abhishek Banerjee, her nephew. The move angered many, including Mr Roy, who saw it as heaping favours on the Adhikari clan. Regardless of how her preference annoved others in

match violence with vio-

idabad, long considered Congress bastions. The network that Mr Adhikari built across at least seven districts out of a total of 23 in West Bengal, and his popularity, made him an asset for the Trinamul Congress. The BJP's gain is thus the TMC's loss. To capitalise on this, Mr Shah has drastically revised the BJP's campaign content and

the TMC, Ms Banerjee

continued to pamper Su-

vendu with greater res-

ponsibilities, like obser-

ver for the 2019 Lok Sabha

polls for crucial districts

in Malda and Mursh-

strategy. The plan is crude, and the BJP hopes it will be luring effective Mamata Banerjee into a personal fight against Mr Adhikari, who she was wont to see as a loyalist turned disgruntled defector with an insider's knowledge of how the TMC government and organisation failed, its corruption, its dependence on a partisan bureaucracy and the police. It would challenge . Mamata Banerjee's credibility and her legitimacy

as a leader. The other advantage of a Mamata Banerjee verus Adhikari fight would mean there would be two foes against the lone chief minister. It would serve to situate the BJP's best star campaigner, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, above the fray, with a solution to the problems of West Bengal by main-streaming the margin-alised, deviant locals.

insider-outsider game set up by the BJP is theoretically neat. The question is — will it be effective? West Bengal has always seen itself as a leader in national poliof laggard followers could be unsatisfactory. The state's chief ministers have always punched way above their weight as they were politically important national leaders to begin with. Even though Mamata Banerjee was not a member of the social elite to which all her predecessors in office belonged, she was still a national leader, the successful leader of a party that she had founded. when she became chief minister. In contrast, Mr Adhikari is a local, per-

haps too local. The localisation of the BJP is far from complete. Adding a bhoomi putra is a design element and does not indicate a structural transformation. If localisation has indeed begun, it was difficult to find it, when Mr Shah's roadshow snaked through Bolpur, with a DJ managing the event, and dancers and bands preceding the leader as though it was a carnival, and not a political rally.

> Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist based in Kolkata

#### **MUTANT VIRUS**

The news coming from the United Kingdom of a fast-spreading Sars-CoV-2 variant of Covid-19 in that country is quite disturbing. The health secretary of the UK, Matt Hancock, has reportedly said that the new Covid-19 strain is "out of control". It is still to be seen whether the Covid-19 vaccine would be effective in case of the new virus strain. Several countries including India have banned flights from and to the UK. Airport authorities in India need be very particular in strictly adhering to the Covid-19 pandemic management protocol and subjecting all flyers coming from Europe and the Middle East to tests and quarantine. Slackness could be disastrous.

> M.C. Joshi Lucknow

#### **LEAVE NEPAL ALONE**

THIS REFERS TO the editorial "Is China behind Oli's move?" Nepal is in the throes of a constitutional crisis which is primarily the outcome infighting within the party. By dissolving the Parliament at this critical juncture when the priority for all nations is to combat Covid, Prime Minister Oli has cast himself in an unflattering light. Of late, he has been out of favour with India. But India, too, ought to refrain from nosing in Nepal's affairs.

Deepak Singhal

#### **HAZEL'S OFFERING**

CELEBRATE YOUR Christmas this year with Hazel Parikh's online singing competition of East Indian Marathi songs. Hazel was the first person along with Polly D'Mello to release an East Indian Marathi language audio cassette comprising of original East Indian Marathi songs in 1982 when the East Indian community did not have any audio cassettes or CDs of their own. She is going live on December 25 from 9.00 pm onwards. Merry Christmas, Hazel. Jubel D'Cruz Mumbai

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

#### Dilip Cherian Dilli Ka Babu



Centre spars with Mamata in bid to turn Bengal babus into stool pigeons

he battle for the West Bengal Assembly elections looms ahead but skirmishes have already started. After the attack on BJP president J.P. Nadda's convoy in the state, the Centre retaliated against the Trinamul government by recalling three IPS officers from the state on Central deputation. Further, to perhaps underline the "message", the ministry of home affairs summoned state chief secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay and direc-tor general of police Virendra to Delhi to explain the law and order situation in Bengal.

A defiant chief minister Mamata Banerjee refused to comply with the summons. Also, she declined the Centre's demand to send the three IPS officers — Bholanath Pandey, Rajeev Mishra and Praveen Kumar Tripathi — on deputation saying there was a dearth of good officers in the state, and the state could not spare the three officers.

There is a precedent here. The then chief minister of Tamil Nadu J. Jayalalithaa had similarly denied the Centre in 1991 when the state police had conducted a raid on the house of former state chief minister and DMK leader M. Karunanidhi, her archrival. The Centre had asked the Tamil Nadu government to relieve the three officers involved for Central deputation. Like Mamata now, she had refused to spare those officers.

Apparently, there is little the Centre can do against civil service officers who are posted under the state government. For any action to be taken on an officer, the state and the Centre both need to agree.

#### **REBELS FOR A CAUSE?**

Outliers are far and few between in the civil service, which runs on obedience rather than resistance. But sometimes momentous events reveal "rebels" with a cause.

Punjab DIG (Prisons) Lakhminder Singh Jakhar has resigned from service in support of farmers who are in Delhi protesting against the three new farm laws. There are politicians, sports people, even exdefence forces officers who have renounced their awards and medals in protest, but an IPS officer resigning from service for the farmers' cause is a first in the

Of course, IAS officer Kannan Gopinathan resigned from the service to protest against the restricimposed in Jammu & Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370. Similarly, Shah Faesal, the young IAS officer from J&K resigned from the service in 2019 to start a political party. And just a few months ago, the DGP of Bihar Gupteshwar Pandey opting for VRS in a bid to contest the state Assembly poll (his position his still vacant), but that was not for a public cause.

Meanwhile, Jakhar who had served the Army joined the IPS as a 1994-batch officer and was slated to superannuate in August 2022. Interestingly, he had been suspended in May earlier this year on alleged corruption charges but was reinstated within a month. Clearly, outliers defy easy definition!

#### TN WON'T LET GO OF CHIEF SECY

By seeking the extension of the tenure of Tamil Nadu chief secretary K. Shanmugam, the state government has stirred up a hornets' nest in the upper echelons of the administration. An extension of tenure for Shanmugam could mean that several senior Tamil Nadu cadre officers eligible to succeed him may find their chances

According to sources, Shanmugam, a 1985-batch IAS offi-cer, has already received two According

extensions.

Meanwhile, there are 30 IAS officers in the state in the additional chief secretary rank, including four who are secretaries to the Central government. For them, the third extension for Shanmugam seems to indicate that the state government doubts their abilities to handle the top job.

Interestingly, when chief minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami first sought an extension of tenure for Shanmugam, it was for one year. but the Centre granted approval only for three months. The second extension was for another three months. Now the state government has requested a six-month extension for the babu who reportedly is playing a "critical role in Covid management in the state". Will the Centre oblige again?

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.











SHORT TAKES

#### **PLANE CRASHES ALONG TEXAS ROAD, 1 KILLED**

Grand Prairie, Dec. 22: At least one person was killed when a small plane crashed along a highway service road in North Texas shortly after taking off Monday afternoon, authorities

The Federal Aviation Administration said the single-engine Wheeler Express CT crashed about 1 miles (1.61 kilometres) west of the Grand Prairie

Municipal Airport, located in the city just west of Dallas. Grand Prairie Fire Chief Robert Fite said witnesses said the plane came down rapidly, hit a telephone pole and then struggled another 500 feet (152.40 metres) hitting the concrete multiple times before hitting a pickup truck traveling on the service road.

Fite said the person in the truck was slightly injured and was taken to the hospital.

#### **RIVER SURGE HITS CANYON GROUP, 4 DEAD**

Mexico City, Dec. 22: Rain unleased a surge of water that swept away most of a 21-member group on a canyoning expedition in southern Mexico, killing at least four people and leaving three missing, authorities said Monday.

The civil defence office of Veracruz state said five more people were injured in the Rio Oro canyon, near the Gulf of Mexico. The accident occurred Sunday, and the office said searches continued Monday with police, volunteer rescue groups and firefighters participating.

The office did not release the names or nationalities of the victims, but such expeditions are popular among young Mexican tourists.

Canyoning involves hiking, rappelling and climbing, swimming through river canyons. The Rio Oro canyon includes waterfalls and relatively narrow rock passages.

#### CABINET **RESHUFFLED IN INDONESIA**

Jakarta, Dec. 22: Indonesia's president announced a Cabinet reshuffle Tuesday following the arrest of two of his ministers on corruption charges and his administration's lack-

luster pandemic response. The Cabinet shake-up comes amid surging Coronavirus cases in the world's fourth most populous nation. Indonesia's economy nas fallen into reces sion for the first time since the Asian financial crisis more than two decades ago as the country struggles to control

the pandemic. Four ministers lost their jobs, including Health Minister Terawan Agus Putranto, and two others were rotated to more important positions, ending weeks of speculation about the possible changes. President Joko Widodo chose the mayor of Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, to become the social affairs minister, replacing Juliari Batubara, who was detained by anticorruption commission on December 6. Batubara was accused of taking bribes related to the government's COVID-19 aid distribution.

#### **U.S. POST OFFICE NAMED AFTER SLAIN SIKH COP**

Washington, Dec. 22: US President Donald Trump on Monday signed into law a legislation to name a Texas post office after slain Sikh police officer Sandeep Singh Dhaliwal, who was gunned down in the line of duty during a routine traffic stop in Houston a year ago.

Trump signed H R 5317, which designates the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 315 Addicks Howell Road in Houston. Texas, as the Deputy Sandeep Singh Dhaliwal Post Office Building, the White House said in a statement.

The post office named after Dhaliwal in Houston is only the second US post office to be named after an Indian American. The first one was named after the first Indian American Congressman Dalip Singh Saund in Southern California in 2006. The House of Representatives and the Senate had recently passed the legislation in this regard. In his remarks on the Senate floor, Texas Senator Ted Cruz had said that Dhaliwal was a hero and a trailblazer whose commitment to his faith will inspire generations of Sikhs and other religious minorities.

# Vax may work on UK virus: Pharma

But CEO of BioNTech says further studies are needed to be completely certain

**Berlin, Dec. 22:** German pharmaceutical company BioNTech is confident that its Coronavirus vaccine works against the new UK variant, but further studies are needed to be completely sure, its chief executive said Tuesday. The variant, detected mainly in London and the southeast of England in recent weeks, has sparked concern worldwide because of signs that it may spread more easily. While there is no indication it causes more serious illness, numerous countries in Europe and beyond have restricted travel from the UK as a result. 'We don't know at the

moment if our vaccine is also able to provide protection against this new variant," CEO Ugur Sahin told a news conference the day after the vaccine was approved for use in the European Union. "But scientifically, it is highly likely that the immune response by this vaccine also can deal with the new virus variants." Sahin said that the proteins on the UK variant are 99% the same as on the prevailing strains, and therefore BioNTech has "scientific confidence" that its vaccine will be effective.

"But we will know it only if the experiment is done and we will need about two weeks from now to get the data," he said. "The likelihood that our vaccine works ... is relatively high." Should the vaccine need to be adjusted for the new variant the company could do so in about 6 weeks, Sahin said, though regulators might have to approve the changes before the shots can be used.

Having to adjust the vaccine would be a blow for the rollout of immunisation campaigns and rein in the pandemic that has so far killed more than 1.7 million people worldwide. BioNTech's vaccine, which was developed together with US pharmaceutical company Pfizer, has been authorised for use in more than 45 countries, including Britain, the United States and the EU.

Hundreds of thousands of people have already received the shots. The companies submitted data to regulators showing the vaccine, which goes by the brand name COMIRNATY in Europe, is 95 per cent effective in preventing infection with Covid-19.

countries across the EU that have requested doses will receive them in the next five days, the very initial supply, and that will be followed up next week with further supplies," said Sean Marett, BioNTech's chief commercial offi-cer. Several EU countries have said they plan to start vaccinating on Sunday.

Germany's health minister, Jens Spahn, said he expects the country to receive more than 1.3 million doses by the end of this year. Germany is among European countries that have banned flights from the UK because of the new variant there.

We don't know at the moment if our vaccine is also able to provide protection against this new variant. But scientifically, it is highly likely that the immune response by this vaccine can deal with the new virus variants.

— UGUR SAHIN



Christiana Care campus in Newark, Delaware on Monday.

# Probe finds Trump officials Congress okays attacked CDC virus reports \$900 bn relief bill

Trump administration political appointees tried to block or change more than a dozen government reports that detailed scientific findings about the spread of the Coronavirus, a House panel investigating the alleged interference said

Monday.
Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C., said his Coronavirus committee investigators have found evidence of a "political pressure campa-ign" to "bully" professionals at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in what may have been an attempt to "cripple the

INVESTIGATORS HAVE found evidence of a "political pressure campaign" to "bully" professionals at the Centers for Disease **Control and Prevention in** what may have been an attempt to "cripple the nation's Coronavirus response in a misguided effort to achieve herd immunity.

nation's Coronavirus response in a misguided effort to achieve herd immunity." Herd immunity is shorthand for a theory — Herd immunity is health experts — that soci-

by allowing younger people to get infected and develop natural immunity until vaccines are widely available. Accusing Health and Hu-

man Services Secretary Alex Azar and CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield of stonewalling his investigation, Clyburn issued sub-poenas compelling them to turn over reams of documents and emails by Dec. 30. The committee's findings were detailed in a letter to Azar and Redfield that centred on the actions rejected by most public of two political appointees

## Spain holds Christmas lottery

Madrid, Dec. 22: Children from Madrid's San Ildefonso school have begun calling out prize-winning numbers in Spain's bumper Christmas lottery known as "EL Gordo" (the fat one), which is being held under tight conditions because of the Coronavirus

The lottery will shell out 400,000 euros (\$489,000) or some 325,000 euros after tax, to holders of 20-euro tickets bearing the topprize number.

The incredibly popular lottery dishes out a total of 2.4 billion euros in prizes

this year, much of it in small prizes. Other lotteries have bigger individual top prizes but Spain's Christmas lottery, staged each year on Dec. 22, is ranked as the world's richest for the total prize money involved.

#### Washington, Dec. 22: relief question, a logjam that broke after President-Congress passed a \$900 billion pandemic relief packelect Joe Biden urged his

deliver long-sought cash to businesses and individuals and resources to vac-cinate a nation confronting a frightening surge in Covid-19 cases and deaths. Lawmakers tacked on a \$1.4 trillion catchall spending bill and thousands of pages of other end-of-session business in a massive bundle of bipartisan legislation as Capitol Hill prepared to close the books on the year. The bill approved Monday night went to President Donald Trump for his signature, which was expected in the coming days.

age that would finally

The relief package, unveiled Monday afternoon, sped through the House and Senate in a matter of hours. The Senate cleared the massive package by a 92-6 vote after the House approved the Covid-19 package by another lopsided vote, 359-53. The tallies were a bipartisan coda to months of partisanship and politicking as lawma-kers wrangled over the

party to accept a compromise with top Republicans that is smaller than many Democrats would have liked. The bill combines Coronavirus-fighting funds with financial relief for individuals and businesses. It would establish a temporary \$300 per week supplemental jobless benefit and a \$600 direct stimulus payment to most Americans, along with a new round of subsidies for hard-hit businesses, restaurants, and theatres and money for schools, health care providers and renters facing eviction.

The 5,593-page legislation—by far the longest bill ever—came together Sunday after months of bat tling, posturing and postelection negotiating that reined in a number of De-mocratic demands as the end of the congressional session approached. Biden was eager for a deal to deliver long-awaited help to suffering people and a boost to the economy.

#### **BIDEN PUBLICLY RECEIVES COVID VACCINE SHOT**

**Washington, Dec. 22:** US President-elect Joe Biden on Monday publicly receiand said he was doing this to demonstrate that people should be ready to take the vaccine when it is available. Biden received the first course of the Pfizer-Bio-NTech vaccine at ChristianaCare Hospital.

"I am doing this to demonstrate that people should be prepared when it's available to take the vaccine. There's nothing to worry about," he said. Tabe Masa, Nurse Practitioner and Head of Employee Health Services at ChristianaCare Hospital, administered the vaccine. Dr Jill Biden, having already received the first course of the vaccine earlier in the day, was also present on the occasion.

"Today, I received the Covid-19 vaccine. To the scientists and researchers who worked tirelessly to make this possible - thank you. We owe you an awful lot," Biden said in a tweet. "And to the American people — know there is nothing to worry about. When the vaccine is available, I urge you to take it," he said. "This is what leadership looks like," Vice President-elect Kamala Harris said in a tweet.

#### INDO-AMERICAN PHYSICIANS TAKE **COVID VACCINE**

New York, Dec. 22: Several Indian-American physicians, in the frontline of the fight against the Coronavirus pandemic, are publicly taking the coronavirus vaccine and encouraging others to get the shots, emphasising that the vaccine is the "only saving grace" and a "scientific blessing" that will help the world win the battle against Covid-19.

The US began administering vaccines a week ago and has approved jabs developed by Pfizer-Bio-NTech and Moderna.

we all should take the vaccine. It is very effective and we are seeing good results. The vaccine is the only saving grace we have right now and we have to take it," former President of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) Dr. Suresh Reddy said.

## Scientists probe virus variant's spread in kids

ating the impact of a new mutant variant of Coronanamed 202012/01, on children and whether its faster transmission in parts of England is down to the younger segment of the population.

The government's New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (Nervtag) is monitoring the data to analyse this arc of the variant,

which has led over 40 countries, including India, to suspend travel to and from the UK in order to try and contain the more infectious mutation.

Earlier strains of Coronavirus found it harder to infect children than adults, with one explanation being that children have fewer of the doorways called the ACE2 receptor the virus uses to enter a human body's cells

Professor Wendy Barclay,

• EARLIER STRAINS of Coronavirus found it harder to infect children than adults, with one explanation being that children have fewer of the doorways called the ACE2 receptor the virus uses to enter a human body's cells.

from Nervtag and Imperial College London, said the mutations to the virus appeared to be making it easier to breach those doorways. "Therefore children are equally susceptible, perhaps, to this virus as adults, and therefore given their mixing patterns, you would expect to see more children being infected,' she explained.

Experts do not believe that the new version is any greater threat to children's health and the scientist behind the world's first approved vaccine against Covid-19 has said the

work against the strain, though further investigation remains underway.

'The likelihood that our vaccine works is relatively high," said Ugur Sahin, chief executive of the German co-developer of the vaccine BioNTech.

Speaking on Bild TV' in Germany, Sahin said his company would investigate the mutation in the coming days and that he viewed the matter with a

His message of some confidence comes as the UK reached the half a million milestone for vaccinations of the jabs, delivered to the elderly and most vulnerable sections of the country's population.
"I can today announce

that over half a million people, more than 500,000 people in the UK, have now received their first dose,' Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced.

## Drop in kindergarten enrolment is 30% of total reduction across the 33 states

# Covid-19: Enrolment in US public schools dips

**Washington, Dec. 22:** Fearful of sending her two children back to school as the coronavirus pandemic in Mississippi, Angela Atkins decided to give virtual learning a

chance this fall. Almost immediately, it was a struggle. Their district in Lafayette County didn't offer live instruction to remote learners, and Atkins' fourth grader became frustrated with doing worksheets all day and missed interacting with teachers and peers. Her seventh grader didn't receive the extra support he did at school through his special education plan and started getting failing grades. After nine weeks, Atkins switched to home

schooling.

It got to the point where it felt like there was no other choice to make, she said. I was worried for my kids' mental health. By taking her children off the public school rolls, Atkins ioined an exodus that one state schools chief has warned could become a national crisis. An analysis of data from 33 states obtained by Chalkbeat and The Associated Press shows that public K-12 enrolment this fall has dropped across those states by more than 500,000 students, or 2%, since the same time last year.

That is a significant shift considering that enrolment overall in those states has typically gone up by

AN ANALYSIS of data from 33 states obtained by Chalkbeat and The **Associated Press shows** that public K-12 enrolment this fall has dropped across those states by more than 500,000 students, or 2%, since the same time last year.

around half a percent in recent years. And the decline is only likely to become more pronounced, as several large states have vet to release information. Chalkbeat and AP surveyed all 50 states, but 17 have not released comparable enrolment numstates is preliminary, offers the clearest picture yet of the pandemic's devastating toll on public school enrolment a decline that could eventually have dire consequences for school budgets that are based on headcounts. But even more alarming,

educators say, is that some of the students who left may not be in school at all. I would like to hope that many of them are from homes where their parents have taken responsibility on their own to provide for their education, said Pedro Noguera, the dean of the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education, adding that affluent fami-

The data, which in many lies will have an easier led their children in kindtime doing that. My fear is that large numbers have simply gotten discouraged and given up. So far, many states have held off on making school budget cuts in the face of enrolment declines. But if enrolment doesn't rise, funding will

> We've been trying to scream from the hilltops for quite some time that this is happening, Kirsten Baesler, North Dakota's schools superintendent, said of the enrolment declines. And it could be a national crisis if we don't put some elbow grease into it.

> The declines are driven by a combination of factors brought on by the pandemic. Fewer parents enrol-

ergarten, and some students left public schools for other learning environments. At the same time, students who are struggling to attend classes, as many are right now, may have been purged from public school rolls for missing many days in a row. That is a typical practice, though there is some more flex

ibility now. The Chalkbeat/AP analysis shows that a drop in kindergarten enrolment accounts for 30% of the total reduction across the 33 states making it one of the biggest drivers of the nationwide decline. Kindover half of states.

#### 4.6K FROM UK QUARANTINED **IN TURKEY**

Ankara, Dec. 22: Turkey has identified and quarantined 4,603 airline passengers who arrived the from Kingdom on and after December 14, Turkish Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said Tuesday. Flights from the UK South Africa, Denmark and the Netherlands were suspended on Sunday evening response to a new strain of Coronavirus said to

be circulating there. Koca tweeted that 335 passengers flying from those countries at the time of Sunday's announcement tested for the virus on arrival in Turkey and

INDICATO	RS	%
Sensex	46006.69	0.99
Nifty 50	13466.30	1.03
S&P 500*	3,692.94	-0.05
Dollar (₹)	73.84	-0.05
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.31	-1.81
Euro (₹)	90.28	-0.48
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,936 <b>▼</b> 480	0.95
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	50.21	-0.70
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.951	-0.005
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.923	-0.018
* As of 9:30 PM IST		

#### Trust AMC eyes ₹10,000 cr AÚM in next 2 years

Trust Asset Management Company, the latest to enter the already cluttered ₹30-lakhcrore mutual fund industry with 44 payers, plans to launch its maiden fund within a couple of weeks and garner an AUM of around ₹10,000 crore in the first two years of operations, says a top official. The fund house, which had announced a soft launch earlier this month, is awaiting the Sebi nod for its maiden scheme.

#### Gold prices fall amid weakness in global mart



Gold prices fell ₹243 to ₹49,653 per 10 gram in Delhi on Tuesday, reflecting the weakness in global price of the precious metal. In the previous trade, the yellow metal had closed at ₹49,896 per 10 gram. Silver prices also declined Rs 216 to ₹67,177 per kg from ₹67,393 per kg in the previous . In the global market gold and silver were trading lower at \$1,868 per ounce and \$25.70 per ounce, respectively.

#### Manappuram raises ₹400cr via issue of bonds

Manappuram Finance on Tuesday said it has raised ₹400 crore by issuing bonds on private placement basis. The Financial Resources and Management Committee of the board of directors of the company has approved the allot-ment of 4,000 rated, secured, redeemable non-convertible debentures aggregating to ₹400 crore, Manappuram Finance said in a regulatory

## **Reliance Capital** gets 10 more bids for subsidiaries

Reliance Capital Ltd, part of the debt-ridden ADAG Reliance Group, has received 10 more bids, including from SBI Life, for its subsidiaries, sources said. Earlier this month, the Committee of Debenture Holders had extended the last date for submission of expression of interest to December 17. Following this, 10 new bids have come in for Reliance Capital's assets, taking the total number of bids to 70.

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# Apple eyes car rollout by 2024 Centre begins

#### iPhone maker's self-driving car will have battery with better technology

New York, Dec. 22: Apple Inc is moving forward with self-driving car technology and is targeting 2024 to produce a passenger vehicle that could include its own breakthrough battery technology, people familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The iPhone maker's automotive efforts, known as Project Titan, have proceeded unevenly since 2014 when it first started to design its own vehicle from scratch. At one point, Apple drew back the effort to focus on software and reassessed its goals. Doug Field, an Apple veteran who had worked at Tesla Inc, returned to oversee the project in 2018 and laid off 190 people from the team in

Since then, Apple has progressed enough that it now aims to build a vehicle for consumers, two people familiar with the effort said, asking not to be named because Apple's plans are not public.

#### **POWER BATTERY**

Central to Apple's self-driving car strategy is a new battery design that could radically reduce the cost of batteries and increase the vehicle's range.

The tech major plans to use a unique "monocell" design that bulks up the individual cells in the battery and frees up space inside the battery pack by eliminating pouches and modules that hold battery materials.

The company is also examining a chemistry for the battery called or lithium iron phosphate, which is inherently less likely to overheat and is thus safer than other types of lithium-ion batteries.

Central to Apple's strategy is a new battery design that could "radically" reduce the cost of batteries and increase the vehicle's range, according to a third person who has seen Apple's battery design.

Apple declined to comment on its plans or future

products.

Making a vehicle represents a supply chain challenge even for Apple, a company with deep pockets that makes hundreds of millions of electronics products each year with

parts from around the world, but has never made a car. It took Elon Musk's Tesla 17 years before it finally turned a sustained profit making cars.

"If there is one company on the planet that has the resources to do that, it's probably Apple. But at the same time, it's not a cellphone," said a person who worked on Project Titan.

It remains unclear who would assemble an Applebranded car, but sources have said they expect the company to rely on a man-

partner to ufacturing build vehicles.

And there is still a chance Apple will decide to reduce the scope of its efforts to an autono-mous driving system that would be integrated with a car made by a traditional automaker, rather than the iPhone maker selling an Apple-branded car, one of the people added.

Apple has decided to tap outside partners for elements of the system, including lidar sensors, which help self-driving sional view of the road, two people familiar with the company's plans told

As for the car's battery, Apple plans to use a unique "monocell" design that bulks up the individ-ual cells in the battery and frees up space inside the battery pack by eliminating pouches and modules that hold battery materials, one of the people said.

Apple's design means that more active material can be packed inside the battery, giving the car a potentially longer range. Apple is also examining a chemistry for the battery called LFP, or lithium iron phosphate, the person said, which is inherently less likely to overheat and is thus safer than other types of lithium-ion batteries.

"It's next level," the person said of Apple's battery technology. "Like the first time you saw the iPhone,

# process to sell stake in SCI

New Delhi, Dec. 22: The government on Tuesday invited expressions of interest for strategic dis-investment of its 63.75 per cent stake in Shipping Corp of India along with the transfer of management control.

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) has issued Preliminary Info-(PIM) inviting Expressions of Interest (EoI) from potential buye February 13, 2021. buyers

Shares of Shipping Corp were trading at ₹86.30, up 4.54 per cent over its previous close on the BSE. At the current market price, the government's stake sale in Shipping Corp is valued at about ₹2,500

The government has appointed RBSA Capital Advisors LLP as its transaction advisor to manage the disinvestment pro-

Shipping Corporation of India is largest Indian shipping company with a fleet strength of 59 vessels. It operates a fleet of 59 ships, including crude oil tankers, very large crude carriers, petroleum product carriers, liquefied petroleum gas carriers, bulk carriers, container ships and off-shore

support vessels.
The state-owned shipping company owns and operates around one-third of the Indian tonnage, and has interests in practically all areas of the ship-ping business; servicing both national and international trades.

Prominent among the companies that have shown interest in acquiring a stake in Shipping Corporation of India are Vedanta Resources Ltd and Dubai's DP World.



tion of India is largest Indian shipping company with a fleet strength of 59 vessels. It operates a fleet of 59 ships. including crude oil tankers, very large crude carriers, petroleum product carriers, liquefied petroleum gas carriers, bulk carriers, container ships and offshore support

Recently, Vedanta Resources has teamed up with Centricus Management Ltd to create a warchest of \$10 billion to acquire the state-run companies.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs in November last year gave in-principle approval for the strategic divestment of Shipping Corp. However, the plans were

delayed due to the pan-demic. The 2020-21 Budget has set a record divestment target of ₹2.1 lakh

The government has so far raised ₹12,380 crore through minority stake sale in Central Public Sec-tor Enterprises (CPSEs) and share buybacks this fiscal year. Strategic sale process of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Air India is ongoing and both the companies have received "mu-İtiple" EoI from potential

#### Sebi to rope in agency to conduct risk assessment

**New Delhi, Dec. 22:** Capital markets regulator Sebi is looking to rope in an agency for performing in-depth risk assessment of its information technol-

ogy (IT) infrastructure.

The risk assessment needs to include identification of foreseeable threats, assessment of the likelihood and potential damage of these threats, and the sufficiency of controls to mitigate risks. In a notice last week, the

regulator has invited expression of interest (EoI) from solution providers to conduct risk assessment of IT infrastructure, prepare policy documents, standard operating procedures (SOPs), documentation of procedures and processes and other IT documents.

In addition, design specification document need to be prepared for all the processes automation, the regulator

"Bidder is supposed to conduct risk assessment infrastructure deployment at Sebi annually, calculate risk score accordingly, review controls and its impact on policies and SOPs and changes required in the policies and SOPs," the regulator said.

Sebi noted that IT risk assessment helps to determine the vulnerabilities in information systems and the broader IT environment, assess the likelihood that a risky event will occur, and rank risks based on the risk estimate combined with the level of impact that it would cause if it occurs.

It will also help in identifying controls and meas-ures required to be included in IT policies and SOP,

## Industry bodies to ask Centre to relook at new wage definition

New Delhi, Dec. 22: Representatives of industry bodies, including from CII and Ficci, will hold a meeting with the labour ministry top brass on Thursday to make a case for holding back implementation of new definition of wages, which would increase social security deductions and reduce take-home pay of

The representatives of CII and Ficci among other industry bodies would meet union labour mintop brass cuss the new definition of

New Delhi,

Adapting to

hybrid normal of remote

and office work, cautious-

ly optimistic corporates

are looking to hire more

people and provide better

appraisals in the new year

as they step out of the

The coronavirus pandemic emerged as the

biggest inflection point

for the Indian job land-

scape. For the corporates,

remote workers became

the new normal and for

the professionals, online

learning and digital skills

In 2020, most companies

"deprioritised" their hir-

ing plans amid uncertain

economic outlook while

industries like travel, hos-

pitality, retail, aviation,

real estate, construction

Nevertheless, there is a

cautious optimism among

severely hit.

automobile were

took the centre-stage.

work-from-home

pandemic-ravaged 2020.

Firms step up hiring

after Covid impact

and

the new

 Lobbyists want the government to hold back the new definition and fear that this would result in major cut in take-home salaries and also put additional burden on employers.

 The new definition will lead to a cut in workers' take-home pay while an increase in the employer's provident fund contribution liability.

wages which is likely to be implemented by April 1, 2021," an industry source

The source also said that lobbyists want the govern-ment to hold back the new definition and fear that cut in take-home salaries

corporates and it is get-

ting reflected in their

recruitment plans for the new year. "Yes, the market

is showing positive signs

of recovery with almost

all industries showing

growth in hiring but with

caution. Overall, the

intent to hire recovered smartly from 11 per cent

during the lockdown peri-

od to 18 per cent for HY

(half year) and this num-

ber is growing," Deval Singh, business head,

Mobilization (hiring) at

While there is caution in

hiring, the market is dis-

He said there is a 50 per

cent increase in employ-

ment opportunities from

Pay cuts have been reve-

rsed since Diwali in most

organisations and bonus-

es were issued in few.

Some IT companies even

declared early appraisals,

TeamLease Services.

playing optimism.

the lockdown days.

he noted.

and also put additional burden on employers.

wages is part of the Code on Wages, 2019 passed by Parliament last year. The rules to enforce the law was also firmed up last year. Now, its implementation is planned from April

three codes on industrial relations, social security and occupational health safety & working conditions. The new definition pro-

1, 2021 along with other

vides that the allowance of an employee cannot be more than 50 per cent of the total salary. This would increase the social security deductions like provident fund.

Presently, the employer and employee contribute 12 per cent each towards the social security schemes run by the Employees' Provident Fund Organi-

# Daimler AG picks Infosys to manage automotive IT infra

**RAVI RANJAN PRASAD** MUMBAI, DEC. 22

German auto Daimler AG and Infosys on Tuesday entered into a long-term strategic partnership to drive hybrid cloud-powered innovation and IT infrastructure transformation in the automotive sector. Daimler is the company that manufactures Mercedes-Benz

"After the receipt of all regulatory approvals, Daimler AG will transapprovals. form its IT operating model and infrastructure landscape across workplace services, service desk, data centre, net-works and SAP Basis together with Infosys," said a joint statement issued by the two compa-

"The partnership will enable the company to deepen its focus on software engineering and to



establish a fully-scalable on-demand digital IT infrastructure and anytime-anywhere workplace. The collaboration will empower Daimler strengthen its IT capabilities, and Infosys, its automotive expertise.

"Daimler will towards a model that ensures a robust IT infrastructure across its plants and regions, and supports consolidation of its data centers, scaling its IT operations, and bringing innovations to the fore, the joint statement said.

"As a part of this part-nership, automotive IT

experts based out of Germany, wider Europe, the US and the APAC region will transition from Daimler AG to Infosys, Infosys is wellplaced to realise this transition as an expert having integrated more than 16,000 employees through other partnerships in recent years with a high acceptance, retention and

The transfer will also enable Infosys to bolster and grow its automotive business, while offering Daimler employees strong prospects for long-term career growth.

satisfaction rate.'

## **ICICI Bank** to focus

Mumbai, Dec. 22: With the increase in foreign direct investment into the country, ICICI Bank on Tuesday said it is upping its focus on serving the multinational companies. The lender is looking

at services beyond cred it needs of such overseas corporates with an eye on the fee income possibilities, its executive director Vishakha Mulye told reporters.

It already serves about 1,500 MNCs out of an overall market of up to 5,000 companies, she said.

Mulye said factors like aversion to China, favourable demographics and an improvement in the ease of doing business is leading many MNCs to look at investing in India.

BIG | BUCKS

## **Tech firms Glance and VerSe Innovation crossed \$1-billion valuation**

## Google backs two social media unicorns

Mumbai, Dec. 22: Goo-gle investments helped create India's two young-est technology unicorns: a pair of startups that feed personalised news and entertainment to the world's fastest-growing smartphone population.
Glance, which feeds
news and sports scores to
phone-lock screens, is

said to have reached a valuation of more than \$1 billion after completing a funding round led by Google. And VerSe Innovation Pvt, the studio behind the popular Dailyhunt news site and TikTok-like Josh app, said it passed that threshold after winning more than \$100 million from Google and

Google and its Ameri-



can internet peers are steadily amping up their investment in India. latching onto the only other country with a billion-plus population after getting shut out of China. From Amazon.com Inc. to Facebook Inc., they're hoping to get in on the ground floor of what they envision as a smartphone and online commerce boom that could eventuallv create a market to rival the world's No. 2 economy. The online search leader has struck an alliance with Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd. to invest \$4.5 billion and

cooperate on technology

initiatives including the development of afford-

able mobile phones. But they're also teaming with smaller outfits to target more local audiences. "In the last two years alone, 100 million new

internet users have come online from rural India,' vice-president Caesar Sengupta wrote in a blog post on Tuesday, announcing its invest-ment in VerSe. "But many of these internet users continue to have trouble finding content to read or services they can use confidently, in their own lan-

Of the two, Bengaluruheadquartered Glance Digital Experience Pvt is the more nascent outfit. It's the second unicorn to emerge from the group that created InMobi, a

cloud marketing platform that became India's earliest tech startup to reach the milestone. That group was founded by 43-yearold Naveen Tewari, alumnus of the prestigious IIT and the holder of an MBA from Harvard Business School. On Tuesday, his 18-month-old firm announced it had scored \$145 of investment from Google and billionaire Peter Thiel's Mithril Capital.

Glance currently has 115 million daily active users who average 25 minutes on the app each day. The app operates only in the Android ecosystem and has partnered with leading device makers including Samsung Electronics, Xiaomi Corp., Oppo and - Bloomberg

## 3.75 CR ITRs FILED **FOR 2019-20 FISCAL**

New Delhi, Dec. 22: As many as 3.75 crore taxpayers have already filed their Income-Tax returns for Assessment Year 2020-21 (fiscal year 2019-20) till December 21, the Income Tax department said on Tuesday.

"Do you know that 3.75 crore taxpayers have already filed their Income Tax Returns for AY 2020-21 till 21st December, 2020? Have you filed yours yet? If not, File NOW!," the Income Tax department

tweeted. This includes 2.17 crore taxpayers filing ITR-1, 79.82 lakh filing ITR-4, 43.18 lakh ITR-3 and 26.56 lakh filing ITR-2. The deadline to file I-T returns by individual taxpayers for 2019-20 fiscal (Assessment Year 2020-21) ends on

December 31, 2020, while

whose accounts require to be audited is January 31, The due date has been

extended from July 31 and October 31, 2020, respectively in view of the Covid pandemic.
At the close of deadline for filing ITR without pay-

ment of late fees for fiscal 2018-19 (assessment year 2019-20), over 5.65 crore returns were filed by tax-

The deadline last year too was extended till August 31.

Giving a comparative analysis of the ITRs filed, the Income Tax department said 3.63 crore income-tax returns were filed till August 21, 2019, compared to 3.75 crore filed till December 21,











#### SHORT TAKES

#### **Cole's goal settles** point for Odisha

Goa: It could have been another defeat but Odisha FC clawed back a point despite taking the lead early against NorthEast United, drawing 2-2 in a Indian Super League game at the GMC Stadium, here on Tuesday. Odisha took the lead through Diego Mauricio (26') before Benjamin Lambot (45+1') drew parity. Kwesi Appiah (65') then converted a penalty to put the Highlanders ahead but soon saw his goal cancelled out by

Cole Alexander (67'). Odisha named an unchanged eleven from the side that lost to Bengaluru FC while NorthEast coach Gerard Nus rang in four changes with Federico Gallego handed a start.

The first half saw a cagey contest with both sides heading into the break level after creating plenty of chances. The first big chance of the game arrived during the 10th minute but Odisha keeper Arshdeep Singh produced a fine save to deny an opener for

#### **Don's Test cap** sells for \$340k

Sydney: An Australian businessman has purchased Donald Bradman's first baggy green Test cap for 450,000 Australian dollars (\$340,000) at auction, the second-highest price paid for a piece of cricket memora-

Peter Freedman, the founder of Rode Microphones who earlier this year paid 9 million Australian dollars (\$6.8 million) at an auction for a guitar used by Nirvana front man Kurt Cobain, plans to tour Bradman's Test debut cap around

Australia. "The price for Bradman's 1928 Australia cap sits behind the 1,007,500 (\$760,000) paid at auction for Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne's Test cap earlier this year the world-record price for an item of cricket memorabilia," auction officials said. — AP

### **CAC** to interview

#### new selectors New Delhi: The BCCI's general body on Thursday will form a

new Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC), which will pick three national selectors ahead of the series against England, starting February. It is learnt that the committee headed by Madan Lal was appointed for one meeting and after the Board's upcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Ahmedabad, a new CAC will take over and conduct the interviews "Madan Lal, Rudra Pratap Singh and Sulakshana Naik were

appointed for one meeting where Sunil Joshi and Harvinder Singh became selectors," a senior BCCI source told on conditions of anonymity. "Since all cricket committees will be formed after the AGM. the new CAC will be formed and then the interview process is expected to start after that,"

#### **Pakistan win** third T20 in NZ

Napier, New Zealand: New Test captain Mohammad Rizwan showed his leadership quality in a bold innings of 89 which steered Pakistan to a four-wicket win over New Zealand in the third Twenty20 on Tuesday. Rizwan will lead Pakistan in the two-match Test series against New Zealand starting on Sunday in place of Babar Azam,

who is injured. - AP **Brief scores: New Zealand** 173/7 (Conway 63, Ashraf 3-20) lost to **Pakistan 177/6** (Rizwan 89. Southee 2-25).

## Live on TV

Big Bash League: Brisbane Heat vs

laide Strikers from 1.45 pm on Sony

Indian Super League: Jamshedpur vs

Goa from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2; Napoli vs Torino from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1; Roma vs Cagliari from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Six, HD

NXT: Bouts from 6.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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# KOHLI SIGNS OFF Raina sorry for Covid violation

captain Virat Kohli left Australian shores on Tuesday after a pep talk with his beleaguered teammates, handing over the mantle of leading the side to Ajinkya Rahane in the remaining three Tests.

Kohli is coming back to India for the birth of his

first child in January.

Before boarding his flight back home, the star batsman met his teammates and encouraged them to give their all in the remainder of the series, which the visitors trail 0-1 after the heavy defeat in the opening Test.

Long before setting foot on Australia, Rahane had been entrusted with the responsibility of leading in the team in Kohli's absence after the star had approached the BCCI for

The idea behind organising the pep talk was to boost the confidence of the players and keep them in a positive frame of mind heading into the crucial Boxing Day Test in Melbourne.

India lost the lung-opener here inside three days after crumbling to their lowest Test score of 36. The second Test is sched-

uled to be held at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) from December 26-30.

Kohli, who has been leading the Test team since

2014, urged his players to show intent and express themselves on the field without any inhibition.

While Kohli has departed for India, his white-ball deputy Rohit Sharma is quarantining in Sydney.
Kohli was India's best

performer with the bat in the series opener, top-scoring with a sedate 74 in their first innings before being run out following a misunderstanding with

Before boarding his flight back home, Virat Kohli met his teammates and encouraged them to give their all in the remainder of the

Colombo, Dec. 22: The

new strain of Covid-19 that has hit the United

Kingdom will not jeop-

upcoming tour of Sri

Lanka even though the

development is a cause

of concern, the coun-

try's cricket board

(SLC) said on Tuesday.

(SLC) medical team

feels that the tour start-

ing January 14 is on

schedule but additional

might be enforced for

the visitors either before leaving their

country or after arriv-

According to a report

in *ESPNcricinfo*, SLC's

medical team is expect-

ed to hold discussions

with their English

Tuesday on the matter.

"I don't think we should (look at the new

strain as something that jeopardises the

counterparts

Sri Lanka Cricket's

England's

protocols

**ENGLAND TOUR STILL ON** 

**DESPITE NEW COVID WAVE** 



Australia's Steve Smith (left) and Virat Kohli during the first Test in Adelaide.

# Virat deserves respect: Smith

Adelaide, Australian batsman Steve Smith on Tuesday said Virat Kohli deserves credit for prioritising the birth of his child over cricket as "there would have been a lot of pressure" on the India skipper to stay for the entire duration of the ongoing Test series.

India are 0-1 down in the four-match rubber after losing the opening Test by eight wickets during which they also collapsed to their lowest Test score. Kohli will head home on

tour) " said Sri Lankan

team's doctor Daminda

take extra precautions,

but we don't need to

As per the itinerary.

the England squad is

scheduled to fly to Sri

Lanka on a chartered

After their arrival

would be required to

undergo a three-day

isolated quarantine,

and will only began

their training after

The English players

will mingle with their

Sri Lankan counter-

parts only after 10 days.

they will not be in con-

tact with my local people or the local providers, and they

will be in quarantine. I

don't see why we need to restrict them com-

'When they come in

testing negative .

the tourists

flight on January 2.

'We might have to

Attanayake.

stop the tour.

here.

big loss for India, not having him for the rest of the series. We just have to look at the way he played in the first innings. That was a pretty class display against some good bowling on a wicket that was doing a bit," Smith said during a virtual press conference.

"I just fist-pumped him at the end (of first Test) and said 'Mate safe travels, hope everything goes well with the baby, and pass on my best to your wife.' That was about it,"

"I'm sure there would have been a lot of pres-

sure for him to stay but to stand up and want to go home for for the birth of his first child, it's a credit for him. It's a milestone that he certainly would-

n't want to miss." Kohli's 74 was the highest score by any batsman on either side in the first innings of the pink-ball day/night Test while Smith was out for 1.

Smith was also asked legendary

Warne's view that red ball is "pathetic" and pink ball should replace it in all Tests. He disagreed with the idea.

"Personally I'd like to red-ball cricket alive. I think one series or something like that is a good amount. We've seen in Adelaide for instance it's worked exceptionally well, it's a great spectacle. We played some really good day/night games. "But I think overall, I'd

like to personally play red ball cricket a lot,"

## Australian spinner Shane Smith said. Waugh sees 'no hope' of India bouncing back

Melbourne, Dec. 22: The Indian cricket team has "no hope" of making a come back after the humiliation in Adelaide and will suffer a 4-0 whitewash in the fourmatch Test series against Australia, feels former batsman Mark Waugh.

India were bundled out for their lowest-ever Test score of 36 in their second as Australia claimed an eight-wicket win in the pink-ball Test to take a 1-0 lead in the series. Asked if India could bounce back after losing the first Test, Waugh said:

'No hope, no hope. "I thought Adelaide was the Test that they could win on paper and with Virat Kohli here for just the one Test. I thought the conditions would suit them.

"I just can't see how they can bounce back (after) Australia whitewashed them on the third day. So



Mark Waugh

'no' is the answer four-nil to Australia," he said on Fox Cricket.

#### CA SAYS SMITH NOT ONLY

Batting mainstay Steve Smith's reappointment as Australia's Test captain is far from certain as the sport's governing body in the country feels there are some "great young leaders" coming through the sys-

Smith was removed from captaincy due to his involvement in the 2018 ball-tampering scandal, with Cricket Australia (CA) appointing Tim Paine to the top job.

However, there have been speculations recently that Smith could be reinstated as skipper.

Asked about the board's view, CA chairman Earl Eddings told *ESPNcricinfo*: "First of all we've got three great captains in Meg, Aaron and Tim. We've got some great young leaders coming through. So it's not just about should Steve take over, it's about what's best overal.

"Steve's a great young man and he was a good captain when he was there. Like any succession there's planning in place."

India cricketer Suresh Raina, who was among 34 people arrested and released on bail by Mumbai Police for violating COVID-19 social distancing norms at a club here, has regretted the "unintentional and unfortunate" incident.

A statement issued by the former batsman's management team said the 34-year old was not aware of the local timings and protocols at the time of the incident. "Suresh was in Mumbai

for a shoot which extended to late hours and was invited by a friend for a quick dinner post the same prior to him taking his flight back to Delhi. He was not aware of the local timings and protocols," said the

"Once pointed out, he (Raina) immediately complied with the procedures laid out by the authorities and regrets the unfortu-nate and unintentional incident.

"He (Raina) always holds rules and laws laid down by governing bodies with the highest regard and will continue to do so in the future as well," it added.

Thirty-four people

Thirty-four people including Raina and celebrity



Suresh Raina

Khan were Sussanne arrested after a raid at a posh club near the Mumbai airport on Tuesday for violating social distancing norms.

According to the police, those arrested in the raid at the Dragonfly Experience included seven staffers of the club.

The 13 women, who were arrested, were allowed to leave after being served notices. The men were shown as arrested and granted bail later.

Police said the raid was conducted after the club remained open beyond the permissible time limit and

violated Covid-19 norms. Raina, who has played 18 Tests, 226 ODIs and 78 T20s, announced retirement from international cricket in August earlier this year.



## Sindhu hopeful of travelling from UK

New Delhi, Dec. 22: flights on the UK because situation ın England where she is training right now, world champion shuttler P.V. Sindhu on Tuesday said that she remains hopeful of travelling to Thailand for tournaments in January despite countries increasingly banning flights from the ŬK.

Sindhu, who has qualified for the Tokyo Olympics, has been training in London for the last two months and is scheduled to play her first tournament since the break in Thailand. She will have to be in Bangkok by January 3 to compete in the two Super 1000 events (January 12 to 17 and January 19 to

24).
"I plan to travel in the first week of January There is no travel ban from UK in Thailand, so I can travel from Doha. The idea is to use the Gulf route to reach Thailand," said Sindhu, who is managed by sports management firm Baseline Ventures.

Several countries around the world, including India, have imposed bans on

Unfazed by the worsening of a new and seemingly more contagious strain of coronavirus England.

The 25-year-old had left for London in October to focus on her nutrition and fitness at the Gatorade Sports Science Institute (GSSI) and also has been training alongside British shuttlers Toby Penty and Rajiv Ouseph at the National Training Centre.

"Thankfully, my training is going on pretty well. The national center is not closed. It is run as a bubble center, so I have been able to practice ahead of the Thailand,' Sindhu said.

The Thailand leg will mark the return of international badminton but the country has been dealing with pro-democracy protest movements and has recently seen a spike in Covid-19 cases as well.

Last Saturday, health officials in Thailand reported 548 new cases, most victims being migrant workers of the seafood industry in Samut Sakhon province, 34 kilometers southwest of

Chelsea's Tammy Abraham celebrates after scoring his team's second goal during their English Premier League match against West Ham at Stamford Bridge in

## Abraham hammers West Ham

London, Dec. 22: Tammy Abraham hit a quickfire late double on Monday as Chelsea beat West Ham 3-0 to reignite their Premier League challenge after a consecutive defeats.

The Hammers proved BBC. tricky opponents at an empty Stamford Bridge but lacked the firepower to hurt Frank Lampard's men, who led early through Thiago Silva's bullet header.

Chelsea enjoyed a strong start to the season before losses to Everton and Wolves checked progress but the victory at the London Stadium lifts them into fifth spot. Liverpool Champions

have opened up a five-point gap at the top of the table but behind them, just seven points separate secondplaced Leicester from 11thplaced Wolves. 'It was nice to see that at

the end because we had a period at 1-0 where it was tough, we dealt with that well," Lampard told the Lampard told the

"We dropped off slightly and it was important tonight we came back," he added. "There were loads of

things for the team to show their character — we want more. West Ham had the ball in

the net in the seventh minute after a cleverly worked free kick but Declan Rice was denied by the offside flag after an impressive finish from a tight

Three minutes later Chelsea were in front when

#### THE RESULTS

**Burnley** (Barnes 35, Wood 51) (Silva 89-pen)

Chelsea (Silva 10, Abraham 78, West Ham

Silva powered home a header from Mason Mount's cor-

The Brazilian found the net from close range after a well-timed run, leaving West Ham goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski rooted to the spot.

Chelsea enjoyed the lion's share of possession after their goal without creating

much of note but West Ham worked their way into the game as the half wore on.

#### **WERNER GOAL DROUGHT**

Timo Werner, who has not scored for Chelsea since early November, had a golden chance to double their lead in the closing minutes of the first period but got the ball caught under his feet and Fabianski saved

comfortably. The win lifts Chelsea to 25 points — one behind fourthplaced Everton — while West Ham stay in 10th

Earlier, Burnley beat Wolves 2-1 to climb out of the Premier League's relegation zone, thanks to goals from Ashley Barnes and Chris Wood.