

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI MONDAY 7 DECEMBER 2020



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Kushwaha-Nitish meeting triggers reunion buzz, RLSP chief downplays speculation



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Trump campaigns in Georgia amid key Senate race, again says Nov. 3 election 'rigged'

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Saif apologises for his Ravan comment, says didn't mean to hurt people's sentiment



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

Vol. 27 No. 291 | 16 PAGES | ₹5.00

WINDOWS

Cop, civilian hurt as militants open fire at police in Srinagar

Srinagar: Two people, including a civilian, were injured after militants opened fire on a police party here on Sunday, the police said. The incident took place in Hawal area of the city, they said. Militants opened fire on the police party at Hawal Chowk, resulting in injuries to a policeman and a civilian. They have been taken to the hospital, a police official said. The area has been cordoned off to track down the militants, he said. The injured policeman was identified as Farooq Ahmed. — PTI

UK & EU hold talks on post-Brexit deal

London: The UK and EU are holding crunch talks on Sunday to give one last push to try and thrash out a post-Brexit trade agreement before the end of the transition period on December 31. There are lingering divergences on key areas of EU fishing rights in UK waters. — PTI



PSG's French forward Kylian Mbappe celebrates after scoring a goal during the French L1 match with Montpellier Herault at the Mosson Stadium in Montpellier, southern France, on Saturday. — AFP

Economy on track by 2022's end: Niti

New Delhi: India's economic growth is likely to reach pre-Covid levels by the end of the 2021-22 fiscal as the GDP contraction in this financial year is expected to be less than 8 per cent, Niti Aayog vice-chairman Rajiv Kumar said on Sunday. — PTI

COUNTERPOINT



The Opposition parties are demanding a spacious Well of the House!

WEATHER

Max: 27°C
Min: 12°C
RH: 51%
Rain: Nil%
Forecast: Sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Bahula
Saptami till 6.42 pm
Star: Magha till 2.28 pm
Variyam: 10.13 to 11.46 pm
Durmuhurtam: 12.29 pm to 1.13 pm; 2.41 pm to 3.25 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
SUNSET TODAY 5.24 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 7.00 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 11.52 PM
MOONSET TODAY 12.25 AM



Farmers gather in large numbers during their "Delhi Chalo" protest march against the Centre's farm laws at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

Chinese build new villages close to LAC in Arunachal

PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, DEC. 6

Continuing with its aggressive stand, the Chinese government has built new villages near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Arunachal Pradesh this year, to beef up its defences and also to put pressure on India in the disputed area, the satellite images shared by independent OSINT (open source intelligence) indicate on Sunday.

This follows reports of the Chinese building a village within Bhutanese territory near the site of the Doklam standoff between India and China



in 2017. Going by the satellite images, one of the villages constructed this

year is a mere 5 km from the Bum-La pass at the LAC in Arunachal

Pradesh. "Evidence of new villages and accommodation similar to what was seen at Pangda village in Bhutan is now visible near the Bum-La pass that sits between India and China on the eastern front," tweeted OSINT analyst Detresfa. He said that these villages had been built in order to strengthen the weakening border forces by balancing the outflow of residents. He said that the relocation move also promises to offer China better border surveillance and patrols through a network of herders. All these new villages are within

■ **Turn to Page 3**

Pressure rising on Shivraj to induct 2 Scindia loyalists

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, DEC. 6

Pressure is mounting on Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan by a strong section of the ruling BJP here to expand his Cabinet to accommodate two loyalists of senior party leader Jyotiraditya Scindia in his ministry.

Two former ministers, Govind Singh Rajput and Tulsii Silawat, resigned from the Chouhan ministry ahead of the November 3 Assembly bypolls in the state when their six-month tenure as non-MLA ministers came to an end on October 27.

The two former ministers, close lieutenants of Mr Scindia, staked claim for reinduction in the Cabinet after they won the November 3 bypolls.



Mr Scindia has a ready held discussions with the chief minister on this as well as on accommodating two other former ministers, Imarti Devi and Giriraj Dandotia, who lost the byelections, ss heads of some corporations, BJP sources said.

"Mr Scindia discussed the issue with Mr Chouhan during his Bhopal visit last week. He is scheduled to arrive here on December 11 and may take it up with the party leadership here", sources close to Mr Scindia said.

Pressure is also mounting from other senior MLAs and former ministers seen as close to Mr Chouhan to induct them in the Cabinet.

Work on CAA to start Jan-Feb: BJP

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, DEC. 6

Faced with the threat of losing the vote bank of the Matuas, a sizeable community of Hindu migrants in West Bengal, in the coming Assembly election there, BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya on Sunday asserted that implementa-

tion of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) for refugees will get underway from "either January or February" across the country.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah ensured the CAA's passage in Parliament, promising to give citizenship to the

migrants who have taken shelter here after facing religious persecution in Bangladesh and Pakistan. The work of the CAA is going to be underway soon. The BJP has resolved that we will start the work of giving citizenship under the CAA from either January or February to all the refugees. No one needs to

worry about it further," Mr Vijayvargiya told a BJP meeting near Kolkata's Red Road.

On Saturday, he indicated at Barasat in North 24 Parganas that the CAA implementation will be underway "probably from January". His remarks came close on the heels of Bongaon BJP MP ■ **Turn to Page 3**

Cachar probes threats over visit to church

Silchar (Assam), Dec. 6: The Cachar district administration of Assam has asked the police to investigate an inflammatory speech reportedly made by a local Bajrang Dal leader threatening to beat up Hindus visiting churches during Christmas celebrations.

Cachar deputy commissioner has instructed the SP to probe the matter. ■ **More on Page 3**

India clinch T20 series, beat Aussies by 6 wickets



Hardik Pandya and Shreyas Iyer celebrate their win in the second T20 match between Australia and India at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday. India won by six wickets, sealing the T20 series against Australia with a game to spare. ■ **Report on Page 8** — AP

UK readies for huge vaccine rollout

London, Dec. 6: The coronavirus vaccine developed by American drugmaker Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech was being sent to hospitals across the UK in super-cold containers on Sunday, two days ahead of the kickoff of Britain's biggest-ever immunization program, one being closely watched around the world.

Around 800,000 doses of the vaccine are expected to be in place for the start of the rollout on Tuesday, a day that British health secretary Matt

■ **AROUND 800,000** doses of the vaccine are expected to be in place for the start of the rollout on Tuesday

Hancock has reportedly dubbed as "V-Day," a nod to triumphs in World War II.

"Despite the huge complexities, hospitals will kickstart the first phase of the largest scale vaccination campaign in our country's history from Tuesday," said Professor Stephen Powis, NHS

England's national medical director.

"The first tranche of vaccine deliveries will be landing at hospitals by Monday in readiness."

Last week the UK became the first country to authorise the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for emergency use. In trials, the vaccine was shown to have around 95 per cent efficacy.

Vaccinations will be administered starting Tuesday at around 50 hospital hubs in England, Scotland, Wales and

Northern Ireland will also begin their vaccination rollouts the same day.

Governments and health agencies around the world will be monitoring the British vaccination program to note its successes and failures and adjust their own plans accordingly.

The United States hopes to start vaccinations later this month. British regulatory authorities are also examining data on vaccines made by Moderna and AstraZeneca-Oxford University. — AP



Boxer Vijender Singh joins the farmers' agitation at the Singhu border in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

Police suggests alternative routes to enter & exit Delhi

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, DEC. 6

With farmers protesting against the new farm laws staying put, commuters continued to suffer due to the sealing of multiple borders connecting the national capital with the surrounding states. The Delhi traffic police took to Twitter to inform commuters about alternative routes open

for travelling to the neighbouring states of UP and Haryana.

The traffic police advised those commuting to Delhi to come via the DND instead of Noida Link road. "Chilla border on Noida link road is closed for traffic from Noida to Delhi due to the farmers' protest near Gautam Budh Dwar," said the traffic police.

■ **More on Page 2**

Cases fall in India; Pfizer asks govt for vaccine nod

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, DEC. 6

India's total Covid-19 active caseload dropped to 4,03,248 — the lowest in 138 days — as 36,011 fresh infections were recorded, against 41,970 recoveries in the last 24 hours. After getting approval for emergency use in Britain and Bahrain, Pfizer Inc has become the first pharmaceutical company to seek an emergency use authorisation for its vaccine in the country from the Drugs Controller General of India.

This is the first such request received by the DCGI amidst the race to find a potential vaccine for the deadly virus, that affected over 66 million people globally, with 15 million in the US alone, followed by over 96.44 lakh in India. In its application to the drug regulator, Pfizer sought permission to import the vaccine for sale and distribution in the country, besides waiver of clinical trials on the Indian population in accordance with the special provisions.

Continuing with the trend of the past nine days, India saw more daily recoveries than new cases. New cases per million population in India in the past week were 186, one of the world's lowest, while 482 people died of the virus in the past 24 hours, taking the overall fatalities to 1,40,182. The highest daily infection numbers are being recorded in Kerala, Maharashtra, Delhi and West Bengal.

■ **More on Page 3**

SHORT TAKES

MAN DIES AFTER
BEING STRUCK ON
HEAD WITH TABLA

New Delhi: A man who worked as a "granthi" at a gurdwara in RK Puram was killed allegedly over a petty issue while performing "kirtan", police said on Saturday. Both the deceased, Ravinder Singh, and the accused, Darshan Singh, worked at the gurdwara, they said. On Friday morning, while performing kirtan, they got into quarrel over some petty issue, and Darshan Singh hit Ravinder Singh on the head with a tabla, the police said. The accused also hit Ravinder Singh's wife, Maninder Kaur, who tried to stop the fight, a senior police officer said. Ravinder Singh succumbed to injuries at the Safdarjung hospital on Saturday, while the condition of his wife is stated to be stable, he said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Ingit Pratap Singh said a case has been registered, and efforts are being made to nab the accused, who is at large. — PTI

50-year-old found
killed in Sonia Vihar

New Delhi: The body of a 50-year-old man bearing multiple injuries to the head was found at his home in northeast Delhi's Sonia Vihar area on Saturday morning, police said. The deceased, identified as Birender Singh, used to stitch gunny bags and lived with his wife, they said. A senior police officer said the victim's wife had gone to a temple in the morning and on returning home, found the body. There was no sign of a forceful entry, he said. The spot was visited by crime and Forensic Science Laboratory team of Rohini, the officer added. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northeast) Ved Prakash Surya said a case of murder under section 302 of the Indian Penal Code was registered, and the case was being investigated by 10 different teams. As per initial investigation, the role of an insider is suspected and personal enmity could be the motive behind the killing, he said. The body has been shifted to a mortuary in Guru Teg Bahadur hospital and will be handed over to the family after autopsy, the DCP added.

Rohini: 25-year-old
gangster shot dead

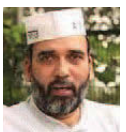
New Delhi: A 25-year-old man was shot dead allegedly by a group of four-five assailants in sector-24 of outer Delhi's Rohini area on Friday evening. The CCTV footage of the murder surfaced on social media on Sunday in which the victim's female friend is seen helping him and chasing away the attackers. As many as seven bullets were fired at the 25-year-old man, identified as Bharat Solanki alias Yuvvin, killing him on the spot. Solanki had a criminal background and was involved in three-four criminal cases, including extortion and robbery, said deputy commissioner of police (Rohini) Pramod Kumar Mishra.

Woman who duped
100 people arrested

New Delhi: A woman involved in duping more than 100 people on the pretext of delivering them flats was arrested from Mumbai, police said on Sunday. The accused has duped over 100 people of more than ₹20 crores. She was found proclaimed offender in many cases and wanted in more than dozen cases across the Delhi and NCR, they said. A probe was initiated by the Economic Offences Wing of the Delhi Police after it received complaints from several people who had booked flats in a project at Raj Nagar Extension in Ghaziabad. They alleged that the directors of the said company never delivered them flats on promised time and also stopped the construction without any reason, police said.

CORRIGENDUM

A report on page two titled "BJP MP, MLA at loggerheads over issue of a road divider" published on December 6, inadvertently mentioned MP. We regret the mistake.

In the name of talks, BJP govt is only using delaying tactics: Rai
AAP to support Bharat Bandh TuesAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 6

Delhi Minister Gopal Rai on Sunday announced that Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has decided to support the farmers-led Bharat Bandh slated to take place on December 8. Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has urged his party officials and workers to support the bandh. "Aam Aadmi Party's convenor and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal Ji has urged party officials and workers to support farmers-led Bharat Bandh on December 8. Ours is an agrarian country, I would also urge the people to show their support as well," Gopal Rai tweeted. While slamming the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Gopal Rai said that "For several days, farmers are out there protesting against the farm laws brought by the BJP government. They are forced to sleep on the streets during this winter season. In the name of discussion, the government

Farmers' protest: Traffic cops suggest
alternative routes to enter, exit capitalAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 6

With farmers protesting against the new farm laws staying put at the national capital's gateways, the Delhi Traffic Police on Sunday advised people to take alternative routes for entering and exiting the city. Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana and other parts of the country have been camping at Delhi's borders for the past 10 days to demand a repeal of the agriculture reform laws. The Delhi Traffic Police took to Twitter to inform commuters about alternative routes open for travelling to the neighbouring states of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. It advised those commuting to Delhi to come via the DND instead of Noida Link road. Chilla border on Noida link road is closed for traffic from Noida to Delhi due to the farmers' protest near Gautam Budh Dwar. "The Ghazipur border on NH 24 is closed for traffic from Ghaziabad to Delhi due to farmers' protests. People are advised to avoid NH 24 for coming to Delhi and use Apsara/Bhopra/DND for coming to Delhi," it tweeted.

Besides AAP, Congress has also decided to support the Bharat Bandh in support of the farmers protesting against the Centre's new agriculture laws. Farmers have been protesting at the borders of the national capital for the past eleven days now

against the three farm laws. The Centre is engaging with farmers to settle their differences. The farmers are protesting against the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, the Farmers (Empowerment and

Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020. The Centre, which claims the laws would revitalise India's agrarian economy by boosting produce, has made several attempts to placate the farmers. But five rounds of talks have failed to break the impasse so far. The agitation continued and another round of negotiations is scheduled for December 9. The call for a bandh was given on December 4, a day before the farmers and the government met for their fifth round of talks. As part of the agitation, farmers said they would "block all the roads leading up to Delhi."

The toll plazas will also be occupied and protests against the central government and corporate houses will intensify. Meanwhile, Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala also spoke in support of the farmers on Sunday, saying the Congress stood united with them in their struggle.

Delhi's air quality very poor, likely to improve

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 6

Delhi's air quality was recorded in the upper end of the 'very poor' category on Sunday and is likely to improve over the next two days due to a predicted increase in the wind speed. The air quality had turned severe on Saturday with slow wind speed allowing accumulation of "locally-generated" pollutants, according to officials of the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The city's air quality index (AQI) was 394 at 9.00 am. The 24-hour average was 404 on Saturday, which falls in the 'severe' category. Air pollution in the

neighbouring cities of Ghaziabad (AQI 430), Greater Noida (404), and Noida (404) remained in the severe zone. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good," 51 and 100 "satisfactory," 101 and 200 "moderate," 201 and 300 "poor," 301 and 400 "very poor," and 401 and 500 "severe." The wind speed remained slow allowing accumulation of pollutants generated locally, said VK. Soni, the head of IMD's environment research centre. Easterly winds carrying moisture also led to the formation of secondary particulate matter. All these factors together pushed the air quality in the 'severe' zone, he said. He

► **THE CITY'S** air quality index (AQI) was 394 at 9.00 am. The 24-hour average was 404 on Saturday, which falls in the 'severe' category. Air pollution in the neighbouring cities of Ghaziabad (AQI 430), Greater Noida (404), and Noida (404) remained in the severe zone.

added that the air quality is likely to be in the 'poor' category by Monday due to an expected increase in the wind speed. According to the IMD, the maximum wind speed is likely to be 8 kmph on Sunday and 15 kmph on Monday. The minimum temperature was 11.4°

Celsius on Sunday and the maximum is likely to settle around 28° Celsius, the weather department said. Notably, calm winds and low temperatures trap pollutants close to the ground while favourable wind speed helps in their dispersion. Mahesh Palawat, an expert at Skymet Weather, a private forecasting agency, said Delhi recorded a rise in the maximum and minimum temperature in the last few days which can be attributed to light, warm easterly winds and plenty of sunshine during the daytime due to clear skies. The city is likely to record above normal temperatures till November 10, he said.

However, Mr Palawat said a fresh Western Disturbance will trigger moderate to heavy snowfall in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and upper reaches of Uttarakhand. After the WD withdraws, icy winds from snow-clad western Himalayas will blow towards the plains, leading to a drop in the mercury, he said. Shallow to moderate fog is also predicted over the next two days, the IMD said. The central government's Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi said the city's ventilation index — a product of mixing depth and average wind speed is likely to be 1,000 m²/s on Sunday.



Farmers during their Delhi Chalo protest march against the new farm laws at Singhu border in New Delhi on Sunday.

— PTI

NGT directs DDA to look into plea alleging
discharge of untreated sewage in Sanjay LakeAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 6

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to look into a plea alleging garbage burning and discharge of untreated sewage into a lake in East Delhi. A bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice A.K. Goel asked the vice chairman of the DDA to ensure proper action in the matter expeditiously. The order came after the DDA filed an affidavit stating that all norms are being complied with and that tiles are being placed in the Sanjay Lake Park in an interlocking way to allow the water to seep through. "The park is being developed for the convenience of the people. A footpath,



Sanjay Lake

cycle track, children's play equipment, etc. are being provided in the park. Water tank and sprinklers are being installed for irrigation purpose at the site. However, no concretisation is being done," the DDA said. The petitioner, however,

alleged that DDA has completely failed to respond to the serious issues relating to garbage burning as well as the discharge of untreated sewage into the lake and the park. The applicant contended that as per the Master Plan of Delhi 2021, while it may be permissible to

have food court and adventure park activities in a district park, the same must be done in an eco-friendly manner. The tribunal's order came on a plea filed by city resident R.P. Singhal alleging that the Sanjay Lake Park near Mayapuri Vihar is being polluted by ingress of sewage in the water body. The plea alleged that Sanjay Lake and Sanjay Lake Park are being polluted, for which the DDA and Delhi Tourism and Transport Development Corporation (DTTDC) have to take necessary steps. Concretisation around trees is taking place in violation of orders of the tribunal, the petitioner submitted, adding that he made a representation to the authorities but no action has been taken till date.

6 held at Delhi airport for
smuggling gold, cigarettesAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 6

Customs officials arrested six people at the international airport here for allegedly trying to smuggle into the country gold, some of which was concealed in their bodies, and cigarettes worth ₹1.79 crore, an official statement issued on Sunday said. Ten passengers were intercepted by the officers after their arrival from Dubai on Friday, the statement issued by the Customs (preventive) said. "Detailed search of their baggage led to the recovery of foreign origin cigarettes of various brands such as Esse Light/Gold Special, Pine, Dunhill Switch, Gold Flake,

► **A SEARCH OF** the said passengers led to the recovery of gold paste from which 1.26 kg of gold worth around ₹64 lakh was recovered

Benson & Hedges Blue Gold etc. totalling to 7.52 lakh sticks and valued at around ₹1.15 crore," it said. Further, a search of the said passengers led to the recovery of gold paste from which 1.26 kg of gold worth around ₹64 lakh has been recovered, it said, adding that "the same was concealed by them on and in their bodies, including the rectum". According to the statement, both cigarettes and gold have been seized under the provisions of

the Customs Act, 1962. "The total value of seizure comes out to be ₹1.79 crore," the statement said. These passengers also admitted to have smuggled in around 18 lakh sticks of foreign origin cigarettes worth around ₹2.41 crore in the past, it said. "Thus, the total offence value, including previous offences, comes out to be around ₹4.20 crores," it added. So far, six arrests have been made in the case, the statement said. Late last month, customs (preventive) officials at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport here had seized foreign origin cigarettes worth ₹1.24 crore, among other things, from nine Afghanistani men.



A Delhi police officer hands over a scooter to its owner in New Delhi on Sunday. Delhi Police on Sunday claimed to have returned ₹7.5 crores and other valuable case properties to their rightful owners in the last six months. Police said that these articles were lying in the custody of Delhi Police from the last several years.



SHORT TAKES



Justice G. R. Udhwani

JUDGE'S DEATH: GUJ HC, COURTS TO REMAIN SHUT TODAY

Ahmedabad, Dec. 6: The Gujarat High Court and subordinate courts in the state will remain closed on Monday on account of the death of Justice G. R. Udhwani, the HC said on Sunday. Justice Udhwani (59), the sitting HC judge, tested positive for Covid-19 on November 19 and died at a private hospital here on Saturday due to complications arising out of the infection.

The high court in a notification said a holiday is declared on Monday in the Gujarat HC and subordinate courts as well as their offices in the state on account of the sad demise of Justice G. R. Udhwani.

A full court reference via video conference will also be held at the HC on Monday to offer him tributes and condolences. Justice Udhwani, who hailed from Ahmedabad, was elevated as additional judge of the high court on November 12, 2012 and was confirmed as a permanent judge on July 10, 2014.

Before that, he served as registrar general of the high court between June 20, 2011 and November 11, 2012. He had also served as registrar of the high court. In his legal career spanning over three decades, he had also served as judge of the city civil court in Ahmedabad and as additional judge of a special Prevention of Terrorism Act court.

CONDUCTORS TO BE ARMED WITH BODY CAMERAS IN MAHA

Aurangabad, Dec. 6: Bus conductors and ticket inspectors in Maharashtra's Aurangabad city will soon be equipped with body cameras to keep a tab on the behaviour of passengers and other activities during transportation, an official has said.

A few days back, some women conductors of the civic-run buses complained of misbehaviour with them during their duty hours. "Acting on it, the Aurangabad Smart City Development Corporation has decided to install body cameras in the front pockets of shirts of the conductors and inspectors of its buses to record the activities in the vehicles during their duty," the ASCDCL official said in a statement on Saturday.

The cameras will help in the real-time examination of tickets and to keep an eye on other activities in the buses, he said. The ASCDCL administration has also deployed former defence servicemen as line inspectors, who will check tickets of passengers and their behaviour, the official said. They will also ensure security of passengers and give the feedback of commuters to authorities, he added.

The ASCDCL has a fleet of 100 buses, out of which 29 are currently being run on 12 routes in the city, ferrying around 5,000 passengers in a day, another official said. The Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation's employees have been hired as drivers and conductors of these buses, he said. During the lockdown period, these civic-run buses were used to ferry Covid-19 patients. Last month, the ASCDCL resumed its bus services for normal passengers, the official added.

The ASCDCL has been formed by the Aurangabad Municipal Corporation.



Health workers scan temperatures of farmers during their ongoing Delhi Chalo agitation against the new farm laws at the Singhu border in New Delhi on Sunday. Farmers' organisations have given a call for a Bharat bandh on Tuesday. — PTI

Pawar as agri minister sought changes in APMC Act: Sources

New Delhi, Dec. 6: With NCP chief Sharad Pawar backing farmers' protest against the contentious agri reforms, government sources on Sunday pointed out that as the agriculture minister in the UPA dispensation he had asked chief ministers to amend the APMC Act in their states to allow the private sector to play an important role in the field.

Sharing the content of some letters he had written to various chief ministers, the sources claimed that the BJP-led NDA government has made the same set of changes in the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act as pushed by Mr Pawar when he was the Union minister.

Mr Pawar is scheduled to

meet President Ram Nath Kovind on December 9 over the ongoing farmers' protest against the new agrarian laws after the NCP joined other opposition parties in supporting the 'Bharat Bandh' called on December 8 by farmer unions, which have demanded the repeal of the Centre's new agri-marketing laws.

The government sources said Pawar in a 2010 letter to the then Delhi chief minister Sheila Dikshit that the agriculture sector needs well-functioning markets to drive growth, employment and economic prosperity in rural area of the country.

"This requires huge investments in marketing infrastructure including cold-chain. And for this,



private sector participation is essential, for which an appropriate regulatory and policy environment needs to be in place," his letter said, calling for amending the state APMC Act.

In a letter on similar lines to the then Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Pawar had underlined the need for investments in post-harvest and marketing infrastructure from

the farm gate to the consumer and said "private sector needs to play an important role in this regard".

Mr Pawar was the Union agriculture, consumer affairs, food and public distribution minister in the then Manmohan Singh-led government.

Earlier on Sunday, Mr Pawar asked the Centre to take serious cognisance of the ongoing farmers' protest and said if the deadlock continues, the agitation will not be limited to Delhi and people from across the country will stand by the protesting farmers.

The ruling BJP has accused the opposition of playing politics on the matter and noted that the manifesto of the main

opposition party, the Congress, had also batted for some of the reforms the Modi government has ushered in.

Prominent opposition leaders including Congress president Sonia Gandhi, NCP leader Sharad Pawar, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, DMK chief M K Stalin and PAGD chairman Farooq Abdullah issued a joint statement on Sunday supporting the call for Bharat Bandh on December 8 by farmer groups and pressed the Centre to meet the legitimate demands of the protesters.

Protesting farmer unions have demanded the repeal of all three laws Parliament had passed in the last session. — PTI

ASSAM TO PROBE BAJRANG DAL'S THREAT AGAINST VISITING CHURCH

Silchar, Dec. 6: The Cachar district administration of Assam has asked the police to investigate an inflammatory speech reportedly made by a local Bajrang Dal leader threatening to beat up Hindus visiting churches during Christmas celebrations.

Taking note of a viral video in which the saffron outfit's leader was seen issuing the threat, Cachar Deputy Commissioner Keerthi Jalli on Sunday said she has instructed the superintendent of police to probe the matter and "take necessary steps".

Police, however, said no case has been registered as of now and the incident is being investigated.

"We have not received any complaint from anyone. However, we are looking into the incident after seeing the video," a senior police officer said. — PTI

Cases fall in India; Pfizer asks Centre for Covid vaccine nod

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, DEC. 6

India's total COVID-19 active caseload dropped to 4,03,248 — the lowest in 138 days — as 36,011 fresh coronavirus infections were recorded against 41,970 recoveries in the last 24 hours. After getting the nod for emergency use in the UK and Bahrain, Pfizer Inc. has become the first pharmaceutical company to seek from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) an emergency use authorisation for its coronavirus vaccine in the country.

This is the first such request received by the DCGI amid the race to find a potential vaccine for the deadly virus, which has affected over 6.6 crore people globally, with 1.5 crore people in US alone followed by over 96.44 lakh people in India. In its application submitted to the drug regulator, Pfizer has sought permission to import the vaccine for sale and distribution in the country, besides waiver of

Ministry: Not aware where vaccine records are kept

New Delhi, Dec. 6: The Union health ministry has said in response to an RTI application that it does not know where records related to agenda circulated in meetings of the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 are held.

Venkatesh Nayak of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative had approached the ministry seeking details of the constitution and working of the expert group such as dates of meetings, a copy of the detailed agenda circulated in relation to every meeting, presentations made before its

members, and material it had shared with the MEA. Nayak had also sought to know the amount of sitting fees and every other remuneration or allowances payable to the chairperson and every member of the expert group and the amount of sitting fees and every other remuneration or allowances actually paid to them. The National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC) was constituted under the chairmanship of member (health) of Niti Aayog V. K. Paul on August 7 to prepare a strategy for the roll-out of Covid vaccine. — PTI

clinical trials on Indian population in accordance with the special provisions under the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019.

While five other vac-

cines are currently in advanced phases of clinical trials in India, Pfizer is getting ready for emergency rollouts of its vaccine and is now in the final stages of planning

before it starts its vaccination drive starts on December 14 in the United Kingdom.

The Pfizer vaccine's one major drawback is that it has to be stored at minus 70 degree Celsius, a temperature which most Indian cold storages cannot reach.

Elsewhere in China, a million people have already been vaccinated. Unlike the Pfizer vaccine, the Chinese ones can reportedly be stored in temperatures as low as 2 to 8 degree Celsius.

Continuing with the trend of the last nine days, India has reported more daily recoveries than daily new cases in a span of 24 hours. The last time daily new cases crossed the 50,000-threshold was on November 7.

The overall coronavirus recoveries have shot past the 91-lakh mark, taking the recovery rate to 94.4 per cent. New cases per million population in India in the last seven days are 186. It is one of the lowest in the world.

Nadda: All parties are family-centric except the BJP

Dehradun, Dec. 6: Describing rival political parties as family-centric, BJP president J. P. Nadda on Sunday said the BJP is the only ideology-based party where the whole organisation is "one big family".

Nadda was addressing a booth committee of the Pradesh BJP on the third day of his four-day tour of Uttarakhand to galvanise the party's organisational structure.

"All other political parties have become confined to families, whereas ours is a party which in itself is one big family," he said. "We are an ideology-based party that does not discriminate between classes, castes and religions," Nadda said.

Underlining the key role of the cadre in the party, he said even a booth level

worker can be seen rising to eminent positions only in the BJP. "Our cadre base is our speciality and it is built through booth committees," Nadda said at the meeting where he shared the dais with Pradesh BJP president Bansidhar Bhagat, district president Sita Ram Bhatt, Mandal president Vijendra Thapliyal and booth president Sonia Verma.

Presided by Verma, the meeting was termed as "historic" by the party. It is for the first time in the country's political history that the national president of a party shared the dais with the presidents of mandal and booth committees — two primary units of the party, Pradesh BJP vice president Devendra Bhasin said.

— PTI

PFI probe: ED set to quiz outfit's chief

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 6

Noose seems to be tightening around the Popular Front of India (PFI) as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is preparing to interrogate O.M. Abdul Salam, chairman of the banned radical outfit, as part of its money laundering probe against them.

Sources in the Central probe agency said, "The ED will soon issue summons to Salam and Nasaruddin Elamaram (PFI National Secretary) for questioning in connection with its ongoing money laundering probe against them. They may be called for questioning next week. A total amount of ₹120 crore, credited to

bank accounts linked to the PFI, is under the scanner of the ED," sources said. The agency recently conducted searches at 26 premises in nine states linked to PFI in connection with the case.

The ED is investigating PFI's financial links on the alleged charges of fuelling the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) protests in the country, the Delhi riots that took place in February this year and few other instances. The action was aimed at collecting evidences in multiple money laundering cases that have been clubbed into one and are being probed against the PFI and those linked to it under PMLA, they added.

Kushwaha & Nitish meeting triggers reunion speculation

RLSP supremo downplays buzz

Patna, Dec. 6: Amid buzz that former Union minister Upendra Kushwaha and chief minister Nitish Kumar may join hands again, following their recent meeting here four days ago, the RLSP chief on Sunday downplayed the speculations as "pre-mature guesswork".

Mr Kushwaha said he had a cordial meeting with Kumar earlier in the week but denied hammering out a deal for the homecoming. He, however, did not rule out the possibility of a reunion in future.

Political circles had indicated that Kushwaha may merge his Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP) with the ruling JD(U), and he would subsequently be inducted into the state cabinet as a member of the legislative council.

The new NDA government, under which Kumar was sworn in on November 16, has 14 ministers in the cabinet, including the chief minister. As per constitutional provisions, Bihar cabinet can accommodate up to 36 members. Many ministerial slots, hence, are still

■ **MR KUSHWAHA** said he had a cordial meet with Kumar earlier in the week but denied hammering out a deal for the homecoming. He, however, did not rule out the possibility of a reunion in future.

lying vacant. "It's a wild speculation... I am not hankering for a ministerial post or a legislative council seat. We had a good meeting... we talked about the latest political situation. Beyond that, any guess has no basis," Mr Kushwaha said.

The RLSP chief further said that Kumar had invited him to his bungalow "to explore the option of working together", which he willingly accepted.

Asked about the possibility of a reunion, Mr Kushwaha said "there is no such plan as of now... but who knows what happens tomorrow".

Shortly after the meeting, Mr Kushwaha had launched a scathing attack on RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav for making a "personal attack" on the CM. — PTI

Chinese build new villages close to LAC in Arunachal

■ **Continued from Page 1** Chinese territory. This development is significant as the villages have come up at a time when India and China are involved in a major military standoff in eastern Ladakh. These villages will also help China to solidify its claim over these disputed areas.

However, this is not for the first time that China has built villages near the LAC.

China had been building villages along the LAC for some time now. Even in 2019, there

were reports of the Chinese building around 20-25 "model" villages at several points near the LAC.

These villages had well connected roads and boasted of community halls, shops and playing areas. The Indian Army had been keeping a close watch on these villages.

Last month there were reports that China had established a village "Pangda" 2 km within Bhutan's territory near Doklam as part of its "salami slicing" strategy, by taking over territory in a

gradual manner.

There is now a virtual deadlock between India and China over the move to disengage from the seven-month military standoff in eastern Ladakh.

There has been no progress on the disengagement proposals which were discussed at the eighth round of the corps commanders' meeting.

There has also been no discussion on the next date for the corps commanders of India and China to meet again.

All Opp. parties back bandh

■ **Continued from Page 1** legitimate demands of our kisans-annadatas," it said. The letter was signed by Congress president Sonia Gandhi, DMK chief M.K. Stalin, NCP president Sharad Pawar, RJD's Tejaswi Yadav, National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, among others.

The NCP supremo, Mr Pawar, a former Union agriculture minister, has meanwhile warned the Centre that if the deadlock continues much longer, the agitation will not be limited to Delhi and people

from across the country will stand by the protesting farmers. He is scheduled to meet President Ram Nath Kovind on December 9, the day the farmers' unions and the government are due to hold the next round of talks.

"I hope wisdom dawns on the government, and it takes cognisance to resolve the issue. If this stalemate continues, the protest will not be limited to Delhi, but people from every nook and corner of the country will stand by the protesting farmers," he said. Expressing solidarity with the farmers' unions, the Congress said

it will hold protests that day at all district and state headquarters in solidarity with the demands of the farmers.

"I would also like to announce that the Congress extends its wholehearted support to the Bharat Bandh on December 8," its spokesman Pawan Khera said while addressing the media at the AIICC headquarters.

"All our district headquarters and Pradesh headquarters will participate in this bandh. They will hold demonstrations and ensure that the bandh is successful," Mr Khera said.

'CAA work by Jan-Feb'

■ **Continued from Page 1** Shantanu Thakur, also the party's face among Matuas, complained of delay in the implementation of its CAA promise to his community, which backed the saffron party's rise in the last Lok Sabha election in the state, hoping to avail of the law.

Highlighting his community's growing anger due to the long wait, the All India Matua Mahasangha joint president reminded the BJP leadership to fulfil its promise or else the Matuas, he warned, would break with the party in next year's Assembly polls.

This was also the first time a senior BJP leader has spoken clearly about the time of the CAA's implementation. During their last visits to the poll-bound state, Mr Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda had declared that the CAA would be implemented soon but were silent about its timing.

On November 6 the Union home minister said in Kolkata: "The law has been made. It will definitely be implemented." Asked if this would be before the Assembly polls, he responded: "It depends on the Covid-19 pandemic."

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	45,079.55	1.00
Nifty 50	13,258.55	0.95
S&P 500*	3,699.12	0.88
Dollar (₹)	73.79	-0.17
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.50	0.42
Euro (₹)	89.79	0.26
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,813	-0.27
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	49.21	1.03
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.897	-0.034
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.941	2.172

* As of Friday

IRFC IPO may hit market later this month

Indian Railway Finance Corporation's IPO of about Rs 4,600 crore is likely to hit the market this month. This will be the first IPO by a railway NBFC. "In all probability, it (IPO) will be by the third week but, if the market is not okay then we can go to the first or second week of January also," Amitabh Banerjee, CMD, IRFC, said. The company, the dedicated financing arm of the Railways, will also be going for anchor investment.

Everstone snaps up pharma firm Calibre for ₹1K cr



Singapore-headquartered and India-focused PE firm Everstone Capital has acquired a controlling stake in Calibre, a specialty ingredients player focused on pharma, nutrition and personal care segments, in a reported Rs 1,000-crore deal. Mumbai-headquartered Calibre, founded in 1984 by Ranjit Bhavnani in Gujarat, is a leading specialty ingredients player in the iodine derivatives, persulfates and perchlorates segments.

Germany to spend \$7.3 bn on vaccination

Germany will spend as much as 6 billion euros (\$7.3 bn) on vaccinating its population against the coronavirus. "That's a lot of money," health minister Jens Spahn said. Still, the cost of "not getting it under control is higher," he said. The cost of drugs, vaccination stations and digital tools will likely be between 5 billion euros and 6 billion euros, Spahn said. Germany aims to begin mass vaccinations by the summer.

Traders creating artificial scarcity of plastic: Firms

Some traders are creating artificial shortage of raw material used to make plastic, resulting in a spike in prices, plastic manufacturers and processors alleged. Exploiting the demand for PPE kits, some profiteers have plunged the industry into a crisis, they said. S. Dandekar of APC Polymers said raw materials such as PVC, polyethylene and polypropylene and ABS are being sold in the open market at a substantial premia.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

■ Insurer cuts stake in several firms LIC's holdings rise 40% in H1

FC BUREAU MUMBAI, DEC. 6

Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), India's insurance behemoth and a dominant player in the stock market, saw the value of its top 200 equity holdings jump by 40 per cent in the first half of this fiscal to \$77 billion (Rs 5.7 lakh crore). The figure must have gone up considerably since the end of the September quarter, as the stock market has rallied 13 per cent in the last two months.

LIC's market portfolio saw significant stride in the last two decades when compared with the market capitalisation of the BSE.

In the March 2000 quarter, the value of LIC's holdings was just \$4 billion compared with the BSE m-cap of 102 billion. But in March 2010, LIC's portfolio value jumped \$59 billion while the BSE m-cap zoomed to \$1.14 trillion. According to a Kotak Institutional Securities report, when the BSE m-cap peaked to \$1.8 trillion in March 2019, LIC owned \$81 billion of that.

In March 2020, when the markets were at a low, having lost over 35 per cent to the pandemic scare, the value of LIC's equity holdings plunged to \$55 billion—the lowest in six years. However, its holding rose by \$22 billion, or 40 per cent, to \$77 billion during April-September 2020. LIC is said to have pumped Rs 55,000 crore into the equity market since April against Rs 32,800 crore in the same



FDI INFLOWS CROSS \$500 BN

New Delhi, Dec. 6: Foreign direct investment inflows into Indian equities crossed the \$500-billion milestone during the April-September 2020 period, booting India's credentials as a safe investment destination. According to DPIIT data, the inflows during H1 stood at \$500.12 billion. About 29 per cent of the FDI came through Mauritius and 21 per cent via Singapore. —PTI

period a year ago.

During July-September, LIC raised its holdings in Yes Bank to 5 per cent from 1.6 per cent (in Q1), in HDFC AMC to 2.8 per cent from zero Q1 and in Mahanagar Gas to 4.2 per cent from 1.6 per cent. It picked up 2.6 per cent stake in Ramco Cement and 2.3 per cent stake in Alkem Laboratories from nil. LIC

more than doubled its stake in Container Corporation from 2.1 per cent to 4.4 per cent in the first half.

However, LIC pared its stake in Bank of Baroda from 3.3 per cent to zero and in Dr Reddy's Laboratories, it nearly halved the stake from 4.2 per cent to 2.2 per cent, so it did with Cipla from 4.2 per cent to 2.5 per cent. It sold its entire 1.7 per cent holding in GMR Infrastructure and 1.4 per cent holding in Bayer Cropscience.

It reduced the stake in Britannia Industries from 4.6 per cent to 3.3 per cent, in ICICI Bank from 8.3 per cent to 7.3 per cent and Tata Power from 7.1 per cent to 6.1 per cent.

Similarly, the insurer pared its stake in Bharat Electronics to 2.3 per cent from 3.3 per cent, from 3.9 per cent to 2.9 per cent in GSPL, from 7.1 per cent to 6.2 per cent in Gateway Distriparks and from 4.7 per cent to 3.8 per cent in Wipro. In Indiabulls Housing it cut the stake from 10.7 per cent to 9.9 per cent and in Vedanta from 6.4 per cent to 5.6 per cent.

THERMAL PLANTS MAY GET TO SELL POWER BEYOND AGREED PERIOD

SUDARSHAN VARADHAN BENGALURU, DEC. 6

India's power ministry proposes letting coal-fired power plants keep selling power after completing their 25-year agreements with buyers, a letter seen by Reuters shows, despite national promises to close old plants to curb pollution. The proposal, if approved, would help old coal plants earn additional revenue, increase liquidity in short-term power markets and help distribution companies in states access cheaper power, the ministry said in the draft proposal dated Friday.

"It is in the consumer interest to keep the tariff of electricity as low as possible," says the letter sent to states and utilities such as NTPC Ltd.

Such a move would enable federal-run electricity generators such as NTPC "to sell power in any mode" after distribution companies exit an agreement upon the completion of the tenure, the ministry said.

Power minister R.K. Singh and finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman have previously said they plan to shut old coal-fired power plants. The environment ministry has also pushed for shutting down coal plants, which account for 80 per cent of India's industrial pollution, if they do not comply with green laws.

A final decision on the proposal is not imminent. —Reuters

Angola stops diamond sales to boost local mfg

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 6

Angola, the third largest producer of diamonds in Africa, plans to stop direct sales of rough diamonds to India. It is putting pressure on the Indian polishing industry to invest in that country in order to create a diamond value chain locally.

Angola wants to increase diamond production from about 9 million carats per year to 15 million carats by 2022 as part of its efforts to cut its over dependence on oil exports and diversify its export basket. Angola has only explored 40 per cent of its diamond-rich territory within the country. As it is facing difficulties in attracting foreign investment, Angola wants Indian polishing companies to invest in the country.

"Angola is in the process of consolidating reforms for the diamond sector and we are working on setting up a bourse and selling rough locally through tenders. We do not plan to send rough directly to India, instead we would like Indian companies to manufacture diamonds locally," Eng. Fernando Amaral de Sodiam said. Sodiam is the state-owned diamond trading company of Angola.

"Diamonds are an important source of revenue for Angola and its people, and with the new diamond policy modalities



ties we would like to sell through sights, tenders and spots. The sight contracts will be only for two years. Angola is hoping to increase diamond production from about 9 million carat per year to 15 million carat by 2022. We invite Indian companies to invest in Angola and cut and polish diamonds locally," he added.

"The Angolan state announced a diamond policy focused on marketing and trading of rough that offers incentives for those who invest in diamond mining in the country. We believe India can play a key role here," said Jose Carlos Ferreira de Sousa of Endiama, an Angolan national company dedicated to the prospecting, exploration and marketing of diamonds.

Currently, 95 per cent of the rough diamonds produced by Angola comes to India either through Belgium, Dubai or directly for polishing. India's imports of rough diamonds from Angola amounted to just \$6.01

million in FY20.

According to Indian diamond industry, stoppage of direct sales of roughs will not affect Indian industry. "Angola is trying to develop its value chain. It wants Indian companies to invest in that country. However, it is not feasible. Only two companies—KGG Group and Kapu Gems—have set up manufacturing facilities in Angola. Even if they do not sell roughs directly, it is not going to affect us," said Vipul Shah, vice chairman, GJEPC.

In fact, Indian industry has a dominating presence in the global diamond value chain, which was evident during the lockdown times. When the industry had decided to stop imports of roughs in order to clear the inventories, mining companies had faced a tough time. The price of rough diamonds across categories had fallen by 20 to 25 per cent during the April-June period. With the resumption of imports, prices have returned to earlier levels.

Foreign funds colonising start-ups: Naukri founder

New Delhi, Dec. 6: In perhaps the first red flag by a significant start-up curator against 'flipping', Naukri.com founder Sanjeev Bikhchandani said foreign funds are the new East India Company that are colonising successful start-ups in India by transferring ownership overseas to skip Indian regulations and taxes.

The internet entrepreneur says an estimated Rs 17 lakh crore of market cap has been transferred abroad after young Indian start-ups were forced to shift their company domicile overseas by foreign investors promising them growth funds.

"Shades of the East India Company-type of situation here—Indian market, Indian customers, Indian developers, Indian workforce. However, 100 per cent foreign ownership, foreign investors, IP and data transferred overseas. Transfer pricing issues foggy," he tweeted. "Basically institutionalised transfer of wealth away from India while liv-



Sanjeev Bikhchandani

ing off the Indian market and Indian labour somewhat like the days of the Company rule."

Profits from such "global exploitation" of intellectual property (IP) created in India by Indians retained overseas. "Tax to Indian govt on such profits??" Indian investors shut out," he tweeted.

Reached for comments on his tweets, Bikhchandani, whose listed firm Info Edge (India) owns job search portal naukri.com, matrimony site jeevasathi.com and real estate search engine 99acres.com, said flipping is externalising Indian companies.

"You take an Indian start-up and transfer own-

ership of all its shares to an overseas company that has been usually freshly floated just for this purpose. So now the Indian company becomes a 100 per cent subsidiary of the overseas entity," he said.

All shareholders will own shares in that overseas company, including the founders, employees and current and past investors. This is accompanied by transfer of all IP and data hitherto owned by the Indian company.

"All IP developed and all data captured by the Indian entity in the future will also belong to the overseas entity," he said. "This overseas company is substantially outside of Indian jurisdiction and the influence of Indian regulators."

He the government must insist that data and the IP belong to the Indian subsidiary. Bikhchandani, whose company also owns stakes in Zomato and policybazaar.com, said if this flipping option was not there, most would invest in Indian start-ups. —PTI

Women's representation takes back seat on boards

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 6

Women's representation on corporate boards in 2020 saw a noticeable slowdown. The rate of increase is just 0.6 percentage points among the top global listed companies tracked by Morgan Stanley Corporate International (MSCI) since 2009.

"Emerging research has suggested that women are being more impacted by the economic fallout caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has the potential to undo years of progress," the global investment research firm said.

"If the trend over the past four years continues it may take until 2029 for women to comprise 30 per cent of corporate boards, and until 2045 to reach 50 per cent," MSCI said.

"In 2020, we saw a noticeable slowdown in the rate of increase for female representation on boards, with a gain of only 0.6 percentage points among constituents of the MSCI ACWI Index, after a jump of 2.1 percentage points last year," MSCI said.

MSCI ACWI is a stock index that tracks about 3,000 stocks in 49 developed and emerging market countries.

In the case of India, of the 86 companies in the MSCI ACWI Index five companies had no women on their boards.

Female representation on boards in CEO/CFO positions in India was 3.5 per cent compared to 16.6 per cent director seats held by women.

"Though fewer new female directors were added to boards this year than in the past, the number of all-male boards globally continued to decline. Only 17 per cent of constituents of the MSCI ACWI Index have all-male boards in 2020, down from 18.6 per cent last year," MSCI said.

There were 23 companies in the index with majority-female boards in 2020, up by just one from 2019, but still representing 0.8 per cent of companies.

Much of the change came in emerging markets, where the percentage of all-male boards dropped from 34.3 per cent in 2019 to 31.0 per cent in 2020.

PANDEMIC INCREASES TECH ADOPTION BY LOGISTICS COMPANIES



SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 6

The pandemic has accelerated adoption of new-age technology by the logistics and warehousing sector.

New-age tech-driven service providers form a small segment of the industry. From a smaller base they have been growing faster. The pandemic has accelerated the process with more logistics companies adopting new-age technologies.

With social distancing being the norm, logistics firms are reducing human interface. Companies in the last-mile segment are offering no-contact delivery options, according to a report by Dun and Bradstreet.

In order to ensure safe and efficient movement of goods, logistics providers are automating processes. Automation in cargo handling equipment is set to increase.

An increase has been visible in the usage of cloud platforms and SaaS solutions to enable organisations to adopt digital solutions without increasing their capex. They also have been increasingly using intelligent supply chain technologies, big data and analytics and machine learning to track and optimise supply chain operations.

Going ahead, robotics process automation (RPA), artificial intelligence (AI) and business intelligence will be adopted in various supply chain processes, including warehousing operations. Drones and use of smart locker solutions for contactless pick-ups is being adopted. Robotics, drones and autonomous vehicles will reduce dependence on labour.

According to Iera, e-commerce prefers technology-driven logistic companies. —PTI

SILVERY | GLITTER Platinum has nearly doubled from a mid-March low to \$1,060/0z

Platinum back in vogue as gold acts pricey

ANNIE LEE, YULIYA FEDORINOVA & EDDIE SPENCE DEC. 6

Even before the release of the next James Bond film, *No Time to Die*, Swiss watchmaker Omega is offering a platinum-gold version of the Seamaster Diver 300M that actor Daniel Craig wears when playing 007.

The 51,700 Swiss franc (\$57,000) time piece—made 95 per cent from platinum—underlines a renaissance in demand for the silvery-white metal. Omega isn't the only luxury goods maker to note the trend, with interest in high-end watches helping to almost double platinum-jewellery demand in Europe in the third quar-

ter from the preceding three months.

That's helping platinum to make a comeback, after languishing behind gold and palladium for most of the year: its relative value is part of its appeal. Platinum posted its biggest monthly gain in November since 2008 amid a revival in investor buying. Jewellery purchases are being driven by demand in China, where wealthy consumers are starting to make emotional purchases with cash hoarded during the pandemic.

"We have observed that Covid has resulted in a re-evaluation of love giving," said Trevor Raymond, director of research at the World Platinum Investment



Council. "Platinum has been very strongly associated with love gifting, globally and in China."

The WPIEC expects China's platinum jewellery consumption to rise by 13 per cent next year, the first increase since 2013 and climbing above sales both this year and in

2019. The widening price differential with gold over most of this year has also spurred buying.

"Platinum is more competitive," said Michael Xue, chairman of Shenzhen Bofook Jewellery Co., a Chinese jewellery maker that specialises in working with the metal. "Gold prices have increased way too much since the pandemic."

Bofook said its platinum jewellery sales jumped 20 per cent in the third quarter from a year earlier.

Hong Kong-based Luk Pook Holdings International Ltd launched a new men's collection in June and is offering new products to meet expanding demand in the platinum market, said Nancy Wong, deputy chief execu-

tive officer of the jewellery chain.

Many Chinese jewellery makers built up platinum stocks in March when prices slumped, recalling the benefit from similar purchases during the global financial crisis, according to the WPIEC. The association expects platinum markets to post a record deficit this year as disruptions to key producers in South Africa outstrip the Covid impact on automaker demand.

Now prices are rising too. Platinum has almost doubled from a mid-March low, with a 25 per cent surge since early November. But at \$1,060 an ounce, it's still much less pricey than gold, which was trading above \$1,800.

—Bloomberg

THE ASIAN AGE

7 DECEMBER 2020

To end farm stir, PM must signal shift in govt stand

In the confrontation between the country's farmers and the Centre, the Union government first appeared to be uncaring, relying on its brute Lok Sabha majority. Before the vote on the troubling farm-related laws in September, it gave no value to farmers' representatives who travelled to Delhi to have its ear. Bureaucrats, rather than political leaders, were sent to meet them, which basically meant reeling off the catechism. In Parliament, the government laughed off moves by Opposition parties to have the three contentious farm bills sent to a select committee for a close discussion.

And now the government appears stuck on the Singhu border with Haryana and on to Punjab, and on the UP border, where farmers from several states, with the robust contingents from Punjab becoming the toast of the country, are amassed — several divisions of them, if military terminology be permitted, with women and the elderly talking between too.

Five rounds of talks between the 30-odd farmers' unions and the government's representatives — with the Union agriculture minister in the lead — have produced no results. The farmers have given an all-India strike call for tomorrow (December 8). The government has offered another round of talks the following day in which it has promised to come with some "concrete proposals". If the proposed strike is met with repression in the smallest degree, the next meeting is unlikely to take place.

In any case, "concrete proposals" would appear to be wispy. This is because, in effect, the government side has so far reiterated in different ways that it is not going to budge from the stand the BJP took in Parliament. Prime Minister Narendra Modi battling repeatedly for the three agri-laws passed in

Parliament has become the stumbling block. In effect he has taken up cudgels for the corporate sector directing through contract farming what crops to grow and in what quantities and then dictating the price through large-scale storage and market operations.

The Indian farmer has thus come to fear losing his agency. This is why even in states — and these are the majority — where the minimum support price is not offered in practice, farmers appear to be rallying to the wider cause being currently articulated. There are few takers for the government's assurance that the MSP regime will not be scrapped when the new laws kick in. Since the PM's public stance has become the limiting factor, the negotiations in Delhi's Vigyan Bhavan have been pretty pointless, really speaking. Perhaps only some assurance from Mr Modi can unlock doors at this stage.

Since farmers have risen in agitation against existing laws, only Parliament has the authority to modify them in a way that will satisfy India's food growers, or to undo them. Calling a special session of Parliament, which the agitating farmers as well as some Opposition parties, including Congress, the main Opposition party, have demanded, to discuss the whole issue afresh, suggests itself. Also remember that the bills were passed in Rajya Sabha by a voice vote, with the deputy chairman not permitting division. This was irregular. There is also substantial legal opinion, which suggests that the subject of agriculture in all its aspects is the exclusive remit of the states and not the Centre in our constitutional scheme. This makes the three laws *ab initio* suspect.

Rajini: A long way to go

His is a mystique that is so overpowering that whatever he does makes news. For, the klieg lights love to shine on him, be it inside or outside film studios. So it was only natural that his announcement on the launch of his own political party in 2021 sent the media corps into a frenzy. They continued to camp outside the gates of his house in Poes Garden, a professional practice that the media in Chennai is accustomed to since the days of the late J. Jayalalithaa, who too lived in that posh locality. Linger on, hoping to catch up on any nugget of information that may be flung out of the gates, the media seeks to stitch a narrative on Rajinikanth's political future.

Beyond that, in a domain whirring with rumours and speculations, another strategy is scripted based on the secret wishlist of those who really want to see Rajinikanth as the next chief minister of Tamil Nadu. Dwelling in that domain is a set of serious politicians, desperately wanting the 69-year-old actor on the political arena, as their hatchet man. Theirs is an agenda distinctly different from that of the superstar's legions of fans, who blindly believe that their matinee icon can change the world upside down in real terms, too.

But the superstar has seemingly given in to the wishes of those serious politicians and not the devout fans after a quarter century of dilly-dallying. That he had a change of heart soon after BJP honcho Amit Shah came calling to Chennai, despite having conveyed his reluctance to take the political plunge just over a month ago on health grounds, and his surprise appointment of an otherwise obscure BJP "intellectual" as prime coordinator almost hit the nail on who exactly was choreographing his moves.

However, all media narratives, high hopes of fans and clever political manoeuvres notwithstanding, when the voter finally adjudicates on the matter, the mystique could be blown to smithereens.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Printer & Publisher: K. SUBHAKAR

THE ASIAN AGE office is located at:

New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124.

Published and Printed on behalf of and for

Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301.

London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.

RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Subhani



Biden in Afghanistan



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

In the wake of the September 9, 2001, terror attacks on the US, President George W. Bush greenlighted Operation Enduring Freedom on October 7, 2001. The avowed aim was to rid Afghanistan of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. For 17 months the then American Administration under the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld combine relentlessly pounded that war devastated country from air and land even as a bulk of the Taliban and Al Qaeda leadership escaped to Pakistan and even Iran where they were sheltered by the respective deep states of both these nations. Black sites, waterboarding, rendition and Guantanamo Bay were some of the new words that entered the everyday lexicon of people around the world.

On March 20, 2003, the United States of America invaded Iraq and soon Afghanistan became a sideshow for the Bush Administration. By the time Bush demitted office in January 2008 the number of US troops in Afghanistan were 47,000 in number. They were supplemented by 50,000 additional Nato troops and 70,000 personnel of the Afghan national army. However, the mission had not gone according to plan. Despite a civilian administration under Hamid Karzai assuming office on December 22, 2001, the hold of the Afghan government and the coalition forces on Afghanistan was at best tenuous.

Barack Obama inherited the war. Even as a Democratic presidential nominee Obama had visited Afghanistan on the 19th of July, 2008. He made a distinction between the United States' involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan by terming the latter as a war of necessity. In

February 2009, Obama increased the number of US troops by 21,000 that included 4,000 military trainers. Ten months later, bowing to pressure from the Pentagon and the ground commander in Afghanistan, General McChrystal Obama announced a surge of 30,000 troops in Afghanistan, bringing the total number of US troops deployed to a hundred thousand. Forty thousand Nato troops, additionally, were already serving their tours of duty in that country.

However, the situation did not stabilise and the Taliban kept on gaining ground. While its grip on the country side kept waxing and waning but on the whole its influence increased.

On December 28, 2014, the United States and Nato ended their combat missions in Afghanistan and commenced Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) and the Nato-led Resolute Support. The objectives of both these missions were narrowly defined, namely to conduct counterterrorism operations targeting terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and its local ISIS affiliate, as well as focusses on building up local Afghan security forces to help fight the Taliban. However, this recalibration was nothing more than a fig leaf to create the illusion of an honorable exit. The fact being that the Taliban continued to hold sway over much of the countryside. Obama handed over

If Biden sticks to the Doha exit plan to bring US troops down to 2,500 with the Taliban not keeping its end of the bargain it is doubtful whether the Ashraf Ghani government would be able to hold up

All the blood and treasure that the US has expended would go down the tube with the clock being turned back to 2001. The Taliban and its mentor Pakistan will have the last laugh.

the Afghan war to Donald Trump who during his 2016 election campaign had heavily critiqued the continuing US presence in Afghanistan. However on the 21st of August of 2017, in the eighth month of his Presidency he declared at Fort Myer: "I arrived at three fundamental conclusions about America's core interests in Afghanistan. First, our nation must seek an honorable and enduring outcome worthy of the tremendous sacrifices that have been made, especially the sacrifices of lives. The men and women who serve our nation in combat deserve a plan for victory... Second, the consequences of a rapid exit are both predictable and unacceptable. 9/11, the worst terrorist attack in our history, was planned and directed from Afghanistan because that country was ruled by a government that gave comfort and shelter to terrorists. A hasty withdrawal would create a vacuum that terrorists, including ISIS and Al Qaeda, would instantly fill, just as happened before September 11. Third and finally, I concluded that the security threats we face in Afghanistan and the broader region are immense. Today, 20 US-designated foreign terrorist organisations are active in Afghanistan and Pakistan the highest concentration in any region anywhere in the world." He added another 4,000 troops to the by-now-depleted US presence in Afghanistan that stood at 8,400 post the 2015 winding down.

However Trump realised that things were not working out. A year later, on September 21, 2018, he appointed Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad

as the American Special Representative for Afghanistan reconciliation to try and broker a deal with the Taliban. On February 29, 2020, Khalilzad and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar signed the agreement for bringing peace in Afghanistan in Doha. It was followed up with the intra-Afghan talks between the government in Kabul and the Taliban that began on September 12 to map out a political role for the latter. However, they are bogged down over procedural issues as yet with a huge trust deficit to bridge especially between the women of Afghanistan and the Taliban.

Concurrently, violence levels, rather than decreasing, are only escalating. At least 369 pro-government forces and 212 civilians were killed in Afghanistan in October 2020 marking the highest civilian death toll in a single month since September 2019 with the US also launching air strikes in the Helmand Province and Donald Trump threatening to bring the bulk of the US troops home by Christmas both from Iraq and Afghanistan.

This is the situation that Joe Biden inherits. In a piece in the *Foreign Affairs* magazine in spring, he stated: "It is past time to end the forever wars." However, it is easier said than done for if Biden sticks to the Doha exit plan to bring the number of US troops down to 2,500 with the Taliban not keeping its end of the bargain it is doubtful whether the Ashraf Ghani government would be able to hold up. All the blood and treasure that the US has expended would go down the tube with the clock being turned back to 2001. The Taliban and its mentor Pakistan will have the last laugh while a child born in 1979, who for the last 41 years only knows conflict as the new normal, the last weep.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

WE THE LAB RATS

Hyderabad-based pharmaceutical firm Bharat Biotech's Covaxin efficacy is under a cloud. Haryana's health minister Anil Vij, who had received a dose of the vaccine on November 20, has tested positive for the coronavirus. Covaxin elicited an adverse event during its phase 1 trials in August, too, though the matter was brushed under the carpet. Not only Bharat Biotech but AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson also had to temporarily halt their phase 3 clinical trials. It certainly looks like the people are the lab rats that companies and the government are experimenting on in their hurry to defeat the pandemic.

Vijaykumar H.K.
Raichur, Karnataka

TIME RUNNING OUT

AFTER INDIA snubbed Justin Trudeau, Canadian PM, 36 British MPs have written to UK foreign secretary Dominic Raab seeking the UK government's intervention in the farmers' protests in India. Meanwhile, in keeping with its aggressive stance, India has had to boycott the Canada-led meet on Covid. It's time for the government to urgently resolve the crisis. Or else it will end up losing face before the world, not to speak of hurting the interests of its own people and alienating them. This is its final chance.

Bidyut K. Chatterjee
Faridabad

BIGGEST TEST

THE CENTRE'S EFFORTS to buy time from the protesting farmers have paid off for the time being with both sides agreeing to meet for the sixth time on Wednesday, a day after the proposed Bharat Bandh. The government pacified the farm unions saying an intra-government deliberation was needed to present a concrete proposal. The farmers rejected the government's proposal to amend farm laws, insisting upon repeal. Breaking the stalemate will be the biggest test for the Narendra Modi government.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Deepak Singhal (Dec. 6). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Kishwar Desai
London Diary



After vax 1st, will 'lucky Boris' swing Brexit deal?

Yes — the vaccine is coming! The vaccine is coming! And I have been told — that people are now heading back to the UK as this may be the first country to get a reliable injection to beat the pandemic.

But the problem is how to keep the virus from spreading during these last few weeks — and once again rules, regulations, etc., are being trotted out. As always these have raised levels of dismay. But a week is a long time in politics — and from being one of the most unpopular prime ministers for imposing restrictions — "lucky" Boris is now shooting up the popularity charts!

Who even remembers that just last Monday Parliament debated legislation about imposing a system of tiers in different parts of the country to replace the lockdown? This was so unpopular even among Tory MPs that Boris Johnson faced the worst backbench revolt of his year long Premiership. Fifty six Tory MPs voted against the government. Had Labour Party and Scottish Nationalists also voted

against, the government would not have been able to impose the tiers.

Yet the very next day came the good news that the Pfizer vaccine was ready and had won its approval from the UK regulators. Someone had the foresight to book forty million of these vaccines for us. So the Prime Minister was pulled up from the depths of defeat to a sense of being the first off the starting line! UK had once again beaten the world!

A list has been quickly drawn up of who has priority for receiving the first round of shots. The vaccines have to be kept at -70 degrees C so the logistics are tricky. They also arrive in packages of 975 so only hospitals can deal with such large numbers. As of now care home patients and frontline workers have top priority. Then comes the turn of the NHS staff followed by the over 80s and then down the age ladder. Fortunately, thanks to the NHS — there are detailed lists of everyone — their addresses and even who has what illness. This will make the task easier.

Fortunately, unlike in India, the VIP system does not apply here. While I am worried about whether my father at 97 will get the vaccine in India (as he should be in the first list), in the UK everyone awaits their turn, and Parliamentarians and other VIPs are not a priority. And even the Queen, at 94, will wait to receive it, when her turn comes. This is always reassuring.

The triumph of UK being first in the world among the "vaxxers" did not go down well with everyone. Tory Ministers could not help boasting that it was thanks to Brexit that UK could be the first, leaving the EU behind — as all of Europe will get it at the same time. The EU regulators then retaliated by casting some doubts on the early bird decision of the UK regulators. Had corners been cut? Then the Americans joined in. Dr Fauci, hitherto the hero for standing up to Donald Trump, said the US regulators would take longer to approve. But he later added that he did not doubt the decisions of the UK regulators.

However, just when things were

beginning to look rosy, the Brexit crisis has resurfaced. A deal has to be signed by end of December. Otherwise UK exits Europe without a deal. If that happens, lorries going from here to Europe across the Channel as well as EU lorries coming to UK will need to fill in many forms and pay tariff on the goods. Some people predict queues of lorries stretching for miles at the ports. Apart from the delay, it will play havoc with social distancing. It may even delay the vaccines arriving from Brussels. So it is a delicate few days of negotiations before the 27 nations of EU unanimously approve of the Brexit deal. Will 'lucky' Boris swing it again?

There is already huge excitement over Christmas. Decorations are up and going by the crowds thronging into Harrods — it seems Christmas has come early. This is the vaccine effect — though Oxford Street lights are a bit dim because several well known stores have gone into administration together. Arcadia, a consortium of well known brands

such as Top Shop, Top Man, D H Evans, Miss Selfridge Burton, Dorothy Perkins, was owned by Sir Philip Green — a billionaire who lives on a yacht in the South of France. He has refused to rescue these shops and 13,000 employees will be made redundant. As a consequence Debenhams which has been on the High Street across the country since 1,778 has also gone bankrupt with 12,000 employees losing their jobs. No "Merry Christmas" just a silent night for them. But this has also meant that it is a shopping bonanza for all those who have been at home for far too long. And so yes, those long queues you see in London are not for the vaccine — but to pick up some great discounts from the shops which are closing down. Ironically — the biggest profits will be made just before the cash registers stop ringing!

Kishwar Desai is an award winning author, and playwright. Her latest book, The Longest Kiss: The Life And Times of Devika Rani, will be published shortly.

SHORT TAKES

NICARAGUA MINE
COLLAPSE: TWO
BODIES FOUND

Managua, Dec. 6: Rescue workers on Saturday said they had recovered the bodies of two men trapped in the collapse in southern Nicaragua of an unlicensed gold mine.

The accident occurred in the La Esperanza region, more than 200 kilometres (120 miles) southeast of the capital Managua. The two victims, identified as Israel Sequeira and Santos Herrera, were from the Rio San Juan department, local government official Johnny Gutierrez told official website 19 Digital.

He said rescue work, involving police, firefighters and army troops, would wind up no later than Sunday. Gutierrez did not speculate on the fate of other miners caught in the collapse. Local media said anywhere from seven to 18 miners were trapped when the rain-soaked hillside collapsed.

Amaru Ruiz, director of the nonprofit Fundacion del Rio, said that the hillside was honeycombed by mining tunnels dug over the years on private property. An estimated 3,000 people work in Nicaragua's unlicensed mines. Months of rain had saturated and weakened the clayey land, Ruiz added.

CHINA COAL
MINE TOLL
CLIMBS TO 23

Beijing, Dec. 6: The death toll due to a carbon monoxide leak inside a coal mine in southwest China has gone up to 23, while one person has been rescued, officials said on Sunday. The accident took place at around 5 pm (local time) on Friday at the closed Diaoshuidong colliery in Yongchuan district of Chongqing Municipality.

The dead are among 24 people trapped underground by excessive levels of carbon monoxide gas at the coal mine, where they were dismantling equipment in a pit. The mine was suspended and shut down over two months ago.

The cause of the accident is being further investigated, state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Sunday. The Diaoshuidong coal mine, which was established in 1975 and became privately-owned in 1998, has an annual production capacity of 120,000 tonnes of coal, according to the local emergency management department.

In March 2013, hydrogen sulfide poisoning in the mine left three dead and two injured. Though safety improvements have reduced deaths at coal mines in recent years, mining accidents are common in China, which is the world's largest coal producer. At least 16 people died in late September after high levels of carbon monoxide trapped miners at the Songzao coal mine in Chongqing.

China, which is both the world's largest producer and consumer of coal, has now reported more than 100 coal mining accidents in 2020.

CHRISTMAS TREE
LIGHTING IN
BETHLEHEM MUTED

Bethlehem, Dec. 6: Only a few dozen people attended the lighting of the Christmas tree in the biblical city of Bethlehem on Saturday night, as coronavirus restrictions scaled back the annual event that is normally attended by thousands.

A small group of residents and religious leaders participated in the tree-lighting ceremony at Manger Square near the Church of the Nativity, where Christians believe Jesus was born. Others watched it virtually due to restrictions prompted by the virus pandemic. Some officials, including Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh, attended in person and addressed event participants watching online. Shtayyeh said the Palestinian leadership is receiving the new year with determination to "confronting the (Israeli) occupation more firmly" and ending the internal political division with the rival militant Hamas group.

He said the Palestinians would "defeat the settlement" building in the occupied West Bank despite the pandemic. Bethlehem Mayor Anton Salman said Christmas is being observed this year in ways like no time before.

"We resorted to modern technology and to the virtual world to celebrate the lighting of the Christmas tree, wishing hope and optimism would flutter upon Palestine and the world," Salman said. Thousands of pilgrims and tourists typically visit Bethlehem, fill hotels and dine at restaurants during the Christmas season, bringing the area a much-needed injection of cash.

Houthi-held 14
Indian seamen
fly back home

Dubai, Dec. 6: Fourteen Indian seamen who were stranded in Yemen for over 10 months after their ship sank in the Gulf of Aden flew back to India on Saturday from Dubai. The 14 seamen were taken into custody on February 14, 2020 by the local Houthi authorities in Yemen, the Indian embassy in Djibouti said in a statement. "After persistent and painstaking efforts, the Embassy of India, Djibouti was able to get them released on November 28 through its Sana'a office," it said.

According to the embassy, the stranded Indians had lost their passport and other documents and belongings. It also requested all maritime and other authorities concerned to take note of their situation and support them. The rescued seamen have been identified as Mohanraj Thanigachalam, William Nicamden, Ahmed Abdul Gafur Wakankar, Fairuz Nasrudin Zari, Sandip Balu Lohar, Nilesh Dhanraj Lohar, Hiron SK, Dawood Mahmood Jivrak, Chetan Hari Chandra Gawas, Tanmay Rajendra Mane,

● **THE SEAMEN** claimed that they have not received their salaries from the last 10 months. They requested the Indian embassy in Oman and their Omani employer to release their pay.

Sanjeev Kumar, Maniraj Mariyappan, Praveen Thammakaramantavida and Abdul Vahab Musthaba.

The Indian Consulate in Dubai confirmed the arrival of the Indian seamen in Dubai. Chandrashekhar Bhatia of the Gulf Maharashtra Business Forum said that the Indians took a flight on Saturday night.

Bhatia also shared a letter signed by GMBF Global President Sunil Manjerakar in which he thanked the government and officials who helped ensure the release of the seamen. In another note shared by Bhatia, the seamen claimed that they have not received their salaries from the last 10 months. They requested the Indian embassy in Oman and their Omani employer to release their salary. — PTI

Defiant Don says US election
was 'rigged' in favour of Biden

At a rally, Trump falsely claims he won Georgia in the Prez race

Trump presses Georgia Gov
to help subvert Prez poll

Washington, Dec. 6: A defiant Donald Trump is showing no signs of surrender and has reiterated yet again his unsubstantiated allegations of widespread voter fraud, claiming at his first post-poll rally in Georgia that he won a "rigged" United States presidential election that he lost. Trump alleged on Saturday that the last month's US election was rigged in favour of his Democratic opponent Joe Biden, who is now the President-elect.

"They cheated and they rigged our presidential election, and they're gonna try to rig this election too," Trump told his cheering supporters at a rally in Georgia where he campaigned for his Republican candidates for the Special Senatorial elections.

Trump began by falsely claiming he won Georgia in the presidential race. The state has already certified its election results, declaring Biden the winner. Trump claimed he won an election that he lost. "If I lost, I would be a very gracious loser. If I lost, I would say I lost and I would go to Florida and I would take it easy," Trump

Atlanta, Dec. 6: President Donald Trump fruitlessly pressed Georgia's governor on Saturday to call a special legislative session aimed at subverting the presidential election results in that state as Trump's fixation with his defeat overshadowed his party's campaign to save its majority in the Senate. Trump and Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp spoke by phone hours before Trump was to appear at a rally in Valdosta, Georgia, where Republicans hoped the president would dedicate his energy to imploring their supporters to vote in two runoff elec-

said at the rally.

Trump was a resident of New York. After becoming the president, he moved his residence from New York to Florida. Thousands of his supporters, not only from Georgia but also from the neighbouring states, as far as

tions Jan. 5.

But it remained an open question whether his first postelection political rally would be a mission to help his party or himself. Hours before the event, Trump asked Kemp in the phone call to order the legislative session; the governor refused, according to a senior government official in Georgia with knowledge of the call who was not authorised to discuss the private conversation and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

A person close to the White House who was briefed on the matter verified that account of the

call. According to a tweet from the governor, Trump also asked him to order an audit of signatures on absentee ballot envelopes in his state, a step Kemp is not empowered to take because he has no authority to interfere in the electoral process on Trump's behalf. Trump vented his frustrations on Twitter after the call. "Your people are refusing to do what you ask," he complained, as if speaking with Kemp. "What are they hiding? At least immediately ask for a Special Session of the Legislature. That you can easily, and immediately, do."

— AP

California and Ohio, came to hear his speech.

This was Trump's first public rally after he lost the election and Biden was declared as the President-elect.

"I think they say that if you win Florida and if you win Ohio, in history

you've never lost an election. This has got to be a first time — but the truth is they were right, we've never lost and we're winning this election," Trump said. He urged his supporters to go out and vote for the January 5 Senate elections in Georgia.

Santa's balancing act



A fire brigade height rescuer dressed as Santa Claus abseils down from the roof of the Children's University Hospital Eppendorf in Hamburg, Germany, on Sunday.



— AP

US, IRAN REACH
'UNEASY
DETERRENCE'

Dubai, Dec. 6: The top US Navy official in the Mideast said Sunday America has reached an "uneasy deterrence" with Iran after months of regional attacks and seizures at sea, even as tensions remain high between Washington and Tehran over the Islamic Republic's nuclear programme.

Vice Adm. Sam Paparo, who oversees the Navy's 5th Fleet based in Bahrain, struck an academic tone in comments to the annual Manama Dialogue hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies. He described having a "healthy respect" for both Iran's regular navy and the naval forces of its Revolutionary Guard. — AP

'Wolf Warrior diplomacy'
charge dismissed by China

Beijing, Dec. 6: China has sought to dismiss the use of the term "Wolf Warrior diplomacy", which is used to describe confrontational rhetoric by its diplomats to ward off criticism on a host of issues, calling it yet another version of "China threat theory" being floated by Beijing's critics.

"Obviously, the 'Wolf Warrior diplomacy' is actually another version of the 'China threat' theory and another 'discourse trap', whose purpose is to prevent China from fighting back, Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng said in the first official reaction to the widely-used phrase among international diplomats and media to highlight Beijing's aggressive posturing.

Chinese diplomats were once known for their low-key approach in dealing with complex domestic and global issues. But their style changed in recent years as Beijing battled increasing global adversity on issues like Coronavirus, which became a pandemic after emerging from Wuhan, allegations of mass internment camps in Xinjiang and imposition of national security law in Hong Kong. Critics also say the change in style is fuelled by the pursuit of aggressive nationalism by the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) under the leadership of President Xi Jinping.

Le said that as a responsible major country, China has always been a defend-

er of the international order, a contributor to global governance and a provider of international public goods. It was a time when there seemed to be less inordinate criticism from the West. But the world and Chinese diplomats have changed, a write up in the CPC's aggressive tabloid *Global Times* said.

"In some Westerners' eyes, Chinese diplomats are now engaged in 'Wolf Warrior' style diplomacy, named after a 2015 Chinese patriotic action film and its 2017 sequel. The change seemingly has made the West feel challenged," it said. The term was coined from the 2017 Hollywood Rambo style Chinese action film "Wolf Warrior 2". — PTI

Violence erupts in Paris
protest over security law

Paris, Dec. 6: Violence erupted in Paris on Saturday for the second consecutive weekend at a mass protest against a new security law, with demonstrators clashing with police, vehicles set alight and shop windows smashed.

The weekly nationwide protests are becoming a major headache for President Emmanuel Macron's government, with tensions intensified by the beating of a black music producer by police last month.

However, the numbers were less than half this Saturday with the nationwide figure at 52,350 against 133,000 a week earlier, the interior ministry said. Around 5,000 people demonstrated in Paris against 46,000 last week, it added.

Members of the so-called yellow vests movement, which shook Macron with protests against a lack of equality in France over the winter of 2018-2019, were also prominent in the rally. Windows of a supermarket, property agency and bank were broken while several cars were in flames along Avenue Gambetta as thousands of

demonstrators marched towards the central Place de la Republique, AFP reporters said.

Objects were also thrown at police who responded by using tear gas, in a repeat of the violent scenes from the protests last weekend against the security law that would restrict publication of pictures showing the faces of police.

Some demonstrators used objects left in the streets to create improvised barricades that they then set on fire. A bank was ransacked by protesters who broke inside and brought out papers that they burned in the street. Protesters, some letting off smoke bombs and firecrackers, shouted slogans including "Everyone hates the police".

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin wrote on Twitter that police in Paris were facing "very violent individuals".

"The thugs are breaking down the Republic," he said.

Sixty-four people were detained across the country, Darmanin said, adding that eight police were injured.

— AFP

95 ARRESTS AT
SECURITY LAW
PROTESTS: MIN

Paris, Dec. 6: Police arrested 95 people during protests across France against a planned security law, and 67 officers were injured during the demonstrations, Interior Minister Gerard Darmanin said Sunday.

In Paris, the site of the worst violence, 48 police officers or gendarmes were injured during Saturday's street clashes, the interior ministry said on Twitter.

A firefighter was also injured in the capital after being hit by a projectile, a police source said. Paris police held 25 people, including two minors, said the prosecutors' office.

It was the second weekend of violence in the capital during protests against a security bill currently going through French parliament.

Demonstrators clashed with police, vehicles were set alight and shop windows smashed.

— AFP

UN: India's solar leadership can
help world attain climate goals

United Nations, Dec. 6: India's leadership on solar and industry transition is the reason to believe the world can achieve its climate goals, a top UN official has said, asserting that as governments look to restart their economies after Covid-19, it is vital to pursue a recovery that is not only sustainable, resilient and fair, but also job-rich.

UN Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohamed highlighted "encouraging news" on global

efforts to overcome climate change while attending a webinar titled 'People and Climate: Just Transition in Practice' last week. "Today there is encouraging news: Japan and the Republic of Korea, together with more than 110 other countries, have now pledged carbon neutrality by 2050."

China says it will do so before 2060. India's leadership on solar and the industry transition is reason to believe that we can achieve our climate goals,"

she said. She said the European Union and its Member States had a strong history of leadership on climate action, including the commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

"It is essential that the European Union delivers on its promise to adopt a new climate target this year, by coming forward with a baseline of reducing emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030," she said.

— PTI

POWERFUL | TOOL

4,200 artists from 53 countries participate in the first international online art competition

Indo-US-run NGO starts virtual art gallery on disability

Washington, Dec. 6: A US-based global NGO run by an Indian-American has launched a virtual art gallery on the theme of disability that aims at colouring the world with inclusion of specially-abled people through the creative expression of artwork.

The launch of virtual art gallery by Voice of Specially Abled People (VOSAP) on Saturday follows the successful "VOSAP Art From Heart Con-

test", which was participated by more than 4,200 artists from 53 countries.

An international panel of eight judges declared 50 winners from 24 countries using online platform of VOSAP.

This is the first international online art contest on theme of disability with this huge response, a media release said. In a letter to VOSAP founder Pranav Desai, Prime Minister Narendra Modi

● **THE DIGITAL** platform not only gives global exposure to artists but also helps redefine disability with vivid paintings, drawings beautifully portraying aspirations, issues, talents, solutions, emotions of specially abled people.

congratulated 50 winners and later stated it is heartening to see tech interven-

tions like VOSAP Virtual Art Gallery will lead to better understanding of skills and talents of Divyangian (specially-abled). VOSAP said this unique initiative to spread awareness on skills, talent of specially-abled people by virtue of powerful tool of visual art and using technology is now taken to the next level with launch of virtual VOSAP Art Gallery of selected 250 artwork of 250 artists.

This digital platform can reach to millions of people around the world and not only gives global exposure to artists but also helps redefine disability with vivid paintings, drawings beautifully portraying aspirations, issues, talents, solutions, emotions of specially-abled people.

"Inclusion of 1 BN+ specially abled people is a 21st-century opportunity in front of all of us and such initiatives are aimed

to touch hearts of millions of people so that there is "True Access" in the society, beyond physical accessibility," Desai said.

The launch was celebrated with a live event hosted by singer and multi-talented Sparsh Shah. Over 5,000 people watched it on social media platforms and they all were very inspired by soulful singing of Sparsh and life story of Jessica.

Chairman of Executive Board of WHO and Union

Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan gave a video message stating that this idea of VOSAP to use art as a tool to mobilise artists to become change makers of tomorrow is exemplary. Dr Thawar Chand Gehlot, Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, also delivered his video message and appreciated VOSAP efforts towards inclusion of Divyangian.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

SAUDI PRINCE
FLAYS ISRAEL AT
BAHRAIN MEET

Dubai, Dec. 6: A prominent Saudi prince harshly criticised Israel on Sunday at a Bahrain security summit that was remotely attended by Israel's foreign minister.

Prince Turki al-Faisal, who led Saudi intelligence for more than two decades and served as ambassador to the US and Britain, warned that any normalisation deals needed to help the Palestinians obtain their own independent state. He described Israel as a "Western colonising" power. He said Israel has "incarcerated (Palestinians) in concentration camps under the flimsiest of security accusations."

RETURN BUDDHA
STATUE: DUTCH
COLLECTOR TOLD

Beijing, Dec. 6: A Chinese court has ordered a Dutch art collector to hand over a Buddha statue in the latest twist in a 3-year-old legal battle with villagers who say it was stolen from a temple.

Residents of Yangchun, a village in the southeastern province of Fujian, say the statue is a 1,000-year-old relic that holds the mummified remains of a monk and disappeared in 1995. The collector says he bought the object in Hong Kong in 1996 but denied it was the stolen statue.

The ruling Communist Party is stepping up efforts to retrieve Chinese art and artifacts that are believed to be stolen and in foreign hands. The Sanning Intermediate People's Court on Friday ordered the collector, Oscar van Overeem, to return the statue within 30 days, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

Two committees representing villagers sued in a Dutch court in 2017, but judges ruled the following year they didn't count as legal entities that could make a claim.

OLI SKIPS
CRUCIAL RULING
PARTY MEETING

Kathmandu, Dec. 6: Nepalese Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, one of the chairmen of the Communist Party of Nepal (NCP), on Sunday skipped a crucial meeting of the party's 45-member strong Standing Committee, amid growing internal rift.

In a letter sent to the party's Standing Committee, Oli said that he was unable to attend the meeting, NCP spokesperson Narayan Kaji Shrestha said. Shrestha said that the next Standing Committee meeting has been scheduled for December 13.

The rift surfaced after the dissident group leaders, including the party's executive chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, demanded Oli's resignation from both as the party's chairman and as Nepal's PM after he accused them of conspiring to topple his government. In apolitical document presented on November 13 at the party's Secretariat meeting, Prachanda criticised Oli for failing to properly run both the government and the party.

PROTESTS
OUTSIDE BIBI
RESIDENCE

Jerusalem, Dec. 6: Several thousand protesters in Jerusalem gathered Saturday outside the official residence of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, demanding his resignation as Israel moves toward an early election.

The protesters have been gathering weekly for the past six months, saying Netanyahu should step down because of his corruption trial and what they say is mismanagement of the country's deadly Coronavirus crisis.

The protests began last spring when Netanyahu and his chief rival, Benny Gantz, agreed to form what they called an emergency government focused on managing the health and economic challenges stemming from the virus pandemic.

Their partnership has been paralyzed by infighting, and a pair of lockdowns hit the economy hard, sending unemployment skyrocketing to double-digit figures.

With wintry weather settling in, the crowds have begun to shrink. But participants remained vocal and animated Saturday. Nearly all wore masks, though not everyone observed social distancing.

2,30,000 new Covid-19 cases,
2,527 deaths in US over 24 hrs

Health officials warned of surge as people travelled for Thanksgiving

UK Oppn leader Starmer
self-isolates for 2nd time

Washington, Dec. 6: The United States notched a record number of Coronavirus cases in 24 hours for the third day running, as it was reported that Britain's Queen Elizabeth II will get a vaccine within weeks.

A tally by Johns Hopkins University showed the world's worst-hit country — which has seen a dramatic virus resurgence in recent weeks — reached nearly 230,000 new infections and 2,527 Covid-related deaths on Saturday alone.

For two weeks, the US has regularly topped 2,000 deaths per day, as it had in the spring at the height of the first wave of the country's outbreak.

US health officials warned of a surge after millions of Americans travelled to celebrate last week's Thanksgiving holiday despite pleas from authorities to stay home.

The Coronavirus has now killed more than 1.5 million people and infected 66 million around the world since emerging in China last year, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP.

In Britain, it was reported that the 94-year-old monarch will receive the Pfizer-BioNTech Coronavirus vaccine within weeks after UK regulators granted emergency approval. The rollout of the vaccine will begin next week.

The queen and her 99-year-old husband Prince Philip are in line to get the jab early due to their age and will not receive preferential treatment, the Mail on Sunday reported.

The newspaper said Britain's most senior royals would reveal they have been given the inoculation "to encourage more people to take up the vital jab", amid fears so-called antivaxers could dent enthusiasm for it.

British health officials are set to use criteria based on age and vulnerability to decide who gets the vaccine first.

Elderly care home residents and their carers will be the very first to get inoculated, followed by those aged 80 and over and frontline health and care

London, Dec. 6: Britain's Leader of the Opposition, Labour leader Keir Starmer, has gone into self-isolation for a second time after a member of his staff tested positive for Covid-19.

In line with the current government rules, even though Starmer was said to be well and not displaying any symptoms of Covid-19, he will now have to stay at home for 14 days since his last contact with the affected person, which his spokesperson said ends on December 16.

"I'm pleased to say my colleague is feeling ok. I'm not showing any symptoms. But will now be working from home. Keep safe and follow the public health advice," he said.

staff. Britain has pre-ordered 40 million doses of the vaccine in total, and is set to receive an initial batch of 800,000 to begin next week's rollout.

The World Health Organisation has warned that vaccines are no magic bullet for the Coronavirus crisis, as Russia started vaccinating its high-risk workers and other countries geared up for similar programmes. The WHO cautioned against what it said was an erroneous belief that the pandemic would end soon with vaccines on the horizon.

"Vaccines do not equal zero Covid," said WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan, adding that not everyone will be able to receive it early next year. "Vaccination will add a major, major, powerful tool to the tool kit that we have. But by themselves, they will not do the job." WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus also cautioned against the "growing perception that the pandemic is over" with the virus still spreading fast.

— AFP

● "BLACK PANTHER" star Letitia Wright has deleted both her Twitter and Instagram profiles, days after the actor came under fire for sharing a video by a coronavirus vaccine sceptic on her social media accounts. The "Small Axe" actor had shared a link to a 70-minute YouTube video which expressed doubts over the in-progress Covid-19 vaccines, which will begin roll-out in the UK in the coming week.

The Opposition leader has previously had to self-isolate in mid-September

when a member of his household showed possible symptoms of the deadly virus. He did not experience any symptoms at the time. His latest self-isolation follows a week after Prime Minister Boris Johnson came out of his self-isolation after coming in contact with an MP who had later tested positive with the virus.

It comes as the UK recorded 15,539 new cases of Coronavirus and 397 new deaths on Saturday, taking the country's death toll beyond 61,000 to make it the fifth highest in the world. The vaccine developed by American drug-maker Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech was being sent to hospitals across the UK.

— PTI

7 PATIENTS DEAD
AFTER OXYGEN
SUPPLY RAN OUT

Peshawar, Dec. 6: Seven patients being treated for the Coronavirus died after one hospital in Peshawar ran out of oxygen supplies, officials said Sunday.

Farhad Khan, a spokesman at Khyber Teaching Hospital, said the patients died Saturday night when the vendor who supplies the hospital with medical oxygen to refill tanks with failed to arrive in time. The hospital, which is the second largest in Peshawar, receives its oxygen cylinders from a vendor in Rawalpindi, Khan said.

Provincial Health Minister Taimur Saim Jhagra tweeted about the incident, saying the hospital's board of governors has been ordered to probe the incident and take action within 48 hours.

— AP

VIRUS AID GRAFT:
INDONESIA MIN
SURRENDERS

Jakarta, Dec. 6: Indonesia's social affairs minister turned himself in to anti-corruption authorities Sunday to face charges of taking bribes related to the government's Covid-19 aid distribution.

Social Affairs Minister Juliari Batubara arrived at the Corruption Eradication Commission's headquarters in the capital, Jakarta, hours after the commission's Chairman Firli Bahuri called on him to surrender in a news conference just before midnight Saturday.

Batubara, who is also a member of the ruling Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, made no comment. The anti-corruption commission said he is accused of receiving at least 17 billion rupiah from two supplier companies through his two subordinates, who were also named as suspects.

— AP

Large-scale rollout
of vaccine in China

Taipei, Dec. 6: Provincial governments across China are placing orders for experimental, domestically made Coronavirus vaccines, though health officials have yet to say how well they work or how they may reach the country's 1.4 billion people.

Developers are speeding up final testing, the Chinese foreign minister said Thursday during a UN meeting, as Britain issued approval for emergency use of Pfizer Inc.'s vaccine candidate and providers scrambled to set up distribution.

China's fledgling pharmaceutical industry has at least five vaccines from four producers being tested in more than a dozen countries including Russia, Egypt and Mexico. Health experts say even if they are successful, the certification process for the United States, Europe,

— AP

Unrest in Moldova



People take part in a rally to demand the government's resignation and snap parliamentary elections on Sunday in central Chisinau. Moldova last month elected pro-European Maia Sandu to the presidency, earning her a surprise victory over pro-Russian incumbent Igor Dodon. After Moldovan lawmakers passed a bill transferring control of the country's intelligence agency from the president to parliament, Sandu called for her supporters to rally.

— AFP

COVID | IMPACT

Study evaluates multidimensional effects of the pandemic over the next decade

Additional 207 mn can be pushed into poverty by '30

United Nations, Dec. 6: An additional 207 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030 due to the severe long-term impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, bringing the total number of the world's extremely poor to more than a billion, a new study from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has found.

The study assesses the impact of different Covid-19 recovery scenarios on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), evaluating the multidimensional

effects of the pandemic over the next decade. The study is part of a long-standing partnership between the UNDP and the Pardee Center for International Futures at the University of Denver.

"Severe long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic could push an additional 207 million people into extreme poverty on top of the current pandemic trajectory, bringing the total to over 1 billion by 2030," noted the study.

The 'Baseline Covid' scenario, based on current

mortality rates and the most recent growth projections by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), would result in 44 million more people living in extreme poverty by 2030 compared to the development trajectory the world was on before the pandemic.

Under a 'High Damage' scenario, where the recovery is protracted, Covid-19 is likely to push an additional 207 million people into extreme poverty by 2030, and increase the female poverty headcount by an additional 102 mil-

lion compared to that baseline, says the report.

The 'High Damage' scenario anticipates that 80 per cent of the Covid-induced economic crisis would persist in 10 years' time due to loss in productivity, preventing a full recovery to the growth trajectory seen before the pandemic. However, the study also finds that a focused set of SDG investments over the next decade in social protection/welfare programmes, governance, digitalisation, and a green economy

could not only prevent the rise of extreme poverty, but actually exceed the development trajectory the world was on before the pandemic.

"This ambitious, yet feasible 'DG Push' scenario would lift an additional 146 million people out of extreme poverty, narrow the gender poverty gap, and reduce the female poverty headcount by 74 million, even taking into account the current impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic," UNDP said.

UNDP Administrator Ac-

Japanese eager
to scrutinise
asteroid samples

Tokyo, Dec. 6: Japanese space officials said they are excited about the return of a capsule that safely landed in Australia Outback on Sunday while carrying soil samples from a distant asteroid so they can start analysing what they say are treasures inside.

The capsule's delivery by the Hayabusa2 spacecraft completes its six-year sample-return mission and opens the door for research into finding clues to the origin of the solar system and life on Earth. "We were able to land the treasure box" onto the sparsely populated Australian desert of Woomera as planned, said Yuichi Tsuda, Hayabusa2 project manager at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA, adding that the capsule was in perfect shape.

"I really look forward to opening it and looking inside." The capsule will be packed in a container as soon as its preliminary treatment at an Australian lab is finished and brought back to Japan this week, Satoru Nakazawa, a project sub-manager, said during an online news conference from Woomera. Hayabusa2 left the asteroid Ryugu, about 300 million kilometres from Earth, a year ago.

After it released the capsule on Saturday, it set off on a new expedition to another distant asteroid. Scientists say they believe the samples contain valuable data unaffected by space radiation and other environmental factors.

— AP

CHINESE PROBE
TO BRING MOON
ROCKS TO EARTH

Beijing, Dec. 6: A Chinese probe that landed on the moon transferred rocks to an orbiter Sunday in preparation for returning samples of the lunar surface to Earth for the first time in almost 45 years.

The upper stage of the Change' lander blasted off Friday from the lunar surface. If the mission succeeds, it will make China the third country after the United States and former Soviet Union to bring moon rocks to Earth.

— AP

CHINA LAUNCHES
SAT FOR EARTH
OBSERVATION

Beijing, Dec. 6: China on Sunday successfully launched a new Earth observation satellite which can take high-resolution pictures of ground objects across the globe.

The satellite was launched from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in southwest China's Sichuan province, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The satellite, Gaofen-14, was sent into orbit by a Long March-3B carrier rocket.

It can efficiently obtain high precision stereo images globally.

— PTI

US Sikhs protest
Indian farm laws

Washington, Dec. 6: Hundreds of Sikh-Americans have held peaceful protest rallies in several cities across the US in support of the Indian farmers who have been protesting against the new agricultural reforms in India.

A large car caravan of protesters from various

parts of California blocked the traffic on the Bay Bridge on Saturday as they moved towards the Indian Consulate in San Francisco, while several hundreds gathered in downtown Indianapolis. The protesters at both the places demanded the new laws be repealed.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES



Mick Schumacher

Schumacher's son wins F2 title

Sakhir, Bahrain: Mick Schumacher, the Formula One-bound son of seven-time world champion Michael Schumacher, clinched the Formula Two drivers' championship title on Sunday.

Despite finishing 18th in the final race of the season at the Bahrain International Circuit, ahead of Sunday's later Sakhr Grand Prix, he took the title by 14 points ahead of nearest rival Briton Callum Iltott, who finished 10th.

Jehan Daruvala won the race, taking his first F2 victory after Schumacher had flat-spotted a tyre on the first lap in his

Prema car.

Schumacher was third on the grid alongside Iltott and took second at the start, but fell back and after a pit-stop for new tyres had to rely on others finishing ahead of the Briton. Iltott, who needed to finish second to retain a title bid, fell down the order and finished 10th. Schumacher ended the season on 215 points and Iltott on 201. — *AFP*

— *AFP*

Mbappe scores 100th goal for PSG

Paris: Kylian Mbappe scored his 100th goal for Paris Saint-Germain after making a late appearance as a substitute for the Ligue 1 leaders in Saturday's 3-1 victory at in-form Montpellier. With Neymar preserved ahead of next week's crucial Champions League clash against Istanbul Basaksehir and Mbappe rested from the start, Colin Dagba's first career goal gave PSG the lead on 33 minutes. English forward Stephy Mavididi levelled before half-time at the Stade de la Mosson, the ball just crossing the line despite the best efforts of Dagba and Keylor Navas. Moise Kean restored the advantage for PSG on 77 minutes after Rafinha triggered a quick counter, hitting a magnificent solo goal for his fifth in seventh league games.

The Italy international was then replaced by Mbappe, who wrapped up the victory in stoppage time as he brought up his century of goals in his 137th game for PSG. — *AFP*

Cadiz shock for Barca, Real win

Madrid: Lionel Messi's Barcelona suffered a fourth Liga defeat of the season as they went down 2-1 to Cadiz on Saturday, while Real Madrid eased the pressure on Zinedine Zidane with their first league win since October.

Barca are now a distant seventh, 12 points off leaders Atletico Madrid, who beat Real Valladolid 2-0.

Under-pressure Zidane said Madrid's scrappy 1-0 victory in Seville was significant after a testing run of results. Sevilla goalkeeper Bono guided Vinicius Junior's effort into his own net in the second half, allowing Zidane's side to take the three points and move up to third in the table, six points behind Atletico. — *AFP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

Lanka Premier League: Colombo vs Galle from 3 pm; Jaffna vs Dambulla from 7.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Jamshedpur vs Mohun Bagan from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

English Premier League: Brighton vs Southampton from 1.30 am (Tuesday) on Star Sports Select 1

Italian League: Fiorentina vs Genoa from 1.15 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

WWE

Raw: Bouts from 6.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002, and Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C-9, Sector-3-III, Noida-201301.
Editor — T. Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 57290/94, Price in Nepal - Nep. Rs. 20.00 per copy.

SHORT AND SWEET

Dhawan, Pandya seal T20 series for India with a game to spare

Sydney, Dec. 6: India sealed the T20 International series against Australia with a game to spare after a swashbuckling Hardik Pandya finished what Shikhar Dhawan had set out to achieve with a scintillating 36-ball 52 in the second and penultimate match here on Sunday.

The visitors thus avenged their 1-2 ODI series loss, chasing down a challenging 195-run target set by the home side. They won the opener in Canberra by 11 runs on Friday.

Needing 25 of the final 12 balls after fetching 12 in the 18th over, Pandya brought the equation down to 14 in the last over with two fours. The all-rounder then hit two sixes to seal the match in India's favour.

Pandya remained unconquered on 42 off 22 balls.

India were off to a sedate start with no boundaries coming in the first two overs. But fours and sixes rained from the willows of Dhawan (52) and K.L. Rahul (30) once the duo got their eye in.

Dhawan got himself a couple of boundaries and a six off Glenn Maxwell as India scored 34 runs in two overs to gain the momentum they were looking for. Dhawan, despite coming down the wicket early, managed to pull Sean Abbott over deep mid-wicket for another six.

Australia got their first breakthrough when Rahul gave a simple catch to Mitchell Swepson at deep point. But India had still managed a strong start, reaching 60/1 at the end of the Powerplay.

Having played some fine shots, Dhawan topped an attempted slog sweep off leg-spinner Adam Zampa to give Australia their second wicket.

Sanju Samson got out after a 10-ball 15 but it



Captain Virat Kohli hugs teammate Hardik Pandya to celebrate India's victory in the second T20 international against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday. India won by six wickets. — *AP*

was debutant Daniel Sams, who gave the hosts their biggest breakthrough when he had Virat Kohli caught behind for a well-made 24-ball 40.

Earlier, stand-in skipper Matthew Wade led from the front with a half century and powered hosts to a strong total after a fairly commanding performance with the bat. — *PTI*

SCORECARD

Australia: Matthew Wade run out (Kohli/Rahul) 58, D Arcy Short c Shreyas Iyer b T. Natarajan 9, Steven Smith c Hardik Pandya b Chahal 46, Glenn Maxwell c Washington Sundar b Thakur 22, Moises Henriques c Rahul b T. Natarajan 26, Marcus Stoinis (not out) 16, Daniel Sams (not out) 8. Extras (lb-1, w-8) 9. **Total (for 5 wkts, in 20 overs) 194.**

FoW: 1-47.2-75.3-120, 4-168, 5-171. **Bowling:** Deepak Chahal 4-0-48-0, Washington Sundar 4-0-35-0, Shardul Thakur 4-0-39-1, T. Natarajan 4-0-20-2, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-51-1.

India: K. L. Rahul c Swepson b Andrew Tye 30, Shikhar Dhawan c Swepson b Zampa 52, Virat Kohli c Wade b Daniel Sams 40, Sanju Samson c Steven Smith b Swepson 15, Hardik Pandya (not out) 42, Shreyas Iyer (not out) 12. Extra (lb-1, w-2, nb-1) 4. **Total (for 4 wkts, in 19.4 overs) 195.**

FoW: 1-56, 2-95, 3-120, 4-149. **Bowling:** Daniel Sams 3.4-0-41-1, Sean Abbott 2-0-17-0, Andrew Tye 4-0-47-1, Glenn Maxwell 1-0-19-0, Mitchell Swepson 4-0-25-1, Moises Henriques 1-0-9-0, Adam Zampa 4-0-36-1.

Kohli hails Pandya's raw talent

Sydney, Dec. 6: India captain Virat Kohli on Sunday said winning the T20 series against Australia without established players like Rohit Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah meant a great deal to him and lavished praise on the marauding Hardik Pandya's "raw talent".

Pandya struck an unbeaten 22-ball 42 to take India home with six wickets in hands in the second T20 International and help the visitors take a 2-0 unassailable lead in the three-match rubber here.

"Yeah meant a great deal. We've played as a team in T20 cricket. The fact that we don't have Rohit and Bumrah, our established white ball players, in and still doing well makes me happy and

CHAHAL EQUALS BUMRAH'S RECORD

■ Yuzvendra Chahal equalled Jasprit Bumrah's Indian record of most wickets in Twenty-20 Internationals by dismissing Steven Smith on Sunday.

■ It was leg-break googly bowler's 59th wicket at an average of 23.98 in 44th innings of as many matches. Bumrah also claimed same number of wickets in at an average of 20.25 in 49 innings of 50 matches.

■ Only three bowlers completed a half century of wickets in Twenty20 for India.

■ R. Ashwin the third one who claimed 52 wickets at an average of 22.94 in 46 innings of as many matches. — *S. PERVEZ KAISER*

I am very proud of this team," Kohli said after the win.

While Rohit has missed the series because of a hamstring injury he suffered during this year's

IPL, Bumrah has been rested from the T20 matches keeping in mind the upcoming four-Test series against Australia.

The India skipper believes that with his raw

talent, Pandya, who earned the man-of-the-match award for his batting, can become a bankable player for the team in years to come.

"The reason for him (Hardik) coming into the team in 2016 was pure ability. He has raw talent. And now he realises that this is his time, the next 4-5 years, to be that bankable player that can win you games from anywhere. His plans are right and I'm glad to see that," Kohli said.

"He now realises that this is the time to establish in that (finishing) role and play match-winning knocks for us. He plays with all his heart and he certainly got that competitive nature about him and also has the skill to execute that at the highest level." — *PTI*

STARC TO MISS FINAL T20 GAME AGAINST INDIA

Sydney, Dec. 6: Australian pacer Mitchell Starc has pulled out of the remainder of the T20 series against India due to an illness in his family.

The 30-year-old pacer had missed the third ODI due to back and rib niggle but returned to claim two wickets in the 11-run loss in the first T20I in Canberra on Friday.

He had arrived in Sydney on Saturday but soon left the team bubble after learning about a family illness.

"There is nothing in the world more important than family and in this case Mitch is no exception," said Australia head coach Justin Langer said in a statement.

"We will give Mitch all the time he needs." — *PTI*

Man Utd climb to fourth spot

London, Dec. 6: Manchester United roared back to beat West Ham 3-1 on Saturday, while Chelsea moved top of the Premier League by the same scoreline over Leeds as fans returned to the English top-flight for the first time in nine months.

United fell behind at the London Stadium, but for the fifth consecutive away league game came back to win as a three-goal blitz from Paul Pogba, Mason Greenwood and Marcus Rashford turned the tables in a 13-minute spell after half-time.

United, who have won nine successive league games on the road, are now fourth in the table, one point ahead of Manchester City, who earlier cruised past Fulham 2-0.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer started with Bruno Fernandes and Rashford on the bench in an attempt to keep two of his star men fresh for Tuesday's crucial Champions League trip to RB Leipzig.

But they were needed to inspire a second-half turnaround after Tomas Soucek's goal seven minutes before half-time gave West Ham a deserved lead at the break.

Cheered on by 2,000 fans in their cavernous 60,000-seat stadium, the Hammers should have been further ahead but squandered their chances.

Pogba started the fight-back in the 65th minute with a superb strike from

THE RESULTS

West Ham (Soucek 38)	1
Manchester United (Pogba 65, Greenwood 68, Rashford 78)	3
Manchester City (Sterling 5, De Bruyne 26-pen)	2
Fulham	0
Chelsea (Giroud 27, Zouma 61, Pulisic 90+3)	3
Leeds (Bamford 4)	1
Burnley (Brady 3)	1
Everton (Calvert-Lewin 45+3)	1

distance and minutes later United were ahead, Greenwood turning and firing home in the area.

CHELSEA GO ATOP

Chelsea also came from a goal down to win 3-1 as fans made a return to Stamford Bridge for the first time since March.

Patrick Bamford gave Leeds a shock early lead as he took advantage of hesitation in the Chelsea defence to round Edouard Mendy and slot home his eighth goal of the season.

However, Lampard's men are now unbeaten in 16 matches in all competitions and showed why they are serious title contenders by storming back to win comfortably. — *AFP*



Manchester United's Mason Greenwood (left) scores against West Ham in their English Premier League match at The London Stadium on Saturday. — *AFP*

Juventus hit back to beat Bologna

Milan, Dec. 6: Juventus came from behind to beat Torino 2-1 on Saturday with US midfielder Weston McKennie scoring for the first time since he joined the Italian champions on loan, but Inter Milan retained second place.

McKennie's close-range header on 78 minutes put Juve level after Nicolas Nkoulou had given Torino a first-half advantage.

After McKennie's equaliser, Leonardo Bonucci produced an almost identical header in the 89th minute to give Juve victory and put them on 20 points from ten games, a total littered with five draws.

Having seen their rivals win, Inter defeated Bologna 3-1 at home thanks to a goal from Romelu Lukaku and a double from Morocco's Achraf Hakimi

behind leaders AC Milan.

Emanuel Vignato's strike for Bologna was in vain.

Milan, who have not won Serie A since the 2010-11 season, face Sampdoria in Genoa on Sunday with a chance to stretch their lead.

Before Juve's game in Turin, Cristiano Ronaldo was presented with a special jersey commemorating his 750th career goal.

But Ronaldo played a supporting role for once as 22-year-old McKennie, on loan from German club Schalke 04, scored a first Serie A goal and was mobbed by his teammates.

Bonucci said Juve had finally showed the qualities he wanted to see: "I have great respect for Torino but they succeeded in the first half because we were at half speed."

"In the second half we rediscovered what we have to show, that desire and intensity." — *AFP*

ANGULO SHINES AS FC GOA SECURE SEASON'S 1ST WIN

Goa, Dec. 6: FC Goa bagged their first win in the Hero Indian Super League Season 7 as they thumped Kerala Blasters 3-1 at the Fatorda Stadium, here on Sunday.

A brace from Igor Angulo (30', 90') and one from Jorge Ortiz Mendoza (52') ensured Juan Ferrando picked up his first win as Goa head coach. Vincente Gomez (90') scored a consolation goal for Kerala.

Ferrando made two changes to the side that was held by NorthEast United as James Donachie and Alexander Jesuraj were included. Nishu Kumar, Gomez and Nongdamba Naorem returned to the starting eleven for Kerala.

The first big chance for the Gaurs arrived early on in the 10th minute when Mendonza beat Nishu to take control of a long ball and fired a shot from outside the box, only to see his effort hit the crossbar.

The home side came close to grabbing the lead once again seven minutes later, only to be denied by the upright. A miscued pass from Rohit Kumar put Angulo through on goal. — *Agencies*

Kiwis blow Windies away

Hamilton (New Zealand), Dec. 6: New Zealand claimed the first Test against the West Indies by a comprehensive innings and 134 runs after ending a battling rearguard century by Jermaine Blackwood in Hamilton on Sunday.

The West Indies were all out in the first session on day four for 247 after only making 138 in their first innings in reply to New Zealand's 519 for seven.

Blackwood was the second to last wicket to fall for 104 after a 155-run stand with Alzarri Joseph who made 86.

The victory was set up over the first two days when New Zealand captain Kane Williamson, the man of the match, crafted a majestic 251 and the West Indies were always on the back foot from there.

The tourists went into the fourth day at 196 for six with Blackwood and Joseph advancing the total



West Indies' Jermaine Blackwood celebrates his century against New Zealand on Day Four of their first Test in Hamilton, New Zealand, on Sunday. — *AP*

to 244 before Kyle Jamieson and Neil Wagner combined to take the final three wickets in the space of 10 deliveries.

Wicketkeeper Shane Dowrich, who injured a hand on the first day, did not bat in either innings. New Zealand had a

chance for a key breakthrough early in the day when Blackwood, on 89, edged a ball straight to Ross Taylor.

— *AFP*

Brief Scores: West Indies 138 & 247 (Blackwood 104, Joseph 86, Wagner 4-66, Jamieson 2-42) lost to New Zealand 519 for 7 decl.