

# FREE-PRESS

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₹3

Quality at Value

**WEATHER**  
 23.2°C, 9.6°C  
 Sunrise : 07.03  
 Sunset : 05.47

**THOUGHT FOR THE DAY**  
 "You do not know about your physical, emotional, mental being. If you do not know yourself you cannot know God or Divinity"  
 H. H. Mataji Nirmala Devi



**HYDERABAD EMERGES AS VACCINE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD** Pg-7

**MAMATA BANERJEE LOSING GROUND AHEAD OF KEY POLL** Pg-6

**EMINEM APOLOGISES TO RIHANNA OVER LEAKED CHRIS BROWN LYRICS** Pg-10

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**MP'S LARGEST BANQUET HALL FOR CORPORATE EVENTS & WEDDINGS**

**News Brief**  
**386 test +ve, 3 deaths in city**  
**Positive percentage is 7.8**  
**INDORE:** As many as 386 patients tested Covid positive out of 4,949 sample reports received on Sunday. Rate of positive patients was recorded at 7.8% and total number of positive reached 51,949. Three deaths were also reported taking toll to 840, so far. According to the bulletin released by CMHO, reports of total samples received till Sunday night was 6,13,862. As many as 4536 samples were tested negative on Sunday. Department has taken 4702 more samples for testing including 1851 RTPCR samples and 2851 Rapid Antigen Tests. As many as 4078 patients are going under treatment in various hospitals of the city. Total 47031 patients have been discharged so far. As many as 119 patients were added to the discharged patients list on Sunday as reconciliation and 333 patients discharged.

## Higher infant death rates in tribal districts than Shahdol

**IN MANDLA and Balaghat, infant death rate is 15%**

MITHILESH PANDEY BHOPAL

Infant deaths reported in Shahdol district may have created shockwaves in the state, but in reality, tribal districts, such as Mandla and Balaghat, have a higher rate of infant deaths. In Mandla and Balaghat, the infant death rate is 15%, while, in Shahdol, the figure is 13%.

However, in general, Madhya Pradesh has a 12%-13% infant death rate. In most places, it is 11%-13%, while a few places have a 10% infant death rate.

The infant mortality rate in Madhya Pradesh is 48 per 1,000. The current infant mortality rate for India (2020) is 29.848 deaths per 1,000 live births, a 3.48% decline from that in 2019. The infant mortality rate for India in 2019 was 30.924 deaths per 1,000 live births, a 3.36% decline from that in 2018.

Mandla's SNCU in-charge, Dr Rotela, said, "Mandla has a 15% death rate in the district and most of it is due to being underweight. Their lungs do not develop, so they suffer from acute respiratory problems. So, the death rate is higher in our district. Hundred and ten infants were admitted to the SNCU in November, while 50 infants have been



FILE PHOTO

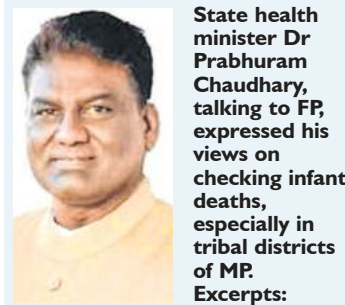
| Tribal districts | IMR | Tribal districts | IMR |
|------------------|-----|------------------|-----|
| Balaghat         | 15  | Betul            | 11  |
| Mandla           | 15  | Hoshangabad      | 10  |
| Shahdol          | 13  | Sidhi            | 10  |
| Chhindwara       | 12  | Khargone         | 09  |
| Barwani          | 11  | Umaria           | 08  |
| Seoni            | 11  | Alirajpur        | 08  |

**There is a 13% death rate in Shahdol. In November, 198 infants were admitted to the SNCU. The infants are brought from the surrounding districts, so the number of infant deaths swells**

RAJESH PANDEY, SHAHDOL'S EX-CMHO

admitted in December; so far, four deaths have been reported."

Similarly, Balaghat's SNCU in-charge, Dr Ashutosh, said, "We have over a 15% death rate in the district. In November, 270 infants were admitted and 28 infants died. We need more infrastructure at the SNCU. Some parents also take away their infants to other hospitals."



**State health minister Dr Prabhuram Chaudhary, talking to FP, expressed his views on checking infant deaths, especially in tribal districts of MP. Excerpts:**

**Q:** What is the overall strategy to check infant deaths in MP?

**Ans:** We are conducting a survey in the state covering the infants' condition and local reasons. Whether tribal districts or any other district, the survey will help us know the reality and reasons behind the deaths.

**Q:** Mandla, Balaghat have a 15% death rate and most of the tribal districts have death rates at par with Shahdol's infant deaths. The SNCU in-charge complains about the shortage of hands in most tribal districts...

**Ans:** We are strengthening the infrastructure and manpower wherever there is a need to redress such complaints.

**Q:** You removed the CMHO and civil surgeon in Shahdol when the infant death rate is 13 per cent, but, in the other tribal districts, the condition is more pathetic. So, what is your strategy to check infant deaths?

**Ans:** We have removed the CMHO and civil surgeon in Shahdol over infant deaths, but removal of any official does not serve the purpose.

**Govt mulls over I-T report, CM consults BJP leaders**

OUR STAFF REPORTER BHOPAL

The state government has begun to mull over the income-tax report. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan discussed about the report with party's state unit president VD Sharma and organisational secretary Suhas Bhagat on Sunday. Statements are being issued that an FIR should be registered against former chief minister Kamal Nath, his colleagues and

**Confusion over names of party-hoppers**

The government is in a dilemma over taking action on the report because of those leaders who have defected to the BJP. Their names have figured in the report. Therefore, an FIR has also to be registered against those 13 MLAs who have joined BJP. Of them, three are ministers. Taking action against them may rattle the BJP govt.

against three police officers. Sharma demanded that FIR should be registered against the guilty on the basis of the Election Commission's letter to the government. The government, however, is in a dilemma over the issue. The officers have suggested Chouhan that further action should be taken only after a thorough inquiry into the report. **CONTD. ON P8**

**CONG FLAYS GOVERNMENT MOVE 'Stopping loans to youths under CM scheme to harm interests'**

MSME dept issued orders to Bankers' committee to stop disbursing amounts under CM Yuva Udhaymi Yojana till further orders

OUR STAFF REPORTER BHOPAL

The state government has issued orders to banks to stop disbursing loans to youths. The Congress has criticised the government decision.

The department of micro, small and medium industry has issued the orders to the State-Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) to stop disbursing amounts under the CM Yuva Udhaymi, an employment and agriculture entrepreneur scheme, until further orders.

The decision was taken by the department at a meeting held on December 14; the order was released on Friday.

Congress state media vice-president Bhupendra Gupta alleged that, on the one hand, the state government portrays themselves as friends of youths and various schemes were launched to lure them in the by-elections. But now, when the youths and their parents had voted for the BJP, the government has put the scheme on hold.

He added that the government had betrayed lakhs of

**NOT A SINGLE YOUTH GOT LOAN**

● In the current year, not even a single youth has got loans to establish his venture. The department has not even allocated the physical and financial targets for the year

● Under the Mukhya Mantri Yuva Udhaymi Yojana, loans of Rs 10 lakh to Rs 2 crore are given. To obtain the loan, an entrepreneur has to deposit the 15% margin money and has to pay 5% interest on the loan

● Under the Mukhya Mantri Self-Employment Scheme, loans of Rs 50,000 to Rs 10 lakh are given. One has to deposit 15% of the margin money and has to pay 5 per cent interest annually

● Under the Mukhya Mantri Krishak Udhaymi, loans of Rs 10 lakh to Rs 2 crore are given.

youths by closing the scheme in this corona pandemic situation.

**'Upgrading the schemes'**  
 "We wanted to make changes in the present schemes to make them more effective. So, we have decided to have a small break; the schemes will be launched shortly in a new and fresh shape"

VIVEK PORWAL, SECRETARY, MSME DEPARTMENT

**PM Oli gets Nepal Parl dissolved**

**KATHMANDU:** Nepal's embattled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on Sunday sprang a surprise on his rivals and got the President to dissolve Parliament, a controversial move amidst a prolonged tussle for power between him and former premier Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" within the ruling dispensation. President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved House of Representatives at Oli's recommendation and announced mid-term general election in April-May, a decision termed "unconstitutional, impulsive and autocratic" by the Opposition and dissidents in the NCP. **P9**

## Shah denounces Didi's 'fiefdom' politics

**BOLPUR:** Having dented Mamata Banerjee's citadel a day before, a triumphant Amit Shah drove through the Bolpur city centre on Sunday like a victor amid showers of petals and chants of 'Jai Shri Ram'.

The architect of BJP's resurgence in the state once considered a Left bastion and then Mamata Banerjee's fiefdom, asserted the saffron party will form the next government with over 200 seats. West Bengal has a 294-member assembly. He attacked the Banerjee govt over "corruption, extortion, and Bangladeshi infiltration" patronised by "bhatija", a reference to TMC MP and Mamata's nephew Abhishek Banerjee. And the crowds roared in approval.

The cavalcade rolled through the streets of Bolpur, the town associated with Bengali literary and cultural giant

admitted in December; so far, four deaths have been reported."

Similarly, Balaghat's SNCU in-charge, Dr Ashutosh, said, "We have over a 15% death rate in the district. In November, 270 infants were admitted and 28 infants died. We need more infrastructure at the SNCU. Some parents also take away their infants to other hospitals."

**Amit Shah during a roadshow in Bolpur**

Rabindranath Tagore, like a victor's parade. Shah had virtually pulled off a coup a day before when Suvendu Adhikari led a parade of nine MLAs and a TMC MP into the BJP. **CONTD. ON P8**

**NiMo's bro Nehal charged with \$2.6m fraud in New York**

New York: Nehal Modi, brother of Nirav Modi, has been indicted for fraudulently obtaining diamonds worth over \$2.6 million from a company in Manhattan. Nehal, 41, is charged in a New York Supreme Court indictment with Grand Larceny in the First Degree, Manhattan District Attorney Cy Vance, Jr. said. "While diamonds maybe forever, this flawed scheme was not, and now Modi will face the clarity of a New York Supreme Court indictment. **P9**

## Farmers take cue from Modi's Covid optics

**Will bang utensils to drown out his Mann ki Baat**

FP NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Agitating farmers have decided to take a cue from none other than PM Modi to drive their message home. They have accordingly appealed to all and sundry to bang utensils to drown out Modi's monthly Mann ki Baat on radio on Dec 27. "We should ask the Prime Minister 'when will you listen to our

**Why is PM Modi silent on deaths of 33 protesting farmers: Congress**

**NEW DELHI:** Blaming the Centre for the death of 33 farmers during their ongoing protest, the Congress on Sunday questioned PM Modi's "silence" on the issue amid the farmers' sit-in on the Delhi borders since Nov 26.

**Tomar may meet farmers soon: Shah**  
**BOLPUR:** Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar will likely meet farmer unions agitating at the borders of the national capital for repeal of three farm laws in a day or two, Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday.

baat," said Swaraj India chief Yogendra Yadav.

Addressing a joint press conference, leader of the BKU Jagjit Singh Dalewala said this would be a replay of the optics marked by the banging of utensils, in response to an appeal from the PM to create a mass surge against the deadly corona virus. **CONTD. ON P8**

## New UK virus strain 'out of control'



**LONDONERS FLEE to escape lockdown curbs that will kick in shortly**

FP NEWS SERVICE LONDON

In a knee-jerk response to the confirmation in London that a potent new strain of the corona virus was "out of control," European countries have started banning flights coming from the UK.

The Dutch were the first to clamp the ban on passenger flights, which will last until January 1. Taking a cue from the Netherlands, a German government source said Berlin, too, was considering a similar move as "a serious option" for flights from both Britain and South

Africa. The moves came as around a third of England's population entered a Christmas lockdown. With that came a warning from UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock that the new strain of virus was "out of control".

It seems that scientists first discovered the new variant in a patient in September. But it was on Friday that modelling revealed the full seriousness of the new strain. That seems to be a confirmation of a figure put out by Prime Minister Boris Johnson - that the new virus strain could be 70 percent more transmissible.

This means it will drive up the 'R' or reproduction rate, which is the average number of people that an infected person passes it on to. **CONTD. ON P8**

**Meet to discuss new strain in UK**

New Delhi: Union Health Ministry has called an urgent meeting of its Joint Monitoring Group on Monday to discuss the emergence of a mutated variant of the coronavirus in the UK, which has led to a surge in the infection rate there.

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## Indore huddles at 9.6° Celsius

**Sunny day provided some comfort**

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

With the intensified cold winds, night temperature dropped in the city by one degree Celsius further of what was recorded on Friday night. Residents witnessed cold conditions in the night but the day turned comfortable due to sunny weather.

According to the regional meteorological depart-



ment, night temperature on Saturday night was recorded at 9.6 degrees

Celsius which was one degree Celsius below normal.

"The intense chill conditions were generated due to cold winds blowing in

### UMARIA WITNESSED LOWEST TEMPERATURE AT 3.2 DEGREES CELSIUS

Umaria witnessed the coldest night of the state on Saturday as the temperature dipped to 3.2 degrees Celsius. After Umaria, Rewa witnessed the second coldest night at 4 degrees Celsius followed by Gwalior at 4.3 degrees Celsius. State's capital Bhopal also sizzled at 6.8 degrees Celsius on Saturday night. Seoni witnessed the warmest night in the state with temperature recorded at 11 degrees Celsius.

from north India. The condition would remain for the next couple of days and the temperature may dip further," the met department officials said. They also informed us that due to Western Disturbance in Himalayan re-

gion, the city's day temperature would also dip further in the next couple of days. Maximum temperature on Sunday was recorded at 24.8 degrees Celsius, which was three degrees Celsius below the normal.

## Licences of 6 pubs, bars suspended till Dec 31



**Ban on smoking zones in all types of pubs and bars**

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

District administration on Sunday suspended licences till December 31 of six prominent bars and pubs where children below the age of 21 years were found in inebriated condition.

Besides, the administration put a ban on smoking zones in all types of pubs and bars.

"The district administration has started a crackdown on against drug mafia and drug business following the instructions by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. The action taken on Sunday was on that time," said district collector Manish Singh.

Those whose licenses have been suspended include Vidora at Palasia, Pitchers opposite C-21 Mall, Drinx Exchange at C-21 Mall, 10 Downing Street at Malhar Mega Mall, KYRO at Bhanvarkuan and Shosha at Bhamori in Vijay Nagar area.

Children below the age of 21 were found to be intoxicated during investigations in all these bars. After the suspension notification was issued,

the excise department officials went to the bars and pubs and sealed them.

The notification issued by the collector states that the irregularity committed by them is subject to cancellation or suspension of the license / operating order issued for the year 2020-21 in violation of Section 31 (1) (b) of the Madhya Pradesh Excise Act 1915. Under the provisions of Madhya Pradesh Excise Act, they will not be entitled to any compensation or refund of any fees paid or deposited in connection therewith for suspension period of permission for license / operation.

"In case of any irregularity found in their licensed premises in future, the license issued in their favor will be eligible for cancellation," Singh said.

In another order, Singh has directed to close smoking zones in all bars and pubs. The administration had received a complaint that consumption of drugs was also being made under the guise of smoking in these pubs and bars. The administration has warned that strict action will be taken on any attempt to make youth addicted to drugs in all such places. Singh has also warned of legal action against the illegal presence of youth in pubs and bars.

## NTPC to set up plant in city to convert waste into energy

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

State-owned National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) is going soon to set up a plant to convert waste into energy at land freed from legal waste at trenching ground in Devgurada.

"The municipal solid waste will be segregated and processed to utilise combustion fraction for conversion to coal or for power generation, biodegradable fraction for production of methane gas for use as bio CNG, and the recycled residue shall be used for construction purpose after required processing," a civic body official said.

As per information, an MoU between Indore Municipal Corporation was inked some months ago. As per the MoU, an amount of Rs 107 crore would be spent on establishing the plant which would be one of



its kind. Official sources stated that the amount for setting up plant would be brone completely by NTPC. They also stated that the work to develop the plant would start within a month.

Machines which convert waste into coal would be brought soon to the city. Identical plants would be setup in Bhopal, Varanasi and Kawas.

Mountains of waste used to pile up at trenching

ground until IMC decided not to dump waste there any further and remove the legacy was complete.

Within six months, the IMC had remove 13 tonnes of legacy waste and freed 100 acres of land. Initially, there were plans to develop the freed land as a golf ground but late city forest was planned. In a portion of that land, city forest was developed and now NTPC plant is going to come up there.

## 2 arrested with 3.9 kg cannabis

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

Crime branch arrested two persons while they were carrying cannabis in a scooter in Sanyogitaganj area on Sunday. Police recovered 3.9 kilograms cannabis from the accused and they are being questioned about the source of cannabis.

ASP (crime) Guruprasad Parashar said acting on a tip-off, the crime branch team accompanied by Sanyogitaganj police station reached Chhawni area and managed to arrest two persons while they were carrying cannabis in a scooter. The accused were identified as Santosh of Annapurna area and Sandeep of Hawa Bungalow area of the city. They were booked under 8/20 NDPS act and they are being questioned about the person who gave cannabis to them. Police believed that the accused came to supply the cannabis to someone in the area.

## 2 minor girls threaten people with knife near Rajbada



OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

Two minor girls allegedly threatened people in the Rajbada area on Sunday early morning. They were carrying a knife and were arguing with women at Gurudwara also. The devotees at the Gurudwara immediately informed the Sarafa police after which they were caught. The girls were booked under the relevant sections and they were sent to juvenile home.

ASP Rajesh Vyas said the two minor girls on an Activa scooter were passing from Gurudwara in Rajbada area when they threatened people by flashing a knife. The locals informed the police when they were caught and were booked under the relevant sections. Further investigation is on. It is said that the girls are

resident of Banganga area of the city and they stayed at a friend's place at night. They were returning home on their Activa scooter when they had an argument with some women at the Gurudwara and the girls took out a knife to threaten people.

One Parminder Singh said he was at the Gurudwara around 6 am when the minor girls reached there. They hit some women there and started an argument. The girls later started manhandling people and threatening them by flashing a knife.

Parminder said the girls also threatened two persons near the gurudwara with the knife. The girls were possibly in an inebriated condition. However, the police didn't confirm the same. The girls didn't reveal the source of the knife.

## 12K street vendors given loans of Rs 10K each

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

Over 12,000 street vendors were provided with a loan of Rs 10,000 each under the PM Street Vendor Aatma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) by the Indore Municipal Corporation.

IMC additional commissioner Shringar Shrivastav said that on the request of IMC commissioner Pratibha Pal, the

collector Manish Singh allowed the banks to remain open on Sunday for the benefit of the beneficiaries. The teams of IMC were deployed at zonal offices and were instructed to help the street vendors in every way.

The IMC commissioner took a review meeting earlier and asked the bank officials to keep the bank open on all Sundays coming in between the dates from December 20 till January 2, 2021 and asked them to provide loans to all the eligible street vendors who apply for the loan.

## Slum kids shine at charity show



OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

The initiative of a police constable Sanjay Sanwre and his few friends, Operation Smile in which they teach kids living in slum areas has received appreciation in a programme, Smile Charity, organised in the city on Saturday by an event manager Yatharth Tanwar.

Sanjay said 13 children from his classroom in a slum area of Lalbagh Basti had participated in the event and danced on a tribal song costumed in tribal dresses. The choreography

and costumes were provided by the event organizers only. The kids said after getting such appreciation they are feeling motivated for the future. They said it is not that the kids in slums do not have talent but they actually lack opportunities and hence can't showcase their talent.

Event organizer, Yatharth said that this was his first such event in which he invited physically challenged kids, deaf and mute kids as well as kids of slum areas. Looking at the Covid-19 situation only 37 children were called in to perform.

## IMC starts marking and painting dividers, roads

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

The traffic department of Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC) has started marking and painting dividers at a war-footing.

Zebra crossings with lane marking are being done on roads including the BRTS and supper corridor. This work will last in 10-15 days.

Marking and painting work on dividers is done every year in December before the arrival of central team for cleanliness survey in the city.

This year, the cleanliness survey will start in February-March, so the



REPRESENTATIVE PIC

corporation has got two months extra for preparations. Road marking will be done on all the major roads in the city including MG Road, RNT Marg, Greater Kailash Road, Dhakanwalakuan Main Road, Patrakar Colony Square Road, Annapurna

Road, Ranjit Hanuman Road, Manikbagh Road, Kesarbagh Road and VIP Road.

Along with this, color and re-coloring is being done on road dividers too. This time the corporation is getting black and yellow color instead of black and white on the dividers and pavement boundaries.

Apart from this, municipal commissioner Pratibha Pal has directed the garden department to prune trees around the roads and on the dividers so that the roads look orderly. Along with this, decorative and beautiful flowering plants are also being planted on the dividers.

### LAST SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS

## Christians light 4th & last purple candle in churches, homes



Christmas spirit brightens the day and brings smiles to community members as children spot Santa Claus in the market (PHOTO BY ANAND SHIVRE)

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

On the fourth Sunday of Advent period, Christian community lit the fourth and last purple candle in churches and homes. The fourth candle is often called the angel candle. It represents the messengers who announced the birth of the Messiah.

For the last three weeks, the entire community has been preparing to celebrate birth of Jesus Christ on Christmas with fervour. Parish priest Father

Thomas Rajamanikam and Father Selvin lit the fourth and last purple candle on the fourth Sunday of Advent, also known as the angel candle or "Angel's Candle", at St. Joseph's Church, Nanda Nagar.

"This candle represents peace," Rajamanikam explained in his sermon. He added that Jesus had come to bring peace, he was going to bring people closer to God and to reunite each other.

Selvin said, "We have to prepare ourselves spiritually and spiritually to give the child Jesus a place in our

## 24 TOP SCORERS AWARDED

To motivate students to study and value education, 24 promising children who scored highest marks in community class 5th, class 10th, class 12th and those who earned PhD were awarded. Out of 24, 18 were felicitated and awarded cash rewards.

Spokesman of Dharmaprantia Catholic Sabha, Indore William Rafael shared that the award distribution was organised at Saint Vincent Pallotti Palli, Sukhliya by the community on Sunday, i.e. fourth Sunday of Advent. The program commenced with the acclamation of the reverent Bishop Chacko Thottumarickal. He felicitated



Top scoring children with their awards at Saint Vincent Pallotti Palli, Sukhliya

the children with shawl and prizes. President of Sabha Joseph TV and team coordinated the event.

patented and prepared themselves spiritually for "Christmas".

In the evening, rituals to prepare for the big day were held at 5 pm.

"Christmas rituals will be held on Thursday, December 24, at 7 pm and further, on Friday, December 25, from 6:30 am and 8 am," Francis shared.

For this the construction of the cowshed is in process. Church will be lit up with electrical lights and decorated with ornaments for Christmas.

However, this year, there is no market fanfare on Christmas this year. Community members are preparing themselves spiritually for this festival.

## Christmas celebrations to be muted this year

PINTU NAMDEV  
Indore

Covid-19 has impacted all the festivals this year and in Indore specifically looking at the rising number of cases it seems that it will affect festivals next year also. Playing the responsible role towards the society the Christian community of Indore has decided to celebrate the Birthday of Jesus Christ with simplicity.

Bishop Chacko said that this year there will be Christmas Carol only in the church, and they won't go from house to house, which is the practice every year. Instead of overnight worship, there will only be Holy Mass and Prayer from 5 to 7 pm.

He said that every year, on the night of 24 December, the birth of Lord Jesus is celebrated in the churches, but this time it will be celebrated between 5 and 7 pm on the evening of December 24. Nine Catholic churches will have the Holy Mass and prayers. Worship will be



done on December 25 also. Stickers have been placed on the benches in the church to take care of social distancing. Sanitiser machines have been installed at many places on the church premises. Masks will be mandatory for all and fewer amount of people will be allowed inside the church premises, he added. According to K Father Biju Mathew, car-

ols will be sung on a small scale in churches. All will greet each other through social media. Those over 65 years and below 10 years of age have been requested not to come to the churches.

Along with the expansion of the city to date, there are nine Catholic churches in the city with a population of around 15,000 and three Protestant churches.



## Indore techie married twice within 5 days, alleges first wife

### Woman from Khandwa alleges that hubby married another girl in Mhow

FP NEWS SERVICE  
Indore/Khandwa

A woman and her family from Khandwa have filed a complaint with Khandwa police, against a 26-year-old software engineer Naveen Panchal from Indore for marrying another woman. The 'first-wife' who is a resident of Bajrang Chowk in Khandwa—alleged that Naveen has married two women, within a span of five-day and then fled, police said on Sunday. She alleged that he married her (in Khandwa) first and after a few days he married another woman in Mhow.

of police office on Saturday and submitted a complaint. During preliminary investigation it was revealed that the accused, a resident of Musakhedi area in Indore, allegedly married a woman from Khandwa on December 2 and another woman at Mhow in Indore on December 7, Gathare said quoting the complaint. As per the complaint, the entire matter came to the fore when one of the relatives of girl from Khandwa went to a wedding dinner in Mhow tehsil of Indore district. Finding resemblance with the groom of his kin he shared a photograph of the 'Mhow wedding groom' with the Khandwa woman over the phone on December 7, CSP

Gathare said. Subsequently, a woman from Khandwa who entered into the wed-lock just five-days back lodged a police complaint here, seeking registration of an FIR against the accused. As per the complaint, the family had spent Rs 10 lakh on the marriage and have given household items to the bride. The complaint also stated that the accused, after marrying the woman here, took her to his place in Indore. After a few days, he told her that he had to go to Bhopal for some unavoidable work, but he went to Mhow to marry another woman, the official said. On December 2, the accused had come for the

wedding here with his parents, brothers, sister, and other relatives, he said. When the Khandwa victim's family spoke to the woman with whom the accused tied the knot in Indore, she told them that her marriage was arranged and not a forced one, as per the complaint. After December 7, the accused did not return home and switched off his mobile phone, CSP said. The search for the accused is underway, he added. A cops said that if woman's claim is found to be correct then an FIR will be registered under Section 494 (marrying again during lifetime of spouse) and other relevant sections of IPC.

### BUILDING OF GOVT COLLEGE INAUGURATED

## Oppn misleading farmers: Gehlot

FP NEWS SERVICE  
Indore/Alot

The newly constructed building of the government college was inaugurated here at Taal village, about 18-kilometre from Alot tehsil of Ratlam district in Madhya Pradesh on Sunday. Rs 6.5 crores has been spent on the project. The chief guest of the inauguration ceremony was union social justice and empowerment minister Thawarchand Gehlot, while the programme was chaired by the state higher education minister Dr Mohan Yadav. Member of Parliament from Ujjain Anil Firozia, former MLA Jitendra Gehlot, Tal BJP Mandal president Vishal Kala were present as special invitees in the programme. Addressing the programme, Gehlot said that Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Narendra Modi's government have done a lot of welfare work for the farmers.



From Kisan Credit Card Scheme to renovation of mandis to raising minimum support price for the farmers. The opposition just misleading innocent farmers against the BJP government at Centre and this is not right. Gehlot said that he started his political life from Alot assembly constituency. Therefore, he used to look forward to the development here and will continue to do so. State higher education

minister Dr Yadav also addressed the programme and laid stress on the employment-oriented education to the students. He said that employment-oriented education has been given importance in the new education policy. Therefore, instead of traditional courses in colleges, more employment-providing courses will be run. He approved to conduct BSc, BCom, and postgraduate courses in the colleges of Taal and Alot from the next

academic session. MP Firozia and others also addressed the programme. Earlier, members of the National Students' Union of India demanded that the inauguration of the new college building be cancelled as the new building lacks many facilities. NSUI members claimed that the college does not have a playground for the students to play. Cracks are visible on the walls of the new building. Boundary walls of the college have not been constructed properly due to which anti-social elements can enter the college at any time. Due to the leakage of the drinking water tank, there is no systematic arrangement for drinking water in the new college building. They alleged that low quality work has been done by the contractor in constructing the college. Apart from this, many other works are lying incomplete in the building, due to which the inauguration of the college should be postponed, they demanded.

## Sadho urges Congmen to stop politics of back-stabbing

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

Former minister and convener of Congress for Indore civic body elections Vijayalaxmi Sadho met Congress activists and leaders with an appeal to get united before civic body elections. "Hamko ek dusare ko nipatane ki rajneeti band karna padegi. (We will have to end the politics of damaging each other's prospects). We will have to get united and contest election together to end the exile of last many years in Indore Municipal Corporation," she told the activists while addressing the meeting at Gandhi Bhawan on Sunday. Sadho also said that activists should come together to get a deserving candidate who will win.



### MEET PEOPLE AND INFORM THEM ABOUT FAILURES OF BJP: INDORA

Secretary of All India Congress Committee Kuldeep SIndora also addressed the meeting and said that Kamal Nath had ended the 15-year exile of the party in Madhya Pradesh by reaching out to the people. "We will have to do the same by reaching people door to door and inform them about the failures of BJP. BJP's ill policies like GST, demonetisation, and others have increased unemployment in the country. Activists must inform the people about these things to the people," he said. Indora also added that the party will give ticket to those who are working on the ground level and can ensure a win.

will be distributed on the basis of a survey of the candidates in each ward and it will be given to those whom people know in their respective area." Sadho also targeted BJP and said that a large number of scams took place in

the 15-year tenure of BJP. "Many scams were unearthed during our tenure and we were getting them investigated, which was also a major reason for BJP to topple the government. All scam should be investigated," she added.

## Man found dead under mysterious circumstances

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

A 36-year-old man was found dead under mysterious circumstances in the back lane of a house in Juni Indore area on Sunday morning. Injury marks were also found on his body. Some artificial jewellery was also recovered from him. As a result, it is believed that on his way out of a house after robbery, he might have fallen to his death. The cops are investigating the case further. According to Juni Indore police station in-charge Bharat Singh Thakur, the deceased it has been identified as Natwar alias Jitendra, 36 year, a resident of Street Number 5 in Sindhi Colony area of the city. He was found dead in the back lane of Street number 6 in the area around 8.30 am. After spotting the body, locals immediately informed the police. TI Thakur further said a deep injury mark was also found on his head. During



the search, some artificial jewellery was found from his possession. The jewellery was reportedly stolen from a house in the area. The statement of his family members and residents of the house from where the jewellery was stolen is being taken by the police to verify the incident. The autopsy report is also awaited to know the exact reason of his death. The cops also recovered some cash from him.

## INDOMITABLE SPIRIT: Navy officer's widow clears SSB, set to join army

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

She lost her father before completing her education, later she met her soul-mate, got married and he became a martyr only after 40 days of their wedding. Picking up the responsibility of her soul-mate, she

chose to join the Indian Army and will begin her training from January 7. Meet Karuna Singh Chauhan, who found her new path and guidance after losing her marital dreams, in Indore. Karuna and Lt Commander Dharmendra Singh Chauhan met on a matrimonial site where their profile matched in June 2018. Dharmendra was married to Karuna Singh, a professor in a college in Agra March 10, 2019. Lt Commander Dharmendra Singh Chauhan (30) died while fighting flames on INS Vikramaditya was laid to rest on Sunday at his native place in Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh in April 2019. After the devastating loss of her better half, Karuna decided to fight on.



Karuna Singh Chauhan

"It took time, but by December 2019, I made a choice to take his mission ahead and serve my country," Karuna said. She approached Colonel Nikhil Diwanji in Indore,

who trained her to clear SSB. "Alongside, my preparation for SSB, I decided to take care of all responsibilities of my late husband including taking care of my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law's wedding," Karuna said. Some officers of the Indian Navy suggested that she join the navy, but she wanted to join the army. But, clearing SSB was not easy. "I got my first SSB call in September 2020, where I was removed in the first screening round," Karuna said.

Motivated by the challenge of the test, she focused on her training and gave another attempt in October 2020. She was selected this time and will be training for a year in Chennai. Before losing her husband, Karuna also underwent another challenge in life as her father late Dr AK Singh passed away in 2014. "My brother was in class 10th back then and I was still in college, so life had a tough turn for us, but still, I found inner strength," she said. Karuna was sharing her story in a live event organised by Diwanji to motivate people to join armed forces and serve the country. Sharing a piece of advice, Karuna said, "Every day, take a step towards success and you can make a difference."

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## Cong leader's son assaults sister-in-law

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

A son of Congress political leader Salim Sheikh, who himself is a doctor by profession, assaulted his sister-in-law (elder brother's wife) over a dispute of using a water pump in the house on Sunday. A case registered in Chhatripura police station. According to police, the victim in the case, Nafeesa complaint against her brother-in-law Idris for assaulting her. A cross-FIR was done in the case under sections 323, 294 and 506 of IPC. Police said that Nafeesa and Idris's wife Wahida had an argument over using the water pump in the house. The argument turned ugly when Idris intervened between them. Idris allegedly assaulted Nafeesa. Idris is the younger son of Congress party activist, Salim Sheikh. Also, reportedly a video of the incident has been shared with the police by the victim Nafeesa. However, senior police officials denied knowledge about the video.

## MGM docs share memories, Covid strategies online at alumni meet



OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

Alumni Association of Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College organised the first-ever online alumni meet on Sunday. Over 400 doctors working in various parts of the world joined the meeting and relived their old days by sharing their memories with their colleagues and classmates. "Our alumni are working across the globe and they all shared their experience online for handling Covid-19. Unlike every year, we couldn't organise the programme in medical college this year," secretary of Alumni Association Dr Vinita Kothari said. Earlier, IPS Vineet Kapoor addressed the members on ways to

stay safe from cyber crime and Dr Shivkumar Uttare addressed about "Treatment through telemedicine and safety". Dr Dawoodi, Dr Alka Trivedi, Dr Kulkarni, Dr Jyoti Devras, Dr Sanjeev Agrawal, Dr Vinayak Kamath, Dr Gaur, Dr Radheshyam Agrawal and others had joined the meeting from US, Malaysia and UK. Patron Dr Satish Shukla of 1958 batch and Dr Leela Joshi of batch 1956 addressed the meet and shared their experience along with appreciating the efforts of other members. Dr Apoorva Pauranik, Dr Sumit Shukla, Dr Rajendra Choube, Dr Rakesh Gupta, and Dr Rajendra Lahoti introduced all the members while Dr Vinita Kothari and Dr Sanjay Londhe hosted the programme.

## Excise SI dies of Covid-19

Covid-19 claimed another corona warrior of the city on Sunday when an excise sub-inspector posted in the city died during treatment in a city hospital. Excise sub-inspector Santosh Singh, who was posted in Rajmohalla Circle of Excise Department in the city was tested positive for Covid-19 three days ago. Since then, he was undergoing treatment in a city hospital. It is said that his condition deteriorated on Sunday and he could not be saved. During the lockdown, 44-year-old excise officer Singh played a leading role in nabbing liquor suppliers in the city. He was a good officer in the department. Sources claimed that his wife has also tested positive and she is undergoing treatment in a hospital. Assistant Excise Commissioner Raj Narayan Soni said that Singh was from Singrauli and he was posted in the city since 2012. He was an honest and fearless officer. On Sunday, his last rites were performed at the Regional Park crematorium and many officers including assistant excise commissioner Soni were present there to pay tribute.



## Woman files dowry harassment case

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

A woman married in February this year filed a dowry demand complaint of Rs 3 lakh with the Women Police Station on Sunday. Police said following a complaint by Shivani against her husband Sidhant Jaiswal, his father Sunil, mother Rashmi and Sister Sanskrati, police have registered a case under Section 498A, 323, 34 of IPC and under Dowry Prohibition Act 1961. Shivani said in March after her marriage when she was planning to visit her parents, her sister-in-law

Sanskrati asked her to bring along Rs 3 Lakh of the "promised" Rs 5 lakh dowry amount. However, soon after Shivani came to her see her parents, the nationwide lockdown was imposed and she could not go back to her in-laws home. However, after the unlock process began and Shivani returned to her in-laws residence, she was mentally pressured and at times she was also denied food. They also misbehaved with her and used abusive language against her. When she could not take it further, she visited the police station and complained.

## 8-yr-old Devyani comes second in Int'l Spell Bee (Junior) contest

### Her twin sister kept motivating her

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
Indore

Another feather in Indore's cap as 8-year-old Devyani Bharadwaj bags first runner-up position in International Spell Bee (Junior) contest. Devyani was the winner of national round and represented the country in the grand finale alongside top spelling bee champions from various countries. Five students each from Junior and Senior Category were selected in International Level from

India. Devyani Bhardwaj (Junior), Krishnavi Agrawal, Khwaish Manwani, Pari Solanki (Senior) have been selected for Grand Finale. The 8-year-old gives credit to her twin sister Shivranjani for standing by her side throughout the competition. Shivranjani had come in second in the national round of the contest. This was the first attempt of both the sisters. "We had been preparing for the spelling bee contest for 9 months and



Devyani Bharadwaj (on right) who was first runner-up in the International Spell Bee (Junior) contest with her mother Smita Bharadwaj and twin sister Shivranjani Bharadwaj, who came in second in the national round of the competition

participating on various levels with guidance from our mentor Deepa Dagaonkar," Devyani said. She shared that 45 participants from various nations were selected for the international round of the competition. "From 45, only 9 participants reached the finale, where I was selected as well," Devyani said. Close to bagging first position, Devyani came in second because of 1 point miss. Sharing her future aspirations, she said, "I love food and want to become a chef in future." During the lockdown, she learned fireless cooking and wants to learn

more in the coming days. Sharing how her sister's support helped her, their mother Smita Bharadwaj said, "Being twins, both the sisters always improve each other with support and setting an example." She added that both the sisters prepared together for the contest and practised their spellings. "We would challenge each other and it helped us get better," the sisters said. Bharadwaj added, "Being sisters supporting each other, the twins had an extra edge to win the competition." This was the first attempt at the championship for both the girls.



## Northern wind brings down temp; state on Yellow Alert



Cyclists among commuters face hassle due to poor visibility in Ujjain on Sunday

**FP NEWS SERVICE**  
Ujjain

With the onset of snow fall in hilly areas - the cold wind coming from northern India brought down temperature across the state. The met depart-

ment has put the state under Yellow Alert. As per the weatherman, there is no respite from cold during this week, however precipitation is not likely in near future due to weak system. The intervening night

of Saturday and Sunday was the coldest night of the city for this season, the weatherman informed.

As per government Jiwaji Observatory till December 24 the minimum temperature may contin-

### WINTER SOLSTICE TODAY

As per Government Jiwaji Observatory the winter solstice will occur on Monday, as the earth poles will have their maximum tilt away from the Sun. On Monday the Sun will rise on 7.05am while it will set on 5.45pm. Consequently, the duration of the will be 10.41 hour while the night will have a duration of 13.19 hours.

ue to fall. And cold wave and frost may damage crop of Gram, potato and green vegetables.

As per the observatory the maximum temperature on Sunday remained 23 degree Celsius. Relative humidity remained 78 per cent in morning and 43 per cent in the evening on Sunday.

## Youth thrashed for eloping with minor girl

**FP NEWS SERVICE**  
Ujjain

A youth was tied to a pole and thrashed by kin of a minor girl in Ujjain. He promised the girl that he will marry her and had eloped with her recently.

The youth is a resident of Devashish Nagar. The parents of the boy and girl lodged separate complaints of missing for their children.

The parents also launched a search for the duo. After some time, the kin of the girl succeeded in locating the young couple. Next, they tied the youth with a street-light's pole and thrashed him badly. He was later handed over to Neelganga police.

The police have arrested the youth and started a probe. The parents of the boy also chided him. They counselled him that as he is not financially independent, he shouldn't have eloped with the girl.

## IMA fetes Dr Saluja & Dr Tajankar



Dr Saluja and Dr Tajankar being felicitated during a programme organised by the IMA FP PHOTO

**FP NEWS SERVICE**  
Ujjain

The local chapter of Indian Medical Association (IMA) felicitated well-known gynecologist Dr Satinder Saluja and ear-nose-throat expert Dr PN Tajankar with 'Dr Jyoti Prasad Ganguly Memorial National Award' and 'Life Time

Achievement Award', respectively during a programme.

Ex-national president of IMA and ex-vice-chancellor of DAVV, Indore Dr Bharat Chhapparwal was chief guest of the programme which was presided over by the IMA State president Dr Anoop Nigam.

Earlier, Dr Anita Peter and Dr Ajay Jain gave the introduction of both of these doctors. Various social organisations also honoured both of them by presenting shawl and sripthal. Dr GK Nagar conducted the proceedings and Dr NK Trivedi proposed a vote of thanks.

### News in Brief



**689th annual urs of Hazrat Maulana Kamaluddin Chishti organised with simplicity**  
**DHAR:** The 689th annual urs of Hazrat Maulana Kamaluddin Chishti was celebrated in a simple manner on December 17 due to COVID-19. Secretary of Urs committee Javed Anjum apprised that Urs was organised as a day-long event. Sufi Saint Anwar Baba Khadim Moinuddin and chief guest Maharaja Himendra Singh and acting president of Urs Committee Sohail Nisar offered prayers at the tomb of the Sufi. The Covid guidelines were followed by the devotees throughout the celebration. Police administration and district administration played an important role in making the programme a success.

### Prayer meeting organised for Suman Mehta



**JAORA:** A prayer meeting was organised by Jain Social Group Jaora and Jain Social Group Jaora Golden on the sudden demise of Suman Mehta. Ex-state president of Jain Social Group Dharam Chand Chappod said that Suman Mehta was a simple and socially active person. She was an active member and her demise was a big loss for the organisation. State vice president Rahul Chappod and various social organisations have expressed grief over her sudden death. The prayer meeting was conducted by Pradeep Sethia and vote of thanks was proposed by Subhash Dugarwal. After the meeting all of them went to her residence to offer condolence to the aggrieved family.

### BJP office inaugurated in Dhamnod

**DHAMNOD:** District head Rajiv Yadav inaugurated BJP office and Pandit Deendayal Service Center. Yadav addressed workers in the speech saying that the main aim of the BJP is to work for the betterment of the people. Mandal president Satish Chaudhary, ex-MLA Kalu Singh Thakur, nagar jury Dinesh Sharma, Mandav representative Jayaram Gower, district representative Arun Malviya, district director Lal Dabar, mandal director Karan Kaheer, Dharampuri group director Kamlesh Manve, district vice president Gopal Solanki, along with others were present.

### Cong leader DS Vaskale passes away

**THIKRI:** EX-Sarpanch of Abhali village and Congress leader Daulat Singh Vaskale's sudden demise has come as a sad news to the villagers. Vaskale was 75-year-old and besides politics he was an active social worker. His father Mangial Adivasi was an ex-MLA. His funeral was attended by many political people as well as the villagers and they paid tribute to the departed soul, praying that his soul may rest in peace.

### COVID-19 DISTRICT UPDATE

## Five students, gas agency owner among 17 test +ve

**FP NEWS SERVICE**  
Ujjain

A total of 17 more persons tested positive for Corona taking the number of Covid-19 patients to 4,644 in the district on Saturday. The toll is 100. Overall, 5 students, 2 farmers and 1 senior citizen, bank worker, gas agency owner and a labourer each have made it to the list of new patients.

As per the medical bulletin issued at 11 pm, out of 700 sample reports received on the day, 17 persons including 11 from Ujjain city, 2 from Mahidpur and 1 each from Barnagar, Nagda, Khachrod and Tarana were tested Corona positive. All the patients including 7 women are symptomatic and most of them were admitted in different hospitals or home quarantined.

Overall, 231 patients, 87 of them symptomatic, have been getting treatment. Samples of 1, 48, 837 persons have been taken across the district so far and no report is awaited. With 15 more discharged on the day, the total number of corona winners has gone up to 4,313.

**TALLY 4,644**

## Shukla to make 2 films in Malwa

**FP NEWS SERVICE**  
Ujjain

Renowned film script and dialogue writer Dilip Shukla visited the city. During his short stay, here he announced two films Malwa 90 minutes and Hatheli par Chaand.

Both films will be dedicated to Malwa's soil. Shukla said, the cooperation of Malwa and artists of the adjoining region will be taken in both the films. One film will be comedy and while another will be a family film.

Dilip Shukla, has written dialogue and script of successful films like Ghayal, Damini, Dabang, Andaaz Apna-Apna, Mohra, etc, said



Local artistes felicitate script writer Dilip Shukla FP PHOTO

that the script and story of the two films have been completed and the film will soon be shot in the adjoining areas of Ujjain, Indore and Bhopal.

The films were duly announced by Shukla at a func-

tion held in Ujjain. Rajesh Rawal and Sandeep Srijan of the Samwad institution and Dinesh Diggaj of Kabir Anhad welcomed Shukla by presenting him memento.

Artists of the city including Ashok Bhati, Saurabh

Chatak, Swami Muskurake, Dr Om Bairagi, Himanshu Bawander and Ajay Ganguly made their presentations. The programme was conducted by Surendra Circuit and gratitude was expressed by Navtej Singh.

## BJP's training programme begins

**Badnagar:** First day of BJP training program was conducted at Indraprastha Garden in five sessions with different topics. The training was inaugurated by MP Anil Firojiya, ex-MLA Mukesh Pandya and ex-district panchayat head Kanha Singh Rathore and district minister Sanjay Sharma. Anil Firojiya informed the history, development and family of the BJP in the first session. Speaker Pradip Pandey emphasised on mainstream ideology and thinking of India. Speaker Rajpal Singh Sisodiya accentuated the effective use of social media and media in the third session followed by Madan Sankhla emphasising on BJP and its responsibilities in the fourth session. Later, Rajpal Rathore laid importance on developing personality. The program was held between 9 am to 5 pm and was conducted by general secretary Ajay Dauraya.

## Sair-Sapata a huge hit despite Corona outbreak

**FP NEWS SERVICE**  
Ujjain

In accordance with the tradition of previous years, the Sair-Sapata event was organised as a cycling picnic this year here on Ankpaat Road on Sunday. The children, adults and women enjoyed every moment of the event.

Ex-municipal president and Mallkhamb Association president Sonu Gehlot, comedian Swami Muskurake and Gayatri Pariwar members worshipped the portrait of Goddess Saraswati and a by-cycle. A signature campaign was also launched to build the country's first bicycle city, a mission cycle city campaign on behalf of the institution.

Jwalant Sharma and Amit Sharma encour-



Participants enjoy Sair-Sapata in Ujjain on Sunday FP PHOTO

aged the youth and women by imparting aerobics and yoga on the backdrop of music. The

patriotic song was presented by Srinath Chaudhary. The participants also enjoyed the taste of

sprouted grains and juices. Sports officer Motilal Dagar highlighted the benefits of cycling.

### ILLEGAL MINING

## Six tractors, two dumpers seized



Illegal sand being seized

**FP NEWS SERVICE**  
Ujjain

Following the instruction of CM Shivrajsingh Chouhan district administration is taking strict action against goons, mafias and illegal miners. The local administration has seized 6 tractors and 2 dumpers involved in ille-

gal mining on Sunday. SDM Sanjeev Sahu on Sunday conducted raid at a manufacturing factory at Industrial area from where illegally mined sand was recovered. Illegally mined sand was also recovered from Adarsh Traders located in Nagziri area. Cases have been registered against both the firms.

## Training of BJP workers begins

**JAORA:** The two day training of BJP was inaugurated at Saraswati Puram Pahadiya road in which former head of Ujjain Anil Jain Kaluheda said BJP has panchatantra allegiance and emphasised on giving time to family and work. Ex-president of student council Kshitij Purohit informed workers about BJP's projects and allied organisations on humara vichaar humara parivar. President of Mandasaur Sahakari Bank, Madanlal Rathore said that the workman is the one who constantly learns. Former-district head Kaan Singh Chauhan emphasised on aatmanirbharta and national security. While MLA Dr Rajendra Pandey laid stress on the training.

### IRREGULARITIES UNDER MGNREGA IN SARDARPUR JANPAD PANCHAYAT

## Staff, sarpanches to face axe, suspension

**FP NEWS SERVICE**  
Sardarpur

In a case pertaining to irregularities in Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Act in which people benefited unlawfully, Sardarpur janpad panchayat chief executive officer Shailendra Sharma has forwarded a proposal to the district panchayat CEO recommending to terminate services of five employment assistants,

suspension of five gram panchayat secretaries and expulsion of four sarpanches under Section 92 (act done in good faith to benefit a person without consent) of Indian Penal Code.

On December 8, sub divisional magistrate Vijay Rai had asked janpad panchayat CEO and sub-divisional officer of Rural Engineering Services department to take strict action in view of financial irreg-

ularities and fake payments made under MGNREGA. SDM Rai has given three-days to officials to act in the matter.

Janpad panchayat CEO Sharma said that those involved in irregularities include sarpanch Kailash Bhuriya, panchayat secretary Charansingh Vasunia and employment assistant Khemraj Bamniya from Bachiya gram panchayat, sarpanch Santubai, secretary Rupsingh Bhabar, em-

ployment assistant Harisingh from Bimrod gram panchayat, sarpanch Vishnubai Meda, secretary and employment assistant Rakesh Solanki from Bhangarh gram panchayat, secretary Sunil Garud and employment secretary Mukesh Bhabar from Khakhedi gram panchayat and sarpanch Krushnabai Bherulal, employment secretary and panchayat secretary Magansingh of Shyampur Thakur gram

panchayat. Post of sarpanch is vacant in Khakhedi gram panchayat after the death of sitting sarpanch there.

Sharma forwarded a proposal to terminate the services of five employment assistants, suspension of five panchayat secretaries, and dismissal of four sarpanches on charges of irregularities in MGNREGA construction work and benefiting people against the norms.

Besides, notices have been issued to sarpanch, sarpanch secretaries, and employment assistants for recovery of financial irregularities under MGNREGA. In Bhangarh, based on fake muster roll, Gaurav Kumawat and his wife Tika Kumawat withdrew huge sums of money from MGNREGA bank accounts. Janpad panchayat CEO has also sent a proposal against them to the district panchayat CEO

for recovery under Section 92 of IPC.

Meanwhile, the administration's major action against those involved in the irregularities might upset many political and influential people in the district. Informal reports claimed that many political and influential people in Sardarpur tehsil are upset with the action as those who are on verge of losing jobs enjoy political backing.

### PANCHANG 21.12.2020 (DAKSHINAYAN)

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| Saka 1942   | Samvat 2077     |
| Month : Aghan Shukla 7 Monday 4:16 P.M.                 |                 |
| Nakshatra : Pu-Bhadrapad 11:03 P.M. then Utti-Bhadrapad |                 |
| Yoga : Siddhi 11:51 A.M. then Vyatipat                  |                 |
| Karan : Vishi 5:11 A.M. then Bav                        |                 |
| Moon : Kumbh 4:29 P.M. then Min                         |                 |
| JUP. SAT 10   | VEN. KETU 8     |
| 11 NEP. MOON  | 3 PLU. MER. SUN |
| 12 MARS   | 6               |
| 1 HER   | 3               |
| 2 RAHU  | 4               |
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# Leopardess found dead in Pench

**Seoni:** A leopardess has allegedly died of electrocution at the Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR) in Seoni district, an official said on Sunday. The feline's carcass was found on Saturday in Gandatola beat of the reserve's Rukhad buffer zone, PTR's field director Vikram Singh Parihar said. He said no evidence of hunting was found in the area during a search operation.

## OVERHEARD

### Bidding goodbye

An officer generally tries to get posting to the Chief Minister's Secretariat. What is more, after retirement, most of the officers want to go there. But a retired officer does not want to work in CM's office where he was posted earlier. As he had toured with the Chief Minister at the time of the by-elections he resigned from the post of officer on special duty. Everybody, however, expected him to return to the Chief Minister's Secretariat. The officer himself refused to do that. The other officers of the CM's Secretariat are pursuing him to return, but has stuck to his guns on his plans. The officer has gone back to his home town where he owns properties. Therefore, he wants to spend the rest of his life there looking after the farmlands. The government is trying to rehabilitate another retired officer in the CM's Secretariat. This officer also prefers rehabilitation in some other place to the Chief Minister's Secretariat. In the present situation, the government plans to rehabilitate this officer in CM's office.

### Ego clash

A dispute between a female minister and her principal secretary has begun in a department. The principal secretary keeps away from the work the minister asks her to do. The officer does not easily return the files the minister forwards to her. Even if the files are remitted they contain so many queries that the work mentioned in those dossiers fails to take off. The minister, also a rabble-rouser, is hot under the collar about the officer's attitude. She has reportedly urged the higher-ups to shift the principal secretary. It is yet to be decided whether the officer will be shifted after the minister's demand for it. But, because of the principal secretary, the minister is losing her rag. She is also not on good terms with the principal secretary of another department functioning under her. Nevertheless, as the principal secretary is not required for the daily working of the department the minister does not bother much about that officer. The minister is, however, on good terms with the directors of both the departments. During her previous stint as minister, she developed bad blood with the officers of the department she was heading then. At that time, instead of the officers, the minister was removed from the department.

### Seeking refuge

An officer, fond of bragging about himself, has capitulated to the government after retirement from an important position. The officer caught in committing an irregularity feels if the government gets angry and registers a case against him, he may be in the soup. Therefore, the officer has thought it better to patch up with the administration. The Sahib has recently met the Chief Minister whom he expressed his agonies. The Sahib did not get any reply, though. Yet he is assured that he should be out of danger. The court will soon give a verdict on the matter in which an inquiry against the Sahib is on. For this reason, he fears lest the government should create some problems for him. Otherwise also, as the government does not want to annoy him, a way to understanding between them has begun to open.

### Brass out of grip!

A huge amount of brass of an IAS officer seems to have been snowed in. The Sahib gave a lot of dough to a man for his posting. The man took the money by pulling a fast one on the Sahib, as he did not have as much clout as is required for posting the officer to some other place. Now that the matter has reached the higher-ups in the government, the Sahib is not going to get a plum post. Therefore, the Sahib wants his money back. As the Sahib he did not get back the money he picked up the man with the help of two persons. The man, however, returned only part of the dough. The officer is struggling to get his money back. He borrowed part of the money from a friend of his. The friend wants the money back, since the Sahib did not get the posting of his choice. The Sahib is now up the creek.

### Ill at ease

A principal secretary is ill at ease, after the name of some officers figured in a report of the income-tax department. The principal secretary reportedly collected a huge amount of brass during the Congress rule. The report also consists of the name of the officers whose help the principal secretary took to muster the dough. He thinks if the government takes action on the I-T report he will be in a tight corner. The money was sent through the principal secretary to different places. The bad days of the principal secretary began in the Congress rule. He, however, began to run out of luck after the Congress government fell. If the government continues with the probe into the case his difficulties will only increase. As the government is talking about taking action on the report he has begun to lobby to get rid of this mess. The principal secretary is trying to find out ways to keep out of harm's way through some people with clout.

### Internal squabbling

Two IPS officers posted to a corporation have locked horns over power distribution. Both officers are high-profile. One of them, however, pulls the strings in the corporation. As the other IPS officer is senior he wants that his approval should be taken on every file. But the junior one has given a wide berth to taking the nod of his senior. Thus, the latter is very angry about it, and has begun to dig out information about how to keep all the powers under his control. A senior officer once controlled the corporation. Of the two officers, one has made all the rules in his favour. And the other one is pulling out all the stops to amend those rules. The bitterness between the two officers has provoked harassment among the officials of the corporation, as they do not know who they should listen to. The fiscal health of the corporation, once in the pink, is now challenged.

■ Nitendra Sharma

# State set to allow people to fell trees on their land in rural areas

NITENDRA SHARMA  
BHOPAL

People in the rural areas do not have to take permission for felling trees on their farmlands. They may plant saplings on their land and sell when those seedlings grow into trees. They do not have to take permission for it.

The forest department is set to amend the Plantation Act in the next assembly session. The department is ready to put up the proposal before the Cabinet on December 22.

Once the scheme gets Cabinet nod, it will be put up before the House. The Bill is, however, meant for the rural areas only.

For felling a tree in an urban area, one has to take

## Bill to be put up in the ensuing Vidhan Sabha session



permission according to procedures. Nonetheless, for cutting a Saal tree even in rural area, one has to take permission, as such trees are exempted from the proposed Bill.

them to go for agro forestry.

According to the forest officers, the farmers should plant saplings on their farmlands and, when those seedlings grow into trees, they can increase their income by selling them.

The Bill, being prepared for this purpose, will not only make the farmers and others understand the importance of trees, but also increase their income.

Social activist Ajay Dube says the forest department should encourage plantation instead of making laws for cutting trees. Such laws will encourage people to fell trees. The forest department may allow a farmer to fell a tree on his own land, but people will begin to cut trees from government land on the pretext of the Bill.

## Exams from Dec 22 for students who missed exams due to Covid-19

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
INDORE

College students, who could not appear for examinations that were held three months back due to Covid-19 situation or some other reason, can take the exams from December 22.

Besides, students who got ATKT or supplementary are also going to get a special chance from December 29.

In August, Department of Higher Education (DHE) had issued detailed order regarding holding examination in the institutes of higher education taking into account Covid-19 guidelines, the order of Ministry of Education, University Grants Commission and the decision taken by the Governor on June 6.

As per the order, the students, not residing within the jurisdiction of the university and were unable to appear for the exams conducted in August-September, will be given another chance to write their papers. The university was told to conduct separate exams for students at an appropriate time.

"Such students were required to inform depart-

ment or university through email about their inability to appear in the exams and only then their claims were held valid," the August order of DHE read. However, the DHE has reportedly diluted that condition.

In August-September, the exams were held online and in open book mode. Question papers were uploaded on official websites of universities and colleges using National Information Centre (NIC) platform.

On the same pattern, students will be required to take up exams during a window of seven days. They will be provided with questions papers of all subjects on December 22. They will have to complete writing exams within seven days and then submit answer sheets to nearest government colleges, which will double up as collection centres by December 28. Exam controller Ashesh Tiwari stated that the students are required to ensure that they submit the answer books within the deadline.

He also stated that a special exam would be organised for students who got supplementary or ATKT in last exams from December 29.

## Webinar on women's health

Indore: Indore Zilla Maheshwari Mahila Sangathan organized a health awareness webinar for their women members on Sunday. President of Sangathan Suman Sarma informed that the aim of the webinar was to spread awareness among women about health issues and to teach them ways of living healthy. Director of Sodani Diagnostic Dr Sadhna Sodani addressed the webinar on 'Cervical Cancer' and its cause. "Early marriages, HIV, sexual disorders, unhygienic ways and others are the reason for Cervical Cancer. Early detection of the disease is important as it can be cured. For detection, women must go for pap smear test on regular intervals," Dr Sodani said. Dr Jyoti Simlot informed about the vaccine for the prevention of the disease while cardiologist Dr Bharat Rawat informed about the ways to keep the heart healthy especially in COVID times. Secretary Namrata Rathi coordinated the programme.

## Tansen music fest from Dec 26

Gwalior: The 5-day Tansen Sangeet Samaroh, an annual music festival, will be organised in presence of a limited audience in Gwalior from Dec 26. Entry, for the first time, will be on the basis of passes due to the corona outbreak, with attendance capped at 300 to 350% prog, but all events would be streamed live on social media, said an official of Ustad Alauddin Khan Sangeet Evam Kala Academy.

## Precious potable water being misused for washing vehicles

Mhow (fpns)

At a time when drinking water has become scarce and is not available to a large number of people sufficiently in Mhow, some people are misusing the same water supplied by Cantonment Board for running their vehicle washing centres. Such washing centres are being run at two places in Mhow town and at both these centres they have taken water connection from the domestic water pipe lines and are using thousands of litres daily for washing two wheelers and four wheelers. Interestingly, the staff of Cantonment Board is not taking any action against them.

### Factionalism seen in Congress during demo

Leaders and workers of Congress party of Mhow demonstrated against the central government for failing to curb rising inflation. Under the leadership of Congress President and other senior leaders they staged

dharma at Dreamland Talkies and raised slogans against the central government for rising prices of all commodities. Even during the demonstration, factionalism in Congress was clearly visible to

onlookers. Leaders were seen blaming each other for the defeat of Congress in Mhow. Not only this two leaders got into a scuffle, and had to be separated by senior leaders. The senior leaders were heard lamenting that there is no discipline in the party and action should be taken against such leaders who fight in public.



## Free eye check-up camp for senior citizens today

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
BHOPAL

Sewa Sadan Eye Hospital will organise a free eye check-up camp for senior citizens on Monday. Free spectacles will also be distributed to those who need them. On the 14th death anniversary of Sant Hirdaram, senior citizens having refraction error in their eyes can get free eye diagnosis facility from 10am to 4pm at IHL wing of the hospital.

Managing trustee of SSEH LC Janiyani has appealed to senior citizens having refraction error to visit Sewa Sadan Eye Hospital at the fixed time and date to avail of the free eye care facilities.

**Indian Bank**

ALLAHABAD

Vijay Nagar Branch: Indore  
Vijay Nagar (Opp. Saayaji Hotel)  
Indore Phone : 0731-2553655

**SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES**

**Appendix-IV-A (See proviso to rule 8(6))**

**SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES**

E-auction Sale Notice For Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rules 8(6) of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the borrower(s) and guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged / charged to the secured creditor, the constructive / physical possession of which has been taken by the authorised officer the secured creditor will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS, AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" & WHAT EVER THERE IS" on 21-01-2021 for recovery of bank dues to the secured creditors.

| Name of Borrower / Guarantors / Mortgagor   | Description of Secured Assets (Movable/Immovable Properties)  | Demand Notice Date |                            | Reserve Price |
|---|---|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
|   |   | Possession Date    | EMD                        |               |
| Borrower/Guarantor/Mortgagor :<br><b>Mrs. Harpreet Kaur Singh<br/>Mr. Dayal Singh</b> | All that part & parcel of the property consisting of Flat No. 302, Third Floor, Plot No. 110, Monika Plaza, Indrapuri Colony, A.B. Road, Indore (M.P.) Having builtup area of 865 sq.ft. Boundaries: North - Building MOS then 9.14m wide colony Road, South- Plot Common Passage of Building, East- Flat 301, West- Building MOS then plot No. 111 | 05.03.2020         | ₹                          | 20,70,000/-   |
|   |   | 14.09.2020         | ₹ 2,70,000/-               |               |
|   |   | ₹ 23,43,921/-      | + Interest & Other Charges | ₹ 25000/-     |

Indian Bank e-Allahabad Bank Vijay Nagar Branch: Indore Vijay Nagar (Opp. Saayaji Hotel) Indore Phone : 0731-2553655  
Name of EMD A/c : The Authorised Officer, Indian Bank (e-Allahabad Bank) A/c No. 50455647185, IFSC : ALLA0210983

**Date & time of submission of Process Compliance form & EMD: 16/01/2021 up to 2.30 pm at Indian Bank (e-Allahabad Bank)**  
**Date & time of e-auction: 21/01/2021 from 11:00 A.M. To 2:00 P.M at the platform of "https://indianbank.auctiontiger.net"**

For detailed terms & conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in Indian Bank Secured creditors website : <https://indianbank.auctiontiger.net>, <https://www.allahabadbank.in>, <https://www.eprocure.gov.in>  
Place : Indore, Date: 21.12.2020

AUTHORISED OFFICER, INDIAN BANK

**IDFC FIRST Bank Limited**

(erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)

CIN : L65110TN2014PLC097792

Registered Office Address of IDFC First Bank Limited KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai - 600031, Tel : +91 44 4564 4000 Fax : +91 44 4564 4022

Authorized Officer - SURABHI MITTAL CONTACT NUMBER- 9691648666

**IDFC FIRST Bank**

**APPENDIX- IV-A**  
**[See proviso to rule 8 (6)]**  
**SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES**

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Co-Borrower (s) as per column (i) that the below described immovable properties as per column (iii) mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of erstwhile Capital First Home Finance Limited and Capital First Limited now IDFC FIRST Bank Limited, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" On 12.Jan.2021 as described hereunder, for the recovery of amount due from Borrower (s) and Co-Borrower (s) as per column (i), due to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Home Finance Limited and Capital First Limited).

| S. NO. | (i) Demand Notice Date and Amount | (ii) Name of Borrower (s) and Co-Borrower (s)                      | (iii) PROPERTY ADDRESS   | (iv) Reserve Price Amount | (v) EMD Amount | (vi) Date and Time of Auction      | (vii) Date & Time of Inspection |
|--------|-----------------------------------|--|--|---------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1      | Rs. 18,83,645.49/-<br>03-Sep-18   | Nilesh Parmar & Gayatri Bai Vijay Parmar                           | Flat No. G-01, Shyamkala Residency, Plot No. 295, Shiv City, Village Nihalpur Mundi, Indore, Madhya Pradesh-452004   | 8,71,200/-                | 87,120/-       | 12.Jan.2021<br>11.00 AM to 1.00 PM | 06.Jan.2021<br>11.00 AM to 4PM  |
| 2      | Rs. 51,92,304.14/-<br>21-April-18 | Javid Sheikh & Gulnaaz Sheikh                                      | Flat No 304, 4th Floor, Silver Wings, Village Khajrana, Indore, Madhya Pradesh-452001. East : Lobby then Flat No. 401, West : Open Land (at present Shanti Niketan Apartment), North : Flat No. 404, South: Flat No. 402               | 18,76,000/-               | 1,87,600/-     | 12.Jan.2021<br>11.00 AM to 1.00 PM | 06.Jan.2021<br>11.00 AM to 4PM  |
| 3      | Rs. 21,10,126.61/-<br>08-Sep-17   | Ishwar Restaurant, Anchaladevi Do Devendrasah & Ishwar Narayan Sav | All the piece and parcel of the property address as plot no. 66, Junior Ward No.-13, Saral No.-172, Prem Nagar part - 2, Dewas, Madhya Pradesh - 455001. East: Plot No. 67, West: Plot No. 65, North : Plot No. 73, South: Colony Road | 14,20,000/-               | 1,42,000/-     | 12.Jan.2021<br>11.00 AM to 1.00 PM | 06.Jan.2021<br>11.00 AM to 4PM  |

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in IDFC FIRST Bank website i.e. [www.idfcfirstbank.com](http://www.idfcfirstbank.com).

Date: 21.12.2020  
Authorised Officer  
IDFC FIRST Bank Limited  
(Formerly known as Capital First Home Finance Limited/ Capital First Limited)

**FORM A**  
**PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT**  
(Under Regulation 6 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Person) Regulations 2016)

**FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE CREDITORS OF ADVANCE NATH AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS PVT LTD.**

**RELEVANT PARTICULARS**

| S. No.  | Name of Corporate Debtor  | Advance Nath Agri Chemicals Pvt. Ltd.   |
|---|---|---|
| 1 <td>Date of Incorporation of Corporate Debtor</td> <td>11<sup>th</sup> September 2012</td>  | Date of Incorporation of Corporate Debtor   | 11 <sup>th</sup> September 2012   |
| 2 <td>Authority Under Which Corporate Debtor is Incorporated / Registered</td> <td>Ministry of Corporate Affairs<br/>RoC- Gwalior</td>  | Authority Under Which Corporate Debtor is Incorporated / Registered   | Ministry of Corporate Affairs<br>RoC- Gwalior   |
| 3 <td>Corporate Identity No. / Limited Liability Identification No. of Corporate Debtor</td> <td>CIN : U24211MP2012PTC029169</td>   | Corporate Identity No. / Limited Liability Identification No. of Corporate Debtor   | CIN : U24211MP2012PTC029169   |
| 4 <td>Address of the Registered Office and Principal Office (If Any) of the Corporate Debtor</td> <td>701, Sukum Vila Apartment, 3/2, New Palasia, INDORE - 452001 M.P.</td>  | Address of the Registered Office and Principal Office (If Any) of the Corporate Debtor  | 701, Sukum Vila Apartment, 3/2, New Palasia, INDORE - 452001 M.P.   |
| 5 <td>Insolvency Commencement Date in respect of Corporate Debtor</td> <td>Date of Order 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020. Uploaded on website of NCLT on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and downloaded by me on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020</td> | Insolvency Commencement Date in respect of Corporate Debtor   | Date of Order 15 <sup>th</sup> December 2020. Uploaded on website of NCLT on 16 <sup>th</sup> December 2020 and downloaded by me on 18 <sup>th</sup> December 2020                          |
| 6 <td>Estimated Date of Closure of Insolvency Resolution Process</td> <td>13<sup>th</sup> June 2021 (180 Days from the date of Commencement of Insolvency)</td>   | Estimated Date of Closure of Insolvency Resolution Process  | 13 <sup>th</sup> June 2021 (180 Days from the date of Commencement of Insolvency)   |
| 7 <td>Name and Registration Number of the Insolvency Professional acting as Interim Resolution Professional, as Registered with the Board</td> <td>Name : Sanjeev Chaudhary<br/>Reg. No. :<br/>IBBI/IPA-001/IP-P01692/2019-2020/12911</td>      | Name and Registration Number of the Insolvency Professional acting as Interim Resolution Professional, as Registered with the Board   | Name : Sanjeev Chaudhary<br>Reg. No. :<br>IBBI/IPA-001/IP-P01692/2019-2020/12911  |
| 8 <td>Address and e-mail of the Interim Resolution Professional, as Registered with the Board</td> <td>204, Rajkamal Apartment, 127-128, Kailash Vihar, City Centre, GWALIOR - 474011<br/>eMail : rpnclt@icbi@gmail.com</td>                    | Address and e-mail of the Interim Resolution Professional, as Registered with the Board   | 204, Rajkamal Apartment, 127-128, Kailash Vihar, City Centre, GWALIOR - 474011<br>eMail : rpnclt@icbi@gmail.com   |
| 9 <td>Address and e-mail to be used for correspondence with the Interim Resolution Professional.</td> <td>204, Rajkamal Apartment, 127-128, Kailash Vihar, City Centre, GWALIOR - 474011<br/>eMail : cirpanacp@gmail.com</td>                   | Address and e-mail to be used for correspondence with the Interim Resolution Professional.  | 204, Rajkamal Apartment, 127-128, Kailash Vihar, City Centre, GWALIOR - 474011<br>eMail : cirpanacp@gmail.com   |
| 10 <td>Last date for Submission of Claims</td> <td>1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 (14 days from the date of order received by IRP)</td>  | Last date for Submission of Claims  | 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2021 (14 days from the date of order received by IRP)   |
| 11 <td>Class of Creditors, if any, under clause (b) of Sub-section (6A) of Section 21, ascertained by the Interim Resolution Professional</td> <td>Not Applicable as per information available with IRP till date.</td>                         | Class of Creditors, if any, under clause (b) of Sub-section (6A) of Section 21, ascertained by the Interim Resolution Professional    | Not Applicable as per information available with IRP till date.   |
| 12 <td>Names of Insolvency Professionals identified to act as Authorised Representative of Creditors in a class (Three names for each class)</td> <td>Not Applicable</td>   | Names of Insolvency Professionals identified to act as Authorised Representative of Creditors in a class (Three names for each class) | Not Applicable  |
| 13  | (a) Relevant Forms and (b) Details of Authorised Representatives are available at :   | <a href="https://ibbi.gov.in/home/downloads">https://ibbi.gov.in/home/downloads</a><br>Physical Address: As per point 10<br>Not Applicable as per information available with IRP till date. |

Notice is hereby given that the National Company Law Tribunal, Indore Bench at Ahmedabad has ordered the Commencement of Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process of the Advance Nath Agri Chemicals Private Limited, on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020. Hon'ble NCLT vide its order dated 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020 has appointed undersigned as Interim Resolution Professional (IRP). The Creditors of Advance Nath Agri Chemicals Private Limited are hereby called upon to submit their claims with proof on or before 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 to the Interim Resolution Professional at the address mentioned against entry No.10. The Financial Creditors shall submit their claims with proof by electronic means only. All other creditors may submit the claims with proof in person, by post or by electronic means. Submission of false or misleading proofs of claims shall attract penalties.

Sanjeev Chaudhary  
Interim Resolution Professional  
In the matter of Advance Nath Agri Chemicals Pvt Ltd  
Regn No. : IBBI/IPA-001/IP-P01692/2019-2020/12911

Date : 19<sup>th</sup> December 2020  
Place : GWALIOR



**THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:** Parents are sometimes a bit of a disappointment to their children. They don't fulfil the promise of their early years.

— Anthony Powell



## FREE PRESS FOR FREE FLOW OF TRUTH

### Mamata Banerjee losing ground ahead of key poll

There seems to be one-way traffic in West Bengal politics, towards the BJP. The ruling Trinamool Congress may be in denial but it cannot wish away the serious challenge the saffron party is mounting to dislodge it from power in next year's Assembly poll. Ten years ago, Mamata Banerjee had the momentum behind her when to everyone's surprise she managed to oust the Left Front from the Writers' Building after it had ruled the State without a break for three decades. Mercurial Mamata seems to have frittered away much of the goodwill, thanks to her inability to trust anyone with responsibility in the party organisation other than her nephew, Abhishek Banerjee, MP. Along with the mercenary election strategist Prashant Kishore, Abhishek has alienated a number of senior leaders of the party. One of the seniormost who parted company with Mamata, Suvendu Adhikari, a key minister who helped her turn the tide against the Marxists, spearheading protests in Nandigram and Singur, quit a few days ago. Adhikari has now walked away with a number of TMC MLAs and at least one MP from the TMC. At a huge rally in Medinipur on Saturday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah welcomed Adhikari and a host of other senior TMC leaders into the BJP. Shah used the occasion to warn the chief minister that her days in power were numbered. He pointedly trashed the TMC propaganda that the BJP was an outsider in West Bengal, criticising her for being parochial-minded. The chief campaigner of the BJP told the beleaguered chief minister that the BJP was determined to call her to account, no matter how she misuses the state machinery to attack and torment the party workers. Shah and other BJP leaders have accused the ruling party of unleashing a reign of terror against the BJP supporters. A number of BJP workers have died in recent weeks in attacks allegedly by the ruling party supporters. In fact, a few days ago the motorcade of the BJP President J P Nadda was targeted by the ruling party supporters in the Lok Sabha constituency of Abhishek Banerjee. This has led to an administrative stand-off between the Centre and the State. Three IPS officers on deputation to West Bengal, who were in charge of Nadda's security, were recalled by the Centre despite bitter resistance by the state government. The exodus from the ruling party is set to grow further as the poll approaches, especially in view of the arbitrary vetting of sitting MLAs by Prashant Kishore's data crunchers who are unacquainted with the local political contexts in individual constituencies. With nothing positive to show for her decade in power, her only hope is the likely consolidation of the over 30 per cent Muslim vote behind the TMC, in case the BJP looks like a serious contender for power. However, this may not be an unalloyed boon for the TMC, since it has the potential to trigger a counter-consolidation of the majority against the ruling party. A very fierce no-holds-barred contest awaits West Bengal. Neither side will leave any stone unturned to vanquish the other, not a happy augury for a peaceful, orderly poll.

# Economy on strong revival path, but its human capital base needs investment



## Fiscal Prudence

AJIT RANADE

Macroeconomic winds are blowing favourably as we enter the New Year. Stock markets are at an all-time high. Share price indices are up nearly 60 per cent from their lows of March. The stock market is supposed to be a harbinger of economic times to come, so clearly it is indicating a strong revival. Liquidity in the banking system is more than ample. Interest rates are at multi-decadal lows. The gap between Indian and Western policy rates is the lowest it has been in a long time. Coupled with inflation rates above 6 per cent. What this means is that for borrowers the real interest rates are close to zero or negative. This should bring cheer to the government which is the biggest borrower in the system, or to those contemplating taking a home loan, or those businesses planning to raise loans for expansion. The quarter ending September showed spectacular growth in corporate profits across many sectors. The lead indicator, called purchasing managers' index has been expressing bullish expansion for four months in a row. If all this business confidence manifests in a robust rise in hiring and recruitment and visible job creation, then that will give a boost to consumer confidence as well. Both business and consumer confidence build on each other. So, a positive virtuous circle would be greatly welcome. The finance minister is promising a Budget like never before, which hopefully is signalling a big spending stimulus. Spending on infrastructure will benefit allied sectors like construction, and of course employment. And yet, it is worth pointing out the

grim side. Firstly, despite an anticipated sharp V-shaped recovery next year, the fact is that this year has been a recession. We are going to have a reduction in GDP and national income by about 8 to 10 per cent. A sharp recovery next year, of say 10 to 12 per cent, would still mean that for over two years, the net income growth is barely above zero. Secondly, due to measures like the harsh lockdown, and the earlier slowdown of four years, the potential growth rate of the economy has possibly slipped closer to 5 per cent. So, any growth above that is sure to cause overheating. Hence, we will have to watch out for inflation, which can hurt household budgets, and also business sentiment. As such, for the past 12 months, the consumer price index-based inflation rate has been above 6 per cent (except for being marginally lower in March). This is above the tolerable band of the Reserve Bank of India. Sooner or later, the RBI, which has been extremely accommodative in its monetary stance, will have to start tightening money supply. This will affect growth adversely. Thirdly, there has been a lot of forbearance regarding tolerating credit indiscipline. So, after a prolonged moratorium, and restructuring of stressed loans, it is possible that the day of reckoning is not too far for India's banking sector. Be prepared for a nasty spike in the bad loan ratio, which will need substantial capital infusion by the government. Fourthly and most importantly, is the silent and deadly impact on education and health. The Human Development Report 2020 out this week shows India's rank as 131 out of 189 countries, hav-



During the lockdown, since schools were closed, so were the mid-day meals. For many kids, from poor or nearly poor households, that was the only meal they got during the whole day. There have also been spending cuts in child nutrition schemes due to fiscal compulsions.

slipped by two ranks in the past two years. Sri Lanka is at 72 and China is at 85. More worryingly, only one fifth of India's labour force can be called 'skilled'. That low percentage puts India in the same league as Sudan, Cameroon and Liberia. All of its South Asian neighbours have a higher percentage. India also has 42 per cent of its population in the vulnerable category, i.e. just above the bare minimum poverty level of 1.9 dollars a day. The pandemic, loss of livelihoods or illness in the family can easily make it fall back below the poverty line. The pandemic and lockdowns have severely affected the informal sector and small and micro enterprises. The worst impact has been on children. The latest national family health survey (NFHS 2019-2020) shows high levels of child stunting and wasting. These indicate lower height and weight for the child's age, respectively. They reflect chronic undernutrition and malnutrition. The more worrying aspect is that either the stunting or underweight aspect has gone up in 14 out of 17 states in India. This has happened even as access to sanitation and safe drinking water has improved. Clearly, this is the result of a slowing economy and loss of liveli-

hoods. For instance, during the lockdown, since schools were closed, so were the mid-day meals. For many kids, from poor or nearly poor households, that was the only meal they got during the whole day. There have also been spending cuts in child nutrition schemes due to fiscal compulsions. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the education of 290 million people across the country. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) states that nearly 5.3 per cent of the kids in the 6-10 year age group have been pulled out of schools. Many kids have been forced into supporting the family's livelihood. Similarly, even among schooling children, almost 38.2 per cent had no access to smartphones. So online learning has bypassed a large section of the students, partly because they had no access or could not afford digital access. Digital inequality has worsened, and is most visible in education. Similarly, in healthcare too, the high priority to Covid treatment has meant that HIV, cancer and renal disease patients who need regular access to hospitals have been denied treatment or have faced immense hardship. Thus, on one hand the economy is on a strong revival path, but on the other, the human capital base of the economy needs substantial rebuilding and investment. Both in children's education and overall healthcare, the governments at all levels have to increase their financial and resource commitment. Public health expenditure should be increased to 3 per cent and education to 5 per cent of the GDP. Even if that means a higher fiscal deficit, it is worth noting that spending on human capital is an investment for the future. India's public spending on both health and education is below global benchmarks, and its enhancement must be given high priority.

The writer is an economist and Senior Fellow, Takshashila Institution. The Billion Press

### We had it coming in Australia

It was the darkest hour for Indian cricket. A team which under an Australian-like aggressive Virat Kohli had become used to strutting its act on the world stage met its come-uppance at the hands of the fierce fighters that Australians are. The Indian batting crumbling for a record-shattering total of 36 at the Adelaide Oval exposed its decades-old Achilles heel, the fast short and rising ball. Pacers Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins knocking out the entire Indian team between them also helped shatter the mirage of over-confidence that had hovered over the Indians after some of their recent successes in the international contests. Truth be told, Indians don't have a solid top-order in place as yet, the way not long ago Tendulkar, Ganguly, Dravid, Azharuddin, etc., constituted it for over a decade. The current team is perennially in the making, with selectors experimenting with Prithvi Shaw, a dud so far, Mayank Agarwal, etc. Aside from Virat Kohli and the pace trio of Bumrah, Shami and Sharma, every other slot in the 11-member side is up for an unending experimentation. Even allowing for the glorious uncertainties of the sport, the humiliating collapse for the lowest ever Indian total of 36 is a warning to the selectors as well. Like the players, they too fail to justify the huge fees they take home for the lousy job they seem to be doing. Their failure to bring a sense of completeness to the Indian eleven is inexcusable.

**ONE FLEW OVER THE NEST** #ModivisitsGurudwara

33 FARMERS ARE DEAD A Gurudwara visit won't change anything apart from getting Modi likes on Instagram & Facebook. This isn't a religious issue. It's about Agriculture, Livelihood & Cronism. Why doesn't PM travel 20 kms to Delhi's Borders to meet & talk to protesting Farmers? [Srivatsa@srivatsayb](mailto:Srivatsa@srivatsayb)

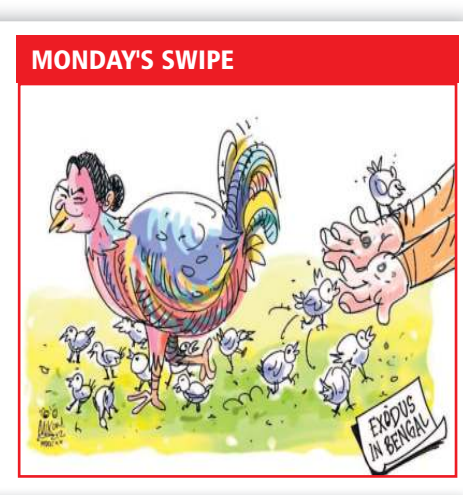
Terrorists Khalistanis Leftists Anti-Indians Chinese & Pakistani Agents | The protestors have been name-called with all these labels but not as farmers. So, now PM needs to visit Gurudwara Rakabganj to appease all of the above? [Priyanka.Chaturvedi@priyankac19](mailto:Priyanka.Chaturvedi@priyankac19)

Prime Minister @narendramodiji visited Gurudwara Rakabganj in New Delhi and paid tribute to Guru Teg Bahadur ji. Next, he should visit the Singhu border to hold talks with the farmers who are protesting there in biting cold conditions. [Shaurya.D.Joshi@ShauryaDJoshi](mailto:Shaurya.D.Joshi@ShauryaDJoshi)

Today PM @narendramodiji visited Gurudwara Rakab Ganj Sahib; it would have been a better gesture if he also had paid a visit to the stranded farmers agitating in biting cold weather and ensured them redressal. [Jagmohan.Singh.Raina@jagmohan\\_raina](mailto:Jagmohan.Singh.Raina@jagmohan_raina)

What a move went to #gurudwara but didn't go to place where farm protest is happening!! [Rohan.luthra@Rohanluthra11](mailto:Rohan.luthra@Rohanluthra11)

Without any Security Protocol, Narendra Modi paid a surprise visit to Gurudwara with Camerapersons, which shocked the Media Persons who had deployed their Camerapersons at the Gurudwara to capture the Surprise Visit [Joy@Joydas](mailto:Joy@Joydas)



**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Bowlers proposed, batsmen disposed**

The genesis of India's rout in the Adelaide Test can be summarised as the advantage gained by the bowlers being squandered away by the batsmen. Also, the under-three days Test result exposed some fault lines in both the sides: India succumbing to the quality pace attack and the traditional weakness of the Aussie willow-wielders against genuine off-spin bowling (Remember Jim Laker, Jasu Patel, Shivlal Yadav, et al?)

Arun Malankar

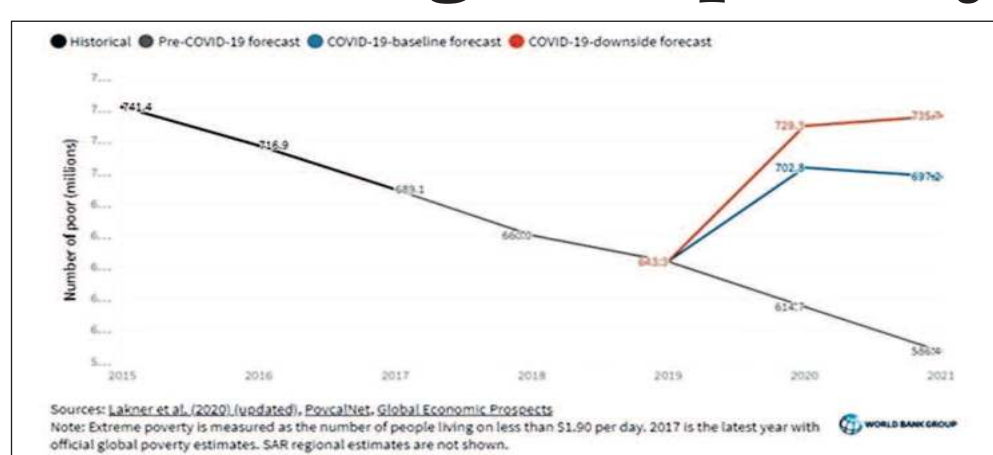
## As governments lock down populations to save lives, the impact is ruined livelihoods

# Covid-19 impact: World, India can't afford to lose the war against poverty



## Frame of Reference HARINI CALAMUR

It has been just over a year since the coronavirus jumped from bats, via a wet market in Wuhan (China), to humans. And, the rest, as they say, is history. As the virus spread across the world, a contagion of unimaginable proportions, it caught governments unaware, wrought havoc through entire populations, and resulted in governments across the world locking down to various degrees, to prevent Covid-19 from wreaking even more havoc. But the cost has been huge. When we talk about the new normal, and the joys of working from home or the convenience of working from anywhere, we often leave out large swathes of the population who have to go somewhere to work. People who work on assembly lines, people who work in food processing plants, people who work in hospitality and in entertainment. There has been a blow to retail trade, small business and the service economies that come up to serve working populations – stationery shops, sandwich counters, tea shops, flowers, takeaway food, and many more. The informal sector, the mainstay of most of the economically marginalised, has been particularly hit. Construction jobs, public works, daily wage jobs have all come to a grinding halt. The devastation across economies has been tremendous, as nations face an uphill battle combatting poverty. According to the World Bank, an additional 88 million people will slip back into extreme poverty because of Covid-19 in the best case scenario, and about 115 million in the worst case scenario. This is the worst reversal in poverty alleviation in almost thirty years, the WB says. Covid-19 is likely to increase poverty by 8.1 per cent in 2020, relative to 2019. The greatest impact of this is going to be in South Asia, and in particular, India. As the lockdown kicked in and large chunks of the manufacturing and service economy shut down, so did growth. Every economy in the world has seen a drop in their GDP. This is, according to



many economic experts, the worst economic downturn since the second world war. Almost a year after most countries locked themselves down, there is no sign of when things will go back to normal. While the vaccine is being rolled out in many parts of the world, it is not easy to get the entire population inoculated at the click of a button. Many European countries are reimposing lockdowns as Covid numbers spike again. In the last few days, London and Sydney have gone into lockdown, as have Germany and Italy. Most countries, especially those that face cold winters, are bracing for the next round of the virus. As governments lock down populations to save lives, the impact is ruined livelihoods. And as more people lose jobs, they are less able to buy things, which in turn will impact the recovery of industries that want to return to 'normal'. Also, the lockdown has resulted in hundreds of thousands of migrants, within and outside the country, returning 'home'. Their earnings having dried up and the region they worked in going into lockdown. Be it states like UP and Bihar who supply the rest of the country with primarily unskilled labour, or the four southern states that offer skilled, unskilled, and white-collar labour – the hit on local economies is huge. What really is needed now is a stimulus. Governments ought to help get back economies on their feet in two ways. The first is by giving a fi-

nanial lease of life to enterprises – this could be in the form of tax breaks, transfers, interest free credit, financial giveaways – to get them back working, and employing people. At the second level, it needs to put money back in the hands of those who are slipping back into poverty. The money, when exchanged for goods and services, will start off a virtuous cycle of growth that will renew itself, and thereby, renew the economy. The problem is that most nations are heavily in debt, and fiscal conservatives are warning against more debt. Conventional wisdom advises against more debt, warning against a doomsday scenario of higher interest rates, strangulation of business credit, and even more unemployment. While there is a time for conventional wisdom, this may not be it. There is nothing about this virus and its economic impact that has any precedent. In an interconnected global economy, we need to be able to reignite the engines of growth to be able to lead millions out of poverty. We are already in an economic doomsday scenario – and governments need to be bold, put aside their dogma, and jumpstart their economies. There is no alternative. The writer works at the intersection of digital content, technology and audiences. She is a columnist, visiting faculty and filmmaker.

**Three more to go**

It was a devastating defeat suffered by the Indian team in the first Test against Australia. That none of our players could reach double-digit scores is a matter of concern. However, they should not lose hope. They have another three Tests to prove themselves. A word of praise for the two pacers, Josh Hazlewood (5/8) and Pat Cummins (4/21), who did the damage. Bad luck they both did not get the man of the match award.

Sravana Ramachandran

**Day of reckoning**

December 19 will go down in cricketing history as a day of reckoning for India. Cricket is famed for its glorious uncertainties, but the way India reversed their fortune, after having the match in their hands was horrible. If in India's first innings Starc got the momentum going, in the second innings, Cummins and Hazlewood were supreme, tearing apart India in just 40 minutes. The faster we forget this and bounce back, the better for us.

Bidyt Kumar Chatterjee

**Big blot**

Ref: India lose to Aussie by 8 wickets after historic batting collapse (December 20). Saying it was an embarrassment would be an understatement. Our team has literally touched the nadir with its lowest Test innings score of 36. Our Test Captain says we should not make a mountain out of a molehill, this is certainly no molehill but a big blot. Once again, our shortcoming of being unable to play world-class seam and swing bowling in trying conditions stands exposed.

Bal Govind

### FPJ ARCHIVES DECEMBER 9, 1962



**PM needs no help, Shastri says**

The FPJ News Service NEW DELHI, Dec. 8: "Prime Minister Nehru stands on his own; he does not need any body's help", declared Home Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri in the Rajya Sabha today. Effectively denouncing the criticisms of the Prime Minister by political parties as also some members of the Congress Party, Shri Shastri said that the Prime Minister was the Head of the Government and as such, all should stand by him solidly in the grave national emergency. He also felt that it was not advisable for some Congress of Party members to talk all the time about not giving support to the Prime Minister and by some others to talk of strengthening the Prime Minister. "The Prime Minister is not so weak. He knows his job and also his strength." The whole party, which represented the country stood by him, Shri Shastri declared.

# E-courts project wins Digital India Award

NEW DELHI: The e-courts services project of the Department of Justice has won the Digital India Award 2020, officials said on Sunday. The project has won the award in the category of "Excellence in Digital Governance" of a central ministry or department. The award ceremony is likely to take place on December 30. The e-courts project was conceptualised on the basis of the National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary-2005, submitted by the e-Committee of the Supreme Court with a vision to transform the judiciary.

## News from South



Tourists visit Taj Mahal, amid the coronavirus pandemic, in Agra, on Sunday PTI

### Two men who 'misbehaved' with actress in Kerala identified

KOCHI: Two men, who allegedly misbehaved with a young Malayalam actress in a mall here two days ago, have been identified, police said here on Sunday. While the police have launched a manhunt to nab the culprits, their lawyer said they will surrender before the police or court soon. The police on Saturday had aired the CCTV visuals of two men walking through the Kochi metro station covering their faces covered with masks. In a video aired by news channels on Sunday, the men hailing from a north Kerala town, denied the allegations.

### DMK launches 'werejectadm' campaign in poll-bound TN

CHENNAI: Months ahead of assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, principal opposition DMK on Sunday launched a campaign against arch-rival AIADMK on what it called "lack of governance" by the Palaniswami government and touching sensitive issues such as the NEET-related suicides. The party's campaign launched on Sunday is titled "werejectadm" and the DMK released a video, flagging issues in sectors like agriculture and education as it urged people to defeat the AIADMK in the elections, likely in coming April-May.

### Woman returned from Kuwait, missing from airport

KRISHNA: A 32-year-old woman returned from Kuwait and missed from the Gannavaram airport in Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh, police said on Sunday. Salasatti Durga was working in Kuwait for two years and returning home, her husband Satyanarayana who is resident of Nelamuru village, West Godavari district told the police. "My wife had gone to Kuwait 24 months ago and returned on December 16. According to CCTV footage she came out of the airport carrying a stroller with two handbags and two big bags," Satyanarayana informed the police.

### T'gana urges Centre to release Rs 1,204 cr under MGNREGS

HYDERABAD: The Telangana government has urged the Centre to release Rs 1,024 crore towards material and admin components of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). State Panachayati Raj and Rural Development Minister, Errabelli Dayakar Rao has written a letter to Union Rural Development, Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, and Panachayati Raj Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, urging him to expedite the release of the pending amount so as to complete the ongoing works and creation of assets under MGNREGS.

### Haasan once again takes on AIADMK over MGR's legacy

CHENNAI: Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) founder Kamal Haasan on Sunday yet again joined issue with the ruling AIADMK over late Chief Minister M G Ramachandran's (MGR) legacy, saying anyone who had ideals like the stalwart could be his 'heir'. His party had ideals like him and therefore, "we are his extension," Haasan said at a poll rally here, days after chief minister and AIADMK Co-coordinator K Palaniswami said no one other than the ruling party can lay claim to MGR's legacy.

### 4 arrested in two anti-drug operations in Srinagar

SRINAGAR: Four people have been arrested in two anti-drug operations carried out in Srinagar by Jammu and Kashmir police, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Haseeb Mughal said on Sunday. "Two anti-drug operations have been carried out today and four people have been arrested. One operation led to the busting of a drug module in the Jhelum Market, Srinagar. The other led to the seizure of about 3 kgs of heroin type substance from the Tankipora area," Mughal, Srinagar SSP said.

### Eight injured in clash over property dispute

GURUGRAM: Eight persons were injured when a clash erupted between two groups over a property dispute here on Sunday, police said. The incident took place at around 1.15 pm at Sacholi village near the Bombay highway of Sohna block. Police said that one person identified as Imtiaz, a former sarpanch of Nunina village in Sohna, had sustained bullet injuries. According to police, at least 7-8 vehicles were also damaged in the incident. Some gunshots were also fired during the clash. However, it is not yet clear who had opened the fire.

### Mizoram Gov urges PM to set up AIIMS in state

AIZAWL: Mizoram Governor P.S. Sreedharan Pillai has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to set up an All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in the state which is battling several dreaded diseases including HIV/AIDS, cancer, and malaria, an official statement said on Sunday. According to the statement, the Governor met Modi at the latter's residence in the national capital on Saturday and submitted a memorandum for setting up of an AIIMS or at least an AIIMS-like super speciality facility in Mizoram.

# Why is PM silent on death of 33 protesting farmers: Cong

### All India Kisan Sabha observes Sunday as 'Shradhanjali Divas' to commemorate death of 33 farmers

AGENCIES  
New Delhi

Blaming the Centre for the death of 33 farmers during their ongoing protest, the Congress on Sunday questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "silence" on the issue amid the farmers' sit-in on the Delhi borders since November 26.

The All India Kisan Sabha observed Sunday as 'Shradhanjali Divas' to commemorate the death of 33 farmers in accidents or due to illness and cold weather conditions ever since they started protesting on Delhi borders against the three central farm laws.

"Why hasn't Modi uttered a single word? Why is our Prime Minister 'maun' (silent)? Our 'annadatas' (food providers) are sitting on the



Farmers light candles to pay tribute to those who lost their lives in farmers' agitation, during their sit-in protest against the Centre's farm reform laws, at Singhu border in New Delhi, on Sunday PTI

Delhi borders along with their wives and children in one of the coldest winters Delhi has experienced, but our Union Home Minister Amit Shah has no time for them but has time to go to

West Bengal." Congress spokesperson Shama Mohammed said at a press conference here.

"Thirty-three farmers have died due to extreme cold and ailments. The Modi govern-

ment is responsible for their deaths... It is very cold even sitting inside a house; we need heaters; now, they are on the roads out there.

"They say that the PM is a man who loves his country, who loves his people; he can just visit them and console them and their families. Just imagine what farmers' families and children are going through. Where is Modi's empathy?"

Commenting on the Prime Minister's visit to Gurdwara Rakabganj near Parliament House here, the Congress leader said: "It is always a good thing to go to a gurdwara or a temple... we all Indians are very spiritual people and I appreciate the Prime Minister's visit there to pay obeisance to the 9th Sikh master, Guru Tegh Bahadur..."

# Masks mandatory for next 6 months in Maharashtra

AGENCIES  
Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday said wearing masks for the next six months in the state.

Addressing people of the state on social media, Thackeray said experts are in favour of imposing night curfew or another lockdown, but he is not in favour of these steps.

The CM appealed to people to be careful during the New Year celebrations.

The coronavirus situation in the state is under control, though not completely, he said.

"Prevention is better than cure. Wearing of mask at public places should be made a habit for another six months at least," Thackeray said.

Those who don't follow the safety protocol should know they are putting lives of others, who are abiding by rules, at risk, he said.

Asking people to be careful while welcoming the New Year, he said the discovery of a new strain of the virus in Europe has resulted in lockdown in several countries as there was no other option.

The chief minister said even though life is slowly limping back to normalcy in the state, reopening of schools has been a problem.

Hitting out at the BJP for calling him egoistic, Thackeray said he "had ego for the welfare of Mumbai and Maharashtra".

"Governments come and go, but development is for people and their future generations," he said.

# CBSE board exams' schedule announcement on Dec 22

NEW DELHI

The schedule of Central Board of Secondary Education exams for Classes 10 and 12 proposed to be held next year through the paper-pen mode is likely to be announced on Tuesday, official sources said. Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, who will interact with teachers across the country on Tuesday, is expected to make the important announcement regarding the examination dates.

As part of the central government initiative to conduct examinations on time amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the Minister has planned a three-way dialogue with the students, parents and teachers across the country. The Minister will interact with the stakeholders through webinars on three days.

CBSE officials have clarified that there is no proposal to hold the board exams online. Authorities have been holding discussions this year with students, parents and teachers regarding the board exams even as schools and colleges across the country are in the process of resuming normal classroom teachings for various classes in Dec 2020 and Jan 2021.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi offers prayers at Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib on the occasion of the 400th Prakash Parv of Guru Teg Bahadur, in New Delhi, on Sunday PTI

# Pensioners can submit life certificates till Feb 28

AGENCIES  
New Delhi

In a major relief to central government pensioners amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the date for submission of life certificate has been extended up to February 28 next year, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Sunday. "This decision has been tak-

en considering all the sensitivities to avoid pandemic risk emanating from gathering of crowds at the pension disbursing banks," said Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel.

In addition to this, he said, the pensioners above the age of 80 years were given an exclusive window from October 1 onward to submit their life certificate

so as to avoid rush likely to happen from the opening date of November 1.

Singh said that while the annual life certificate is mandatory for the continuation of pension, the Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare recently took an innovative decision to rope in Indian Post Payments Bank to facilitate digital life certificate.



Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan during inauguration of Bengal's first oil and gas reserve, at Ashoknagar in North 24 Parganas, on Sunday PTI

# PRADHAN DEDICATES BENGAL'S FIRST OIL AND GAS RESERVE TO NATION

ASHOKNAGAR: West Bengal found a place in the oil map of India as Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday dedicated an oil and gas producing field in North 24 Parganas district to the nation. He said production from the petroleum reserve here, about 47 km from Kolkata, has started with extracted oil being sent to Haldia refinery of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC). "With the commencement of production from the Ashoknagar oil and gas reserve, West Bengal finds a place in the oil map," he said after inaugurating the project. The first proven reserve of oil and gas in the state was discovered in 2018. The Ashoknagar field, which falls under the Mahanadi-Bengal-Andaman (MBA) basin, has been proved to be commercially viable, he said.

# Sabarimala opens for 5000 pilgrims a day, C-negative certificate mandatory

AGENCIES  
Thiruvananthapuram

Devotees visiting the hill shrine of Lord Ayyappa at Sabarimala must carry a Covid-19 negative certificate after undergoing an RT-PCR test, the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) which manages the temple said on Sunday.

TDB President N Vasu said the RT-PCR test certificate, taken not more than 48 hours prior to their visit to the temple, is must for pilgrims from December 26. "Covid-19-negative certificate after a RT-PCR test, taken not more than 48 hours prior to their visit to the temple, is a must for the pilgrims to visit the shrine. Else they will not be permitted to undertake the pilgrimage," Vasu said in a release.



limited to 100 the number of people taking part in the three-day procession carrying the Thiruvabharanam to be adorned on the idol of Lord Ayyappa during the Makaravilakku ceremony.

The receptions to the procession at various points en route to Sabarimala have been cancelled, TDB said.

As per the revised guidelines issued on December 15, all officials on duty at Sabarimala should also undergo the RT-PCR tests.

Meanwhile, the state Health Department has intensified the antigen testing in Sabarimala and its base camps to check the possible spread of the viral infection in view of the increase in the number of permitted pilgrims at the hill shrine.

# Guj govt to start 'Deendayal' clinics for urban poor

AGENCIES  
Ahmedabad

In a bid to provide health service to the poor people near their residences in densely-populated urban areas, the Gujarat government will set up dedicated clinics in the cities and towns with the population of over one lakh, Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel said on Sunday.

The 'Deendayal' clinics will be started on priority in these areas. The state health department, municipal corporations and municipalities have been directed to shortlist such localities, he told reporters.

"In these clinics, MBBS or AYUSH doctors will treat OPD patients and give medicines free of cost between 4 pm and 6 pm every day," Patel said.

"Also, if a patient is diagnosed with a serious illness, he will be referred for speciality or super-speciality treatment as required, for which he can avail treatment for up to Rs 5 lakh under the state government's 'Ma Vatsalya Yojana' and 'PM Jan Aarogya Yojana'," Patel told reporters after visiting a site in Ahmedabad's Vadaj locality where such clinic will start soon.

# Hyderabad emerges as vaccine capital of the world

AGENCIES  
Hyderabad

Amid the gloom caused by Covid-19, one sector which provided a ray of hope was life sciences and turning the challenge into an opportunity, Hyderabad fortified its position as a global force in the world of pharmaceuticals.

This southern city, already recognised as a global information technology destination, proved its prowess in the field of pharmaceuticals and biotechnology and emerged as the vaccine capital of the world.

Already known as the bulk drug capital of India, Hyderabad witnessed manufacturing of life-

saving Covid-19 drugs like Remdesivir, Hydroxychloroquine and Favipiravir by some of the top pharma companies based here.

This was followed by hectic efforts in the city to develop Covid-19 vaccine. In fact, Hyderabad has emerged as the nerve centre of all research and development activities in the country for Covid-19 vaccines and has even attracted international attention.

Today, almost all the vaccines being developed in the country for the pandemic have a Hyderabad connect.

Four of the six companies developing Covid vaccines in India are based in Hyderabad. Bharat



Biotech is currently conducting Phase III clinical trials of India's first indigenous Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin. Covaxin is being developed in

collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) - National Institute of Virology (NIV). This indigenous, inactivated vaccine is being developed and manufactured in Bharat Biotech's BSL-3 (Bio-Safety Level 3) bio-containment facility at Genome Valley here.

According to Bharat Biotech, Covaxin has been evaluated in approximately 1,000 subjects in Phase I and Phase II clinical trials, with promising safety and immunogenicity results.

The Phase III human clinical trials of the vaccine began in November, involving 26,000 volunteers across India. This is India's first and only Phase III efficacy study

for a Covid-19 vaccine, and the largest phase III efficacy trial ever conducted for any vaccine in India.

"Covaxin has garnered interest from several countries worldwide for supplies and introduction," said Suchitra Ella, Joint Managing Director of Bharat Biotech.

In April, Bharat Biotech announced development of CoroFlu, an intranasal vaccine for Coronavirus. University of Wisconsin-Madison and vaccine company FluGen along with Bharat Biotech began the development and testing of CoroFlu. The Hyderabad based company will produce almost 300 million doses of vaccine for global distribution.

Continued from page 1

## Govt mulls over...

According to the officers, if FIR is registered, the issue may go out of the government's hands. An FIR against three IPS officers will kick up a storm in the country. According to sources, the government has also begun to discuss the issue with the Central leadership of the ruling party.

There is no such evidence in the report as can prove that those officers gave money to the Congress for the election. The officers who have been accused of keeping crores of rupees at their residences are getting ready to challenge the income-tax department. Requesting not to be named, these officers said they kept such huge amount of money at their residences the income-tax officials should have confiscated it. For that reason, Chouhan may ponder over the report again and take a decision on it in a day or two. Before handing over the inquiry to the Economic Offences Wing, the government may seek the opinion of the law department. Chouhan wants to take a decision after sifting through the pros and cons of the matter.

## Shah denounces Didi's...

"People of West Bengal are yearning for change as they want to get rid of political violence, corruption, extortion and Bangladeshi infiltration," Shah said addressing the gathering at Bolpur from a truck decorated with marigold flowers and cloth in shades of saffron. BJP flags fluttered atop homes and trees, people showered the cavalcade with flower petals, and green and saffron gullies lent an air of festivity to the roadshow. Women in the crowd that lined the streets shot videos of places teeming with people, as Shah's entourage crawled its way from Hanuman Mandir to Dak Bungalow, a distance of a kilometre and half, that took more than an hour to complete. Speaking to journalists later, Shah referred to the recent attack on BJP president J P Nadda's convoy in West Bengal and excoriated the Mamata Banerjee government over the law and order situation in the state. Quoting data, Shah claimed the state had fared abysmally on development indices including health care and education. He alleged Banerjee and the ruling TMC were raking up the "outsider-insider" issue to divert public attention from the failures of the state government, and asserted that a "son of the soil" will lead the state if the saffron party was voted to power. "I think Mamata di has forgotten a few things. Did she call Indira Gandhi, Narasimha Rao outsiders when they used to come to West Bengal when she was with the Congress? Does she want a country where people from one state cannot visit another?" he asked. He also attacked the Banerjee government over alleged Bangladeshi infiltration, and asserted only a BJP government can stop it. Shah, in an apparent attempt to trash the outsider tag, visited places linked to Bengali cultural icons. He visited Shantiniketan and the Visva Bharati University founded by Rabindranath Tagore, tapped his fingers on the arm of the chair he was seated on at the home of Basudeb Das, a baul singer, and had lunch with them. Baul singers are minstrels unique to Bengali culture who sing songs that are a mix of Sufi and Sahaja music of Bengal. Shah's first port of call on Saturday as part of his "Mission Bengal" was Swami Vivekananda's ancestral home in Kolkata where he lauded the saint-philosopher for taking India's culture and ethos to the world. His next stop was the ancestral home of the boy martyr of the freedom struggle Khudiram Bose in Midnapore. Bose was executed in 1908 when he was just 18 years old. "I want to tell those who are doing narrow politics in Bengal that Khudiram Bose is as much a pride of India as he is of Bengal," he asserted, in an apparent allusion to Mamata Banerjee.

CENTRE HAS RIGHT TO SUMMON OFFICERS: SHAH - Slamming Mamata over the recent attack on BJP chief Nadda's convoy, Shah asserted that the Centre has right to summon state IPS officers responsible for providing him security for Central deputation, and asked the TMC to go through the rules before pointing fingers at the Union Government.

## Farmers take cue...

Farmers will also observe a day-long relay hunger strike on Monday at all sites of protest. "Eleven people will take turns to fast for 24 hours each," explained Yadav. "Another humble appeal is for Dec 23, which is Kisan Divas (Farmers' Day). To honour the men and women who put food on your table three times a day, please skip one meal," he added. Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait, who was also part of the press conference along with Yadav and Dalewala, said they will request people to not cook lunch for a day in solidarity with us. On Dec 26 and 27, farmer groups would send letters to BJP allies to withdraw their support. On these days, Indians living abroad will be requested to approach their respective embassies and urge the Centre to withdraw the laws. Besides, there will be no toll collection on highways in Haryana from Dec 25 to 27.

SOCIAL MEDIA CRACKDOWN: In another development, which is likely to raise hackles, Facebook and Instagram accounts used by the agitating farmers were allegedly blocked on Sunday following a live broadcast, rekindling the discussion about online censorship. The farmers also hit out at the raids on intermediaries or commission agents known as Arhtiyas who are supporting them in their agitation against the agriculture laws. "We have not taken money from industrialists, political parties or Arhtiyas, as is being suggested. The funds in question are from our supporters whom we asked for help," said Joginder Ugraha, the chief of one of BKU's factions. His group -- the largest and the most dominant in Punjab with a huge follower base -- has been issued warning by a bank on alleged foreign funding by NRIs and told to get mandatory registration. "The government is trying to defame the farmers. The farmers are protesting in the cold... the government should think about us but they are busy defaming us. I appeal to the agriculture minister and urge the Centre to drop their ego. I will appeal to youth and children to be calm," farmer leader Jasbir Singh Bhatti said, reports NDTV.

## New UK virus...

There was no evidence it causes a higher rate of hospitalisations or deaths, but if more people caught it because the new strain spread more easily, then 'inevitably' more people would end up in hospital. The three main symptoms to look out for remain the same: a new and continuous cough, a fever or high temperature, and a change in smell or taste. Italy, too, is to join other European countries in imposing a ban on passenger flights from Britain, Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio said on Sunday. Meanwhile, Health Secy Hancock hit at 'totally irresponsible' Londoners who fled the capital on Saturday after Johnson effectively cancelled Christmas for almost 18 million people in southern England. The railway stations were packed with masked passengers desperate to get home for Christmas as the fresh restrictions hit London. Furious Northerners blasted 'selfish' Londoners who fled the capital to avoid spending Christmas in a brutal lockdown, amid fears they will spread the 'mutant' strain of coronavirus across the country.

## IMA moves apex court against allowing Ayurvedic surgeries

AGENCIES / New Delhi

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has moved the Supreme Court against a Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) order to authorise postgraduate practitioners in specified streams of Ayurveda system of medicine to be trained to perform general surgical procedures.

"The petition was filed on Saturday to urge the court to set aside or quash the amendment to regulations to the Postgraduate Ayurveda Surgery by CCIM and declare that the council does not have the powers to include modern medicine in syllabus," IMA President Dr Rajan Sharma said.

The central government had

allowed PG students of Ayurveda to perform various kinds of general surgery and medical procedures, including orthopaedic, ophthalmology, ENT and dental, by notifying an amendment in a gazette notification the CCIM issued in November.

The latest amendment allows PG Ayurveda students to receive formal training for such procedures. The training modules will be added to the curriculum of Ayurvedic studies.

The CCIM amended the Indian Medicine Central Council (Postgraduate Ayurveda Education) Regulations, 2016, to include the aforementioned regulation to allow the PG students of Ayurveda system to practice

## EC begins officers' scrutiny drive for 2021 polls in 5 states

AGENCIES / New Delhi

With just six to seven months left for the Assembly elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Assam, the Election Commission (EC) has begun a mammoth drive for the scrutiny of officers being deployed in the five-yearly exercise aimed at achieving "free and fair" polls.

It is being ensured that the polling officers directly connected to the conduct of elections in these five states are not posted in their home districts and places where they have served for a considerably long period of time.

The EC has circulated the message through a written advisory to the Chief Secretaries and the Chief Electoral Officers of all these five states where the polling is scheduled in May end and early June as the existing legislative Assemblies are due to

expire during that period next year.

As the terms of the Assemblies in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Puducherry and Assam are to expire on May 24, June 1, May 30, June 8 and May 31, respectively, and the elections to these states should be conducted before the due period, the EC has given instructions to the concerned authorities to prepare a list of such officers as per its policy, giving example of the one issued on January 16 last year when the terms of the Lok Sabha and the state legislative Assemblies of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim were to expire within next five-six months.

Accordingly, it has been advised to ensure that all government officers directly connected with the conduct of elections are not post-



ed in her/his home district and they have completed three years in that district during the last four years or would be completing three years on or before May 31.

The list will also include the names of those officers against whom the Commission had recommended disciplinary action in the past and which is pending or which has resulted in a penalty or the officers who have been charged for any lapse in any elec-

tion or election related work in the past. These officers will not be assigned to these duties.

Further, any officer, who is due to retire within the coming six months, shall also not be associated with any election related duties. The officers who were posted on the recommendation of the Commission during the Lok Sabha elections in 2019 may be exempted from the transfer policy.

The Commission's advisory may be brought to notice of all concerned for "strict and timely compliance".

The five states have also been directed to revert back to the Commission's advisory with acknowledgement receipt of the letter.

These instructions shall cover not only officers appointed for specific election duties like

DEOs, Deputy DEOs, ROs, AROs, EROs/AEROs and officers appointed as nodal officers of any specific elections, but also district officers like ADMs, SDMs, Deputy Collectors/Joint Collectors, Tehsildars, Block Development Officers or any other officer of equal rank directly deployed for election works.

These instructions will also be applicable to the police officers of the ranks of IGs, DIGs, Commandants of State Armed Police, SSPs, SPs, Additional SPs, Sub-Divisional Head of Police, SHOs, Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors, RIs/Sergeant Majors or equivalent ranks, who are responsible for security arrangements or deployment of police forces in the districts at election time.

All election related officers will also be required to give a declaration in a particular format to the District Electoral Officer concerned, who shall inform the Chief Electoral Officer.

## 'Love jihad' drama ends after Moradabad woman has abortion

AGENCIES / Moradabad

The 22-year-old woman from Moradabad, who was sent off to a shelter home after her husband was arrested under the new 'love jihad' law, has suffered a miscarriage, according to the ultrasound examination conducted by a private lab.

Earlier this month, the police in Moradabad had arrested a man and his brother under the new anti-conversion law. The man, identified as Rashid, was at the registrar's office in Kanth when he was handed over to the police by members of the fringe outfit Bajrang Dal. Rashid and his brother were released on



Saturday following an order by an Uttar Pradesh court as the police could not find evidence to support the allegations that the woman was forcibly converted.

Rashid had married the 22-year-old Pinky, from Bijnor in Dehradun, about five months ago. The two met in Dehradun where Rashid was working and the girl was studying.

After Rashid's arrest, Pinky was sent to a shelter home where she alleged that she had suffered a miscarriage due to medical negligence. She also said that she was tortured at the Nari Niketan.

The ultrasound report said that Pinky had a miscarriage and added that there is an infection in her uterus, which should be treated to avoid further complications.

Pinky had alleged that the staff at the protection home ignored her worsening condition and took her to a hospital, where an injection by a doctor caused her miscarriage. The charges were vehemently denied by the hospital.

## Govt plans to measure depth of Himalayan glaciers

AGENCIES / New Delhi

As global warming affects the Himalayas, the Ministry of Earth Sciences is planning to measure the depth of glaciers in the region to assess their volume and gauge the water available in them, officials said on Sunday.

The project will start next summer, sometime in June-July, said, M Rajeevan, the ministry's secretary.

Ravichandran, the Director of the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), which will execute the project, said the country's remote and high-altitude research centre, Himansh, is also studying the Himalayan climate. The centre was established in 2016. "The plan is to first study seven

glaciers in the Chandra river basin," he said. The Chandra river is a major tributary of the Chenab river which itself is a tributary of the Indus.

The Himalayan glaciers are a major source of water for rivers originating from there. The Himalayan rivers are also a lifeline for the Indo-Gangetic plains, home to several million people.

The NCPOR director said while the area of the glaciers is already known with the help of satellites, what needs to be known is the volume. "The purpose of studying the depth of the glaciers is to understand the volume. This will also help us understand the availability of water and whether the glaciers are increasing or shrinking," Ravichandran added.

REST IN PEACE

## Crematorium for dogs: Priest to perform ritual

AGENCIES / New Delhi

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) has set the ball rolling to set up the city's first public crematorium for dogs, where provisions will be made to store their ashes for 15 days after being cremated with proper rituals, officials said on Sunday.

The crematorium, spread over 700 sqm, will come up in Dwarka, and the project that has been welcomed by canine lovers.

"Recently, the SDMC got the final official approval

to the project. And, we will soon be floating tenders. It will be a public-private-



partnership (PPP) project," a senior SDMC official said.

He said human-animal bond is very special and for dog or cat lovers, their pets

are like family members. "And, so the grief is same as losing a real family member, even when a pet dies. We want such animals to also have dignified last rites, as we do for humans. So, we have asked for provisions to be made to have a priest at the crematorium who will perform the rituals in a traditional way for a dead pet," the official told PTI.

The veterinary department officer added that many pet-owners wish to immerse ashes in rivers late, so that "sentiment will also be kept in mind".



Women get a selfie clicked during an online bridal show in Jabalpur, on Sunday PTI

## End minority status for Muslims: Sakshi Maharaj

KANPUR (UP): BJP MP from Unnao, Sakshi Maharaj, known for his controversial remarks, has now said that "as there are more Muslims in India than in Pakistan, their minority status should be abolished".

Sakshi was addressing a function in Unnao on Saturday. He said, "There is more Muslim population in India than Pakistan, therefore the minority status of the Muslims should be abolished with immediate effect. Muslims should now consider themselves to be the younger siblings of the Hindus and live with them in the country."

general surgery.

These moves have drawn a lot of criticism from doctors of modern medicine, leading to a series of protests by IMA members across the country this month.

Lakhs of doctors, including those employed in government hospitals, wore black arm-bands at work and hit the streets in small groups to agitate against the CCIM's notification.

The IMA has been openly opposing such policy moves by the Centre, especially the plan to mix modern medicine with the traditional systems of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) in coming years.

## IPS officers' transfer issue

## Mamata thanks 4 CMs, Stalin for backing Bengal government

AGENCIES / Kolkata

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday said that the Centre is interfering with her government by transferring three IPS officers, and expressed gratitude to her counterparts of Punjab, Delhi, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan for voicing solidarity with the state on the issue.

She also thanked Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) president M K Stalin who has described the "unilateral transfer" of three West Bengal IPS officers by the BJP-led central government as

"autocratic and anti-federal". Captain Amarinder Singh, Arvind Kejriwal, Bhupesh Baghel and Ashok Gehlot, chief ministers of Punjab, Delhi, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan respectively, recently alleged that the Centre's order transferring the officers is interference in the functioning of West Bengal's administration.

While Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan are governed by the Congress, Delhi is ruled by the Aam Aadmi Party.

In a tweet, Banerjee said, "Centre is brazenly interfering with State Govt functioning by transferring police of-

ficers. My gratitude to @bhpeshbaghel @ArvindKejriwal @capt\_amarinder @ashokgehlot51 & @mkstalin for showing solidarity to people of Bengal & reaffirming their commitment to federalism. Thank you!"

The three IPS officers were responsible for the security of BJP national president J P Nadda whose convoy was attacked by alleged Trinamool Congress activists during his recent visit to West Bengal, where Assembly polls are due next year. The Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government in the state is opposing the Centre's move.

## Min: Protesters sabotaging ration supply for forces

PATNA: Union Minister of state for Home Nityanand Rai on Sunday alleged that the forces supporting the farmers agitations were working against the national interests and sabotaging transportation of food materials for the armed forces stationed at Hilly areas.

Speaking at farmers rallies at Patna and Vaishali, the minister claimed that due to blockade of highways near New Delhi, ration for the armed forces posted in forward areas of Ladakh were stopped as trucks movement was paralysed. Now, the ration was being airlifted to these areas, the minister said. He described it as a "big conspiracy" and claimed the parties which did not support the country during the Indo-China war were involved in the conspiracy.

## UDF and LDF 'unholy alliance' spoil BJP's chances in local bodies: Surendran

AGENCIES / Kozhikode

The BJP in Kerala on Sunday alleged that the Congress-led UDF and the CPI(M)-led LDF have forged an "unholy alliance" to spoil its chances to form councils in at least 25 local bodies where it emerged as single largest party in the just concluded civic polls.

Hitting out at both the fronts for their "adjustment politics" to check BJP's rise in the southern state, party state chief K Surendran warned that his party will be able to ensure

the defeat of many top leaders of both the fronts in the upcoming Assembly polls, if they go ahead with such "unholy alliance."

He claimed that the BJP has emerged as the single largest party in around 25 panchayats.

"But the Congress and the CPI(M) have reached an understanding to form alliances in these panchayats to keep the BJP out of power.

In some local bodies in Kasaragod district, the UDF, LDF and the SDPI have come together to spoil the BJP's chance," Surendran said.

## After Cong poll debacle, poster 'war' over leadership change heats up in Kerala

AGENCIES / Thiruvananthapuram

After the Congress election debacle, the internal squabbles in the party are coming out in open with posters being put up in various districts of the state in support of leaders to be brought to the helm of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) leadership.

After Kozhikode, Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam, where posters appeared, flex boards were erected in Thrissur town on Sunday.

Hoardings and posters appeared in Thrissur in favour of Congress leader K. Muraliedharan. Flex boards with his picture demanded to call Muraliedharan



to save the Congress.

Similar posters appeared in Kozhikode as well at a time when senior Congress leaders have called for leadership change in

the party's state unit.

In Thiruvananthapuram, posters had appeared supporting Congress leader K Sudhakaran, who had made clear he would

take up the demand of leadership change with the Congress High Command.

While in Kollam posters appeared against Bindu Krishna, the Kollam District Congress Committee leader, who had allegedly spoke against the leadership. In the poster, it was alleged that she is a BJP agent.

As the internal feud intensified in Congress over the poor election performance, it is learned that Tariq Anwar, AICC General Secretary, in charge of Kerala would visit the state next week to amicably settle all issues within the party before the campaign starts for state assembly polls.

"After the recently held civic elections in Kerala, it is being observed that some Congress

leaders in the State are publicly criticising the state Congress leadership for the outcome of the polls. I earnestly hope that our leaders will realize that by trading the charges against each other they are weakening the party and giving strength to the opponents," Tariq Anwar said in a statement.

He also urged Congress leaders not to air criticism in public. "The need of the hour is to close the rank to fight the opposition. I humbly request all the Congress leaders not to air their differences publicly and take up their grievances at the Party forum. I sincerely assure you that any complaint brought to the notice of leadership would be looked into and resolved," he said.

BERLIN: The Netherlands and Belgium on Sunday banned flights from the UK and Germany considered limiting such flights in attempt to ensure that a new strain of coronavirus sweeping across southern England does not establish a strong foothold on the continent. The Netherlands banned flights from the U.K. for at least the rest of the year while Belgium issued a flight ban for 24 hours starting at midnight and also halted train links to Britain. German officials were considering "serious options" regarding incoming flights from the UK, but have not yet taken action.

**News in Brief**



Children of Israeli settlers play in an indoor playground at the Beit Yanatan apartments building complex in the predominantly Arab neighbourhood of Silwan in east Jerusalem, on November 30, 2020. - In 1970, Israel passed a law allowing Jews to reclaim property they had lost in or before 1948, the year of Israel's creation which also saw authority over east Jerusalem pass from British to Jordanian control

**Iraq devalues national currency over economic crisis**

**BAGHDAD:** The Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) said that it has decided to reduce the value of the Iraqi dinar against the US dollar due to the economic crisis that resulted from the decline in oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic. A CBI statement said that it decided to reduce the value of the Iraqi dinar to be 1,450 dinars per \$1 in the central bank, instead of its previous price of 1,119 dinars per dollar, reports Xinhua news agency. The exchange rate of the dollar will reach 1,470 dinars in the local market, the statement said.

**Thimphu goes into complete lockdown**

**THIMPHU:** Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, went into a complete lockdown on Sunday after a 25-year-old woman, who visited a flu clinic at the National Referral Hospital in the city, tested positive for the novel coronavirus. Prime Minister Lotay Tshering announced the lockdown within Thimphu city with immediate effect and asked everyone to remain home, reports Xinhua news agency. Depending on the degree of transmission, relaxations will be initiated over the coming days. All essential deliveries will resume only after 72 hours. Bhutan has so far reported 443 confirmed coronavirus cases with no deaths.

**Uganda's 2nd Deputy PM dies of Covid-19: President**

**KAMPALA:** Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni announced that the country's second Deputy Prime Minister Ali Kirunda Kivejinja died of the novel coronavirus at a hospital in the capital Kampala. Addressing his 2021-2026 re-election campaign rally in the western city of Hoima, Museveni said on Saturday that Kivejinja who had been admitted at Mulago National Referral Hospital intensive care unit succumbed to the virus, reports Xinhua news agency. He said two female lawmakers also succumbed to the deadly disease. Prime Minister Ruhakana Rugunda said the death of Kivejinja was a great loss to the east African country.

**Official: Large car bomb kills 9 in Afghan capital**

**KABUL:** A car bomb blast that rocked Afghanistan's capital Sunday morning killed at least nine people, according to the Afghan Interior Ministry. Interior Minister Masoud Andarabi told reporters at the site of the attack that the attack wounded around 20 others, including a member of parliament, Khan Mohammad Wardak. Andarabi said the lawmaker was in "good condition." The interior minister added that the casualty toll could rise further. The attack happened while the lawmaker's convey was passing through an intersection in Kabul's Khoshal Khan neighborhood. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

**Pak SC to decide on letter of Daniel Pearl's murder accused**

**ISLAMABAD:** The Pakistan Supreme Court announced that a decision will be taken on a letter in which Omar Sheikh, the key accused in the 2002 murder of Daniel Pearl, revealed that the real culprit behind the kidnapping and beheading of the American journalist was a Karachi terrorist. According to Faisal Siddiqui, the counsel of Pearl's parents, Sheikh submitted the hand-written letter to the Sindh High Court on July 19, 2019, reports The Express Tribune. In the letter, Sheikh claimed that he was "a scapegoat" arrested on the US "pressure", and that the real culprit was the Karachi militant, Attaur Rehman.

**Egypt, Jordan, Palestine FMs discuss Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

**CAIRO:** The Foreign Ministers of Egypt, Jordan and Palestine met in Cairo and discussed methods of reviving the Middle East peace process and resuming negotiations between the Palestinian and the Israeli sides, said the Egyptian Foreign Ministry. The three Ministers on Saturday "stressed that the Palestinian cause is the central Arab issue and discussed ways to push the concerned parties to engage in the peace process" Xinhua news agency quoted the Ministry as saying in a statement following the tripartite meeting.

**Suspect in deadly NY subway fire arraigned on murder charge**

**NEW YORK:** A man accused of setting a train fire that killed a New York City subway driver in March told police he was on the train, had a disposable lighter and set paper on fire but not the "big fire," according to court documents released after his arraignment Saturday on murder and arson charges. Nathaniel Avinger was also seen on subway station video walking away from the front of the train where the fire was located, and then exiting the station, according to court documents, which identified him as 49 years old. Police on Friday said he was 50.

**Fiji cyclone death toll rises to 4 with 1 missing**

**SUVA:** The death toll from a powerful cyclone that battered the Pacific island nation of Fiji last week has risen to four with one missing, an official said Sunday. While Cyclone Yasa on Thursday spared the capital city, Suva, and the major tourist hub of Nadi on Fiji's largest island, Viti Levu, the full extent of damage was still being assessed. Fiji's National Disaster Management Office Director Vasthi Soko told reporters that 7,731 people were still in 183 evacuation centers throughout the country.

# Nepal PM Oli gets Parliament dissolved amidst infighting

- Announces mid-term general election in April-May
- Oppn cries foul over 'controversial' move

KATHMANDU

Nepal's embattled Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli on Sunday sprang a surprise on his rivals and got the President to dissolve Parliament, a controversial move amidst a prolonged tussle for power between him and former premier Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" within the ruling dispensation.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved Parliament's House of Representatives at Oli's recommendation and announced mid-term general election in April-May, a decision termed "unconstitutional, impulsive and autocratic" by the Opposition and dissi-

dents in the Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

Earlier in the day, an emergency meeting of the Cabinet chaired by Oli decided to recommend the President for the dissolution of Parliament, a senior Standing Committee member of the NCP told PTI.

The first phase of the mid-term election will be held on April 30 and May 10 for the second phase, according to a notice issued by the Rashtrapati Bhawan. The 275-member House of Representatives, which is the lower house of Parliament, was elected in 2017 for a five-year term. The upper house is the National Assembly.

The move comes as the intra-party feud reached cli-



Nepalese students affiliated with Nepal Student Union burn an effigy of Nepalese Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli during a protest in Kathmandu on Sunday AP/PTI

The Prachanda and Madhav Nepal faction had been urging Oli to quit the post of Prime Minister amidst growing accusation and counter-accusation between the two factions in the NCP. The NCP formed after the merger between Oli led CPN-UML and Prachanda led CPN (Maoist Centre) in May 2018, is divided along the two factions led by Oli and Prachanda. The Prachanda faction enjoys a majority in the nine-member Secretariat, the highest decision-making body of the party.

max in the NCP which has been witnessing months long tussle between two factions, one led by 68-year-old Oli and Party's chairman and another led by 66-year-old "Prachanda", also the executive chair of the party and former premier.

Expressing dissatisfaction over Oli's move to dissolve

In June, Oli, known for his pro-China leanings, claimed that efforts were being made to oust him after his government redraw the country's political map by incorporating three strategically key Indian territories. India had termed as "untenable" the "artificial enlargement" of the territorial claims by Nepal after its Parliament unanimously approved the new political map of the country featuring Lipulekh, Kalapani, and Limpiyadhura areas which India maintains belong to it.

the House, seven ministers from his Cabinet resigned in protest. The Nepali Congress (NC), the main Opposition in Parliament, said that Oli's recommendation to dissolve the House was against the provisions and spirit of the Constitution, and the party will strongly oppose the move.

## Netanyahu receives Covid vaccine jab, kickstarts vaccination drive in Israel

TEL AVIV

Israel on Sunday began its coronavirus inoculation drive, aiming to vaccinate some 60,000 people a day in a bid to stamp out the illness that is once again surging among its population. Netanyahu was the first Israeli to receive the vaccine, hours before a major roll-out of the vaccinations was to begin in the country.

The country will first immunise health workers, followed by the elderly, high-risk Israelis and those over 60 years old. Israel says it has secured sufficient doses for much of the country's 9 million people from both Pfizer and Moderna, whose vaccine US authorities approved this week for emergency use.

With public opinion polls showing many Israelis are reluctant to receive shots right away, Prime Minister



Coronavirus vaccine being administered to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Benjamin Netanyahu said he would set a "personal example" and insisted on being the first Israeli vaccinated. "This is a great day," Netanyahu told reporters at the center. "I believe in this vaccine and I am doing this to serve as a role model and encourage people to get vaccinated," he added. "It's a small shot for a person and a huge step toward the

health of us all," the prime minister said. He received the shot Saturday night. Netanyahu expressed confidence in the vaccine before rolling up the right sleeve of his black, short-sleeve shirt and receiving the injection. He called it an "exciting moment" that would put Israel on the path to returning to its normal routines.



Boxes containing the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine are prepared to be shipped at the McKesson distribution center in Olive Branch, Mississippi, on Sunday AFP

## 2nd Covid-19 vaccine authorised in US preparing to ship out

**OLIVE BRANCH:** Workers on Sunday began packaging shipments of the second COVID-19 vaccine authorised in the US, a desperately needed boost to efforts to bring the coronavirus pandemic under control.

Employees at a factory in the Memphis area were boxing up the vaccine developed by Moderna Inc. and the National Institutes of

Health. The much-needed shots are expected to be given starting Monday, just three days after the Food and Drug Administration authorized their emergency rollout. Later Sunday, an expert committee will debate who should be next in line for early doses of the Moderna vaccine and a similar one from Pfizer Inc. and Germany's BioNTech.

## Pakistan govt cancels licences of 50 pilots

ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan government has cancelled the licences of 50 pilots for flying with fake credentials and authorities will probe how they obtained the certificates through unfair means, the country's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has informed a top court here.

The issue of fake licences surfaced in the wake of the tragic crash of a Pakistan International Airlines plane in Karachi on May 22, killing 97 people, when Minister of Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan told the media that 260 of the country's 860 active pilots had either fake licences or had cheated in their exams. Their names were made public to avoid any negative impression about other pilots, including those working outside Pakistan.

## Fugitive Nirav Modi's brother charged in \$2.6mn fraud in NY

NEW YORK

Nehal Modi, the brother of fugitive jewellery merchant Nirav Modi, has been charged by a New York prosecutor in an alleged \$2.6 million fraud carried out through a multi-layered scheme to cheat one of the world's biggest diamond companies. Announcing the charges against Nehal Modi on Friday, the prosecutor, Cy Vance, said, "While diamonds maybe forever, this flawed scheme was not, and now Mr Modi will face the clarity of a New York Supreme Court indictment."

Modi was charged in the state supreme court with "grand larceny in the first degree" for allegedly "fraudulently obtaining over \$2.6 million worth of diamonds from a diamond wholesale company located in Manhattan," said Vance, who is the prosecutor for the city's Manhattan district. The crime of grand larceny in the first degree under New York State laws is theft involving more than \$1 million and it carries a maximum penalty of 25 years in

The crime carries a maximum penalty of 25 years in prison



prison. According to the New York Post, Modi told the court he was not guilty of the charge and was released without bail. Nehal Modi is wanted in India in connection with an alleged Rs 13,500 crore (about \$1.9 billion) fraud involving the Punjab National Bank, and at the request of India the Interpol has issued a Red Notice, which is a request to law enforcement worldwide to arrest him pending extradition. Under the judicial procedure in New York, the prosecutors first presented the case to a grand jury — a panel of citizens — to determine if there was a prima facie case to proceed with prosecution. The grand jury indicted him — a finding that there were enough grounds to charge him. The alleged crime goes back to 2015 when Nehal Modi asked a company identified as LLD Diamonds USA to obtain over \$2.6 million worth of diamonds with "false representations", some of which he pawned for loans and sold the rest as steeply discounted prices, the prosecution said in a statement.

## Stricter curbs reintroduced in Sydney due to Covid-19 cluster

SYDNEY

Australia's biggest city of Sydney reintroduced stricter restrictions on Sunday as confirmed cases related to newly-discovered coronavirus cluster has increased to 68.

The state of New South Wales (NSW) recorded 30 more locally acquired coronavirus cases on Saturday night, and an additional six cases in hotel quarantine, making the total number of cases related to the cluster in Northern Beaches to 68, Xinhua news agency reported. Among the 30 new locally acquired cases, 28 are linked to the Avalon cluster, while investigations are ongoing into the source of the remaining two cases, both of whom live on the Northern Beaches.

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian on Sunday



Man walks with an umbrella past yachts on a pontoon after the cancellation of Sydney to Hobart yacht race due to an escalating coronavirus outbreak, at Cruising Yacht Club of Australia in Sydney AFP

morning announced several new restrictions to be applied to Greater Sydney from midnight Sunday. Household gatherings will be limited to 10 visitors.

One person per 4 square metre rule will be reintroduced for all indoor settings including hospitality venues and places of wor-

ship. A cap of 300 people will apply for hospitality venues and places of worship. Singing and chanting at indoor venues will not be allowed. Dancefloors will not be permitted, except for weddings, when a maximum of 20 from the bridal party will be permitted.

## Concern among Muslims over halal status of Covid-19 vaccine

JAKARTA

In October, Indonesian diplomats and Muslim clerics stepped off a plane in China. While the diplomats were there to finalise deals to ensure millions of doses reached Indonesian citizens, the clerics had a much different concern: Whether the Covid-19 vaccine was permissible for use under Islamic law.

As companies race to develop a Covid-19 vaccine and countries scramble to secure doses, questions about the use of pork products - banned by some religious groups - has raised concerns

about the possibility of disrupted immunisation campaigns. Pork-derived gelatin has been widely used as a stabilizer to ensure vaccines remain safe and effective during storage and transport. Some companies have worked for years to develop pork-free vaccines.

But demand, existing supply chains, cost and the shorter shelf life of vaccines not containing porcine gelatin means the ingredient is likely to continue to be used in a majority of vaccines for years, said Dr Salman Waqar, general secretary of the British Islamic Medical Association.



This presents a dilemma for religious communities, including Orthodox Jews and Muslims, where the consumption of pork products is deemed religiously unclean, and how the ban is applied to medicine, he said.

The majority consensus from past debates over pork gelatin use in vaccines is that it is permissible under Islamic law, as "greater harm" would occur if the vaccines weren't used, said Dr Harunor Rashid, an associate professor at the University of Sydney. There's a similar assessment by a broad consensus of religious leaders in the Orthodox Jewish community as well.

"According to the Jewish law, the prohibition on eating pork or using pork is only forbidden when it's a natural way of eating it," said Rabbi David Stav, chairman of Tzohar, a rabbinical

organization in Israel. Yet there have been dissenting opinions on the issue - some with serious health consequences for Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population, some 225 million. But with rising vaccine hesitancy and misinformation spreading around the globe, including in religious communities, Rashid said community engagement is "absolutely necessary." In Indonesia, the government has already said it will include the Muslim clerical body in the COVID-19 vaccine procurement and certification process.

Jim Carrey  
steps  
down from  
SNL



**A**head of this week's episode of *Saturday Night Live*, American actor Jim Carrey — who has been portraying President-elect Joe Biden on the beloved sketch comedy series during season 46 — announced that he will not be portraying Biden on the show anymore. According to *People Magazine*, the 50-year-old actor and comedian wrote on Twitter joking, "Though my term was only meant to be 6 weeks, I was thrilled to be elected as your SNL President...comedy's highest call of duty. I would love to go forward knowing that Biden was the victor because I nailed that sh\*\*. But I am just one in a long line of proud, fighting SNL Bidens!" he said, without dropping any hints as to who his successor might be. —ANI

## 'OTT' will flourish until this fear of Covid lessens, but it can't be compared to cinema'

**Richa Chadha**, whose film *Shakeela* is up for a theatrical release, gets candid about the inevitable comparisons with Vidya Balan's *Silk Smitha*, and also talks about why the OTT boom is not a death knell for the movies

LIPIKA VARMA

**R**icha Chadha has always taken the path less travelled when it comes to film selection. Be it hard-hitting gangster sagas like *Gangs of Wasseypur*, social dramas like *Masaan*, or even the fun, comedy *Fukrey* — Richa has never shied away from opting for unconventional roles, which she nails with panache. And, now, she is back again with yet another jaw-dropping, sultry avatar in the eponymous biopic of the Southern adult star Shakeela. Oozing oomph and glamour, Richa pays the perfect ode to the South siren who ruled the roost in the '90s. And, as the movie gears for a Christmas release, the actor opens up about being Shakeela, facing comparisons with Vidya Balan's *The Dirty Picture*, and more... Excerpts from the interview:

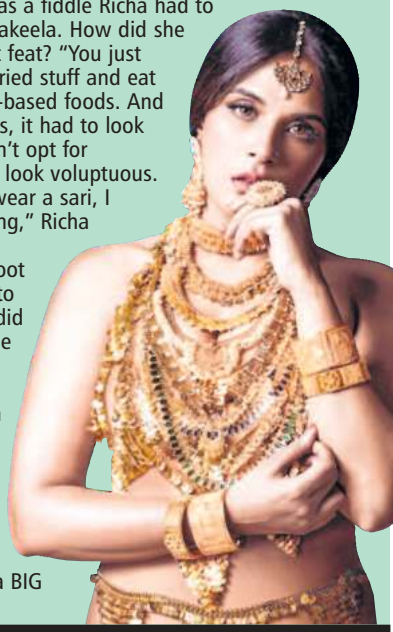
**What was it like, playing Shakeela?**  
It was a fun and different experience. I am playing a character of an adult actress for the first time, who is also dancing and doing a whole lot of other things. It was a new kind of cinema setting, and you will get to see a lot of South flavor. As an actor it is our job to give our best and work sincerely, so that the character looks real on screen.

**Shakeela has been tagged as an 'adult star'. Are there any**

### From Richa to Shakeela...

**O**ne thing about biopics is that the actor playing the person in the film (in this case Richa playing Shakeela) needs to undergo tremendous transformation to look the part. For the movie, fit as a fiddle Richa had to look voluptuous like Shakeela. How did she manage to achieve that feat? "You just have to keep hogging fried stuff and eat a lot of sweets, and flour-based foods. And since I had to wear saris, it had to look real, and hence we didn't opt for prosthetics to make me look voluptuous. If I wasn't required to wear a sari, I could have done padding," Richa says.

And, now that the shoot is over and life is back to normal for Richa, how did she manage to lose the excess weight? "I did a lot of running and continued with my gym routine. I stopped eating fried food, sweet, flour, etc. All those eatables that helped me put on weight were stopped at once! They become a BIG NO!" she says.



has to release. So, when they got a chance to release it before the year ends, they are releasing it.

**You were one of the early actors to take up web series. And, now that it is blooming, how do you see the OTT space? It's become a platform. Everybody is getting a chance to be part of good shows, and tell good stories. Many Bollywood stars too have taken a detour to the small screen, and people want to watch their shows. I am very happy that people are enjoying watching shows/films on varied platforms. This is like bridging the gap between series and movies too. OTT will flourish until this fear of Covid lessens. But it can't be compared to cinema.**

**While most Bollywood actors refrain from commenting on hard-hitting issues, you don't. I don't think that's the case anymore. It was earlier, but now everybody is ready to speak up. Look at the recent support that came in for farmers. Actors are speaking too, and it's a good thing... bolna bhi chahiye.**

**So what's next on the work front?**  
I am doing *Fukrey* next, then there is *Madame Chief Minister*, a political film, which I always wanted to do, it's like a dream come true. And then there's another season of the web series *Inside Edge*. There is a lot more happening, which will be announced when the time comes.

**'controversial' scenes?**  
The film is about her personal life. So there was no need to show sex/bold scenes, and I wasn't uncomfortable in any way while shooting the part. Like I said earlier, as an actor it's my job to play my part in the story convincingly and trust the director's vision.

**Comparisons to Vidya Balan's *The Dirty Picture* are inevitable. What's your take?**  
We can't stop comparisons from being drawn between the two actors and the films. But, I think there is a big dif-

ference between *Silk Smitha* and *Shakeela*. *Shakeela* was not ambitious. Both of them were different in real life too.

**The film is going for a theatrical release, do you think it would get audience in such times?**  
It's a challenge to release films in theaters, but I am happy that it's releasing. Actually, the makers were planning to release *Shakeela* in March. But that didn't happen owing to the pandemic. And now how much can they wait? We cannot hold it indefinitely right? The film



PIC: INSTAGRAM/KAREENA KAPOOR KHAN

## Mother of all gyan: Bebo Edition

**On son Taimur's birthday, the actor announced publication of her book *Kareena Kapoor Khan's Pregnancy Bible*, will come out next year.**

**B**ollywood superstar Kareena Kapoor Khan is set to pen a comprehensive guide to pregnancy, publisher Juggernaut said on Sunday. The book, titled *Kareena Kapoor Khan's Pregnancy Bible*, will come out next year.

Kareena, who is expecting her second baby with husband actor Saif Ali Khan, made the announcement of her upcoming endeavour on the fourth birthday of the couple's first child Taimur Ali Khan. "Today is the perfect day to announce — *Kareena Kapoor Khan's Pregnancy Bible* for all you moms-to-be. Will talk about everything from morning sickness to diet and fitness and being a mom-on-the-go! can't wait for you to read it. To be published by Juggernaut Books in 2021," the actor wrote on Instagram alongside the cover art of the book. "I believe pregnancy is a natural process during which we should be active, healthy and happy. In this book I will tell you how I handled my own pregnancies and give you all the information you need to be happy in yours. This subject means a lot to me and I hope to create a book that will help and guide other women," the 40-year-old actor said.

Earlier on Sunday morning, Kareena took to Instagram to pen a heart-warming note for son Taimur who turned four: "My child... I'm happy at four you have such determination, dedication and focus on what you want to do... which is now picking up the haystack and feeding the cow... don't forget to taste the snow, pluck flowers, jump up and down, climb trees and of course eat all your cake... Chase your dreams and keep your chin up my boy... But above all else... do everything in your life that makes you smile. No one can or ever will love you more than your Amma," she wrote.

PIC: VIRAL BHAYANI

## Hollywood Eminem apologises to Rihanna over leaked Chris Brown lyrics

**G**rammy Award-winning rapper Eminem recently surprised his fans last week with the release of his new album titled, *Music to Be Murdered By — Side B*. The release is a companion to his 11th studio album that features 16 new songs.

But, what's grabbing eye balls is one of the songs from the album called *Zeus*. It seems through the song, the rapper has issued an apology to fellow artiste and singer Rihanna over his controversial lyrics about Chris Brown that leaked in 2019, reports deadline.com.

In the unreleased verse, which was leaked online, Eminem sided with Brown, who later pleaded guilty to felony assault on Rihanna in 2009. The new lyrics read: "But, me, long as I re-promise to be honest / And wholeheartedly, apologies, Rihanna," he raps. "For that song that leaked, I'm sorry, Ri / It wasn't meant to cause you grief. Regardless, it was wrong of me."

—FPJ Entertainment Desk

## Not in the Pink of health, singer fractures ankle

**S**inger Pink survived Covid earlier this year, and now she has injured her ankle. "As if surviving covid wasn't enough for this poop sandwich of a year!" she wrote on Instagram alongside a photo that showed her giving a thumbs up while getting a medical treatment, reportspeople.com. "Well, I got my stitches out from drying that wine glass, that went well. Then I recovered from my very first staph infection for no reason (cry for help?) (right knee was lonely?) so I thought I'd fracture my ankle!" she joked. "Later I'm gonna climb inside a raw chicken and see if I can't check out what salmonella's like! 2020 is the gift that keeps on giving," she added. The singer went on to reveal that she injured herself while trying to get all festive. —IANS



## Ed Sheeran back from break?

**S**inger Ed Sheeran has been on a break for a while, and it seems like he is ready to release his new music soon.

The speculations started when a fan account shared theories about the singer's next album, reports dailymail.co.uk. "If his break started after his note, it would normally end in June 2021. This just makes way more sense to me: he comes back in June with the lead single(s), release maybe one or two more singles in July (and August) and then puts out subtract in August..." a part of the fan's note reads.

Reacting to that, Sheeran wrote: "All very valid questions, but you'll know at least one answer soon." —IANS



## In Theatres This Week

# Intense performances are the only saving grace here

RONITA TORCATO

**H**ow does one forgive something that seems unforgivable? For the happily married protagonists at the heart of this morality tale-cum-psychological thriller, forgiveness doesn't enter the equation.

Replicating the plot of Ariel Dorfman's play *Death and the Maiden*, which Roman Polanski adapted into a film, Israeli director Yuval Adler, and American actor-writer Ryan Covington, interpose the minefield of marital intimacy with deception and secrets that test the

marriage bond.

Set 15 years after World War II, the film follows European emigre Maja (Noomi Rapace), who lives with her American doctor husband Lewis (Chris Messina) and son Patrick in a small town and soon becomes convinced that new neighbour, Thomas (Joel Kinnaman), is the Nazi who was complicit in the gang rape and murder of Romanis (gypsies who originated from India).

The protagonists are not Jewish, but Christians, a tiny cross round Maja's neck is discarded after just one scene, an act that parallels her renunciation of



the Christian (not to speak of Hindu, Jain and Buddhist) ethic of non-violence and forgiveness.

Maja's happy mood in the idyllic opening sequence quickly segues into the harrowing mem-

**Film:** *The Secrets We Keep*

**Cast:** Noomi Rapace, Chris Messina, Joel Kinnaman, Amy Seimetz, Jackson Dean Vincent, Madison Paige Jones, Jeff Pope, David Maldonado, Ed Amatrudo

**Director:** Yuval Adler

**Stars:** 3

ory that she thought she had long buried. From thereon, Adler cloaks much of the narrative in a noirish ambience that reflects the psychological repercussions of wartime violence.

Adler-Covington are astute in depicting human nature: When Maja rushes out bloodied and

bruised, her son retreats in fear while her neighbour scurries homeward.

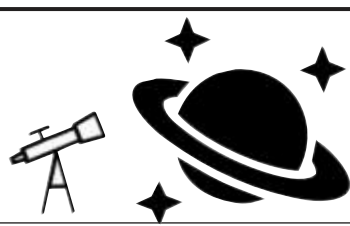
The 50s setting is aesthetically recreated, and the director extracts intense performances from Messina and Rapace, who is herself of Romani lineage. Killman is effective as the hostage trussed up in Maja's basement, and Amy Seimetz shines in a small role as his distraught wife, Rachel.

It boggles the mind though that Maja is able to easily abduct sturdy Thomas in broad daylight all by herself. Implausibilities are offset by nail-biting tension in adroitly helmed

sequences. A war crime is depicted in disjointed chromatic flashbacks, attesting to the fragmented memories of the traumatised victim.

Homage to Hitchcock is evident when Maja pursues Thomas to a theatre screening *North by Northwest* in which Cary Grant is mistaken for someone he is not. What if Thomas was innocent as he initially claims to be? If not, can revenge be justified? The film skims diverse possibilities. Adler-Covington do not adequately address this issue. But then they crafted a movie, not a book.

NEW YORK: Microsoft has announced that it has added the 'Together Mode' option that debuted in Teams to Skype. According to a report from zdnet.com, in the latest Skype version (Skype 8.67), Together Mode is one of a handful of new features available to various versions of Skype. 'Together Mode' is a viewing option that makes it appear as if all meeting participants are located in the same physically shared space instead of via a traditional grid view. As per the reports, Microsoft officials have said they believe 'Together Mode' will help alleviate virtual-meeting fatigue and make meetings feel more real.



## Astronomer discovers rare comet during total solar eclipse

AGENCIES  
Washington

An astronomer has spotted a little tiny speck flying past the Sun which is a recently discovered rare comet, as the world witnessed the total solar eclipse this month. This comet was first spotted in satellite data by Thai amateur astronomer Worachate Boonplod on the NASA-funded Sungrazer Project, as Chile and Argentina witnessed the total solar eclipse on December 14, reports NASA.

Around the time the eclipse image was taken, the comet was travelling at roughly 7.24,205 kms per hour; about 4.3 million kms from the Sun's surface. The comet was around 50 feet in diameter — about the length of a semi truck. It then disintegrated to dust particles due to intense solar radiation, a few hours before reaching its closest point to the Sun. Sungrazer is a citizen science project that invites anyone to search for and

discover new comets in images from the joint European Space Agency (ESA) and NASA Solar and Heliospheric Observatory, or SOHO. Boonplod discovered the comet a day before the eclipse.

"He knew the eclipse was coming, and was eager to see whether his new comet discovery might appear in the Sun's outer atmosphere as a small speck in eclipse photographs," the US space agency said in a statement late on Saturday.

The comet, named C/2020 X3 (SOHO) by the Minor Planet Center, is a "Kreutz" sungrazer. This family of comets originated from a large parent comet that broke up into smaller fragments well over a thousand years ago and continues to orbit around the Sun today. Kreutz sungrazing comets are most commonly found in SOHO images. To date, 4,108 comets have been discovered in SOHO images, with this comet being the 3,524th Kreutz sungrazer spotted, according to NASA. —IANS

## People likely to remember meaningful deaths in fiction

While everyone cheers over a villain's death, it is the other loved character whose demise is forever etched in people's minds

AGENCIES  
New York

Many people may cheer the demise of evil villains in fiction, but the only deaths that they do remember are the ones which they perceive as sad and meaningful endings of the character they love, say researchers.

The study, published in the journal Omega-Journal of Death and Dying, found that when people were asked to recall the death of a fictional character, they were more likely to mention deaths perceived as "meaningful" than those seen as "pleasurable."



"We remember the deaths that made us cry and think more than those that made us cheer," said study co-author Matthew Grizzard from the Ohio State University in the US. "It seems that when we recall death, even in the relatively consequence-free spaces of media entertain-

ment, we experience it as a meaningful, reflective experience," Grizzard added.

For the study, the research team picked 506 people who participated online. As the researchers expected, people

who were asked to recall a character death they found particularly pleasurable tended to choose villains, like Joffrey from "Game of Thrones." Those who were asked to recall meaningful deaths tended to go with sympathetic characters, but not necessarily ones who were always heroes. Snape in the "Harry Potter" movies and Walter White in "Breaking Bad" both were mentioned often.

"When asked to think of meaningful deaths, many people chose characters who went through some sort of redemption. For example, Roy Batty, who was the antagonist in most of "Blade Runner," but in the end has this redeeming action," Grizzard said. —IANS

## OUR ECOSYSTEMS ARE FAILING TO ABSORB CO2

AGENCIES  
New York

Researchers have identified an unsettling trend — as levels of carbon dioxide (CO2) in the atmosphere increase, 86 per cent of land ecosystems globally are becoming progressively less efficient at absorbing.

Because CO2 is a main 'ingredient' that plants need to grow, elevated concentrations of it cause an increase in photosynthesis, and consequently, plant growth — a phenomenon aptly referred to as the CO2 fertilization effect, or CFE.

CFE is considered a key factor in the response of vegetation to rising atmospheric CO2 as well as an important mechanism for removing this potent greenhouse gas from our atmosphere —

but that may be changing.

For a new study published in the journal Science, researchers analyzed multiple field, satellite-derived and model-based datasets to better understand what effect increasing levels of CO2 may be having on CFE.

Their findings have important implications for the role plants can be expected to play in offsetting climate change in the years to come. "In this study, by analysing the long-term data from remote sensing and state-of-the-art land-surface models, we have found that since 1982, the global average CFE has decreased steadily from 21 per cent to 12 per cent per 100 ppm of CO2 in the atmosphere," said study author Ben Poulter from NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. —IANS

## Rise in married Indians using extra-marital app

RAJESHWARI  
VENKITASUBRAMANIAN  
Mumbai

In COVID-19 times, love seems to be blossoming on online dating platforms and extra-marital dating app Gleeden said on Tuesday that it has crossed 13 lakh subscribers in India and has seen subscriptions increased by over 246 per cent in India as more people stay home, the company said.

Gleeden which has registered a longer time spent on the website globally said it expects subscriptions to rise further in India as most parts of the country.

"We are pleased to see the nationwide acceptance of our extramarital dating platform," Sybil Shiddell, Country Manager, Gleeden, India, said in a statement.

Gleeden also informed that Indians stay in chat longer than Europeans — on average 3.5 hours per day versus three hours (From March 2020 to November 2020).

The app has substantial evidence that the New Year's resolution of thousands of Indians is to commit infidelity or flirt with the prospect of doing so. This sudden surge of users on the dating app is the result of the New Year rush witnessed as a pattern among the dating app users.

The same trend was followed in January 2019, as in the first week of its daily subscriptions shot up by 295 per cent compared to the previous two weeks. Also, the number of new subscriptions in the first week of January 2019 was 245 per cent of the entire month.

## Pandemic problems

Last week, we lost our pet of eight years due to his persisting health issues. I have been feeling very low, and crying a lot since then. Yesterday, I had a nightmare in which I saw my parents dying. I am scared of death and any talks related to it. I know it isn't normal, and that it is my grief talking, but I am really affected by my pet's death. What can I do to lessen the pain?



Dr. Anjali Chhabria  
Consultant Psychiatrist

I am very sorry for your loss. It must be emotionally painful to come to terms with the passing away of your pet. We humans have the ability to express grief and bereavement, and sometimes we might need additional help. You can speak to your family members who are also living this pain and loss to get an insight into their coping mechanisms. As far as not wanting to talk about death and being scared, it is quite natural to feel so. In case this persists for another few days, visit a therapist for grief counselling.

I was running a restaurant with my friend in Khar, Mumbai. It was a successful business until the pandemic hit. Last few months, we could survive since we had other sources of income. But now that things are running again, maintaining the restaurant has become an issue for us. The business isn't like before and the expenses are still the same. I am quite stressed, and can't sleep at night. What can be done here? Few practical choices need to be made as the business might take more time to function in its full swing. People are still apprehensive about stepping out and eating at a restaurant with the

same frequency. Discuss the future possibilities with your friend with respect to how to run the business with minimum loss. You can probably hire a business developer who can curate new ideas and help in revival of the restaurant as well. Worry will only dampen the mood and lead to sleepless nights.

My mother turned 80 last month. I recently noticed that she has been repeating herself quite a lot, forgets things kept here and there, and most importantly, she is complaining of memory lapses. I don't understand this sudden change in her behaviour. How to investigate this further?

This could be due to multiple reasons: Age, neurological ailment or a result of some pre-existing medical condition. Memory loss can be detected using few neurological assessment tools. Once the root cause is established, the treatment can begin accordingly. Meet a neurologist so that you know which direction to head to. You can also start playing few memory games, sudoku, puzzles to keep her engaged, and prevent further damage. Keep a track of her diet by adding few items which are good for her memory.

## FUN CORNER

A 'FUN' WRAP UP OF 2020

2019: Stay away from negative people.  
2020: Stay away from positive people.

Never in a million years could I have imagined I would go up to a bank teller with a mask on and ask for money.

This morning I saw a neighbor talking to her cat. It was obvious she thought her cat understood her. I came to my house and told my dog...We had a good laugh.

The dumbest thing I ever bought was a 2020 planner.

I need to practice social-distancing from the refrigerator.

— Compiled by FPJ Features Desk

Disclaimer — This is a joke and no ill will is intended against anyone.

## ARCHANGEL MICHAEL MESSAGE FOR THE DAY

Today focus on work and give your best. Do not procrastinate or delay your work.

Document your work and keep facts ready. Review your post before publishing anything on social media.

Believe in yourself. You have the skillset and aptitude to do well. Teamwork is the key. Learn new skills. Be open to learning.

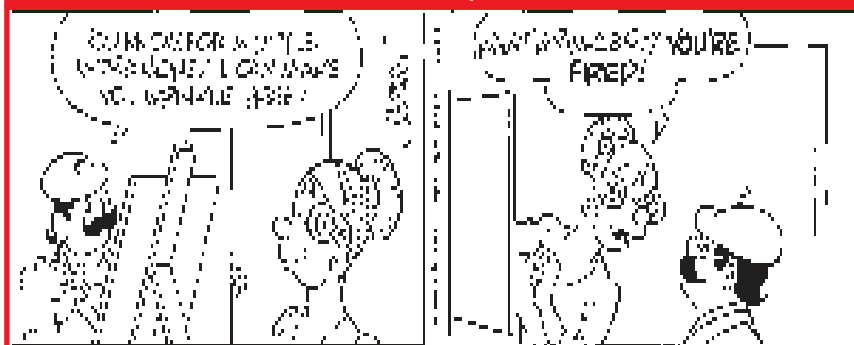
### TIP OF THE DAY:

Focus on the success that you wish to experience and say "Dear God, Goddess and Archangel Michael let my work reach the right people and please bless me with success, this or better than you"

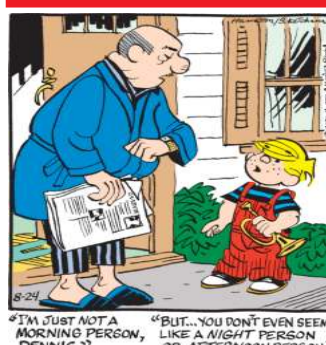
— By Sheetal Sapan Mhatre

(For online appointments, Whatsapp team on 9820533750)

## BRINGING UP FATHER / FRANK JONSON



## DENNIS THE MENACE



## BLONDIE / Dean Young & Mile Gersher



## Smart Kids Corner

### Windsor Castle

AFTER establishing supremacy over England in 1066, the Duke of Normandy, William the Conqueror, built a defensive ring of forts around London to secure his position. One of these was Windsor Castle.

The castle was originally built of wood and was strategically located near the River Thames. It was later fortified with stones, altered and expanded by successive monarchs and eventually transformed into a luxurious palace.

Windsor Castle has witnessed momentous events in English history. It served as a military base and safe haven for royalty and twice withstood a siege of rebellious barons. During the English Civil War (1642-1651), King Charles I was held prisoner here before his execution.

Today, Windsor Castle covers an area of about 50,000 sq.m. and is the largest continuously inhabited castle in the world with about 1000 rooms. It is the principal weekend retreat of the Queen of England and a popular tourist destination.

The splendidly furnished State Apartments are an epitome of royal opulence. St George's



Chapel is a fine example of Gothic architecture. Within the chapel are the tombs of British royals, including Henry VIII and his third wife Jane Seymour, Charles I and more recently, the Queen Mother. The Long Walk, as its name suggests, is a 5-km long pathway leading to the castle.

The castle's most delightful attraction is Queen Mary's Dolls' House. Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens (architect of New Delhi), it took 1,500 craftsmen three years to complete. The dollhouse boasts of real wine in bottles, electric lighting, running hot and cold water and even flushing toilets!

The castle abounds in stories of ghostly sightings. Many claim to have seen or heard the ghosts of King George III, Charles I and even Elizabeth I who reportedly haunt the Royal library!

4293 / © 2020 Amrita Bharati, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan

## GUIDING LIGHT

### Mind your world

— Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Let us contemplate on the difference between Atma (the soul or the Self) and the mind. The soul is unchanging, but the mind keeps on changing from time to time. This is why our mind has been linked to the moon (referring to the different phases of the waxing and waning moon). It is said, 'Chandrama manaso-jayate' (from the Purusha Sukta in Rig Veda; meaning: From His Cosmic Mind was born the Moon). There is a deep connection between the moon and the mind. Just as the moon waxes and wanes over the days, in the same way our mind also experiences ups and downs.

Sometimes it expands, sometimes it contracts. Sometimes it is happy without any reason, and sometimes it is miserable without any reason. This is why people through the ages have said, 'One who conquers the mind conquers the entire World'. The mind alone is the reason behind bondage and liberation. Whether we experience some bondage or attachment, or whether we feel free, the reason for this is the mind. So we have to train the

mind again and again. This is the essence of knowledge. As we go on practising this regularly, we gradually attain the siddhi (extraordinary ability) to tame the mind - just as a person, after repeatedly going through problems in life gradually gains the ability to smile through them.

Then a stage comes where he does not feel any misery in spite of a problem. As we go through the experiences of life (whether pleasant or unpleasant), a stage comes when this realization dawns within us that 'Everything is nothing'. That is when we begin to get established in the Self. To be established in the Self means that regardless of the person, object or situation that comes before us, we do not lose our smile and equanimity even for a moment.

Even if we do lose it, it is momentary and we instantly gain it back. Then we are strongly and firmly established in the Self. Then it is said that one has become a Siddha (a perfected one), that one has truly become established in the Self.

(Spiritual organisations keen to be featured in this space contact : features@fpj.co.in)

## FPJ - SUDOKU - 074

Level: Hard

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   | 3 |   |   |   |   | 4 |   |   |
| 8 |   |   | 6 |   |   |   | 3 | 7 | 9 |
| 7 |   |   |   | 4 | 5 |   |   |   | 6 |
|   | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   | 9 | 6 |   |   | 1 |
| 9 |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |   | 4 |
| 1 | 4 | 2 |   |   |   | 5 |   |   | 7 |
|   |   | 7 |   |   |   |   | 8 |   |   |

WHAT TO DO: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Every puzzle has only one correct solution.



## CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Frolics

6 Molten rock

11 Degraded

12 Eyes

13 Incisor's neighbor

15 Running bird

16 Use a chair

17 Cry of insight

18 1972 Winter Games

20 Scot's cap

21 Mine yield

22 Wilder on film

23 Nervous

26 Took a risk

27 Fishing need

28 Skirt edge

29 Brink

30 Oscar-winning Hitchcock film

34 Neighbor

35 Memorable time

36 Jean — Godard

37 Clothing pattern

40 The Yokum boy

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B | L | A | N | D | C | A | R | P |
| L | A | M | E | R | A | L | E | R |
| A | K | I | T | A | R | A | G | E |
| S | E | T | W | E | E | I | V | Y |
| T | R | I | N | G | T | I | M | E |
| E | T | H | A | N | W | E | N | T |
| C | R | O | S | E | P | A | S | E |
| C | R | O | S | E | S | H | A | M |
| R | O | B | O | A | T | B | O | X |
| C | O | N | A | I | R | E | V | A |
| W | E | L | L | S | R | I | S | E |
| S | E | E | K | S | M | E | L | L |

Yesterday's answer

- 10 Red-faced events
- 14 Cork's country
- 19 Fence part
- 22 Stadium event
- 23 Isaac's father
- 24 Kenya capital
- 25 TV fashion guru
- 26 Pre-election events
- 28 That woman's
- 30 Towel off again
- 31 Nearby fellow
- 32 Funny
- 33 Massage fellow
- 36 Volleyball need
- 39 Count start

|     |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
|-----|---|---|---|----|----|---|---|----|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5  | 6  | 7 | 8 | 9  | 10 |
|     |   |   |   |    | 14 |   |   |    |    |
| '1  |   |   |   | 16 |    |   |   | 17 |    |
| '2  |   |   |   |    |    |   |   | 20 |    |
| '3  |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '4  |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '5  |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '6  |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '7  |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '8  |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '9  |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '10 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '11 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '12 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '13 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '14 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '15 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '16 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '17 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '18 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '19 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '20 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '21 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '22 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '23 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '24 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '25 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '26 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '27 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '28 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '29 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '30 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '31 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '32 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '33 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '34 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '35 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '36 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '37 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '38 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '39 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '40 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '41 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |
| '42 |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |    |

## YOUR DAY

**ARIES:** An imperfect use of your energy will bring some health issues. Be ready for some opposition and criticism, which might make you uncomfortable.

**GEMINI:** Opportunity to pursue further education with scholarship will come your way. You may be able to solve your siblings' problems.

**LEO:** If you concentrate more on your recent projects you can complete them before time, and can also gain new contracts.

**LIBRA:** New relationship will sail smoothly. In job and politics, there will be progress, but don't expect dramatic changes.

**SAGITTARIUS:** You may get a promotion or a pay raise at work. Your lawful thoughts will impress your seniors at your work place.

**AQUARIUS:** You have to work vigorously in service sports and politics to achieve success. Good period doesn't last for long. Job seekers will get good opportunities.

**TAURUS:** Your curious nature helps you to get to the bottom of things, which becomes a fodder for your brain, and assists in gaining vast knowledge.

**CANCER:** Refrain from taking major decisions, especially related to new projects and deals. Focus on your goals, and believe in your actions.

**VIRGO:** You will manage to outsmart the opposition so deftly that they may not even be aware of it. Major decisions with clients to get new contracts will be successful.

**SCORPIO:** A change of attitude is much-needed for professional growth. Some help shall come from those near you for career development and future ventures.

**CAPRICORN:** You will be able to handle your rivals well, and will easily establish dominance over them. You will not face any major financial change.

India, US mutual fund industry earns 'top' grade for disclosure regime: Report

The mutual fund industry of India and the US received "top" grade for robust disclosure practices in areas such as fees and transparency of fund holdings, according to a global study by Morningstar. However, India could work to improve the level of details provided by fund firms in discussions of performance and risk within fund literature, it added. According to Morningstar's biannual 'Global Investor Experience' report on disclosures, India and the US received "top" grades due to their robust disclosure practices. The two markets feature global best practices for disclosure of portfolio manager names, fund ownership and compensation.

Bank loans write-offs during NDA government three times over UPA

The Bharatiya Janata Party-led NDA rule saw the highest loans write-off between 2015 and 2019, which is more than three times compared to the figures of bad loans written off during the previous Congress-led UPA regime from 2004-2014, as per an RTI revelation. During the UPA's 10-year rule, around Rs 2,20,328 crore was written off by various banks, and this figure shot up to Rs 7,94,354 crore during the NDA regime from 2015-2019, resulting in a corresponding reduction in the banks' NPAs. The RTI reply figures around two-dozen public sector banks, some three-dozen in private sector, nine Scheduled Commercial Banks, and a whopping four-dozen foreign banks, and includes several in each category which have not written off any loans.

Union Corporate Affairs Ministry defers implementation of CARO order

The government has deferred implementation of the strict disclosure requirements for auditor reports of companies by one year, a move that comes amid the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Now, the Companies (Auditor's Report) Order, 2020 would come into effect from financial years commencing on or after April 1, 2021, according to a notification issued by the corporate affairs ministry. The ministry is implementing the companies law.

Additional borrowing permission of Rs 16,728 crore granted to five states

Centre has granted permission for additional mobilise additional financial resources to the tune of Rs 16,728 crore through open market borrowings to five states. The permission has been granted as the state have so far completed the stipulated reforms in the ease of doing business. These states are Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana, said a Finance Ministry statement. In view of the resource requirement to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic, the government had on May 17, 2020 enhanced the borrowing limit of the states by 2 per cent of their GDP. Half of this special dispensation was linked to undertaking citizen centric reforms by the states.

With worst pandemic woes behind, FMCG sector optimistic about 2021

MUMBAI: Crisis brings opportunities. This could not have been truer for the FMCG industry in 2020 even as the world grappled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The sector is learning, innovating and rising from disruptions to put the worst behind and looking forward to the new year with optimism and a new-found confidence. With food, personal care items, especially hand sanitizers and disinfectants -- the hero products of the pandemic -- managing to push the industry to post positive growth amid the crisis, in 2021, the FMCG industry is looking forward to carry on with the momentum and sustained revival across categories in rural and urban markets of India.

Home loan ticket size up to over Rs 26 lakh in 2020 on incentives

MUMBAI: The average home loan ticket size increased to over Rs 26 lakh in 2020 despite the pandemic as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), fall in interest rates as well as lower registration costs in some circles evinced customers' interest in buying properties, according to a study by BankBazaar.com. Due to the pandemic, people's priorities have changed and they are evaluating their spends and investments very closely, the fintech player said in its third edition of 'BankBazaar MoneyMood 2021' report. The online marketplace for financial products, which also provides free credit scores, said even as 2020 had very lean months during the lockdown, gradual economic revival and safe access to credit through digital KYC (Know Your Customer) pushed credit uptake to about 80 per cent of pre-COVID levels.

CITY BIZ BUZZ

Pradhan inaugurates New Lube Blending Plant



KOLKATA: Dharmendra Pradhan, Honourable Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Steel inaugurated New Lube Blending Plant at Kolkata on Sunday, in the presence of IndianOil Chairman Shrikant Madhav Vaidya. This new plant is a step towards making India self-reliant in its lubricant requirement. With an investment of Rs 142 crore, this project generated a total of 72000 man-days. Not only will this project meet the requirements of the ever-changing industrial domain, but will also ensure quality products created with the help of its NABL accredited laboratory and a top-notch product evaluation techniques. While giving his address, minister Pradhan said that this inauguration of the Lube Blending plant in Kolkata is another chapter in the history of Eastern India's development under the vision of Honourable PM Narendra Modi. "Kolkata's Lube blending plant will cater to the growing demand for lubricants in the eastern part of the country, the existing plant's capacity up-gradation & augmentation along with the new state of the art blending plant will ensure availability of Servo grade of products to its customers in West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Jharkhand & entire North East.", Pradhan said.

FPIs invest Rs 54,980 cr in Indian equities in Dec so far

Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) pumped in Rs 54,980 crore in Indian markets in December so far amidst availability of excess liquidity in global markets and expectation of fresh stimulus package by various central banks, among others. As per the depositories' data, FPIs invested a net Rs 48,858 crore into equities and Rs 6,122 crore into debt segment between December 1 and 18. This took the total net investment to Rs 54,980 crore during the period under review. In November, the total net investment of FPIs stood at Rs 62,951 crore.

INDIA INC FOR BAD BANK, WANT FPIs TO BUY NPAs

SANJAY JOG  
Mumbai

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has urged the government to consider creation of multiple bad banks to address the adverse impact of non-performing assets accumulated by public sector banks in the recent past, that got further accentuated during the pandemic.

CII, in its recently submitted pre-budget memorandum to the government has recommended that the government consider enabling Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) and Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) to purchase NPAs.

Uday Kotak, President CII, said, "In the aftermath of Covid it is important to find a resolution mechanism through a market determined price discovery. With huge liquidity both globally and domestically multiple bad banks, can address this issue in a transparent manner and get the credit cycle back in action."



A robust market-based mechanism will encourage PSBs to sell their bad loans, without fear of questions being raised later. With cleaner balance sheets, PSBs should be able to raise capital from the market, obviating the need for re-capitalization by government, a bill which the government can ill afford to foot at this point of time. Hitherto the NPAs have largely been sold to Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs). Due to the limited capital that ARCs have, many sales are made not on cash basis but on Security Receipts (SR).

PRICING HIT

RIL to sell new KG-D6 gas at capped price of \$4.06

AGENCIES  
New Delhi

Reliance Industries and its partner BP will get only USD 4.06 a unit for the new gas they have started to produce from the eastern offshore KG-D6 field even though they have discovered a higher rate in an open market auction, sources said.

Reliance-BP in November 2019 auctioned initial gas from the R-Series field at a biddable percentage of Brent crude oil price.

If Brent crude oil stays in the current range of USD 50 to 51 a barrel, the price comes to USD 4.2 to 4.4 per million British thermal unit, two sources at the buyers of R-Series gas said.

Even though operators have pricing freedom, they can't sell gas at a rate higher than the cap the government notifies every six months. The cap for six months to March 31, 2021, is USD 4.06 per mmbtu and so Reliance-BP would get only that amount for the remainder of the current fiscal, they said.

Essar Steel, Adani and GAIL in November 2019 bought the majority of the initial 5 MMSCMD of gas planned to be produced from R-Series in the KG-D6 block by bidding between 8.5 and 8.6 per cent of dated Brent price.

Gold imports fall 40% in Apr-Nov to \$12.3 billion in pandemic hit

MUMBAI: Gold imports, which have a bearing on the current account deficit, fell 40 per cent to USD 12.3 billion during April-November due to fall in demand in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to data from the commerce ministry.

Imports of the yellow metal stood at USD 20.6 billion in the corresponding period of 2019-20. The imports, however, recorded a year-on-year growth of 2.65 per cent in November to USD 3 billion.

Silver imports during April-November 2020 too dipped 65.7 per cent to about USD 752 million.

The decline in gold and silver imports has helped in narrowing the country's trade deficit, difference between imports and exports, to USD 42 billion during April-November 2020-21 as against USD 113.42 billion in the year-ago period. India is the largest importer of gold, which mainly caters to demand of jewellery industry. In volume terms, the country imports 800-900 tonne of gold annually. Gems and jewellery exports declined by 44 per cent to USD 14.30 billion during the first eight months of the current fiscal.

on Friday for Christmas.

"Going ahead, the markets may continue with its positive bias on the back of abundant liquidity, effective vaccine rollout and increasing prospects of a US financial stimulus. However, intermittent profit-booking cannot be ruled out as the Christmas vacation starts from this week," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd. Markets could also be volatile given monthly futures and options (F&O) expi-



STOCKS THIS WEEK

piry, he added.

AI sale unlikely to conclude this year

MUMBAI: Privatisation of Air India may spill into next fiscal year as the divestment process is unlikely to conclude in the remaining a little over three months of 2020-21, an official said.

Salt-to-software conglomerate Tata Group and US-based fund Interopus Inc were among "multiple" entities that put in preliminary bids last week for buying loss-making carrier Air India.

A group of over 200 Air India employees also submitted an expression of interest (EoI) for the carrier in partnership with Interopus at the close of the deadline on December 14.

"The Transaction Advisor will inform the qualified bidders by January 6 following which the bidders will be given access to virtual data



room (VDR) of Air India," an official said.

The share purchase pact will be shared with the bidders, following which financial bids would be invited, the official added.

"The transaction will be concluded only in next fiscal as we are expecting bidders to have a lot of queries once they get access to VDR and before they put in their financial bids," the official told PTI.

Jio, Airtel gaining market share; Voda Idea may lose'



Top two telecom companies Jio and Bharti Airtel are consolidating market share moving the industry possibly towards a "near 2-player structure", with Vodafone Idea facing the prospects of losing revenue market share (RMS) as it struggles financially, according to a report by IIFL Securities.

The latest note by IIFL Securities also indicated that tariff increase may not be immediate and instead sees a "high likelihood of price hike in 12-18 months".

"The industry shake-up that ensued post Jio's entry has resulted in a 3+1 market configuration. In our view, the industry is moving to a near 2-player structure - Jio and Bharti - with Vi (Vodafone Idea) likely to lose RMS as it struggles financially," it said.

It expected Voda Idea to witness "accelerated RMS loss" due to the tight timeline on statutory payments and "significant tariff hikes looking at least 12 months away". Bharti, it added, remains well-placed to benefit from improved industry structure, likely expansion in 'share of wallet' and falling spectrum and equipment capex intensity. "We expect Bharti's revenue market share (RMS) in India mobile to rise, from 33 per cent in 2QFY21 to 37 per cent. India non-mobile and Africa businesses remain strong," IIFL Securities said.

Kotak, ARCIL in race for Reliance Home Finance

AGENCIES  
Mumbai

Six suitors, including Kotak Special Situations Fund (KSSF) and Asset Reconstruction Company (India) Limited (ARCIL), have submitted bids for Reliance Home Finance, part of Anil Ambani-promoted Reliance Group.

Only two bidders submitted compliant and binding bids while four bids are non-binding and not compliant with bid conditions, sources said.

Lenders have decided to further extend the bidding time till January 31, 2021, in order to accommodate the four non-compliant bidders, sources added.

The two compliant bidders have opposed the move by the lenders and have threatened to walk away from alleged non-transparent process, they said.

The two compliant and binding bids are from the US-based Avenue and ARCIL, an asset reconstruction company (ARC), as a joint bid and other from Authum Investment & Infrastructure Limited, listed non-banking finance company (NBFC).

Kotak Special Situations Fund (KSSF) and Asset Care and Reconstruction Enterprise Limited (ACRE) have submitted non-binding bid with several conditions including exclusivity and has also asked for additional time of two months to complete due-diligence, even after the deadline which was extended multiple times, sources said.

The other two ARCs namely, Invent and Alchemist have also submitted conditional bids which are non-compliant with the bids condition and have not paid the mandatory bid bond of Rs 10 crore, they said.

The lenders at their meeting held on December 17, 2020, decided to extend the bid time by two months till January 31, 2021 and invited revised bids from all the bidders, so that non-compliant bidders may be accommodated,



A NEW ABODE

BINDING BIDS — ONLY TWO BIDDERS HAVE SUBMITTED BINDING BIDS

EXTENSION — LENDERS HAVE DECIDED TO EXTEND THE BIDDING TIME TILL JANUARY 31, 2021

sources said.

In August this year, lenders led by Bank of Baroda had invited expressions of interest for the assets of Reliance Home Finance and Reliance Commercial Finance, both arms of Reliance Capital.

The resolution process is being managed by BoB Capital Markets (BoB Caps) and Ernst & Young (EY). Those interested in Reliance Home Finance are allowed to bid for either its retail portfolio, or its entire shareholding and business, or the entire company excluding the wholesale book.

Retail disbursements of Reliance Home Finance had plunged amid tightening liquidity following the collapse of Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS) in 2018, and significant debt repayments during the September 2018 to February 2019 period.

4K sellers surpass Rs 1 cr sales on Amazon

AGENCIES/ New Delhi

Business of small and medium enterprises selling products on Amazon.in witnessed growth amid the pandemic and around 4,152 Indian sellers surpassed sales worth Rs 1 crore in 2020 on Amazon.in, said a report by the e-commerce major.

The report noted that the number of 'crorapati' sellers on the platform grew 29 per cent on a year-on-year



basis.

It said that emerging brands on Amazon Launchpad saw their business grow by 135 per cent YoY. Further, the number of women entrepreneurs under 'Saheli' programme saw their business grow nearly 15x, and weavers and artisans part of 'Karigar' program saw their business grow by 2.8 times.

Amazon.in on Sunday published the 2020 Small and Medium Busi-

ness (SMB) Impact Report. The report marks some of the achievements made by the SMBs working with Amazon and highlights the impact of digitisation on entrepreneurs and businesses across sectors.

Amit Agarwal, Senior VP and Country Head for Amazon India, said: "It's humbling to see over 10 lakh small businesses associated with Amazon in India."

Indian firms raised close to Rs 10 lakh cr in 2020

AGENCIES  
Mumbai

Not-so-expensive credit avenues, benign capital markets and the scramble to build a liquidity war chest to fight pandemic-induced financial woes saw Indian companies mopping up close to Rs 10 lakh crore through equity and debt in 2020. And the bullish trajectory is expected to continue next year too.

With most of the developed markets awash with cheap credit, thanks

to low interest regimes, entities from emerging markets like India tapped the low cost funding options.

Debt route turned more attractive for many Indian corporates for multiple reasons, including that there won't be dilution of promoter equity, according to experts.

"Lockdown and social distancing norms affected a large number of projects. Further, a large number of companies announced fresh capacity expansion and a number of infrastructure projects are likely to start in near

term. Hence, fund mobilisation is expected to be higher in next year," Arjun Yash Mahajan, Head of Institutional Business at Reliance Securities, said.

Out of the cumulative Rs 9.85 lakh crore garnered till December 15 this year, Rs 7.3 lakh crore was mopped up from the debt market, Rs 2.46 lakh crore came from the equity market and around Rs 7,100 crore through the overseas route, data compiled by analytics major Prime Database showed.

Honda to raise vehicle prices from January

AGENCIES  
Mumbai

Japanese auto major Honda plans to increase vehicle prices in India from next month and company dealers have been informed about the decision, industry sources said.

The automaker, which is present in the country through a wholly-owned subsidiary Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL), sells a range of vehicles starting from compact sedan Amaze going up to premium SUV CR-V.

Amaze prices currently start from Rs 6.17 lakh while the entry level CR-V is tagged at Rs 28.71 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi).

A company dealer confirmed the development and said the company is hiking the prices from January due to pressure on input cost and currency impact.

The model wise amount of increase will be intimated by the company to them in early January, the dealer added.

When contacted, a company spokesperson confirmed the move without sharing any details.

Already, various automakers have announced hiking prices of their models from next month. Last week, Renault India said it will increase price of its entire model.

THE DOMESTIC STREET MAY ALSO WITNESS PROFIT-BOOKING AT RECORD LEVELS; MARKETS COULD ALSO BE VOLATILE DURING THE F&O EXPIRY WEEK

Investors to track global events, COVID-19 vaccine progress

AGENCIES  
Mumbai

In the absence of major domestic triggers, equity market would turn its focus on global events mainly US financial stimulus update and development related to COVID-19 vaccination in the holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said.

The domestic market may also witness profit-booking at record levels. Financial markets will remain closed

on Friday for Christmas. "Going ahead, the markets may continue with its positive bias on the back of abundant liquidity, effective vaccine rollout and increasing prospects of a US financial stimulus. However, intermittent profit-booking cannot be ruled out as the Christmas vacation starts from this week," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd. Markets could also be volatile given monthly futures and options (F&O) expi-

continue to monitor development related to COVID-19 vaccination, stimulus update and Brexit trade deal." "Currently, indices seem to be in the hands of all-charged bulls and the mighty bear seem to have given up. However, one cannot rule out mild profit-booking on the way up," said Nirali Shah, Senior Research Analyst, Samco Securities.

Over the past week, the BSE benchmark gained 861.68 points or 1.86 per cent.

"This week, market will be maintaining its focus on global events, as a decision on the US stimulus package and Brexit deal can be expected in the coming days," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services said.

Investment pattern of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), a major driver of Indian equity markets, will also be tracked by investors.

Sumeet Bagadia, Executive Director, Choice Broking said, "Investors will

## Kohli closes gap with top-ranked Smith

DUBAI: India may have suffered an embarrassing defeat in the series-opener against Australia but its Virat Kohli fractionally closed the gap with top-ranked Test batsman Steve Smith, following his 74-run knock in the first innings in Adelaide. Kohli gained two points for his half-century to get to 888 while Smith (911) lost 10 points in the table after scoring 1 and 1 in his two innings.



## INDORE SPORTS



### ITC INDORE OPEN VETERANS TT

#### Ajesh, Kishore, Vipin win titles

INDORE: Ajesh Baphana, Kishore Motwani and Vipin Pandit won titles in their respective categories of the ITC Open Veterans Table Tennis Tournament played here on Sunday. The guest of the prize distribution function was Om Soni, President MP Table Tennis Association. On this occasion, trustees of ITC, Anil Dhupar and Anil Mahajan were present. The programme was conducted by Irfan Ahmed. The final results are: 39+- Ajesh Baphana beat Nilesh Dani 3-1. 49+- Kishore Motwani beat Sanjay Jain 3-1. 59+- Vipin Pandit beat Vibhuti Sharma 3-0.



### BODYBUILDERS SHOWS THEIR SKILLS

#### Sharad, Rahul, Akash, Sachin secure first positions

INDORE: Bodybuilders demonstrated their skills in the midst of chill winds in the district body building event. Based on this competition, selected players will represent Indore district in the state bodybuilding event to be held at Sagar on December 23. The chief guest of the tournament was Atin Tiwari (National Treasurer IBBF). The programme was chaired by Dinesh Paliwal (General Secretary Madhya Pradesh Power Lifting Association). The function was conducted by Sameer Vyas (Secretary District Body Building Association) and Sanjay Karade (Senior Vice President) while vote of thanks was proposed by Shyam Rathore (Head Coach). On Sunday, players of Indore were selected for the state competition at Shri Ram Gymnasium. The selected player will represent Indore district in the Mr MP Competition. Selected players are Sharad Sawang (55kg), Rahul Pahulkar, Golu Sarthia (55-60kg), Akash Gome, Sachin Verma (60-65kg), Hemant Thakur, Ajay Rawat (65-70kg), Pratap Singh Chauhan (70-75kg), Akshay Yadav (75-80kg).

### 2ND MP STATE-LEVEL RANKING TENNIS

#### Manan, Akshat, Shourya, Arnav qualify for main round

INDORE: Manan Lavlani, Akshat Vaishnav, Shourya Khandelwal and Arnav Ghadge qualified for main round of the second MP state-level ranking tennis tournament being played at Indore Tennis Club on Sunday. The tournament will be officially inaugurated by Dr Pawankumar Sharma, Commissioner Indore on Monday 3 pm.

The winners are:

Final round qualifying boys -18-Manan Lawalani, Akshat Vaishnav, Neel Garud, Jayansh Jain, Manya Nayak, Shihar Wadhvani, Abhiyansh Parwal and Sourish Singh. Final qualifying round boys-12-Shourya Khandelwal, Arnav Ghadge, Ganesh Swami, Rudraksh Bajaj, Viraj Singh and Keshavraj Chauhan.



## Jivesh and Anurag shine in CCI's victory

A sensible batting by Jeevesh Shrivastva and devastating bowling by Anurag Sonkar helped CCI register win over Bhaskar Academy by an innings and 27 runs in the two-day MPCA under-18 cricket tournament played at Gymkhana ground on Sunday. Batting first, Bhaskar Academy scored 164 runs. Keshav Vaishnav scored the highest 50 runs. Raj Chauhan and Divraj took 3-3 wickets each. In response, CCI scored 240 runs all out in their first innings. Jeevesh Shrivastva hit a brilliant century and Rahul Chauhan scored 51 runs. Aryan and Tushar took 3 wickets each.



In this way, CCI got a significant lead of 76 runs. Playing second innings, Bhaskar Academy lost all their wickets to score only 49 runs. Anurag Sonkar took 5 wickets with devastating his bowling. After winning the match, CCI entered the semifinal.

### 34th MP State Snooker Championship

## Ketan is champion for record 8th time

INDORE: State's international player Ketan Chawla proved his superiority once again and won the title of Senior men's billiards title for the eighth consecutive time in the 34th MP State Snooker Championship hosted by MP Billiards and Snooker Association. In the final of senior billiards, Ketan Chawla of Indore defeated Ruchir Masand by 532-243 points.



The match, which was played in one and a half hour time format, Ketan showcased skill from the word go. In the semifinal matches played earlier, Ketan defeated Nishant Vinodia by 266-160 points and Ruchir defeated Rohan Sahni 231-154.

Senior men's snooker matches also started from Sunday. In the first round, Rohan Sahni defeated Naman Shukla 2-0, Gaurav Chhabra (Ratlam) 2-0 beat Sarabjit Singh, Pankaj Nandanwar beat 2-0 Hardik Singh (Gwalior) 2-0, Udit Rai (Bhopal) beat Sahil Singh (Gwalior) 2-0, Ruchir Masand beat Arjit Sarraf (Jabalpur) 2-0, Chaitanya Kumar Singh (Bhopal) beat Sanyak Kataria 2-0, Paras Shah beat Anil Kumawat 2-1 and Shubham Karare defeated Nishant Vinodia 2-0 to enter the second round.

### Indore district TT from Dec 24

INDORE: Indore Table Tennis Association (IDTTTA) is organizing district open table tennis tournament at Abhay Khel Prashal from December 24. Matches will be played in men, women, youth, junior, sub-junior, cadet boys and girls categories. Prashant Vyas and Neelesh Pardeshi have been appointed chief umpire followed by Gagan Chandrawat his deputy. Interested paddlers can contact Dhram Banjara and Mohit Vatre for their registration up to December 22, said Neelesh Vaid.

## India win nine medals at Cologne Boxing WC



NEW DELHI: Indian boxers won three gold medals, besides two silver and four bronze, at the recently concluded Cologne Boxing World Cup held in Koln, Germany. "Our Indian boys and girls have won nine medals including three gold, two silver and four bronze medals at the prestigious Cologne Boxing World Cup," Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju shared the news on his official Twitter handle on Sunday.

Ace Indian pugilists Amit Panghal (flyweight 52kg), Manisha Moun (57 kg) and Simranjit Kaur (60kg) clinched gold medals in their respective weight categories. Sakshi Choudhary (57 kg), two-time AIBA Women's Youth World Champion and heavy weight boxer Satish Kumar (+91kg) won the silver medals. Sonia Lather (57kg), Pooja Rani (75kg) Gaurav Solanki (57kg) and Mohamed Hussamudin (57kg) bagged bronze medals.

### Alvarez dominates Smith to capture super-middleweight titles



SAN ANTONIO: Canelo Alvarez unanimously outpointed previously undefeated Callum Smith to win the WBA & Ring super-middleweight championships and vacant WBC super-middleweight title at the Alamodome. Alvarez (54-1-2, 36 KOs) dominated his only bout this year, repeatedly hitting Smith (27-1, 19 KOs) with straight rights and right hooks to the head over 12 rounds. Two judges scored the bout 119-109 and the third had it 117-111.

At 5-foot-8, Alvarez was the aggressor against the 6-foot-3 Smith.

Alvarez previously knocked out Callum's older brother, Liam, on Sept. 17, 2106, at AT&T Stadium in Arlington. Many speculated Callum wanted revenge for the ninth-round knockout, but Alvarez dominated the younger Smith as well.

Alvarez and Smith were fighting for the first time this year due to the restrictions brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic and the ring rust was evident in the first five rounds. It took nearly a minute before the first punch of the bout was thrown, a lunging right by Alvarez.

### WHERE ARE THEY

## India's 2017 Under-17 World Cup players

AGENCIES  
New Delhi

Everyone had high hopes from the players who formed the Indian team that competed at the 2017 Under-17 Football World Cup in India and predicted that many of those would go on to form a formidable senior national team sooner than later.

But, in over three years since the World Cup, only one of the 21 players — captain Amarjit Singh Kiyam — has broken into the national team while the others have only been playing in the national and state-level leagues in India and abroad. Kiyam has appeared for India in five matches — the first one was in June last year — while the other 20 have not progressed beyond I-League and India Super League (ISL).

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) tried to make a pathway for these under-17 footballers. With an aim to keep the team members together and provide them a platform after the World Cup, it formed a special developmental team called the Indian Arrows. This team competed in the



I-League with varying degrees of success.

Winger Komal Thatal was the only player who had at the time opted to move on to the ISL then and signed a contract with ATK Football Club. At the under-17 World Cup, the Luis Norton de Mattos-coached Indian team played three matches and lost all, 0-3 to the USA, 1-2 to Colombia, and 0-4 to Ghana, and crashed out of the tournament.

Midfielder Jeakson Singh was the history maker as he

scored India's solitary goal in the tournament and thus became the first from the country to score in a FIFA World Cup at any level. Singh currently plays for Kerala Blasters along with KP Rahul, who played as a winger in the World Cup team.

So, why have the members of the 2017 Under-17 not progressed as expected three years ago?

"The goalkeepers were very good during our trip in Europe. Like all the other

players, they wanted to learn, which is very important. Moirangthem played all three matches in the World Cup and was brilliant but the other goalkeepers were prepared to play too," said Martins. This is the story of those players who had caught the eye at the 2017 World Cup. The others, who all are 19-20 years old, are challenging for positions at which foreigners are currently playing for clubs, either in ISL or abroad.

## Playing ice hockey with towering dreams in Himalayas

SHIMLA

Taking cue from the Asia's oldest British-era skating clay surface rink in this Himachal Pradesh hill town, authorities in state's remote Spiti Valley had a natural coating of full-sized thick ice for the first time in the newly developed open-air hockey rink with the stunning backdrop of the Himalayas, thanks to the freezing cold.

The locals, mostly youngsters, are eagerly awaiting not to miss an opportunity in getting their skates on the ice in the rink set up in Kaza town, some 350 km from here, that will be thrown open for the public by this week.



"In Spiti, every child dreams of playing ice hockey. To hone their inherent talent, we have decided to develop a rink of 60 metre by 30 metre size by giving a natural coating of thick layers of ice," District Youth Services and Sports Officer Ji-

wan Negi said. The rink lies at an altitude of 3,720 metres with temperatures plummet below minus 20 degrees Celsius in winter. Local authorities have engaged the Ice Hockey Association of India to promote the highest altitude game in the world.

## Chirmako hopes to one day play alongside his idol Akashdeep

BENGALURU: Indian junior men's hockey team's forward Sudeep Chirmako has stated that he idolises Akashdeep Singh and hopes to play alongside the experienced forward one day. "I think the area I play in on the field is very similar to what Akashdeep Singh does for the senior team. He's always very quick with the ball, and his positioning and off-the-ball runs are always very useful for the team, so I always keep a close eye on him, and I hope to one day be able to play alongside him for the Indian team," said Chirmako, who is currently at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) facility.

A winner of the silver medal at the 3rd Youth Olympic Games held in Argentina in 2018, Chirmako is a dynamic forward who has a knack for goals, and is looking forward to making his parents proud.

"It is a wonderful phase in my life and in my young career. I've had the honour and privilege to have represented my country at the highest level with the junior team, and want to keep working hard to one day be able to play for the



## Ronaldo inspires Juventus to crush Parma

ROME

Juventus temporarily cut its gap with leader AC Milan to one point in the ongoing Serie A as it enjoyed a 4-0 away victory to Parma, powered by a brace from Cristiano Ronaldo. With Paulo Dybala injured, Andrea Pirlo on Saturday evening opted for Ronaldo to partner Alvaro Morata upfront, while Rodrigo Bentancur pulled the strings in the midfield, reports Xinhua news agency.

The Bianconeri was utterly dominant and broke the deadlock in the 23rd minute as Morata's dummy let Alex Sandro's pass roll for Dejan Kulusevski to finish with a daisy-cutter. Juve made it 2-0 two minutes later as Morata floated a cross from the left, Ronaldo hung



in the air for an age to steer his header into the net.

Ronaldo completed his brace right after the break as the Portuguese collected a pass from Morata, taking a few touches to finish with

a left-footed strike. Morata also managed to get on the scoresheet in the 85th minute as the Spaniard just stood still to meet Bentancur's long pass, finding the net with a twisting header.



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# CHANGE OF GLOVES FOR BOXING DAY TEST

## Gill, Rahul and Pant get ready to roll into the team; Saha and Shaw set to be axed

KUSHAN SARKAR  
New Delhi

Veteran wicketkeeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha and young opener Prithvi Shaw are unlikely to be picked for the remaining Tests in Australia as India look to ring in wholesale changes after the batting debacle in Adelaide.

It is understood that young Shubman Gill, after a couple of impressive knocks in the warm-up games, is seen as a replacement of Shaw as senior star Rohit Sharma will not be available until the third Test match in Sydney.

With Saha's batting not giving any confidence to the dressing room, the team management will certainly look at Pant, who had scored a hundred Down Under during his previous tour, as keeping might not be a factor on pitches with firm and even bounce.

KL Rahul and Mohammed Siraj are the two others in fray to enter the playing XI and those would be forced changes due to the absence of skipper Virat Kohli and senior pacer, Mohammed Shami,

### Siraj in the mix

He has endured a tragedy during the ongoing tour, having lost his father but young Mohammed Siraj's six five-wicket hauls for India is finally going to be rewarded as he gets ready to make his Test debut at MCG in place of Shami. The choice was between him and Navdeep Saini, but Siraj's better show during the two practice games has tilted the scales in his favour.

who is out with a fractured wrist.

The 36-year-old Saha could well be running the last lap of his international career as young and feisty Pant is set to be preferred by the team management over the next three Test matches and if he does well, against England, too.

As far as Saha is concerned, his inept batting in SENA countries hasn't gone unnoticed (he doesn't have a half-century there), but former chairman of selectors MSK Prasad said that during his



India's top bowler Jasprit Bumrah will miss his bowling partner Mohammed Shami in the remaining three Test matches of the series Down Under — AFP

regime, certain plans were chalked out on the Saha-Pant conundrum.

"Look, our committee was clear that Rishabh Pant will be our first choice keeper in places like England and Australia. Only when we are

looking at matches in India where you don't need batting after number six most times, you can have a specialist keeper," Prasad told PTI on Sunday.

"I believe Rishabh has worked on his fitness issues

during the past month and looked in good touch during the pink ball practice game. So I would agree with the team management if they give Rishabh a go for the next three Tests," Prasad said. Shaw might have to go back

### Bringing Vihari up the order

The Indian team management could mull bringing Hanuma Vihari up the order in the absence of Virat Kohli and Prasad, who has seen Vihari from close quarters, feels it won't be a bad idea to play him at No. 5. "Vihari has a very sound technique and temperament and he can serve this Test team for a long time. In absence of Virat, it would be a great opportunity for him and KL (Rahul) to stand up and be counted," Prasad said.

"I would prefer Vihari batting at No. 4 or 5 in the next few Tests and face the challenge. He is a gutsy boy and I have confidence that he will do well if given the challenge. KL can be a good No. 6 in this series," the former chairman of selectors said.

IN



Rohit Sharma



Mohammed Siraj



KL Rahul



Rishabh Pant

OUT



Virat Kohli



Mohammed Shami



Prithvi Shaw



Wriddhiman Saha

## 'India could suffer a whitewash'

ADELAIDE: India could suffer a whitewash in their ongoing Test series against Australia after their stunning eight-wicket defeat in the first Test in Adelaide, according to former Australia captain Ricky Ponting.

The second Test starts on December 26 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. "There could be a good chance (of a sweep). Let's hope we do get a result in Melbourne and if we do, I think India are going to find it really hard to bounce back and win a game,"

Ponting told cricket.com.au. India were blown away for 36 runs in the second innings — their lowest ever total in Test cricket and the joint fourth lowest score in 2,396 Test matches played over 143 years. They eventually lost the match by eight wickets and Ponting said that with captain Virat Kohli also not available for the rest of the series, there is no one to pick up the visitors' spirits after that bruising defeat. "With Kohli not being there as well there's almost no-one to pick them

back up after a loss like that. They've got to make a couple of changes. Rishabh Pant has to be in that middle order. With Kohli not being there they've got to strengthen their batting, he's got to come in," Ponting said. "I am sure but there's one thing to make selection changes there's another to lift the spirits back up again and make sure they're mentally right for the next challenge because the Australians are not going to go away now," he added.

to the drawing board: As far as Shaw is concerned, everything that can go wrong has gone for the 21-year-old Mumbai; whose technique, temperament and overall attitude towards the game has raised some serious question marks in the corridors of Indian cricket.

If sources in the know of things are to be believed, despite his slump in form, Shaw was preferred over an in-form Gill because he had played in the last series in New Zealand and needed to be given at least one more game. Since he has wasted his chances, it's time for him to cool his heels before going back to the drawing board.



## SCG Test on track for now, no changes in schedule: CA

### Australian board claims to have contingency plans in place to deal with scary Covid-19

FP NEWS SERVICE  
Melbourne

Cricket Australia on Sunday confirmed that the Sydney Test match between India and Australia remains on track for now despite a fresh COVID-19 cluster in Sydney.

The third Test between India and Australia is slated to be played at Sydney from January 7 while the last Test of the series will go ahead at Brisbane from January 15.

There were reports that Cricket Australia was mulling over switching the third and fourth Test venues. As per a report in Sydney

Morning Herald, CA was looking to go ahead with the third Test in Brisbane and the fourth Test at Sydney. "The third Test is more than two-and-a-half weeks away, which provides us with time to assess the evolving public health situation on the northern beaches of Sydney. We have made no changes to our schedule and our preference remains to play the match at the Sydney Cricket Ground," Nick Hockley, Cricket Australia's Interim CEO said in an official statement. "Cricket Australia has developed a solid track record of delivery throughout this most chal-

**The third Test between India and Australia is slated to be played at Sydney from January 7 while the last Test of the series will go ahead at Brisbane from January 15**

lenging of summers and will continue to make appropriate and proportionate decisions in consultation with our biosecurity team, governments, State & Territory Associations, the Australian Cricketers' Association, our partners and venues," he added.

Hockley also clarified that Cricket Australia has its contingency plans in place and

the body is prepared to deal with any kind of situation. "CA has prepared for the possibility of COVID-19 hotspots and state border closures over the course of the summer and the protocols that we have put in place have been effective in ensuring the safety and success of the men's and women's domestic and international programmes to date," said Hock-

ley. "It was less than a month ago that South Australians were contending with an outbreak of the virus in Adelaide and we have just completed a brilliant first Vodafone Test at the Adelaide Oval. We faced similar issues in relation to the Melbourne Cricket Ground playing host to the Boxing Day Test and we are now less than a week away from welcoming back Victorian crowds after a difficult year for the state. We will continue to work closely with all relevant parties to make the right decisions in the appropriate timeframes," he added.

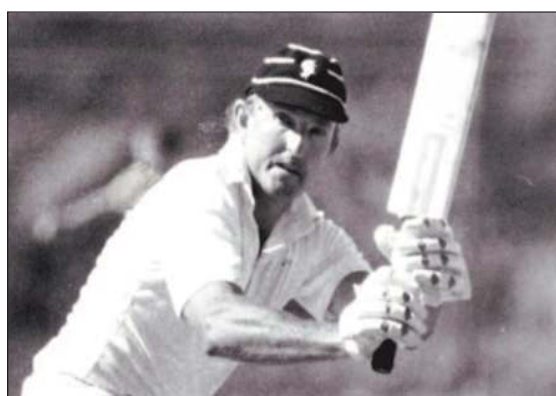


Sydney Cricket Ground

### WHAT'S ON

00.15 Football Extra; SONY TEN 2  
01.15: Lazio vs Napoli; SONY TEN 2

## THIS DAY, THAT YEAR



**1977:** A Packer-decimated Australian side completed a two-wicket win over India in the second Test, in Perth, thanks largely to 105 in three hours from home-town legspinner Tony Mann. He had been wretched with the ball (he took 0 for 112 off his 19 overs), but became the second nightwatchman to score a Test hundred as Australia, set 339 to win, squeezed home with 22 balls to spare. Mann only played four Tests, all in this series, taking four wickets at 79 and scoring 189 runs at 23.62.

### Gill roars to victory in INRC-Round 2

**ITANAGAR:** Three-time APRC champion Gaurav Gill proved to be the king of the mountains once again, winning Round 2 of the Champions Yacht Club FMSCI Indian National Rally Championship, the Rally of Arunachal, here on Sunday evening. Chaperoned by his trusted navigator Must Sheriff, the Arjuna Awardee ruled each of the eight Special Stages over the weekend, to make it a grand double for JK Tyre supported drivers in two back-to-back rounds.

### Para cyclists look for strong finish in Infinity Ride

**HYDERABAD:** Having covered more than 2500km distance so far on their bicycles with a mission to raise awareness about para sports, India's first international medal winning para cyclist Aditya Mehta alongside members of country's para cycling team and other amateur cyclists began the final leg of Infinity Ride 2020 here in Hyderabad on Sunday. Riding from Kashmir to Kanyakumari as part of sixth edition of Infinity Ride, a branch of Aditya Mehta Foundation, aims to create awareness about para sports.

### Frozen lakes pave way for ice hockey in Leh

**LEH:** The sub-zero temperature in Ladakh has frozen water bodies creating ice fields suitable for ice hockey and skating for young athletes. The frozen lakes pave the way for people, especially young athletes, to undertake activities like ice skating and play ice hockey. National player Rinchen Dolma said that while they all are happy to get back to practising ice hockey, they are being cautious and maintaining social distancing in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. "We have come here to practise. We wait for these two months every year and it is an advantage that we get to practice on this natural ice. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, we are practising while maintaining social distancing. But we are happy that the winter season has arrived and we can now practise," Dolma told ANI.

## SPORTS CAFE



### Riju lauds performance of Indian boxers at World Cup

**NEW DELHI:** Indian boxers won three gold medals, besides two silver and four bronze, at the recently concluded Cologne Boxing World Cup held in Köln, Germany. "Our Indian boys and girls have won nine medals including three gold, two silver and four bronze medals at the prestigious Cologne Boxing World Cup," Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijju shared the news on his official Twitter handle on Sunday. "India has achieved tremendous progress in boxing. My hearty congratulations to our star boxers!" he added. Ace Indian pugilists Amit Panghal (flyweight 52kg), Manisha Moun (57 kg) and Simranjit Kaur (60kg) clinched gold medals in their respective weight categories. Sakshi Choudhary (57 kg), two-time AIBA Women's Youth World Champion and heavy weight boxer Satish Kumar (+91kg) won the silver medals.

### Nihal Sarin, Iniyan advance to U-18 QF

**CHENNAI:** India's Grandmasters Nihal Sarin and P Iniyan advanced to the quarterfinals of the under-18 open category in the FIDE Online World Cadets and Youth Rapid Championships on Sunday. As many as 12 out of the 16 Indian players in the fray moved to the quarter-finals stage in various categories. The highly-rated Sarin posted a comfortable 2-0 win over Johann Emil Schnabel of South Africa.

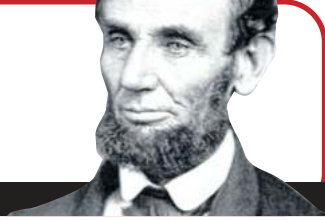
### ISL: Mumbai inflict defeat on Hyderabad

**VASCO:** Vignesh Dakshinamurthy pulled off a stunning goal to set up Mumbai City FC's 2-0 win over Hyderabad FC in an Indian Super League match here on Sunday. In a match where both sides struggle to create clear-cut chances, Vignesh's acrobatic 38th-minute strike stood out as a genuine quality moment. Adam Le Fondre put Sergio Lobera's men further ahead in the 59th minute as Hyderabad tasted their first defeat of the season.

### Kohli's mentor appointed coach of Delhi

**NEW DELHI:** India captain Virat Kohli's childhood mentor Raj Kumar Sharma was on Sunday named the head coach of the Delhi Ranji team for the upcoming 2020-21 domestic season. A former Delhi first-class player, 55-year-old Sharma was the bowling coach of the team last season, when KP Bhaskar was the head coach. Sharma is a Dronacharya awardee and he has also coached ICC Associate team Malta. He has also guided Delhi to CK Nayudu Trophy (Under-23) title. Former India batsman Gursharan Singh was named the assistant coach. Former opener Ashu Dani was named the chairperson of the selection committee by the Delhi & District Cricket Association (DDCA).

“ I destroy my enemies when I make them my friends



■ ABRAHAM LINCOLN

## New virulent strain of coronavirus

# Spike in C-cases sends UK into a tizzy

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has announced a new Tier Four of coronavirus restrictions for London and other parts of England to combat an alarming surge in new coronavirus cases linked to a new virulent strain. Johnson said at a virtual press conference at Downing Street on Saturday evening that from Sunday morning, London, the South East and East of England will move into Tier Four restrictions, which will be broadly similar to national restrictions introduced in England in November, he said. Under the new tougher measures, residents in those areas must stay at home, with limited exemptions. People are also



urged to work from home when they can, and should not enter or leave tier four areas. He said the previous plan to allow up to three households to meet during five days around Christmas will have to be scrapped. "We cannot continue with

Christmas as planned," Johnson said. The Prime Minister said the latest infections in parts of England are "being driven by the new variant of the virus". "New variant may be up to 70 per cent more transmissible," he said

# Patal Lok sweeps Filmfare Awards

Anushka Sharma's 'Patal Lok' swept the Filmfare Awards by winning all the major accolades at the event, including the Best Series Award, on Saturday night. While the lead actor of the drama series Jaideep Ahlawat won the Best Male Award, respectively, the directors of the series Avinash Arun & Prosit Roy were awarded Best Director Award. Both the supporting role awards went to 'Gully Boy' with Amruta Subhash bagging it in the female category and Siddhant Chaturvedi getting it in the male category.



# Ice hockey in Ladakh

The sub-zero temperature in Ladakh has frozen water bodies creating ice fields suitable for ice hockey and skating. The frozen lakes pave the way for people, especially young athletes, to undertake activities like ice skating and play ice hockey. National player Rinchen Dolma said that while they all are happy to get back to practising ice hockey, they are being cautious in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. "We wait for these two months every year to practice on this natural ice," he said.



# 'Natural patriot'

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday hailed National poet and freedom fighter Subramanya Bharathi, saying patriotism came naturally to him and one could understand through his verses, his love for the country and Tamil language. The poet, through his songs, placed the country's interests first rather than his personal commitments, she said in her valedictory address of the International Bharathi Festival to mark the 138th birth anniversary of the poet, hailed as 'Mahakavi'.

## AT SINGHU BORDER

# BIKES VROOM IN SUPPORT OF GROWERS

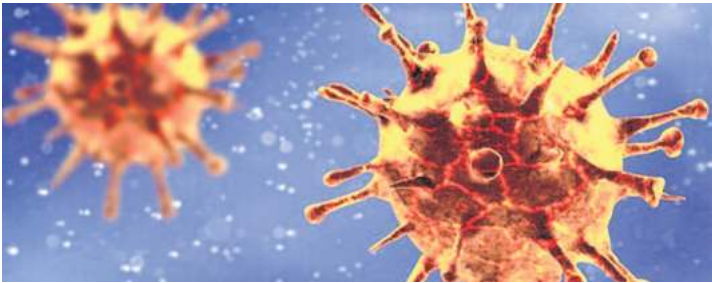
While the farmers' agitation against the three new agricultural laws is about to complete a month, three biker groups in order to express their solidarity with the protesting farmers visited the Singhu border on Sunday. Three biker groups - Punjab Enfield Generation (PEG), Muchchad Gang and Low Beam Riders - came donning their riding gears on their Royal Enfield, Harley



Davidson and other cruiser bikes to extend their support to the farmers. Gurpreet Singh, who is a skating coach in Ludhiana and a member of Punjab Enfield Generation (PEG), said the purpose to come in the protest was to extend solidarity to the farmers and do Sewa. "It is our duty to help our farmers. We have come in different groups and are providing medicines, blankets etc," he added.

## NEW MUTANT OF CORONAVIRUS

# Health ministry's urgent meeting today



The Union Health Ministry is going to conduct an urgent high-level meeting on Monday to discuss the new Coronavirus strain found in the United Kingdom. A senior government official said that the Joint Monitoring Group (JGM) has decided to hold a meeting to discuss the new Covid strain found in the United Kingdom. Representatives of the World Health Organisation are likely to attend the meeting, said the official. "As far as India is concerned, there is no major change or mutation in the Covid strain yet. We are studying strains of coronavirus very closely in our country. But, yes, we also keep a track of whatever is happening in the world related to the variants of COVID-19 strain," said the official. The Joint Monitoring Group (JMG) chaired by the Director General of Health Services (DGHS) will discuss the issue of the mutated variant of the coronavirus reported from the UK. WHO's India representative Dr Roderico H Ofrin, who is also a member of the JMG, is likely to participate in the meeting.

## Minister performs Kanyadaan

Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh and his wife on Sunday performed the "Kanyadaan" ritual of a 23-year-old speech and hearing impaired woman, who is an orphan, during her marriage with a 27-year-old man. Nagpur district collector Ravindra Thakre and his wife performed the father's duty for the groom, who is also an orphan with speech and hearing disabilities. The marriage was held at Nagpur, with many political leaders and government officials in attendance.



an orphan, during her marriage with a 27-year-old man. Nagpur district collector Ravindra Thakre and his wife performed the father's duty for the groom, who is

also an orphan with speech and hearing disabilities. The marriage was held at Nagpur, with many political leaders and government officials in attendance.

## 62-square-metre painting



A student of Banaras Hindu University has made it to the Guinness World Records by creating the world's largest painting using natural colours, a senior official said here on Sunday. Ballia District Magistrate Shrihari Pratap Shahi said, "Neha Singh has made the largest painting in the world using natural colours, measuring 62.72 sq metres. Neha has painted a 'moksh ka vriksh' (tree of salvation), for which her name has been included in the Guinness World Records." Neha is a student of Vedic Science at BHU.

## ONE FOR INSPIRATION

# THE OAK AND THE REEDS

A Giant Oak stood near a brook in which grew some slender Reeds. When the windblew, the great Oak stood proudly upright with its hundred arms uplifted to the sky. But the Reeds bowed low in the wind and sang a sad and mournful song. "You have reason to complain," said the Oak. "The slightest breeze that ruffles the surface of the water makes you bow your heads, while I, the mighty Oak, stand upright and firm before the howling tempest." "Do not worry about us," replied the Reeds. "The winds do not harm us. We bow before them and so we do not break. You, in all your pride and strength, have so far resisted their blows. But the end is coming." As the Reeds spoke a great



hurricane rushed out of the north. The Oak stood proudly and fought against the storm, while the yielding Reeds bowed low. The wind redoubled in fury, and all at once the great tree fell, torn up by the roots, and lay among the pitying Reeds.

## 'Amazing' para-cyclists

Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Sunday appreciated the para-cyclists who are undertaking the 'Infinity Ride 2020' from Kashmir to Kanyakumari as inspirational. "I am amazed at the spirit of enthusiasm and bravery being shown by them. This is truly inspirational," she said. The ride, a brainchild of the Aditya Mehta Foundation and supported by BSF took off from Srinagar on November 19.



## Poor health facilities in villages

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday expressed concern over the lack of modern health care facilities in most villages and urged the private sector to join hands with the government in taking the latest diagnostic and treatment facilities to rural areas. Naidu also flagged the issue of doctor-patient ratio in India, which, he said, was lower than the World Health Organisation (WHO) norm of one doctor for 1,000 people. The issue needs to be addressed urgently and the private sector must complement the efforts of the government, he said.



## Grid goes from Team screens



Microsoft has announced that it has added the 'Together Mode' option that debuted in Teams on Skype. 'Together Mode' is a viewing option that makes it appear as if all meeting participants are located in the same physically shared space instead of via a traditional grid view. As per the reports, Microsoft officials have said they believe 'Together Mode' will help alleviate virtual-meeting fatigue and make meetings feel more real.



## Dealing with water scarcity

# Govt to assess depth of Himalayan glaciers

As global warming affects the Himalayas, the Ministry of Earth Sciences is planning to measure the depth of glaciers in the region to assess their volume and gauge the water available in them, officials said on Sunday. The project will start next summer, sometime in June-July, said, M Rajeevan, the ministry's secretary. National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) will execute the project. The Himalayan glaciers are a major source of water for rivers originating from there. The Himalayan rivers are also a lifeline for the Indo-Gangetic plains, home to several million people. The NCPOR director said while the area of the glaciers is already known with the help of satellites, what needs to be known is the volume. "The purpose of studying the depth of the glaciers is to understand the volume. This will also help us understand the availability of water and whether the glaciers are increasing or shrinking," the director added.

## E-courts win digital award



The e-courts services project of the Department of Justice has won the Digital India Award 2020, officials said on Sunday. The project has won the award in the category of "Excellence in Digital Governance"

of a central ministry or department. The award ceremony is likely to take place on December 30. The e-courts project was conceptualised on the basis of the National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary-2005.

## Freedom fighter, 105, dead



Hariram Dhaka, a 105-year-old freedom fighter from Churu district in Rajasthan, passed away and his mortal remains were cremated with state honours at his native village on Sunday. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his predecessor Vasundhara Raje expressed their condolences

on Dhaka's demise. Dhaka died on Saturday, his grandson Baldev Dhaka said. His eldest son Bhanwarlal Dhaka performed the last rites at their native village Naurangsar.

### QUICK NEWS

#### Shirdi drawing crowds

The number of people coming to the renowned Sai Baba Temple in Shirdi in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district is gradually rising after it was opened for devotees amid the coronavirus outbreak and, therefore, prior booking for darshan was necessary. While initially, some 6,000 devotees were coming per day, the number has now risen to almost 15,000, with crowds being sizable during public holidays, Thursdays and weekends.

#### Nepal Parl dissolved

Nepal's embattled Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli on Sunday sprang a surprise on his rivals and got the President to dissolve Parliament, a controversial move amidst a prolonged tussle for power between him and former premier Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" within the ruling dispensation. President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved Parliament's House of Representatives at Oli's recommendation and announced mid-term general election in April-May.

## Beef crisis in Goa

With the Karnataka Assembly passing an anti-cattle slaughter Bill earlier this month, meat traders and residents of neighbouring Goa are feeling the pinch ahead of Christmas. Concerned about the unavailability of beef during Christmas, the meat traders of the state raised the issue with Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Wednesday. Goa's beef traders have urged Sawant to use his "good offices" with the BJP to prevent Karnataka's law from being notified.



## Delhi shivers at 3 degrees

A cold wave swept Delhi on Sunday as it recorded the coldest morning of the season so far at 3.4 degrees Celsius, the India Meteorological Department said. On Saturday, the minimum temperature at the Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative data for the city, had settled at 3.9 degrees Celsius. "The observatory recorded a minimum of 3.4 degrees Celsius, five notches below normal, on Sunday morning."



## EU nations halt UK flights

Several European Union nations on Sunday banned flights from the UK and Germany fearing that a new strain of coronavirus sweeping across England does not establish a foothold on the continent. The Netherlands banned flights from the U.K. for at least the rest of the year while Belgium issued a flight ban for 24 hours. Austria and Italy said they would halt flights from the UK.



## Greens protest road near Taj

Taj city's environmentalists and river activists on Sunday, staged a dharna and organised a big meeting to protest the construction of a four-lane road through the Keetham reserve forest along the Yamuna river, close to the Soor Sarovar, a recently declared Ramsar wetland site. In a resolution, the eco-warriors said the Keetham reserve forest was a critical green buffer between the Taj Mahal and the Mathura Oil Refinery.



## CBSE exam schedule

The schedule of Central Board of Secondary Education exams for Classes 10 and 12 proposed to be held next year through the paper-pen mode is likely to be announced on Tuesday, official sources said. Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, who will interact with teachers across the country on Tuesday, is expected to make the important announcement regarding the examination dates. CBSE officials have clarified that there is no proposal to hold the board exams online.



## Messi equals Pele's record

Barcelona striker Lionel Messi has equalled Pele's record of scoring most goals for a single club across all competitions. Messi achieved the feat against Valencia in La



Liga on Saturday. With the goal in the first half, Messi brought up his 643rd goal for Barcelona.

Pele had scored the same amount of goals for his club Santos and with the strike against Valencia, Messi went on to equal the record. The 33-year-old Messi achieved the feat as he struck a diving header into the goalpost in the first half against Valencia.



## Shami to miss upcoming Tests

Right-arm India fast bowler Mohammed Shami is likely to miss the remaining three Tests of the ongoing four-match series against Australia after scans on his bowling hand revealed hairline fracture, it has been learnt. Shami was hit on the right hand just above the wrist on Saturday by a delivery from Australia pacer Pat Cummins as the India No. 11 tried to take evasive action.

AFTER INDIA'S DRUBBING IN FIRST TEST

## Aussies hoping for 4-0 win

Former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting reckons that the hosts now have a very good chance of defeating India 4-0 in the four-match series now after the visitors suffered an eight-wicket drubbing in the first Test. India stumbled to an eight-wicket loss in the first Test of the four-match series. "There could be a good chance of a sweep. I think India's going to find it really hard to bounce back and win a game," Ponting said.



## Audience cap for Tansen fest

The five-day Tansen Sangeet Samaroh, an annual music festival, will be organised in the presence of a limited audience in Gwalior from December 26, an official said on Sunday. Entry, for the first time, will be on the basis of passes due to the coronavirus outbreak, with attendance capped at 300 to 350 per programme, but all events would be streamed live on social media.

## Funny Boy is out

Acclaimed filmmaker Deepa Mehta's "Funny Boy", which was Canada's submission for best international film at the 93rd Academy Awards, has been rejected by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science (AMPAS) on the grounds that it contains too much English dialogue. Set in Sri Lanka during the 1970s and 1980s, "Funny Boy" explores the sexual awakening of its young protagonist Arjie from a young boy, deemed "funny" by disapproving family, to a teenager enamoured by a male classmate.



## Indian boxers shine

Indian boxers won three gold medals, besides two silver and four bronze, at the recently concluded Cologne Boxing World Cup held in Koln, Germany.



"Our Indian boys and girls have won nine medals including three gold, two silver and four bronze medals at the prestigious Cologne Boxing World Cup," Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju shared the news on his official Twitter handle on Sunday. Ace Indian pugilists Amit Panghal (fly-weight 52kg), Manisha Moun (57 kg) and Simranjit Kaur (60kg) clinched gold medals in their respective weight categories.

**Smart Kids Corner**

**BOARD GAMES**

### Monopoly

THE board of monopoly has various properties along its path. The game involves buying of land, building hotels or houses and finally collecting rent from those who pass through the properties.

The player can choose to buy the place on which he lands. Each time another player lands on his property, he collects rent. If he chooses not to buy the property, the place is auctioned off to the highest bidder.

As the game progresses, it is fun to see who becomes bankrupt

and who becomes rich beyond their wildest dreams. Monopoly is very challenging as it requires one to make strategic decisions.

The game of Monopoly has a rags-to-riches story behind it. When its maker Charles B. Darrow lost his job during the Great Depression, he started making toys and games. He created Monopoly in 1933.

He started playing the game with his wife and friends. Soon his friends wanted their own game sets and demand for the game increased. Darrow approached two game retailers in New York, who placed huge orders.

Later the Parker Brothers offered to purchase the game from Darrow. It became a bestseller and turned Darrow into a millionaire.

**SPORTS BYTE**

**Sunshine Colour**

THE iconic sunshine colour that is synonymous with the Brazilian national football team was adopted after Brazil's shocking defeat at the hands of Uruguay in the 1950 World Cup final. The all-white outfit that the team had played in until that match was suddenly deemed unpatriotic. In came the yellow jersey with green trim and blue shorts with white stripe along with white socks—thus incorporating all the four colours of the Brazilian flag.