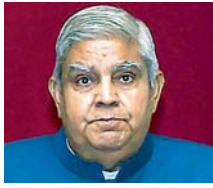




## Tough action

Sarbananda Sonowal says strong action to be taken against those involved in violence



Mamata Banerjee has no option but to abide by Citizenship (Amendment) Act

— Jagdeep Dhankhar, West Bengal Governor

## IN BRIEF

### UN concerned over new law

**Geneva:** The United Nations' human rights body on Friday voiced concern over India's new citizenship law, terming it "fundamentally discriminatory" in nature. The new citizenship law seeks to provide citizenship to non-Muslim persecuted religious minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. "We are concerned that India's new Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 is fundamentally discriminatory in nature," UN human rights spokesman Jeremy Laurence told reporters in Geneva.

### Tathagata Roy: Go to North Korea

**Shillong:** Meghalaya Governor Tathagata Roy on Friday stoked controversy by asking those who do not want "divisive democracy" to go to North Korea. "A democracy is NECESSARILY DIVISIVE. If you do not want it go to North Korea," (sic) Roy tweeted during the day. The governor was apparently backing the new Citizenship Act. "Two things should never be lost sight of in the present atmosphere of controversy. 1. The country was once divided in the name of religion. 2. A democracy is NECESSARILY DIVISIVE. If you don't want it go to North Korea, he said. His tweet came hours before protesters reached the entrance of the Raj Bhavan, tried to breach security following which they were lathi-charged and tear-gassed leaving several of them seriously injured.

### JAWANS BEAT UP CHANNEL STAFFERS

**Guwahati, Dec. 13:** Security personnel, including CRPF jawans, had barged into the office of a private TV channel of Assam, *Prag News* and beaten up its staffers with batons during protests against the amended Citizenship Act, a senior official of the channel said.

At around 8 pm on Thursday, security personnel wielding batons and shields opened gates of the office in Ulubari area of the city and beat up some staffers sitting inside the compound, its managing editor Pranoy Bordoloi said.

The channel official said the security forces then entered the office building and beat up more employees at the reception area.

"It was completely unprovoked and there was no reason for them to enter a media office. We demand an unconditional apology from Assam police," Bordoloi said.

An indefinite curfew was imposed in the city from 6.15 pm on Wednesday when protests against the Act turned violent and the Army was put on standby on Thursday.

Army also conducted flag marches in the city.

# Violence abates but protests continue

Aasu says protests only during day time; Singers, film stars observe 10-hour fast; Firing toll rises to 3

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, DEC. 13

The situation in trouble-torn Assam has started limping back to normalcy with protesting groups led by All Assam Students Union (Aasu) deciding to confine their agitation during the day time besides dissociating from those indulging in violence in the name of protest on Friday.

The death toll in Thursday night police firing went up to three on Friday with one more among those critically wounded succumbing to bullet injuries.

With new additional director general of police G.P. Singh taking over the law and order situation and new officers taking over the trouble-torn districts after a major shake up in the state police force, Assam Police have also intensified their patrolling making their presence felt on the ground.

The defence spokesperson in a statement said that a total of eight columns of Asom Rifle have been requisitioned by the administration and all Army and Assam Rifles columns have managed to restore normalcy in their respective areas of deployment.

However, there were reports of violent protests in Upper Assam's Dibrugarh and Tinsukia district. Security sources said that in Dibrugarh protesters set a vehicle on fire while in Khwang area near Moran in Tinsukia district protesters pelted stones on Army vehicles.

Meanwhile, hundreds of people in all age groups including senior citizens on Friday once again defied the curfew peacefully and joined the sit-in-hunger-strike by Aasu at Chandmari field to oppose the Citizenship Act. A large number of people, including artists, singers

and film stars observed the 10-hour fast. The Aasu has also announced that it will file a PIL in Supreme Court challenging the law. "There is no way Assam or Assamese people will accept it. Besides peaceful protests we will continue legal battle against the law," said Aasu chief adviser Sammujjal Bhattacharya.

Besides Aasu, several other organisations in Assam including Assam Public Works, the original petitioner in Supreme Court for updating the National Register of Citizens in Assam, has also decided to file separate PILs in the top court.

The Aasu has also announced that they are suspending all kinds of protests after sunset for a week. "We are going to start a satyagrah movement at sub-division level all over the state from December 16 to 18. Our slogan will be — Either scrap CAB or arrest us," said Aasu leadership which reiterated their commitment for peaceful democratic agitation.

In a related development former AGP minister turned BJP leader and chairman of Assam Petrochemical Ltd Jagdish Bhuyan who was accorded

cabinet rank by the government resigned from the party and all the posts in protest against the Citizenship Act.

Meanwhile, indefinite curfew which was imposed since Wednesday evening was relaxed for six hours in Guwahati and Dibrugarh on Friday morning from 7 am.

However, several parts of the state continue to reel under raging protests over citizenship law, which came into existence after presidential assent on Thursday. As soon as curfew was relaxed, people gathered outside grocery shops and at vegetable

markets in Guwahati to buy essentials. There was also rush to withdraw money from ATMs, buy medicines and procure fuel. Mobile internet and broadband services continued to remain affected.

All together 26 people who have been injured in the police firing on Thursday night have been admitted at Guwahati Medical College hospital.

The GMCH superintendent told reporters that 11 people who were injured have been released after treatment while three among others with grievous injuries are admitted in ICU.



Commuters drive past the remains of gutted vehicles on a road in Guwahati on Friday.

— AFP

## Refineries shut, fuel crisis looms

**New Delhi, Dec. 13:** Assam and other North Eastern states may face fuel supply issues if the agitation against the Citizenship Amendment Act continues for another week, as it has already led to shutdown of refineries, petrochemical plant and oil-producing facilities in the region.

Indian Oil Corp (IOC) has been forced to shut down its Digboi refinery in Assam and is operating Guwahati unit at minimal throughput, while Oil India Ltd (OIL) has been forced to shut LPG production and its crude oil production has dropped by 15-20 per cent.

Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) has seen up to 25 per cent drop in production, and gas supplies to Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Ltd were snapped, leading to shutting down of Assam gas cracker project.

Sources said the agitation has blocked the movement of tankers and trucks, which are mostly used to supply petrol, diesel and LPG from the refineries to different parts of the North-East.

With limited storage capacity, the companies have been forced to curtail production in absence of evacuation of products, they said.

At present, depots and petrol pumps have enough stock but they will run dry if supplies continue to remain interrupted for few more days, they said.

OIL has shut LPG production for the same reason, they said, adding that the agitation has also limited movement of employees and officers

who work at the refineries and oil installations. "No employee could reach OIL facilities on Thursday," a source said, adding that things improved a bit on Friday but attendance was low.

Protesters pulled out employees from IOC refineries in Guwahati and Digboi, forcing curtailment of operations. Sources said if the agitations were to continue for another 7-10 days, the region may face fuel supply issues as the current stocks will exhaust and supply dry up in the absence of fresh replenishment.

Bongaigaon, the third refinery in Assam, was already under maintenance shutdown when the agitation broke out.

Three people were killed in police firing on protestors who have taken to streets since the Parliament approved the Citizenship Amendment Bill.

Sources said OIL suspended LPG production as IOC was not able to lift the cooking fuel due to protests. OIL has also stopped all drilling operations as the staff was not able to reach work.

OIL supplies crude, mainly to IOC's Digboi refinery and BPCL's Numaligarh unit.

## Law, a brazen attack on rights: Ramesh

From Page 1

Mr Saikia has been joined by member of parliament Abdul Khaleque and Rupjyoti Kumar.

In essence the basic contention in all the petitions is that the amended law provides religion-based citizenship was the negation of not only secularism which is a part of the preamble of the constitution but also liberal ethos, equality and justice.

The PIL by the Rihai Manch, Citizens against Hate says that religion-based classification is constitutionally immoral and antithetical to the idea of Republic of India.

Jairam Ramesh in his PIL has contended that the amended citizenship law was a "brazen attack on the core fundamental rights envisaged under the Constitution" (and) facade violates the fundamental guarantees under Article 14 as also Article 21 of the Constitution.

The new dates and venue are expected to be decided by the two sides in the coming weeks.

Whether the summit ultimately takes place in Guwahati is held elsewhere will depend on the situation in Assam.

The cancellation is, however, a blow to the Indian government's efforts to showcase the Northeast as a region that can hold such high-profile meetings.

Japan has been interested in investing in the region and the earlier proposed holding of the summit in Guwahati was to have been a powerful signal to this end.

## SHAH'S VISIT TO N-E STATES CANCELLED

**New Delhi, Dec. 13:** Union home minister Amit Shah has cancelled his visit to two Northeastern states — Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh — scheduled on Sunday and Monday, officials said on Friday. The cancellation comes amidst widespread protests in Assam and Meghalaya against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.

The home minister's visit to the Northeast has been cancelled, a ministry official said, without citing any reason.

Shah was supposed to take part in the passing out parade at the North Eastern Police Academy near Shillong on Sunday.

He has further contended that the citizenship law was enacted "disregarding the Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee dated 07.01.2019 as also the terms of the Accord between AASU, AAGSP and the Central Government on the Foreign National Issue signed on 15.08.1985 (Assam Accord)." The law under chal-

## POST-CLASH, 50 JAMIA STUDENTS DETAINED

New Delhi, Dec. 13: The Jamia Millia Islamia University turned into a battlefield on Friday after police and students, who wanted to march to Parliament House to protest the Citizenship Amendment Act, clashed with each other prompting AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan to reach the spot to take stock of the situation.

Fifty students were detained following a clash between police and students after the protesters were stopped at the varsity gate and prevented from carrying out their march.

The students, who were baton-charged by police personnel, alleged that the police also used tear gas to quell their march.

The students also resorted to stone-pelting. However, the protestors alleged that police resorted to stone-pelting first and students threw stones in response to the attack.

— PTI

## Cong wants Uddhav to reject Citizenship Act

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, DEC. 13

After Congress-led states declared that they would not implement the new citizenship law, the grand old party has started putting pressure on the Shiv Sena to do the same in Maharashtra.

However, legal experts said that state governments cannot refuse to implement the legislation because it was enacted under the Union List of the Constitution.

The Congress ministers in the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government on Friday, Nitin Raut and Balasaheb Thorat, stated that the law would not be implemented in Maharashtra.

While Raut said that his party would not allow the implementation of amended Citizenship Act in Maharashtra, Thorat — who is also the party's state unit chief — said that the Congress was opposed to the Act and it would follow the same policy in the state.

■ WHILE SHIV SENA, supported the Bill in Lok Sabha, it staged a walk out from Rajya Sabha saying the questions raised by the party remained unanswered.

"Congress has condemned the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, which is not in line with the Constitution. In the state also, we will follow the policy of our party's central leadership," Thorat said.

Raut hoped that the Shiv Sena would stick to the stand it had taken in Rajya Sabha and not allow the amended Citizenship Act to be implemented in the state.

The Shiv Sena had supported the Bill in Lok Sabha, but after the Congress threatened to pull out of the state government if the party continued to back it, the Sena registered its protest against the legislation in the Rajya Sabha and staged a walkout. The

Sena had posed certain queries to the government over the bill and demanded answers before supporting the legislation in the Upper House of Parliament.

"They have put forth their view on this in no uncertain terms in the Rajya Sabha. I am sure Uddhavji is firm on the position his party took on the issue in the House," Raut said.

Meanwhile, advocate Sujay Kantawala, said that state governments have no say in the implementation of laws enacted under the Union List.

"Under our federal structure of government, a Central Act, which is passed by Parliament, has to be implemented by the state. The state cannot have separate say in this," said Kantawala. The Union List or List-I is a list of 100 numbered items given in Seventh Schedule in the Constitution of India on which Parliament has exclusive power to legislate.

## ABE CANCELS VISIT TO INDIA AMIDST PROTESTS

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

In a major casualty of the violent protests rocking Assam and some other parts of the Northeast due to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act controversy, India on Friday announced the cancellation of its annual summit with Japan that was to have been held in Guwahati from December 15 to 17.

With this, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to India for the summit was also cancelled.

"With reference to the proposed visit of Japanese PM Shinzo Abe to India, both sides have decided to defer the visit to a mutually convenient date in the near future," the external affairs ministry announced in a terse statement.

The proposed venue was never officially announced but all preparations had been made to hold the summit in Guwahati.

The MEA had, however, officially announced the dates recently for the summit.

The new dates and venue are expected to be decided by the two sides in the coming weeks.

Whether the summit ultimately takes place in Guwahati is held elsewhere will depend on the situation in Assam.

The cancellation is, however, a blow to the Indian government's efforts to showcase the Northeast as a region that can hold such high-profile meetings.

Japan has been interested in investing in the region and the earlier proposed holding of the summit in Guwahati was to have been a powerful signal to this end.

## STRONG VOICE

■ Mamata Banerjee to hold rally against Citizenship Act tomorrow

# Rail stations in Bengal attacked

RAJIB CHOWDHURI & PRANOMY BRAHMACHARI | DC KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE, DEC. 13

The raging flames of violent protests against the National Register of Citizens and Citizenship (Amendment) Act spread from Assam to West Bengal on Friday as demonstrators attacked the crowded Coromandal Express and began arson and looting at railway property in two districts. The day also saw an

elderly man's death in a district at the India-Bangladesh border and an attack on a senior BJP leader.

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, who announced a Trinamul rally against the NRC and Citizenship Act on Sunday, has appealed to people to maintain peace.

At around 3.22 pm, a mob of 250 people came on railway tracks of both Up and Down lines and started pelting on the Chennai-bound Coromandal Express bringing it to a grinding halt at Uluberia in Howrah-

Kharagpur section of the South Eastern Railway after its departure from Howrah station at 2.50pm. The train driver and a railway staff were injured.

Panicked by the sudden attack, the passengers closed the windows and doors of the coaches. The attackers then went on rampage at the Uluberia station and a railway cabin hurling bricks on them. SER spokesperson Sanjoy Ghosh said, "A massive damage has been caused in the attack. ₹4 lakh in cash, eight computers and

unreserved tickets were taken away from the booking office at the station which is totally dark now."

Six trains: Howrah-Digha Kandari Express, Shalimar-LTT Kurla Express, Hyderabad-Howrah East Coast Express, Yesvantpur-Howrah Duronto Express, Shalimar-Adra Rajya Rani Express and Jabalpur-Santragachi Humsafar Express were halted midway and 11 EMU local and passenger trains have been detained and controlled at various stations due to the

violent attack.

In Murshidabad, protesters set some parts of the railway tracks on fire and damaged the signals at Beldanga railway station and vandalised the Beldanga police station and the Block Development Office at around 3.25 pm.

Rejinagar, Murshidabad and Jangipur stations in the district, Krishnanagar in Nadia and Baruipur in South 24 Parganas also witnessed agitations and obstructions, the Eastern Railway said.



### Twitter record

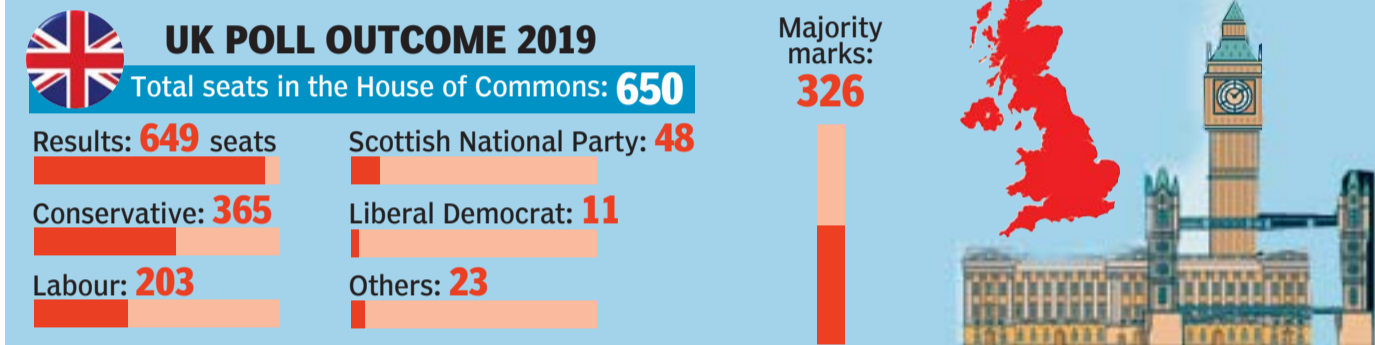
President Trump set a personal record for use of Twitter in a single day since taking office, blasting out more than 120 tweets or retweets in 24 hours

# Brexit path clear after BoJo's landslide

## Tories' thumping win gives Johnson mandate to push EU withdrawal deal through Parliament



Britain's Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader Boris Johnson is greeted by staff as he arrives back at 10 Downing Street in central London on Friday. — AP



The mutual trust between China and the United States is damaged

— Wang Yi

Senior Chinese diplomat

### BRIEF

#### NZ recovers six bodies from island

**Whakatane:** As grieving families sang traditional Maori songs, New Zealand military specialists wearing protective gear landed on a small volcanic island on Friday and recovered six bodies of the 16 people who died in an eruption four days earlier. Wearing hooded protective suits and using breathing gear, the specialists landed by helicopter on White Island and found eight bodies. "We know that reunification won't ease that sense of loss or grief because I don't think anything can. But we felt an enormous duty of care as New Zealanders to make sure that we brought their family members back," PM Jacinda Ardern said.

#### Tebboune elected Algeria President

**Algiers:** Abdelmadjid Tebboune, a former prime minister and loyalist of Algeria's influential army chief, has been elected the country's new president in a vote boycotted by members of a vibrant nationwide protest movement, electoral authorities announced on Friday. Tebboune, 74, received 58.15% of the vote in this oil-rich North African country, according to the head of the National Independent Electoral Authority, Mohamed Charif. Turnout was just 41%. Tebboune served briefly as prime minister in 2017 under ex-President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who was ousted from power in April by a massive pro-democracy protest movement.

#### US discusses Taliban with Pak

**Islamabad:** United States top negotiator for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad on Thursday met Pakistan foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in Islamabad to discuss the peace talks with Afghan Taliban. During the meeting, both the leaders discussed Afghan peace process and regional security. They also deliberated on overall law and order situation, said an official statement. The US envoy was in Pakistan on one-day visit. Pakistan foreign office spokesperson Dr Mohammed Faisal said in a statement that Pakistan truly supports political and peaceful solution to the Afghanistan issue. He said Pakistan had welcomed the resumption of direct talks between the United States and the Afghan Taliban. "We hope the peace process is concluded soon and leads to an intra-Afghan dialogue and reduction of violence in Afghanistan," he added.

#### IMPEACHMENT: HOUSE PANEL TO TAKE VOTE

**Washington, Dec. 14:** The House Judiciary Committee is expected to approve articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump on Friday after abruptly shutting down a 14-hour session late Thursday following a marathon slog through Republican amendments aimed at killing the charges.

Approval of the two charges against the president would send the matter to the full House for a vote expected next week. But the sudden turn late Thursday punctuated the deep split in the Congress, and the nation, over impeaching the Republican president. The committee, made up of some of the most strident lawmakers, clashed all day and into the night as Republicans insisted on lengthy debate over amendments designed to kill the two formal charges against the president but with no hope of winning votes from the majority Democrats. The House committee would resume at 10 a.m. on Friday.

**London, Dec. 14:** Boris Johnson's gamble on early elections paid off as voters gave the UK prime minister a commanding majority to take the country out of the European Union by the end of January, a decisive result after more than three years of stalemate over Brexit.

Johnson's promise to "get Brexit done" and widespread unease with opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn's leadership style and socialist policies combined to give the ruling Conservative Party 365 seats in the House of Commons, its best performance since party icon Margaret Thatcher's last victory in 1987. Corbyn's Labour Party slumped to 203 seats, 59 fewer than it won two years ago, vote totals showed on Friday.

The results offer Johnson a new mandate to push his EU withdrawal agreement through Parliament. Since taking office in July, he had led a minority government and, after the House of Commons stalled his Brexit deal at the end of October, he called the election two years ahead of schedule in hopes of winning a clear majority.

"I will put an end to all that nonsense, and we will get Brexit done on time by the January 31 — no ifs, no buts, no maybes," he said as supporters cheered. Leaving the European Union as one United Kingdom, taking back control of our laws, borders, money, our trade, immigration system, delivering on the democratic mandate of the people." The scale of Johnson's success also marked a stinging defeat for Corbyn, who had promised to lead Labour to victory with the "biggest people-powered campaign our country has ever seen."

Instead, voters rejected his attempt to bridge divisions over Brexit by promising a second referendum on any deal with the EU. The vote also turned away the rest of the party's agenda. — AP

## NRN son-in-law among Indian-origin winners

**London, Dec. 14:** Indian-origin candidates across both the Conservative and Labour parties on Friday registered strong results in the UK's general election, with around a dozen MPs retaining their seats alongside some new faces.

All the Indian-origin MPs from the previous Parliament were successful in clinching their seats, with Gagan Mohindra and Claire Coutinho for the Conservative Party and Navendu Mishra for Labour among the first-timers.

"Time to Get Brexit Done and get on with investing in our schools, hospitals and police to keep our streets safe," said Goan-origin Coutinho, in reference to the central Conservative Party message which clearly resonated with the voters in the polls.

She won the Surrey East Tory-held seat polling 35,624 votes, with an impressive majority of 24,040 for the party. Mohindra also won his



Rishi Sunak

Hertfordshire South West seat decisively with 30,327 votes and a majority of 14,408. The other Tories to return to the Commons

with comfortable wins include Priti Patel, the former UK homes secretary who is likely to remain in Johnson's top team in the new Cabinet as well. "This has been a hard-fought election in a very cold time of the year because we needed a functioning Conservative majority," said Patel, who polled 32,876 votes at her Witham constituency in Essex and held on to a majority of 24,082 for the party. "We are committed to deliver on priorities and getting Brexit done is a priority. The deal is there, we want to move forward," she said.

Her fellow Cabinet colleagues in the previous Johnson-led government also had a good night, with Rishi Sunak, the son-in-law of Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy clinching 36,693 votes, marking a majority for the Tories of 27,210. Alok Sharma, the former international development minister, polled 24,393 votes to win. — PTI

## Boris story: Wizard of words to political star

### MEDIA LENS

**London, Dec. 14:** Boris Johnson's many critics have often dismissed him as a political clown. He's having the last laugh now.

Results on Friday confirmed that Johnson's Conservative Party has won a thumping majority in Britain's general election. It's a triumph for a 55-year-old politician who has been written off more than once. Johnson has built a career playing the rumpel, Latin-spouting clown who doesn't take himself too seriously. He once said he had as much chance of becoming prime minister as of being "reincarnated as an olive."

"He doesn't seem like an ordinary politician," said Jonathan Hopkin, a political scientist at the London School of Economics. "He has managed to create this aura around himself of being a personality, an eccentric, somebody who is funny and can kind of appeal to people beyond the usual party divides."

That bumbling exterior masks a steel core of ambition.

His words often landed him in trouble. Johnson has called



Papua New Guineans cannibals, called the children of single mothers "ignorant, aggressive and illegitimate" and compared Muslim women who wear face-covering veils to "letter boxes."



Confronted with past language, Johnson has claimed he was joking, or accused journalists of distorting his words and raking up long-ago articles. Critics allege that his quips are not gaffes, but deliberate dog-whistles to bigots.

After the referendum, Johnson was made foreign secretary by PM Theresa May, one of the top jobs in government. Two years later he quit in opposition to her Brexit blueprint, then won a Conservative leadership contest in July 2019 when May resigned in defeat after Parliament stymied her plan. To get the top job, Johnson promised Conservatives that he'd rather be "dead in a ditch" than delay Brexit beyond Oct. 31. But his first three months in office were studded with defeats: He suspended Parliament to sideline troublesome lawmakers, but the U.K.

Supreme Court ruled the move illegal. Parliament rejected his attempt to push through this Brexit bill and forced him to ask the EU for more time. The "do or die" date came and went, and Johnson gambled on an election in hopes of securing a majority and a mandate. It was risky, but it paid off. The Conservative campaign was disciplined and focused, hammering home the "Get Brexit done" message. The strategy worked. — AP

## Climate activist changes Twitter bio after US Prez mocks her

# Greta's fitting reply to Trump

**Washington, Dec. 14:** US President Donald Trump slammed *Time* magazine's naming of Greta Thunberg as 2019 Person of the Year, saying the Swedish teen climate activist should 'chill' and go see a movie.

"So ridiculous. Greta must work on her Anger Management problem, then go to a good old fashioned movie with a friend! Chill Greta, Chill!" he tweeted.

Thunberg's reply came

minutes later, when she changed the bio of her Twitter account to: "A teenager working on her anger management problem. Currently chilling and watching a good old fashioned movie with a friend."

The exchange came after *Time* named the 16-year-old, who last year launched the 'Fridays For Future', protest against global warming that has since grown into a worldwide movement and seen

her tipped as a potential Nobel laureate. The backlash on social media was swift, with numerous critics assailing Trump for what they saw as bullying, although some high profile tweeters came to the president's defense.

"There's a reason we don't let people run for president until age 35. Greta is a good example," said Scott Adams, the creator of the Dilbert comic strip.

Thunberg has become known for her fiery speeches to world leaders, and was that day in Madrid, where she accused rich countries of 'misleading' people into thinking they are taking meaningful action against climate change.

Earlier, Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro called Thunberg a "brat" after she expressed concern about the slayings of indigenous Brazilians in the Amazon. — AP

## Protect minority rights: US to India

**Washington, Dec. 14:** The US has urged India to protect the rights of its religious minorities in keeping with its Constitution and democratic values as it continues to monitor the developments in various Indian states regarding the contentious Citizenship Amendment Bill.

"We are closely following developments regarding the Citizenship Amendment Bill. Respect for religious freedom and equal treatment under the law are fundamental principles of our two democracies," a state department spokesperson said, adding, "The US urges India to protect the rights of its religious minorities in keeping with India's Constitution and democratic values."



— PTI

Think 100 times before you take a decision. But once it is taken, stand by it as one man.

Don't let anyone make you believe the length of your skirt is a measure of your character.

# DECCAN Chronicle

14 DECEMBER 2019

## After Jan. 31, Boris' challenges will grow

Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his Conservatives have recorded the largest victory since the days of Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s, while the Labour Party, under Jeremy Corbyn, suffered its worst drubbing in more than 80 years since the 1930s. The redrawing of lines in British politics had to come in such a verdict, but the first thing the result guarantees is that Brexit will happen as the PM declared: "We broke the gridlock, we ended the deadlock, we smashed the roadblock."

Love him or hate him, Boris Johnson can hardly be ignored any more. He has gained immense authority with such a parliamentary majority, more so as his party won seats in traditional Labour strongholds in the industrial north and in the Midlands. A period of serial defeats in Parliament and in the courts for the "Temporary PM" is over, as clarity emerges from the great uncertainties since the Brexit referendum of three years ago.

Mr Johnson's poll message was simple: "Get Brexit done" — and it should happen by January 31, 2020. Such a campaign seemed to resonate with the public bewildered by delays. His critics even slammed him as an "incompetent charlatan" and two former Tory PMs asked voters to stop him as well as Mr Corbyn in an election thought to offer little choice between Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

**The Tories' return should change little for India ties. Prominent legislators of Indian origin, including Mr Johnson's top aide Priti Patel, have all been returned to Parliament**

The Tories' victory under Mr Johnson must be seen against the backdrop of a global trend seen to favour right-wing leaders, invariably led by "strongmen" in the Donald Trump mould, who have used bombast and bluster while lending little credence to facts and detail in portraying themselves as compelling leaders who have the people's ear. Boris Johnson may soon have to deal with separatist tendencies in Scotland and Northern Ireland, who will be dragged out of the EU against their will.

Brexit may have been the tipping point but there is also an underlying xenophobia to be seen in the vote for a party ready to pull out of decades of mutually beneficial association with the European Union on the fear of invasion of migrants. Brexit may happen soon enough under Mr Johnson, but a trade deal with the EU may prove far more elusive and Britain may need to call for Mr Trump to deliver on his trade promises, while also dealing with China.

The Tories' return should change little for India ties. Prominent legislators of Indian origin, including Mr Johnson's top aide Priti Patel, have all been returned to Parliament after Mr Johnson had actively wooed people of Indian origin in an increasingly multi-cultural and diverse society. There was good news on the distaff side too as 221 will be women MPs in the new House of Commons. Mr Johnson's gambit of calling for this early election has paid rich dividends but torrid times may lie ahead for the UK.

## Gone with the Windies

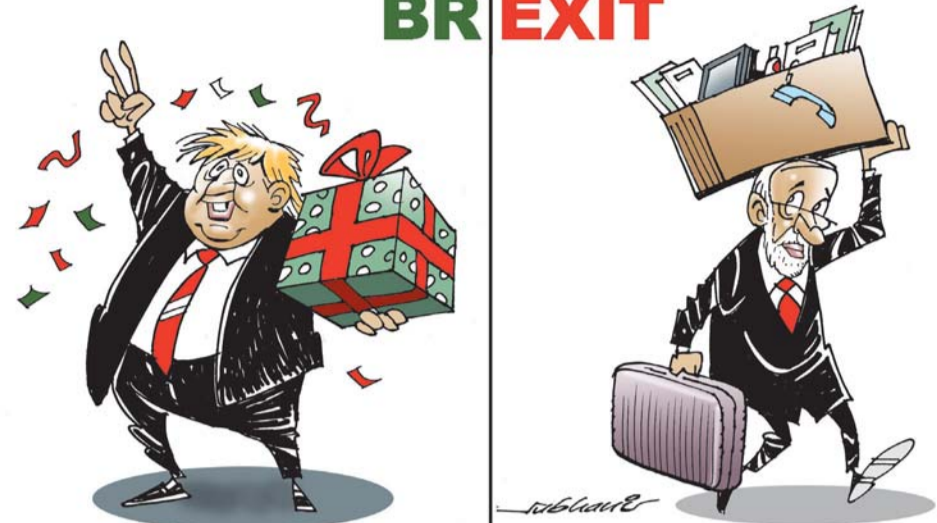
The West Indies were blown away by a hurricane force constituting the combined force of three batsmen. Team India may be something like the girl with the curl, great when she is good but horrid when she is bad. Their victory in the T-20 series decider did, however, contain a message. Fearless batting in a continued assault on 120 deliveries available in T-20 cricket is the only way to win what's really a lottery.

Whenever Rohit Sharma kickstarts the innings with his stroke-making brilliance, Team India becomes a major force. With Lokesh Rahul striking form and Virat Kohli still shining as a "finisher", Team India looked formidable even though they lost one game in which the T-20 world champions bettered them in clearing the ropes.

Statistics mean little in T-20s. It's only a question of how much batsmen can milk in the overs available. But piling runs on a home pitch with little assistance to fast bowlers should be simpler. Where Team India will face a real challenge is in producing winning cricket under the pressure of a must-win situation in major ICC events. Remember, the team hasn't won any white ball titles since the 2013 Champions Trophy in England, and hasn't won the T-20 worlds again since the inaugural in 2007.

To reproduce such aggressive batsmanship in the T-20 worlds next year on pitches Down Under, which will offer far more bounce for quick bowlers, will define how far Team India can go in the white ball game in contrast to its settled position as the world's best performing Test team. There are clear weaknesses in bowling and fielding that come undone under pressure. The challenge for Virat Kohli lies in getting his team to perform as well in do-or-die moments in big events.

Subhani



# CAB: BJP sows seeds of strife across South Asia



K.C. Singh

Both Houses of Parliament earlier this week approved the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill after some Opposition resistance in the Upper House. The Janata Dal (United), which rules Bihar in alliance with the BJP, and the Biju Janata Dal, ruling Odisha, betrayed their origins and the core philosophies of their founders by backing the government. Home minister Amit Shah, replying to the Opposition criticism, justified the bill as necessary to alleviate the religious persecution of minorities in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Diplomatic implications evaded him in tarring three nations with the same brush, quoting incidents at nauseum from Afghanistan under the Taliban, deposed in 2001, Bangladesh under non-Awami League governments or even acknowledging that Pakistan's Sunni radical evangelism persecutes Islamic groups like the Shias and even more so the 10-20 million Ahmadiyyas.

The amendment breaches not only Article 14 of the Constitution, on which the Supreme Court will rule, but even international human rights law as it has evolved since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Indian delegates helped frame that declaration, which remains the bedrock of international human rights law. Although driven by the disruption of European populations during World War II, India's Constitution, adopted in 1950, reflects it in letter and spirit. Hence, equality of treatment under Article 14 is not extended merely to Indian citizens but any "person". Therefore, even though India did not sign the 1951 Refugee Convention or the additional protocol of 1967, which universalised its application beyond Europe, India is bound by its spirit, if not its letter,

as it is grounded in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration, which proclaims everyone's right to seek asylum from persecution. Moreover, when 145 nations subscribe to a convention, its provisions tend to have universal application.

The Indian amendment raises a number of troubling questions. First, it protects those suffering religious persecution in only three nations and belonging to faiths other than Islam, whereas the Refugee Convention defines it more expansively — political or other forms of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. It rests on three principles: non-discrimination, non-penalisation and non-refoulement, the last mandating that no one shall be returned to where that person may face threats. Thus, the limited aim of the Indian amendment is political and electoral, legitimising the stay and eventual citizenship of only those groups of refugees that are non-Islamic. When combined, as Mr Shah keeps reminding us periodically, with a National Register of Citizens (NRC), the objective becomes clearer still. Muslims in India will be subjected to an audit where the burden of proof shall lie on them to prove their Indian citizenship. A prominent Muslim and former holder of a high constitutional office quipped that his family graves date to the 17th century. Poorer segments of the Muslim community may find it impossible to produce documents that pass muster with a usually incompetent if not prejudiced or even corrupt bureaucracy.

The cut-off date is also peculiar. That is what riled the current friendly governments of Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Sheikh Hasina has been Bangladesh's PM for the past decade and can hard-

ly be blamed for persecuting Hindus or Chakma Buddhists. If anything, she has purged the political system of radical Islamists, who were allies of Pakistan's military which governed East Pakistan and subsequently the military, or military-supported, regimes in Bangladesh. Therefore, unsurprisingly, its foreign minister A.K. Abdul Momen cancelled his India trip on weak grounds. Its home minister also cancelled a private visit to Shillong, which was probably unlikely in any case due to the disturbances there. Dissonance in relations was perhaps inevitable as, despite Indian assurances to Bangladesh, the BJP's policy of hounding illegal Muslim immigrants, which plays directly into its politics in Assam, the Northeast and now West Bengal, was leading towards discord over the detention and future of persons of Bangladeshi origin in India.

A similar lack of historical accuracy and sensitivity in naming and shaming Afghanistan led to its ambassador in New Delhi taking exception to Mr Shah's arguments. The cut-off point for refugees allowed a fast-track to citizenship is 2014. The Taliban was deposed in 2001 but may well rule Afghanistan again. What happens to non-Muslim persons of Indian origin still in that country and willing to believe in the survival of an independent and prosperous Afghanistan under a non-sectarian regime? Does not India have a stake in that idea after dispensing \$2 billion in aid and some precious human lives?

What is even more troublesome is that by extremely narrow exceptions a number of other minorities in South Asia and beyond have been ignored. After the second coming of the Rajapaksa clan in Sri Lanka, it is

**An opportunity has been missed to have a proper, non-discriminatory refugee and asylum law in line with India's Constitution and international law**

unlikely that the Tamil minority will get justice or power devolution. The Madhesis are already marginalised politically in Nepal. There may in future be pogroms against the Indian diaspora in Caribbean, Indian Ocean islands like Mauritius and Seychelles or Africa's east coast. Will the government devise ad hoc measures each time or turn away, as India did when Idi Amin hounded Indians out of Uganda. Thus, an opportunity has been missed to have a proper, non-discriminatory refugee and asylum law in line with India's Constitution and international law.

Thus, with a narrow domestic agenda, fuelled by ideological and divisive politics, tapping Islamophobia across sensitive states on Bangladesh's borders, the BJP has sown the seeds of regional strife. To rescue Hindu Bengalis from the NRC's net in Assam and appeal to Bengalis in West Bengal, the government has fired the chauvinism of tribal and ethnic communities across the Northeast. The distant rumble can be heard in the United States and Europe against India going down a route that is more befitting the troubled regions of Africa than the land of Gandhi. There are yet solitary voices seeking sanctions against Amit Shah. Assam joins Kashmir in being put under the security clampdown. The Japanese PM's much-touted summit with his Indian host in Guwahati now lies disrupted. The Northeast was to be the stepping-stone between India and Asean. Which global investor will come to a destabilised region? Sadly, India's PM and home minister could only defend themselves by a hackneyed but dangerous argument — that the Opposition and critics speak in the voice of Pakistan. The truth is they are critical of the government's half-baked, moth-eaten amnesty for some refugees. Pakistan points it out with glee; but Indians with pain. Surely the two are poles apart.

*The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh.*

## LETTERS

### INDIA FOR ALL

The notion that only non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh should be conferred citizenship is democratically immoral. Any religious test to citizenship undermines democratic norms. The Citizen Amendment Bill brazenly violates Article 14 which promotes the right to equality. Refugees, Muslim or non-Muslim, facing religious persecution in Islamic countries should have the entitlement to seek citizenship in India.

**Rudra Krishna**  
Hyderabad

The amended Citizenship Act is discriminatory towards a particular religion. The exclusion of the Muslim community, while awarding citizenship to refugees from neighbouring countries will be a lethal issue in the future. Opposing this draconian Bill, already the northeast states are on fire. What sort of changes does the dispensation at the Centre desire? Do they want to create a law and order mayhem, keeping myriad issues of economy aside? My humble request to government of India to introspect themselves.

**G. Thirupathiah**  
Hyderabad

### SLOW FASTag

The government appears to be incapable implementing any scheme successfully. The reasoning for the total switch-over to FASTag is the avoidance of long queues at toll gates on highways. All that was needed to be done was to issue prepaid rechargeable tags at selected outlets. Instead the online sale of tags and refusal to accept cash for recharges have caused massive confusion all round. We applied for a FASTag from HDFC Bank online on November 28 and it has still not been delivered. We bought a FASTag from the RTA point of sale at Medchal and we are unable to recharge the it.

**C.B.V. Reddy**  
Hyderabad

### GOODBYE, GOLLAPUDI

Stage, radio and movie writer and artist, octogenarian Gollapudi Maruti Rao, popularly known as 'gadda mukku pantulu', had left his indelible stamp as a character actor in more than 250 films. His demise creates a vacuum in many crafts. He was the guru to many upcoming writers and actors (*Gollapudi demise a big loss to Telugu industry, December 13*).

**N. Ramalakshmi**  
Secunderabad

Email your letters to [info@deccanmail.com](mailto:info@deccanmail.com), [editor@deccanmail.com](mailto:editor@deccanmail.com). You can also send them to Editor, Deccan Chronicle, 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad-500 003.

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Rafia Zakaria



## Sex segregation in Saudi ending, never mind what the critics say

There was a central square in the Saudi capital city of Riyadh that was used for executions. Every Friday, after prayers, prisoners were brought here and executed before the watching crowd. The blood of the executed, it is said, used to flow down the square and into the gutters. In recent days, the square has been remodelled. There are no more executions here, and high-end shoppers breeze through the shops lining the square.

At a restaurant, diners sip mocktails, sometimes racking up a bill of more than \$1,000. Now men and women can enjoy the expensive mocktails without having to enter through different entrances. Nor will they have to sit segregated behind partitions.

At the beginning of the week, Saudi Arabia announced that it was putting an end to gender segregation in restaurants. While certain high-

end luxury hotels in Jeddah and Riyadh had already ended gender segregation at restaurants, most of the latter continued to uphold the practice over the past several decades. Suddenly, all of them will have to arrange to accommodate men and women together.

Part of the kingdom's move to become more entertainment-friendly (other reforms have permitted women to attend sporting events and watch certain shows and performances) is a continuing effort by the kingdom to escape its reputation as a staid and backward place, disconnected from the mores of the 21st century. A greater number of tourist visas are also part of the mix as an effort to attract tourists and travellers from the Muslim world and elsewhere to the kingdom.

As is the case with all changes, the new unsegregated restaurants edict has received mixed reviews.

According to one businessman, the rapid pace of change can be likened to sitting blindfolded in the back seat of a car while it is being driven. One can sense that the car is moving but one cannot make out in which direction or its ultimate destination. Others complain that the pace of change, considering how slowly things have moved in the kingdom, is too fast for a sustainable transformation. There is a danger, given this speed of change, that people will seethe in silence and oppose the new ways being introduced in a society that is used to old ways.

At the same time, whatever dissenting Saudis may think of the changes, there is no doubt that a transformation is taking place. The strength of the state means that even if people do not agree with the change, they will have to follow the prescriptions whether they involve women in restaurants or women dri-

ving cars. Undoubtedly, a new generation of Saudis is welcoming the change, eager to be the pioneers leading their country into a new era.

Pakistan and Pakistanis have had a long history of copying whatever Saudi Arabia does. Over the past several decades, the constant sending of migrant labour to Saudi Arabia has meant that the norms and mores of that land have come to Pakistan. The constant stream of pilgrims that go back and forth between the two countries, not to mention the leadership of the ummah, have all meant that many Pakistanis look to Saudi Arabia and take their cue from it regarding their support for or rejection of the emerging norms in their own country.

One hopes that this will also be the case regarding gender segregation. While it is true that Pakistan is not nearly as gender-segregated as Saudi Arabia, and there are no laws impos-

ing such segregation on Pakistanis, the prevalence of formal and informal gender segregation seems to have risen in the past decade. Many weddings are now segregated with male and female guests kept entirely separate, and several other gatherings follow the same trend.

This trend has been noticeable in educational institutions. In September, it was reported Bahria University had issued a notification to all teachers to ensure that male and female students in their classes were seated separately. It was not the only educational institution to do this; the University of Engineering and Technology in Lahore reportedly announced boys and girls would not be permitted to sit together in the canteen. It was only after protests and an outcry that the administration retracted the directive.

*By arrangement with Dawn*

# Am I a citizen of India? Dunno! I am still scratching my head...



Shobhaa's Take

A few hours before the dramatic and fiery CAB debate in the Lok Sabha, I was chatting with an activist/professor (Indian), who lives in New York. This was at an event in Kolkata and the overall atmosphere was overheated with all sorts of opinions flying around. The prof seemed particularly agitated as she raised tricky issues not too many exhausted authors were in the mood to respond to — the lunch buffet was about to be removed and food for the stomach overruled food for thought.

Regardless, she tapped available shoulders and initiated conversations, which was pretty brave of her. I found it fascinating that she was quoting (almost exclusively), a small coterie of New York-based desi "intellectuals", who meet regularly at one another's homes to discuss the "India problem". It was a familiar echo chamber — like-minded folks talking to each other, their brows furrowed, their voices subdued.

I asked her what she was most worried about right now, and she disappointed me with her predictable response. "We are deeply concerned about the future of India." Honey, tell me something I don't know! She talked about Trump and the rise of "fascist forces", comparing the situation in America to what she and her friends believed was happening in India — the rise and rise and rise of right-wingers determined to destabilise and destroy the country. She was well meaning and earnest. But also, clueless. This was a schoolgirlish, textbook take on the current political establishment.

She talked about "exposing" the

hugely successful West Coast techie desis who, she said, had funded "Howdy Mody" and earlier, his Madison Square Garden show. "So many of them are crooks out to make money by pretending to be working for a better India." Perhaps. But what plans did her snooty pals in NYC have to counter these rogues? Start a new dialogue? Blank! I asked her whether she was ever coming back to India, and she shook her head. "Then? Were her buddies going to return in the foreseeable future? Nope."

I have no problem with patriot games being played like parlour games. Provided I am receptive and in a more conducive setting, without one eye on the lunch buffet and another on the timing of my delayed sessions. *Khair. En passant*, I said to her that what was happening in Assam and to Assam was likely to change the future of India far more than any other development projected by the NYC gang (it reminded me of the Khan Market Gang in terms of their naiveté and ignorance). Assam has been transformed into the centre of India, metaphorically, in one stroke.

The Assam agitation will polarise India like no other political devel-

**I have no problem with patriot games being played like parlour games. Provided I am receptive and in a more conducive setting, without one eye on the lunch buffet and another on my delayed sessions. *Khair.***

**Amit Shah used the word "infiltrators". "Infiltrators" is a loaded term. I am beginning to feel like an infiltrator in my own country. Must ask the NYC Gang what they feel like — aliens from another galaxy?**

oment since Independence. Here we are, bang in the middle of an uncomfortable and potentially dangerous situation that is forcing most of us to ask tough questions to which there are no plausible, *jhat-phat* answers. The Lok Sabha passed the tricky citizenship bill 311-80 at midnight, with Amit Shah proclaiming, "NRC is coming". This sounds even more ominous than I had anticipated. It is a dire warning to citizens, forcing political party leaders of other parties to ask valid questions. Saugata Roy (Trinamul Congress) wondered whatever happened to the "one law, one nation" declaration in the wake of the abrogation of Article 370. An impassioned and on-fire Asaduddin Owaisi (AIMIM) tore up papers, declaring dramatically, "It is a conspiracy to make Muslims stateless." But that's Owaisi. Anything more moderate coming from him would have been a major surprise.

Between these points of view, the scariest claim came from Amit Shah himself when he blandly stated what citizens had suspected and feared all along — we have gradually but surely surrendered all our rights. "It (the bill) has the endorsement of 130 crore citizens as it was part of BJP's manifesto in 2014 as well as 2019 Lok Sabha elections." Really? How easy it is for Amit Shah to state something as exaggerated and misleading and insist he is speaking on behalf of 130 crore Indian citizens. I am also a citizen. A tiny speck, but a citizen of India nevertheless. Sure, I did not vote for the BJP. Does that make me a non-citizen? Is that the new criterion? Why is Amit Shah

including me so glibly in his sweeping statement? There are many citizens like me — some who didn't vote for the BJP and others who didn't bother to vote at all. Does this mean we are now automatically downgraded by the State and do not enjoy the same rights as full-fledged, bonafide Indian citizens? What happened to the Constitution of India? Also downgraded? Is it still relevant after the passage of the prickly Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB)? How do I know in which light the State views people like me from this moment on? Can I still call myself a citizen of India and believe it? Gosh! It has come to this! And so quickly. After the ease with which the 311 members allowed the Bill to sail through, one wonders if this is merely a 'let's test the waters' experiment, before the Constitution of India gets junked altogether. This is exactly what I had tried to convey to my NYC prof. The path to citizenship as outlined in the CAB, is open to interpretation and comes with horrifying implications. It sounds like a bill designed to exclude rather than include. No amount of justification can whitewash the obvious. What happens to me tomorrow, if, for example, I change my faith officially and move to another state — Assam, for example? My limited knowledge tells me, I'll be considered dead meat. A traitor. From this moment on, we need to figure what we can and cannot take for granted as citizens of a democracy which promises each one of us the exact same rights. As of now, I am thoroughly confused. If I changed my name from Shobhaa to Shabana, would I be instantly relegated to being a second, maybe even third rung demi-citizen with severely curtailed rights? Amit Shah used the word "infiltrators". "Infiltrators" is a loaded term. I am beginning to feel like an infiltrator in my own country. Must ask the NYC Gang what they feel like — aliens from another galaxy?

Readers can send feedback to [www.shobhaade.blogspot.com](http://www.shobhaade.blogspot.com)

**50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle**  
**AP, Orissa discuss Naxalite threat**

HYDERABAD, DEC. 13. Top officials of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa participated in the coordination meeting held in Bhubaneswar, Orissa on Tuesday, when the Naxalite threat to both the States was discussed, it is

learnt here officially. It may be mentioned that the Naxalite activities have become marked in the bordering district of the two States like Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, Ganjam and Koraput. — ANS

## GOVERNMENT OF INDIA MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCE AND PENSIONS (DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL AND TRAINING)

Applications are invited for filling up of the post of Chief Information Commissioner and four posts of Information Commissioners in the Central Information Commission located at New Delhi.

The details of eligibility conditions and the proforma for sending particulars for consideration for the posts of Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners may be downloaded from the Department of Personnel and Training website: [www.persmin.nic.in](http://www.persmin.nic.in). The last date for receipt of the completed applications in the Department is 03.01.2020.

davp 32201/11/0008/1920



**National Board of Examinations**  
(Autonomous body under Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India)

## 20<sup>th</sup> CONVOCATION

- National Board of Examinations shall hold its 20<sup>th</sup> Convocation and Awards Ceremony at Bhim Hall, Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, Janpath, New Delhi on Tuesday, the 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2019.
- DNB qualified candidates of the following sessions who have been declared as Gold Medal winners are eligible to participate in the 20<sup>th</sup> Convocation.
  - June 2018
  - December 2018
- All other DNB/FNB qualified candidates of the listed sessions shall receive their Degrees 'in absentia' following the Convocation, through SPEED POST.
- Further details of the 20<sup>th</sup> Convocation shall be available at NBE website shortly.

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Textile sector's credit exposure declines

Super rich in India will buy costly e-cars, says Porsche



Overleaf

## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	41,009.71	+1.05%
Nifty 50	12,086.70	+0.96%
S&P 500	3,165.78	-0.08%
Dollar (₹)	70.70	-0.14
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.33	-
Euro (₹)	78.64	-0.23%
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	38,486	+0.60%
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	64.35	-0.40%
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.76	+0.84
US 10-Yr T-bill yield	1.81	-0.30

\* As of 10:45 pm IST

## Powergear firms seek ban on Chinese imports

**Vadodara:** The government should consider banning imports of equipment related to power generation and telecom from China, Indian Electrical & Electronic Manufacturers' Association (IEEMA) director-general Sunil Misra said on Friday. He said the dependence on China for equipment belonging to this critical sector may be "dangerous" for India. — PTI

## Yes Bank expects better results in March quarter



**New Delhi:** Yes Bank on Friday said it expects the third quarter of the current financial year to remain subdued but sees improvement in revenue in the March quarter on the back of government measures. "Topline growth in Q4 FY20 could see some relative improvement as the economy is likely to gradually respond to the government's measures," it said. — PTI

## Paytm's One97 raises \$660m from investors

**New Delhi:** One97 Communications, the parent company of Paytm, has raised over \$660 million (₹4,724 crore) from investors, including Alibaba's Alipay and funds managed by T Rowe Price, as per regulatory documents. In November, Paytm raised over ₹7,000 crore in funding from T Rowe Price and existing investors to fund expansion plans. — PTI

## RIL arm acquires 51.7% stake in Asteria Aerospace

**New Delhi:** Reliance Industries on Friday said its wholly-owned subsidiary Reliance Strategic Business Ventures Ltd (RSBV) has acquired over 51 per cent stake in Asteria Aerospace for ₹23.12 crore. The investment will further enable the group's initiatives in emerging technology. On Thursday, RSBV had said it has picked up 85 per cent stake in NowFloats Technologies. — PTI

## Moody's cuts growth rate

FC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

With the slow employment growth that could weigh on consumption, Moody's Investors Service on Friday said it has lowered its 2019 Gross Domestic Product or GDP growth forecast for India to 5.6 per cent. However, the global rating agency is hopeful that the economy pick up in 2020 and 2021 to 6.6 per cent and 6.7 per cent respectively.

"We have lowered our 2019 GDP growth forecast for India to 5.6 per cent, which is lower than 7.4 per cent growth in 2018," Moody's said in a report, stating that India's economic growth has decelerated since mid-2018, with real GDP growth slipping from nearly 8 per cent to 5 per cent in the second quarter (April-June) of 2019. It further slipped to 4.5 per cent in July-September quarter. "Consumption demand has cooled notably, with slow employment growth weighing on consumption. We expect economic growth to pick up in 2020 and 2021 to 6.6 per cent and 6.7 per cent, respectively, but the pace of growth will remain lower than in the recent past," the rating agency said.

### SLOW GROWTH: NEW NORMAL

■ Ratings agency Moody's Investors Service has lowered its 2019 GDP growth forecast for India to 5.6 per cent for the financial year 2019-20.

■ Though consumption demand has cooled due to slow job creation, Moody's expects economic growth to pick up in 2020 and 2021 to 6.6 per cent and 6.7 per cent, respectively.

■ The pace of economic growth, however, will remain lower than in the recent past.



### GROWTH FORECAST

Moody's	ADB	S&P	RBI	DBS	SBI
5.6%	5.1%	5.1%	5%	5%	5%

Moody's said fiscal measures undertaken by the government, such as corporate tax rate cuts, bank recapitalisation, infrastructure spending plans, support for the auto sector and others, do not

directly address widespread weakness in consumption demand, which has been the chief driver of the economy.

"In addition, interest rate cuts by the RBI are not being adequately

transmitted to lending rates because of the credit squeeze caused by disruption in the non-bank financial sector," it added.

However, commercial vehicle sales in India declined 22.95 per cent in the six months ended September 30 2019 compared with the same period a year earlier. "Commercial vehicle sales have been hit by the liquidity squeeze in the financial sector and the economic slowdown, despite support from government stimulus measures to boost demand and vehicle purchases ahead of India's migration to new emission standards," it said.

Moody's also expected auto loan delinquencies to increase in the next few quarters as the economic slowdown would constrain demand for freight transportation and put pressure on freight rates.

"However, the slowing economic growth has yet to significantly impact the performance of underlying loans as the decline in commercial vehicle sales over the past quarters has helped ease the surplus capacity situation in the medium and heavy commercial vehicle segments and supported the performance," it said.

## FM refuses to predict end of economic slump

FC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Friday the government would take steps to "heal" the economy as and when required but refused to make any prediction when the economy would come out of the woods.

"The government has been working for the economy where it is needed," Ms Sitharaman said, while highlighting the impact of recent financial measures on the economy.

The finance minister was speaking at an event organised to lay a preparatory framework for the next year's Union Budget.

The Union Budget 2020-21 will be presented on February 1, which will be the second Budget of the current BJP-led NDA government after the general elections.

Asked when she expects the economy to revive, the finance minister said, "I am not engaging in any prediction-based thing. I am looking at the economy, where I need to intervene, I am intervening and I shall continue to address the problem of the industry as and when it rises."

The Centre has recently announced several measures to bring the flagging economy back on track. The measures include some important ones such as a cut in the corporate tax rate, funding of stalled real estate projects, and faster GST-refund process etc.

She also declined to comment on the narrative of

## CENTRE IS TRYING TO BOOST CONSUMPTION, SAYS ADVISER

**New Delhi, Dec. 13:** Chief Economic Adviser Krishnamurthy Subramanian on Friday said the government is focusing on increasing consumption to boost economic growth.

Presenting steps taken by the government in the past few months to pull the economy out from a six-year low growth, Mr Subramanian said that the measures include corporate tax cuts to improve risk-return of companies.

He said the government has also announced the capitalisation of the public sector banks and last-mile funding to

the realty projects. As much as ₹4.47 lakh crore has been sanctioned to non-banking financial institutions and housing finance companies to support retail lending, the Chief Economic Adviser said, adding that 17 proposals amounting to ₹7,657 crore had been approved under partial credit guarantee scheme.

Also, 66 per cent of budgeted capex of ₹3.38 lakh crore has already undertaken, he said. Railway and road ministries will have undertaken capex of ₹2.46 lakh crore by December 31, he said. — PTI

stagflation — high inflation coupled with declining growth. "No comment on that. I have heard it. Stagflation is a narrative which is going on. I am hearing it," she said.

On Thursday, the government data revealed that retail inflation has surged to 5.51 per cent in November while the industry output shrunk for the third straight month in October.

On the onion price hike, Ms Sitharaman is hopeful that it would be resolved soon. "We have a group of ministers meeting which is reviewing the situation, and is deciding on how to take up the import related issues. I think gradually, the crop has also started replenishing. The govern-

ment is doing its best to import the commodity and resolve the issue," she said.

Ahead of the crucial meeting of the GST Council on December 18, Sitharaman did not rule out a hike in Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates, saying that her ministry is yet to apply its mind to it.

When asked about the buzz on the proposal of increasing GST rates in the Council meet, she said, "The buzz is everywhere else but not in my office (the ministry of finance). I am not attributing this to my team. There has been no discussion of changing the GST rate in the finance ministry so far."

## India's exports contract for 4th straight month

**New Delhi, Dec. 13:** India's exports contracted for the fourth month in a row in November, dipping 0.34 per cent to \$25.96 billion, mainly on account of poor shipments of petroleum, gems & jewellery and leather products.

Imports too declined by 12.71 per cent to \$38.11 billion in November, narrowing the trade deficit to \$12.12 billion, according to government data released on Friday.

Gold imports increased by 6.59 per cent to \$2.94 billion in the month. The trade deficit stood at \$17.58 billion in November 2018.

Out of the 30 key sectors, as many as 17 segments showed contraction in exports during the month under review.

The shipments of petroleum products, gems and jewellery, fruits and vegetables, leather and leather products and ready-made garments of all textiles contracted by 13.12 per cent, 8.14 per cent, 15.10 per cent, 5.29 per cent and 6.52 per cent respectively.

In November, oil imports declined by 18.17 per cent to \$11.06 billion, while non-oil imports contracted 10.26 per cent to \$27.04 billion.

Cumulatively, during April-November 2019, exports were down 1.99 per cent to \$211.93 billion while imports contracted by 8.91 per cent to \$318.78 billion.

The country's trade deficit during the period narrowed to \$54.06 billion as against \$82.47 billion in April-November 2018-19, the data said. — PTI

## Global rough diamond sales to dip 25%

# Nirav scam hits rough diamonds

SANGEETHA G.  
CHENNAI, DEC. 13

Global rough diamond sales is expected to decline 25 per cent in 2019, thanks to the challenging situation in India's financial sector among other factors, finds a global study.

The study by Bain and Company and Antwerp World Diamond Centre found that the surplus production in 2017, the financial situation in Indian diamond industry — the largest processor of roughs — and the slackening demand for polished stones in the US and China led to the slower demand in 2019.

Polished diamond sales too are expected to drop 10 per cent and 15 per cent by the end of 2019 because of the slowing demand for the diamond jewellery globally, lower diamond content in jewellery designs, inventory optimisation by major retailers and declining availability of finance for midstream players in India.

AWDC CEO Ari Epstein claims that the diamond market remains cautious due to the oversupply of rough diamonds, challenging situation in India.

The Indian diamond processing companies have been finding it difficult to avail finance from the formal banking sector since the Nirav Modi-PNB scam. The import of roughs by India was down 21 per cent between April and October this year.

According to the report,

### MARKET GLITCH

■ The Indian diamond processing companies have been finding it difficult to avail finance from the formal banking sector since the Nirav Modi-PNB scam.

■ The import of roughs by India — the world's largest rough diamond processing centre — was down 21 per cent between April and October this year, which led to excess supply in the market.

■ Higher inventory caused by the largest single-year volume increase since 1986 too has contributed to the oversupply.



the spike in production of rough diamonds in 2017 — the largest single-year volume increase since 1986 — too has contributed to the oversupply. This has "created a surplus that affected the entire value chain", as a result of which inventory in the mining and midstream markets increased through 2019.

Further, the demand for polished and in turn rough is driven by changes in the two largest markets, the United States and China, due to decreasing consumer confidence and geopolitical uncertainty.

In 2019, the US diamond jewellery retail sales are expected to fall two per cent, in contrast to three per cent growth in 2018 as consumer confidence fell to its lowest point since 2016 because of uncertainties surrounding the

labour market, trade tension and a possible recession.

A continuous decline in Chinese travelers to the US lowered luxury purchases overall as well as an extra 15 per cent tariff on Chinese jewellery went into effect in September 2019 and is expected to impact sales during the crucial holiday season.

The Chinese demand too is expected to decrease by five per cent due to yuan depreciation, declining consumer confidence due to trade tensions between the US and China and significantly lower sales in Hong Kong amid protests in the area.

"All signs now point toward the gradual reestablishment of a balance in the market in the coming year," said Mr Epstein.

## India's onion output may remain 20% lower than last year

SANGEETHA G. | DC  
CHENNAI, DEC. 13

The onion production for the year 2019-20 is estimated to be 22 per cent down over last year.

As per the estimates of the department of agriculture, the combined Kharif and late Kharif production for 2019-20 is estimated at 54.73 lakh metric tonnes as against 69.91 lakh metric tonnes in 2018-19.

During 2019-20, there was upto four week delay in sowing and the sown area for onions in the Kharif season too had declined due to the late arrival of monsoon.

Further, the untimely prolonged rains in the major onion growing states of Karnataka, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh during the harvesting period of September and October, caused damage to the standing crops in these regions.

All these factors have adversely impacted the production and quality of onions in the Kharif season.

The rains during

September-October had also affected the transportation of the crop from these regions to consuming areas. This led to limited availability of Kharif onion in the market and put pressure on its prices, the ministry said.

Onion prices had crossed ₹150-200 per kg in some cities and are now back to ₹100 per kg. While the increased import and newly harvested crop was presumed to result in a supply glut in the coming weeks, the lower production estimates can make the market cautious.

The government said that it is serious in dealing with the issue and has also written to chief ministers over it.

The Central government further said that it was taking several steps such as creation of onion buffer of about 57,373 metric tonnes during Rabi 2019, withdrawal of incentive on export of onions under Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS), imposition of Minimum Export Price and subsequent ban on exports of onions.

### STATE-WISE RETAIL INFLATION

The retail inflation in India was 5.54 per cent in November, but the price rise in states ranged from 7.23 per cent to 1.44 per cent.

State	(in %)
Odisha	7.23
Uttar Pradesh	6.93
Kerala	6.89
Madhya Pradesh	6.6
Tamil Nadu	6.26
Rajasthan	6.02
Jharkhand	5.96
Telangana	5.94
Uttarakhand	5.84
Himachal Pradesh	5.76
Assam	5.62
Maharashtra	5.60
Andhra Pradesh	5.58
Karnataka	5.51
West Bengal	5.31
Punjab	4.98
Haryana	4.74
Gujarat	4.15
Chhattisgarh	4.05
Delhi	3.18
Jammu & Kashmir	2.51
Bihar	1.44

## Higher gold prices increase smuggling in India

**Mumbai, Dec. 13:** Surging gold prices in India are keeping customs officials on their toes.

Illegal inflows have jumped after the Indian government increased import taxes in July and prices surged to record highs in September. Customs officials have arrested people for attempting to smuggle in gold by concealing it in bags, clothes and their rectums. On one flight alone, officials caught 30 passengers trying to smuggle in 7.5 kg of gold into

Chennai. "The propensity to smuggle now is very high because every time you increase the tax rate, you give that much more incentive to smugglers," P.R. Somasundaram, managing director for the region at the World Gold Council, said in an interview. "So it will continue like this unless measures are taken by not just the government but also the trade which shares an equal responsibility to obliterate the grey market," he said. Gold in India touched a

record high of ₹39,885 per 10 grams in early September on higher import taxes and as the US-China trade conflict and looser monetary policy boosted global benchmark spot prices. While bullion has since retreated from the all-time high, it's still up 20 per cent this year.

Smuggled inflows of gold may jump 30 per cent to 40 per cent this year to 140 tonnes and rise more in 2020, N. Anantha Padmanaban, chairman of the All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council, said.

■ SMUGGLED INFLOWS of gold may jump 30 per cent to 40 per cent this year to 140 tonnes and rise more in 2020, N. Anantha Padmanaban, chairman of the All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council, said.

Jewellery Domestic Council, said. It could also constitute a bigger percentage of India's demand as official imports decline, rising to as much as 14 per cent this year from 12 per cent a



year earlier, according to the WGC.

A previous spate of smuggling occurred after India, which imports almost all of its gold, increased the tax three times in 2013 to control a

record current-account deficit. Illegal inflows peaked at 225 tonnes in 2014 as smugglers attempted to bring in bullion, including via planes and trains.

In just the two months of September and October this year, nearly 40 per cent more gold was seized than the same period in 2018 from airports, railway stations and border states, data on the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence's website showed. Data on the website is available only for the last four months of

2018, limiting year-on-year comparisons.

There has been a jump in the smuggling of gold into India from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, the DRI said. Bullion is also increasingly being smuggled in from countries bordering India, including Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, China and Bangladesh.

The trend suggests smuggling syndicates are using e-commerce platforms and couriers to smuggle gold into India by hiding it in household and white goods. — Bloomberg

**OPENING BELL**  
PROJECTION FOR TODAY

**Sentiment likely to remain positive**

The market edged higher for the third straight session as positive global cues and improved investor risk appetite.

Metal stocks charged ahead during Friday's trading session after US President Donald Trump said Washington and Beijing are very close to signing a "big" trade deal, auto stocks gained as Conservative leader Boris Johnson won election in the United Kingdom, paving way for Brexit-divorce deal by January 31, 2020.

Public sector banks (PSBs) rallied today after reports suggested that the government is considering increasing the government bond investment limit of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to at least 10 per cent of the outstanding, from 6 per cent now, with an aim to incorporate local bonds into global bond indices.

The Sensex settled 428 points, or 1.05 per cent higher, at 41,009.71 level. Vedanta, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, and Muthoot Finance ended as the top gainers among the Sensex pack. On the contrary, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Auto, and Asian Paints settled as top losers. "Bulls were active in the trade and pushed the index higher towards the resistance zone. If bulls manage to push Nifty beyond 12,050 and close above it, the current consolidation is likely to end. Till the mentioned zone is not breached on the upside, index continues to remain in consolidation phase between 11,700-12,000 zone. Market breadth was strong as participation was wider. Overall broader uptrend remains intact," analysts said.

"Fed's dovish stance on future rate trajectory and strengthening rupee brings cheer to investors. Global sentiment is likely to turn positive in expectation of delay in US tariff deadline, while expecting more positive developments from US-China trade talks. Metals and banks outperformed while IT index slid due to strong rupee and signs of change in risk appetite. On the other hand, November CPI inflation is likely to rise to 5.3 per cent while October IIP may slide to -5 per cent which may have some impact on the direction," Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services. On the NSE, the Nifty50 closed near 12,100-mark, up 114 points, or 0.95 per cent, at 12,085.70 level. For the week, Sensex added 1.5 per cent, Nifty50 advanced 1.4 per cent, and Nifty Bank index gained 2.2 per cent. Sectorally, all the indices ended the day with gains. Nifty PSU Bank index gained the most, up nearly 4 per cent, followed by Nifty metal index (up 2 per cent). The S&P BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices closed 0.89 per cent higher.

— Ashwin J Punnen

# US, China reach phase-1 deal: Trump

Deal would force Chinese to tighten their IP regime and purchase more American goods

Washington/Beijing, Dec. 13: The US and China have reached a historic agreement on a phase one trade deal, US President Donald Trump announced on Friday, in a big breakthrough in the over 18-month-long bruising trade war between the world's two largest economies that has threatened to roil the global economy.

The phase one of the trade deal requires structural reforms and other changes to China's economic and trade regime in the areas of intellectual property, technology transfer,

agriculture, financial services, and currency and foreign exchange. It also includes a commitment by China that it will make substantial additional purchases of US goods and services in the coming years.

Importantly, the agreement establishes a strong dispute resolution system that ensures prompt and effective implementation and enforcement.

As a result, the United States has agreed to modify its Section 301 tariff actions in a significant way. "We have agreed to a very large Phase One Deal with

America will be maintaining 25 per cent tariffs on approximately \$250 billion of Chinese imports, along with 7.5 per cent tariffs on approximately \$120 billion of Chinese imports, USTR said.

China. They have agreed to many structural changes and massive purchases of agricultural product, energy, and manufactured goods, plus much more,"

Trump announced in a series of tweets on Friday. Chinese vice-commerce Minister Wang Shouwen confirmed that a breakthrough in trade negotiations had been reached for a phase one deal.

Mr Wang said the agreement covered a wide range of issues, including intellectual property protection, technology transfer, purchase of agricultural products and expanding trade.

President Trump said that the 25 per cent tariffs will remain as is with 7.5 per cent put on much of the remainder. "Penalty tariffs

set for December 15th will not be charged because of the fact that we made the deal," he said.

"We will begin negotiations on the Phase Two Deal immediately, rather than waiting until after the 2020 Election. This is an amazing deal for all. Thank you!" Mr Trump said.

According to US Trade Representatives Robert Lighthizer the phase one agreement achieves meaningful, fully-enforceable structural changes and begins re-balancing the US-China trade relationship. Describing this as another significant step forward in advancing Trump's economic agenda, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the landmark agreement marked critical progress toward a more balanced trade relationship and a more level playing field for American workers and companies.

The US first imposed tariffs on imports from China based on the findings of the Section 301 investigation on China's acts, policies, and practices related to technology transfer, intellectual property, and innovation. — PTI

## Prince Pipes plans plant in Telangana

FC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, DEC. 13

Prince Pipes and Fittings, a polymer pipes and fittings manufacturer plans to set up a new manufacturing facility in Telangana with ₹196.10 crore investment, partly using proceeds of its initial public offering that opens on December 18.

Prince Pipes and Fittings announced IPO in the price band of ₹177 to ₹178 per equity share of Rs 10 face value and aims to raise total ₹500 crore including a fresh issue of ₹250 crore and an offer for sale of ₹250 crore by the promoter group entities. The IPO closes on December 20.

The IPO will have share allocations to qualified institutional buyers (50 per cent), retail investors (35 per cent) and non-institutional investors (15 per cent). Besides investment in setting up the new plant in Telangana, it intends to utilise the net proceeds in repayment of loans, upgradation of equipment at plants and for general purposes.

## Ascent to set up unit in Gujarat

FC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, DEC. 13

Sedentary lifestyle is leading to huge demand for health care products as people look for relief from nagging back pain, knee pain, painful neck, sore eyes a side effect of 24x7 internet browsing on computer/phone.

Ascent Meditech which has received private equity investment from private equity firm LeapFrog, is now setting up a new plant in Gujarat to produce orthopedic soft goods, mobility, wound care and other health care products with an estimated investment of ₹100 crore.

Indian healthcare market is estimated at \$100 billion. The company's new plant coming up at Valsad in Gujarat would meet future growth in demand as the current production facility at Silvassa may not be sufficient, said Rajiv Mistry, founder and MD Ascent Meditech. The first phase of the new plant is expected to be operational by May 2020, Mr Mistry said. In FY18-19 Ascent Meditech's total revenue stood at ₹140 crore in FY19-20.

## Netrika buys Anti-Piracy Solutions

FC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

India's top risk management and corporate frauds investigations firm Netrika Consulting on Friday announced its acquisition of Anti-Piracy Solutions (APS), a home-grown global online anti-piracy services and strategic consulting company based in Hyderabad.

The acquisition aims at boosting Netrika's capability in the fight against the online sale of counterfeit goods which is a serious issue facing the growing popularity of online shopping. Post-acquisition, founder and CEO, Chaitanya N. of Anti Piracy Solutions (APS) will continue and function as a director at Netrika Consulting.

Asked about the valuation, officials refused to give in details. With the technological synergy, Netrika will now be better positioned to effectively lead the fight against unauthorised leaks and peddling of copyrighted intellectual properties such as movies, music albums, etc.

# Porsche bets big on rich Indians for electric cars

Believes the sport car will open up new customer segment

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, DEC. 13

Porsche, the German super sport car maker, plans to start selling its all-electric Taycan model in India next year, betting big on the ultra-rich Indians who are willing to shell out as much as \$370,000 on an electric car to make their lifestyle statement.

Local custom duties, registration fees and GST in India attract more than 170 per cent on this car but this is not expected to deter the rich and the famous in the country from owning a super sports car with a brand name like Porsche. "After introducing three new products this year, we plan to launch our all-new electric car Taycan next year," Pavan Shetty, director at Porsche India, told *Financial Chronicle*.

He said the ultra-rich Indians would not mind spending more money on electric cars to make a statement to protect the environment.

Mr Shetty said the brand new Porsche Taycan would open up a completely new segment of customers, who are not only sport-car owners, but also want to be seen as environmentally friendly. "We all want to be responsible, and the rich and the successful people have an option and the resources," he said, adding that in the long term the electric car market would grow in India, Asia's third biggest economy.

"We're entering a phase where the rich are neces-



Porsche India director Pavan Shetty and Porsche Middle East and Africa FZE CEO Manfred Braünl, CEO pose with the new Cayenne Coupé.

sarily global citizens. If you own a Porsche, you don't need an introduction. You're already someone, it becomes your identity," Shetty pointed out.

India produced millionaires at the fastest pace in Asia in 2017, according to a Capgemini SE report released last year, but its economy has slowed since then, hitting everything from buying cars to consuming biscuits.

Automobile sales in India, where cleaner and greener vehicles have yet to make a dent on the industry, have

been falling for over a decade, making over 2-3 lakh workers jobless in auto factories and dealerships. "Despite challenges in the auto sector in India, we expect to match our last year sales in the country and be stable," he said.

He said Porsche, which sold 350 cars last year in India, is looking to be closer to that number on the back of launches of its new Cayenne Coupé on Friday, and stabilise its market share with the launch of Porsche Taycan in July. The Taycan was unveiled

in China, Germany and Niagara Falls in September, with a starting price outside India of \$150,900 and a potential base version costing below \$100,000. That underscores the model's central role in parent Volkswagen AG's push to become a leader in battery-powered vehicles.

Iconic British brand MG Motor, now owned by Chinese giant SAIC Motor Corp., and South Korea's Hyundai Motor Co. are the only international carmakers that currently sell electric vehicles in India.

## SERVICE EXPORTS RISE 5.25% IN OCTOBER: RBI

Mumbai, Dec. 13: India's services exports rose 5.25 per cent to \$17.70 billion in October, while imports remained nearly flat at \$10.86 billion, data from the Reserve Bank of India showed on Friday.

The services exports or receipts were \$16.82 billion in October 2018, while the imports or payments were worth \$10.10 billion.

In September, the exports of services were worth \$17.54 billion and the imports were of the order of \$11.10 billion, showed the RBI data on India's International Trade in Services. The services sector is one of the major contributors to the economy, contributing about 55 per cent in India's gross domestic product. — PTI

# Small finance banks see 130% growth in deposits

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, DEC. 13

Small Finance banks (SFBs) recorded a deposit growth of 130 per cent in FY19. They are expected to continue to see increased traction in deposits on the back of higher interest rates, focused marketing strategies and maturing branches, finds India Ratings and Research.

SFBs incrementally mobilised deposits of ₹28,850 crore in FY19. The share of deposits to non-equity liabilities grew to 59.6 per cent in FY19 against 37.6 per cent in FY18.

According to Ind-Ra, the SFBs have been offering interest rates which are 1-2 per cent higher than most

SFBs incrementally mobilised deposits of ₹28,850 crore in FY19. The share of deposits to non-equity liabilities grew to 59.6 per cent in FY19 against 37.6 per cent in FY18.

banks and they have grown the branches by 40 per cent in FY19. Increasing number of matured branches also has helped deposit growth.

However, lower CASA (Current Account and Savings Account) ratio is a challenge for SFBs. Although these low-cost deposits increased 76 per

cent y-o-y to Rs 97.6 billion in FY19, the ratio has seen a decline to 19.2 per cent in FY19 against 25 per cent in the previous fiscal.

Traction in term deposits increased and savings deposits were converted to term deposits owing to the high rates offered by SFBs. The building of a CASA franchise depends on factors such as developing long-term customer relationships, ensuring ease of transactions, fostering trust in the brand, having a large branch network etc.

Large commercial banks benefit from vintage, resulting in deposits from large corporates, government departments, trusts schools and hospitals, businessmen, etc.

New Delhi, Dec. 13: Infosys on Friday said it is not aware of any additional complaints made against the company other than the one it had disclosed to the bourses in October this year.

The clarification comes amid reports of the US-based Schall Law Firm saying it has filed a class-action lawsuit against Infosys to recover losses suffered by investors in the wake of allegations of "unethical practices" at the Indian IT major.

Infosys, in a regulatory filing on Friday, said the company is aware of several reports referencing an additional securities class-action lawsuit against Infosys. "The company is not aware of any additional complaints, other than the initial complaint, which was disclosed on October 24, 2019," it added.

Infosys pointed out that it is not uncommon for plaintiffs' lawyers to issue press releases or other media

communications asking potential plaintiffs to contact them in order to apply for lead plaintiff status in an existing lawsuit.

"It appears that the press communications by the Schall Law Firm is soliciting potential lead plaintiff applicants," it said.

In October, Infosys had informed the stock exchanges of having received anonymous whistleblower complaints alleging certain unethical practices by the top management. US market regulator SEC has also initiated a probe on the matter, while Rosen Law Firm had said it was preparing a class-action lawsuit to recover losses suffered by Infosys investors in the US.

The Schall Law Firm had announced the filing of a class-action lawsuit against Infosys, and asked investors who had purchased the company's securities between July 7, 2018 and October 20, 2019 to contact the firm before December 23, 2019. — PTI

# British markets are back on the map of investors

"The big trade for us is a steeper and that's working for us this morning," Stuttard said.

Improved investor confidence and a still-cheap currency could fuel more overseas direct investments including buying of London property, he suggests.

While UK domestic shares have surged, large caps listed in the country — which mostly make money overseas — have bucked a long-standing negative correlation with the pound to rally in tandem. They were also boosted by a brighter trade outlook aiding cyclical sectors including banks and commodities.

There's plenty of scepticism among those who say the Brexit saga is only just entering another chapter.

Despite his Parliamentary majority, Mr Johnson still has to contend with hard-liners in his party who are willing to give up EU trading ties to exert greater control on labour and environmental standards. This faction is likely to push for a clean break at the end of next year. A big majority could allow him to cut a deal that keeps the UK more closely aligned with the single market.

"The road is full of pitfalls," said Didier Borowski, the head of

macroeconomic research at Amundi, who prefers small, domestically-focused stocks and sees only "short-term relief" for U.K. markets. Going into the Thursday vote, global funds remain decidedly underweight on U.K. equities, according to Bank of America Corp.'s monthly fund manager survey. Their allocation has slipped since the Brexit vote, reaching the lowest since at least 1999 at one point earlier last year. "As of this morning, the British markets are back on the map of international investors," Arbutnot's Perdon said. — Bloomberg



STERLING ROSE by the most since 2017 at one point while stocks and bond yields surged, on expectations that political stability and fiscal stimulus will spur growth and pent-up investment.

since 2017 at one point while stocks and bond yields surged, on expectations that political stability and fiscal stimulus will spur growth and pent-up investment. "All these years of coalition politics, knife-edge politics — that era is over," said Stuttard at

buy," according to its co-chief investment officer Gregory Perdon.

"UK markets have been haunted by uncertainty for several years now but that all changed last night," Perdon said. "Markets love clear mandates and that's what we got."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative Party got biggest majority since 1987 under Margaret Thatcher. That bloc of voting support in Parliament gives Mr Johnson a free rein to take Britain out of the European Union in January, breaking the legislative impasse.

Sterling rose by the most

London, Dec. 13: Investors are ramping up pro-growth trades across UK stocks and bonds as a landslide Tory party victory paves the way for a Brexit deal after years of political gridlock.

In Rotterdam, Robeco's co-head of global macro fixed income Jamie Stuttard is talking up risk on exposures such as bank debt and those that profit from a steeper government yield curve. In Paris, CPR Asset Management strategist Bastien Drut is considering a return to sterling assets. Arbutnot Latham in London sees FTSE 250 stocks as a "screaming



## Injured Ribery

French footballer Franck Ribery to undergo surgery after suffering serious ligament damage to his right ankle



Lionel Messi doesn't need that (to win a World Cup to be great player).

— Herman Crespo, former Argentina footballer on Lionel Messi

### SHORT TAKES

## Saudi to host 1st women's golf

Paris: Saudi Arabia will host its first professional women's golf tournament in 2020 with a prize fund of USD 1 million, the Ladies European Tour (LET) announced. The Jeddah Royal Greens Golf and Country Club will stage the March 19-22 tournament, featuring three-time Tour winner Carly Booth. Booth and four of her fellow professionals have agreed to act as ambassadors for the tournament despite the divisive issue of women's rights in the conservative kingdom. "I'm looking forward to being part of history with the other ladies on the tour," said 27-year-old Booth. "I have visited Saudi Arabia on a number of occasions and been lucky enough to spend some time teaching local women and girls how to play." The men's European Tour made its first foray into Saudi Arabia this year. However, superstars Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy have both refused to play in the 2020 edition. — AFP

## Organe 4x4 Fury set for flag off

Dambuk, Arunachal Pradesh: Marabhum Offroaders Club of Arunachal and BODA will be the cynosure of all eyes as the 6th edition of the JK Tyre Orange 4X4 Fury gets underway here in the serene and quaint Dambuk Valley. MOCA, were the surprise package last year and stunned everyone in the fray with their fearless and tactical driving to win the title. They will fancy their chances again this year and will definitely try and use their local knowledge to the optimum in pursuit of glory. However, it won't be an easy affair for them as they would face a strong challenge from BODA, one of the most experienced off-roading teams of India. BODA, winner here in 2017 will have a strong edge going into the event and will be sure eager to underline their supremacy this year. Other teams that will fancy their chances in this event will be NIOC from Delhi, R&T Catalyst from Kottayam, Team Fairmont from Mumbai and DOT of Goa. This is a calendar event of Arunachal Pradesh Tourism that is focused on promoting adventure sports in the state. — Agencies

## ROHIT TO BE SPANISH LEAGUE FACE

Mumbai: One of international cricket's premier batsmen, Rohit Sharma was on Thursday named the first-ever India brand ambassador of top Spanish football club Real Madrid. He is the first non-footballer in the history of the league to have become a brand ambassador. Rohit comes on board following a series of major initiatives by La Liga in India since 2017. The current ICC World No.2, is the only batsman in the history of the game to have scored three double hundreds in the 50-overs format including a world record 264. "I am truly delighted to be associated with La Liga. It's encouraging to see the Spanish giant have made inroads into the Indian football ecosystem through their grassroots programme," Rohit said. "Personally, I see this as an interesting journey for me into the beautiful game with La Liga. I look forward eagerly to connecting with the football fans in India." Jose Antonio Cachaza, managing director, La Liga India said, "India is a very important market for La Liga from a global perspective, we came here in 2017 to get a better understanding of the pulse of the nation. Over the past two years, and after several ground-breaking initiatives, it is obvious that India has a huge appetite for football." — PTI

# Philly end Celtics run

## 76ers clip Boston's perfect home record with 6-point win

Los Angeles, Dec. 13: Joel Embiid scored a season-high 38 points and grabbed 13 rebounds as the Philadelphia 76ers ended the Boston Celtics perfect home record with a 115-109 win on Thursday. Embiid had a clutch block and drained five of six free throws all within the final 26 seconds as the Sixers withstood a late Boston charge. He also scored 16 points in the final quarter. Tobias Harris added 23 points, eight rebounds and seven assists as Mike Scott scored 15 on five three-pointers as the 76ers won their eighth game in the last nine contests. The Celtics had won 10 straight to start the season and coming into the game were one of just three undefeated teams at home. Philadelphia and Miami are the undefeated teams left. Kemba Walker had 29 points, and Enes Kanter with 20 and Daniel Theis with 16 powered the offense of the Celtics, who have lost two games in as many nights. The Celtics trailed by nine points with 2:25 left in the fourth before mounting a charge. They cut the Sixers lead to 108-106 on a Kanter dunk with 41 seconds to go in the quarter. Ben Simmons hit a pair of free throws, but a Jayson Tatum drained a three pointer cut the Celtics deficit to one, 110-109, with 27 seconds left. Embiid was fouled and made one of two free throws then added two more free throws to clinch the victory. Boston led late in the first half 55-47 but Philadelphia went on a 9-4 run to cut the deficit to three points 59-56 at half-time. Former Celtic Al Horford sat out the game with a left knee and hamstring injury. He received a standing ovation when he was shown on the scoreboard, and he acknowledged the crowd with a wave. Elsewhere, Luka Doncic delivered his second career 40 point triple double as the Dallas Mavericks rolled over the Detroit Pistons 122-111 in Mexico City. — AFP



Enes Kanter (right) of the Boston Celtics tries to stop Joel Embiid of the Philadelphia 76ers at TD Garden in Boston, Massachusetts on Thursday. The 76ers won 115-109. — AFP

## Stern undergoes brain surgery

Los Angeles, Dec. 13: Former NBA commissioner David Stern underwent emergency surgery on Thursday after suffering a brain hemorrhage, the NBA announced. "NBA Commissioner Emeritus David Stern suffered a sudden brain hemorrhage earlier today for which he underwent emergency surgery. Our thoughts and prayers are with David and his family," the league said in a news release. ESPN reported that the 77-year-old Stern collapsed at a New York restaurant and was rushed to a hospital where doctors performed the operation. The NBA did not release any details on his condition. Stern served as commissioner from 2006 to 2014



David Stern

● The 77-year-old David Stern, former NBA commissioner collapsed at a New York restaurant and was rushed to a hospital where doctors performed an emergency surgery for brain hemorrhage. Dallas Mavericks coach Rick Carlisle said the whole organization is hoping for a speedy recovery. "The thoughts and prayers of the Dallas organization are with commissioner David Stern," Carlisle said. "I was with him a month ago yesterday in New York, we had a couple of days between games, I actually sat with him in his office in New York, I consider him a great friend and obviously a great friend of the game." Stern was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2014 and the International Basketball Hall of Fame in 2016. He was given the title of "Commissioner Emeritus" after he stepped down. — AFP

# Neymar-Mbappe duo a hit

Paris, Dec. 12: As the world's two most expensive footballers, Neymar and Kylian Mbappé already stand apart. On the field, they have a harmony which could take Paris Saint-Germain far in the Champions League after three straight seasons of failing to even reach the quarterfinals. Evidence of their growing understanding was fully displayed in the 5-0 home win against an albeit weak Galatasaray side in the Champions League midweek. Mbappé set up Neymar with an exquisite back-heeled pass, and Neymar returned the compliment with a defense-splitting ball to send the electrifying Mbappé through on goal. They also combined in setting up PSG's opening goal for Mauro Icardi. "The real Neymar is back," *Le Parisien* newspaper said on Thursday. But for how long? The worry for PSG is if the relationship between Neymar and Mbappé becomes rather too exclusive, to the detriment of teamwork and the exclusion of teammates. The concern is that against far better sides later in the competition, this will be too predictable and work against PSG. Of Neymar's 57 completed passes against the Turkish side, 17 of them went to Mbappé. Hardly any went to Icardi, the other striker although much of his game is about movement off the ball to open up space for others. There is no denying that with its two biggest stars fully fit, PSG looks an ominous side. — AFP



Paris Saint-Germain's Neymar (left) and his teammate Kylian Mbappé in this file photo. — AFP

## INTER SET EYES ON ITALIAN LEAGUE AS THEY GEAR UP FOR FIORENTINA

Milan, Dec. 13: Inter Milan turn their focus back to the Serie A title chase after their Champions League flop while Gennaro Gattuso begins life as Napoli coach trying to end their seven-game winless run in Italian league action this weekend. Inter Milan were the only one of Italy's four Champions League teams to fail to make the knockout rounds after a 1-2 defeat against Barcelona in the San Siro. Antonio Conte's league

leaders, who have a two-point advantage over champions Juventus, travel to 13th-placed Fiorentina, with their focus on claiming a first Serie A title since 2010. Inter stars Romelu Lukaku (ten) and Lautaro Martinez (eight) have between them scored as many goals as the entire Fiorentina squad this season, with the Tuscan side on a run of four consecutive defeats. Cristiano Ronaldo's Juventus host Udinese, in 16th, on Sunday after

their unbeaten run ended last weekend against Lazio in Rome. Portuguese star Ronaldo has scored in his last three games including the midweek Champions League win over Bayer Leverkusen. In a battle between third and fourth, in-form Lazio and Cagliari go head-to-head. Simone Inzaghi's Lazio can extend their winning streak to eight consecutive games but Cagliari are unbeaten in the league since September 1. — AFP

## CRESPO HOPES MESSI WINS A WORLD CUP

Kolkata, Dec. 13: Lionel Messi is in the same league as Pele or Diego Maradona and he doesn't need to win a World Cup to prove his greatness, feels iconic former Argentine striker Hernan Crespo. Here in the city as the ambassador of TSK 25K run, the prolific Argentine said: "Messi doesn't need that (to win a World Cup to be great player). In the whole history, I can think of five players — Pele, (Alfredo) di Stefano, (Johan) Cruyff, (Diego) Maradona and then there is Messi." He however hoped that Messi gets to finally lift the World Cup in Qatar 2022 even though it will be incredibly tough. "I hope (Messi wins the World Cup in 2022). It will be very hard. This is really our dream, I hope he tries again. The first one is Copa America which we are hosting and Colombia and we have a good chance to lift the Copa America," the legend added. For 44-year-old Crespo, Messi alongside Maradona belong to a "different planet" but when it comes to goal poaching abilities, the best Argentina had is undoubtedly Gabriel Batistuta. "Mario Kempes (1978 Golden Boot winner) was also special for us. Lot of great strikers. Diego is from another planet. There will be Messi with Diego. Batistuta is the best striker ever in Argentina. Messi somewhere nearer," he said. — AFP

### STATE CLIPS



A Rajasthan player goes for a shot during the match against Haryana at the 23rd Junior National Sepaktakraw championship at the Victory Play Ground Indoor Stadium in Hyderabad on Friday.

## TS, Andhra in sepak takraw Last 8

After finishing runner-up on Thursday, the Telangana boys team along with Andhra Pradesh reached the quarterfinals of the regu event at the 23rd Junior National Sepaktakraw Championships being held at the Victory Play Ground in Hyderabad. Telangana beat Goa 21-16, 21-8 in the first match and then won against Pondichery and Uttarakhand. Andhra Pradesh won 21-10, 21-11 over Gujarat and then beat Madhya Pradesh 21-13, 21-17. However, Telangana girls continued to fail in the championship as they were beaten by Odisha and Rajasthan. THE RESULTS (REGU LEAGUE, BOYS) Delhi bt Pondichery 21-6, 21-6; Bihar bt Jharkhand 21-11, 21-18; Haryana bt Himachal 21-11, 21-18; AP bt Gujarat 21-10, 21-11; Telangana bt Goa 21-16, 21-8; Maharashtra bt J&K 21-4, 21-8; Karnataka bt Rajasthan 21-12, 21-19; Uttarakhand bt Punjab 21-14, 21-6; Odisha bt Chandigarh 21-13, 21-9; Manipur bt Assam 21-7, 21-10; Kerala bt Tamil Nadu 21-14, 21-11; Delhi bt Bengal 21-8, 21-9; Bihar bt Nagaland 21-18, 21-15; Karnataka bt HP 21-13, 21-10; AP bt MP 21-13, 21-17; Telangana bt Pondichery 21-8, 21-8; Maharashtra bt Jharkhand 21-8, 21-6; Assam bt Rajasthan 21-16, 12-21, 21-19; Telangana bt Uttarakhand 22-20, 21-17. REGU LEAGUE, GIRLS Assam bt Haryana 21-11, 18-21, 21-7; Nagaland bt Jharkhand 21-11, 21-4; Odisha bt Telangana 17-21, 21-13, 21-18; Goa bt Kerala 21-10, 21-19; Bihar bt Bengal 21-10, 21-15; UP bt Tamil Nadu 21-9, 21-11; Delhi bt Gujarat 21-12, 21-10; Assam bt Bengal 21-4, 21-11; Nagaland bt Tamil Nadu 21-7, 21-6; Haryana bt Bihar 21-17, 21-8; UP bt Jharkhand 21-7, 21-4; Rajasthan bt Telangana 21-8, 17-21, 21-15; Kerala bt Karnataka 21-15, 21-16; AP bt Tamil Nadu 21-9, 21-13; Assam bt Maharashtra 21-15, 21-17; Odisha bt Gujarat 21-4, 21-2; Rajasthan bt Delhi 21-15, 21-12; Manipur bt Karnataka 21-5, 21-7; Haryana bt Maharashtra 21-14, 21-11.

## Stanley AFI technical panel chairman

Telangana Athletics Association president B. E. Stanley Jones has been appointed Technical Committee Chairman for Athletics Federation of India (AFI). Stanley will be in charge of appointment of technical delegates and officials as well the conduct of all National Championships until March next year with a revision that could extend his tenure by four years. Stanley's immediate assignments would be the Khelo India Games scheduled in Guwahati from January 11 to 14 and the National Cross Country Championships to be held in Karimnagar on January 19. — AFP



Stanley Jones

## Skater Srivigna for National event

Hyderabad skater Srivigna has qualified for the 65th STF National School Games Skating Championship to be held in Belgaum in Karnataka from December 27 to 31. Srivigna made it to the national event by winning a gold in the 2,000 metres road event and silver in 1,000 metres rink event in the Under 14 category of the inter-district championships held at Indira Park, Uppal and HMDA Layout rinks. Srivigna also qualified for an event to be organised by the Roller Skating Federation of India (RSFI) at Vizag from December 18 to 23. — AFP



Srivigna

## Cross country trials in Hyderabad

The Hyderabad District Athletics Association is conducting district cross country trials-cum-meet for boys and girls in the 16, 18, 20 years, men and women categories at Nizam College grounds on December 20 at 6.30 am to pick the Hyderabad District team that will participate in the 6th Telangana State Cross Country Championship to be held at Jangaon on December 29. Interested athletes should report to organising secretary K. M. Chisty at the venue. The following races will be conducted at the trials-cum-meet: Men — 10km, Women — 10km, Under 20 boys — 8km, Under 20 girls — 6km, Under 18 boys — 6km, Under 18 girls — 4km, Under 16 boys — 2km, Under 16 girls — 2km. — AFP

# Americans rally for a late surge

Melbourne, Dec. 13: Tiger Woods' US team staged a stirring late comeback to stay in the hunt at the Presidents Cup on Friday after the tournament appeared to be slipping away. The US went into the alternate shot or foursomes format on day two trailing 4-1, after Ernie Els' Internationals enjoyed their best start to the biennial matchplay event since 2005. They ended it 6.5-3.5 behind after clawing their way back against from Els' young unit. At one point the Internationals were ahead in all five matches, but Justin Thomas and Patrick Cantlay both drilled huge putts on the 18th to clinch narrow victories for a US team that desperately needed points. With 30 points at stake over the week, the Internationals need another nine from Saturday's eight matches and the 12 singles on the final day of play, Sunday, for a famous victory. — AFP



## Spin consultant

Pakistan has appointed former Test leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed as spin bowling consultant



We want to expand the pool of players who can perform successfully for us.

— Ed Smith, England selector on the squad announcement for ODI and T20 series in South Africa

## SHORT TAKES

### Rain disrupts Pakistan Test

**Rawalpindi:** Pakistan's first home Test in a decade was affected by bad weather on Friday, with rain and an already sodden pitch forcing officials to suspend play on the third day of the contest against Sri Lanka.

After day three's first session was washed out by wet weather, only 27 minutes of play was possible before the players walked off with just 5.2 overs bowled. The umpires called off play at 15:35pm local time, after only 91 overs of play in three days. Sri Lanka progressed to 283-6, with Dhananjaya de Silva on 87 — 13 short of his fourth Test hundred. Dilruwan Perera was unbeaten on six as stop-start play left the players and some 2,000 fans, mostly schoolkids, frustrated. On Thursday, rain and poor light kept the teams off the field for all but 83 minutes. For Pakistan, 16-year-old paceman Naseem Shah (2-83) and Shaheen Shah Afridi (2-58) were the most successful bowlers. The conditions have put a dampener on the long-awaited return to Test in Pakistan, following the 2009 militant attack on Sri Lanka's team bus that left eight people dead and several players and officials wounded. — AFP

### CAC unlikely to be formed before Jan.

**New Delhi:** The BCCI will decide on the composition of its Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) and subsequent changes in the national selection committee only after the Supreme Court hears its plea on amending some of the key Lodha reforms in January. This could effectively mean that MSK Prasad-led committee will also select the squad for the three-match T20 series against Sri Lanka, starting January 5. According to sources in the BCCI, the top brass wants to wait till the January hearing as there will be clarity on a lot of issues including the CAC and whether it's needed in the first place to conduct interviews for prospective selectors. "It is unlikely that the CAC will be formed before the Supreme Court hearing in January. So naturally, the selection committee might also take some time to form. It is still not clear whether the new selection committee or the existing one will pick the squad for the marquee New Zealand tour," a BCCI source said on conditions of anonymity. The BCCI in its plea has asked for relaxation in the 'cooling off' period which will allow president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah to complete their full terms instead of 10 months. — PTI



(from left) Bowling coach Bharat Arun, Yuzvendra Chahal, Ravi Shastri and Kuldeep Yadav during a training session in Chennai. — E.K. Sanjay

# KulCha sim sim

Will Team India open door for Kuldeep-Chahal to spin magic together?

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, DEC. 13

Not long ago, the buzzword in the limited-overs cricket. Jumping on the bandwagon, the Indian team management was so fascinated by the trend that world-class spinners R. Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja were completely sidelined after the 2017 Champions Trophy to accommodate Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal.

With the full backing from team management, the famed 'KulCha' became a hot combo as they spun a web around various oppositions.

In 34 one-dayers that Kuldeep and Chahal played together, the duo shared 118 wickets between them.

But again, the trend changed. The spin duo haven't played together in the XI since the World Cup league match defeat against England at Edgbaston. Their journey



Groundstaff cover the pitch at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Friday. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

would come full circle if both make it to the XI in the opening ODI against West Indies on Sunday. It was here at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium where they had announced their arrival by sharing five wickets between them in India's win over Australia in 2017.

Bharat Arun, India's bowling coach, said it comes down to finding an ideal combination. "We were looking at an ideal combination that gives absolute balance to the

team. Also, there was an option where we could use Jadeja as an all-rounder. So that really helped us. There may be occasions when there are conducive conditions both can be playing together. But we will have to look at the overall balance before we decide the team," said Arun.

Arun, however, hinted that it's highly unlikely that Jadeja would sit out. "If you look at Jadeja, we have a ready-made all-rounder. Jadeja has been exceptional for us. He bat-

ted well, bowled well and the best fielder in international cricket now. He adds a lot of dimension to us," he said.

The bowling said Washington Sundar would stake a claim in the ODI squad given the way he has performed in T20s. "In due course, Washi will be in contention. Whenever he got opportunities, he has done well. He is more than a capable bat. He has played a cameo whenever he had a chance. In the future, he would be somebody we will consider for the ODI scenario," he added.

"If you can bat in ODI and T20 cricket, it will give you a different dimension. You should be exceptional in at least two skills. If they can bat, it lends a lot more balance to the team. But as it is, Kuldeep and Chahal can be matchwinners on their day. When it comes to matchwinners, you forego the other aspects. They can win you matches just by one skill alone," Arun added.

### Shardul to replace injured Bhuvneshwar

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC. 13

Injured pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar was on Friday ruled out of the three-match ODI series against West Indies. Shardul Thakur has been drafted into the side as his replacement. As India sweated it out in the nets here on Friday, Bhuvneshwar's absence had raised an eyebrow.

Bowling coach Bharath Arun said he was happy with the fact that India have a fast bowling pool where bowlers are ready when given an opportunity. "It augurs well for us and it gives us a varied pool of bowlers to choose. Which bowler to play depends on the conditions. We will go for horses-for-courses policy," he said.

## After Bhuvi, Bumrah to bowl at India nets in Vizag

**New Delhi, Dec. 13:** Adhering to an established norm, pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah will bowl during net sessions with the Indian team before their second ODI against the West Indies in Visakhapatnam as part of his rehabilitation programme after recovering from a back injury.

Bumrah has been out since the start of the home series against South Africa due to a stress fracture but has made a steady recovery. The team management is expecting him to be fit before the tour of New



Jasprit Bumrah

Zealand early next year. The game against West Indies is scheduled for December 18. "Bumrah will be having a net session with the Indian team. This is a norm now. The team management also checked

Bhuvneshwar Kumar's fitness in Indore before the Test against Bangladesh although he wasn't a part of the squad. This is also something on similar lines, a common practice," a BCCI source said on conditions of anonymity. "There is a system that has been put in place. When a player has recovered substantially, he is to be checked by the team management as well as the national team physio (Nitin Patel) and trainer (Nick Webb). Bowling at India nets will give him that feel," said the source. — PTI

## Former India coach Kumble wants Shreyas to come at No.4 position

**New Delhi, Dec. 13:** Former India captain and spin legend Anil Kumble wants Shreyas Iyer to bat at the crucial No.4 position in the upcoming ODI series against the West Indies, which according to him, is going to be a tough "challenge" for the Indian bowlers.

Giving his views on the upcoming three ODIs, starting Sunday, Kumble said India's bowling attack will have to be at its best to get the better of a powerful West

Indies batting line-up. "With Shikhar (Dhawan) not being there it again gives K. L. Rahul chance to open the batting. We have seen Shreyas Iyer's quality and he has grown in stature, so I would like him to be at number four," he said.

West Indies lost T20 leg of the tour, going 1-2 to the hosts. The three-match ODI rubber will start in Chennai. — PTI



Shreyas Iyer

## Bravo eager to contribute again

### West Indian allrounder backtracks on retirement

NEHA SURANA | DC CHENNAI, DEC. 13

West Indies allrounder Dwayne Bravo on Wednesday made a sharp U-turn by reversing his decision on retirement. The former captain, however, made it clear that he would only play the T20 format and pledged his full commitment to the team. "It's been on my mind ever since the Cricket West Indies witnessed a change in administration and team management (coach and captain level). I think it's the right time for me to come back and contribute to the team," said Bravo with just a bunch of reporters attending the hurriedly arranged interaction.



I think it's the right time for me to come back and contribute to the team. — DWAYNE BRAVO

In October, Bravo had announced his retirement from international cricket and a few days ago he hinted a return to it and made himself available for the World T20 in Australia. The 36-year-old feels he is fit enough to play the shortest format. "I feel very motivated in this part of my life and career. All the administrators, coaches and players can now together work towards uplifting the team. We can sing on the same song and improve the state of the team," he said.

Ireland will be touring West Indies early in January for three ODIs and three T20Is. Bravo said he was available for selection. "I waited for the T20 series to finish. I could have gone back home and announced, but the next T20 series starts in the first week of January. So I just wanted to make it clear before next selection," Bravo said.

When asked if he were confident about getting picked for the T20 World Cup, Bravo said: "It's step by step. The World Cup is in October. There's going to be at least 19-20 games before that, so the WT20 is not my main reason for coming back. There's so much talent in West Indies, if managed properly, we can be the most dominant team as we once were. "Windies were World

No.1 not long ago, now the team is ranked 10th. Our focus now is to improve our T20 rankings. I think I can only enhance what is already there that is young talent," he added.

Under new ODI captain Kieron Pollard, West Indies drubbed Afghanistan 3-0 before losing 1-2 to India. Bravo believes Pollard is the right leader to take the team forward. He also appreciated the captain-coach bond that Pollard and Phil Simmons are sharing.

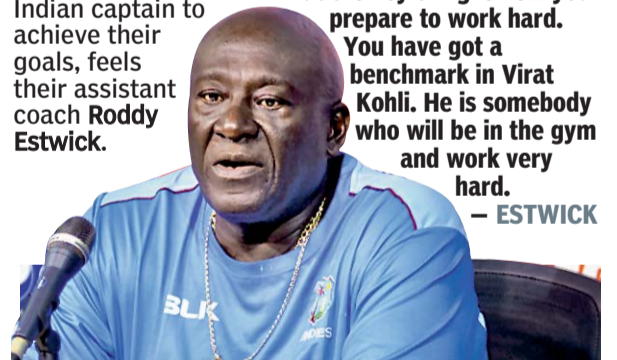
"I think he (Pollard) is a very passionate guy. His leadership skills are very good. He has a very good relationship with the coach as well. The coach-captain relationship is very important for any team. They will mostly have the same plans and will be on the same page. Polly in his short stint as captain against Afghanistan and India has already shown what he can do. He's the one to take us forward," Bravo said.

Bravo is excited at the prospects of playing with youngsters. "I learned a lot when I had seniors around me. So once these young players have seniors around them they'll improve naturally. This new management wants a mix of experience and youth. The mix of youth and experience will definitely help us improve," he said.

### Work as hard as Kohli: Windies coach

Virat Kohli is the 'benchmark' and that is why all West Indies players should work as hard as the Indian captain to achieve their goals, feels their assistant coach Roddy Estwick.

It's exciting times for us when you look at guys like Hetmyer, Pooran and Hope. We have got young batsmen who are developing. But the key thing is how you prepare to work hard. You have got a benchmark in Virat Kohli. He is somebody who will be in the gym and work very hard. — ESTWICK



## Smith pulls off a blinder, Starc tears through Kiwis

**Perth, Dec. 13:** A stunning catch by Steve Smith snared the prized wicket of Kane Williamson as Mitchell Starc tore through the New Zealand top order on the second day of the first Test in Perth on Friday.

Smith dived horizontally to his right at second slip to take the catch to remove Williamson for 34 from the bowling of Starc, just when it appeared New Zealand were fighting back well after losing their two openers with only one run on the board.

After Australia posted 416 in extreme heat on the back of a third successive Test century for Marnus Labuschagne the Kiwis were struggling at 109 for five in reply at stumps, still 307 runs in arrears.

Ross Taylor, who put on 76 for the third wicket with Williamson and made 290 in his previous Test in Perth, was on 66 and BJ



Aussies celebrate a New Zealand wicket on Day Two of the first Test in Perth on Friday. — AFP

Watling was yet to score. Smith's freak catch was a key moment, as the Kiwis slumped to 97 for five by losing three wickets for just 20 runs.

Starc (4-31) did the damage with four wickets, including those of Henry Nicholls (7) and night watchman Neil Wagner (0) in successive balls.

However, Australia had also lost opening bowler

Josh Hazlewood (1-0) with a left hamstring injury.

Hazlewood bowled opener Jeet Raval for a duck in his first over, but managed just two balls in his second before pulling up short during his run up.

**Brief scores: Australia 416** (Labuschagne 143, Head 56, Wagner 4/92, Southey 4/93) vs **New Zealand 109/5** (Taylor 66 (batting), Starc 4/31).

## IPL 2020 AUCTION Maxwell, Steyn and Marsh in top bracket

**New Delhi, Dec. 13:** As many as 332 cricketers will go under the hammer at the IPL auction in Kolkata on December 19 with Australia's Glenn Maxwell and South African Dale Steyn among those opting for the highest base price of ₹2 crore.

"While 997 players had initially registered for the auction, the final list has been pruned after the eight franchises submitted their shortlist of players," read an official IPL statement.

Australian all-rounder Mitchell Marsh and Sri Lanka veteran Angelo Mathews too have opted for the ₹2 crore base price.

Only 73 slots are there to be filled in the eight franchises and only 29 of them can be foreign buys. Robin Uthappa, who was released by

Kolkata Knight Riders last month, is the sole Indian player in the auction list with a base price of ₹1.5 crore.

Premier Australian pacer Josh Hazlewood, who has never played in the IPL, has put himself in the highest base price bracket alongside bowling partner Pat Cummins, who has represented KKR, Delhi Capitals and Mumbai Indians. Maxwell, who recently took a break to deal with mental health, is back in the auction pool after opting out of the last edition alongside Aaron Finch. Finch is back in the pool at a base price of ₹1 crore.

Fellow Australian Chris Lynn, who was released by KKR, will be expecting to go at a good price at the auction next week. — PTI

## I was mentally, physically ruined: Maxwell on break

**New Delhi, Dec. 13:** Australian allrounder Glenn Maxwell said being constantly on the road for the past "four to five years" had mentally and physically ruined him, forcing him to take a mental health break in October.

Maxwell had opted out of Australia's T20I series against Sri Lanka after playing the first two matches to address his mental health. "I was pretty cooked when I decided to take the time off. Big reason why I did take that time away is I was pretty mentally and physically ruined," Maxwell said.

"I think it was eight months on the road, living out of a suitcase and that probably had been going on for four or five years, just constantly on the road and it all just caught up with me at that time.

"I really want to thank Cricket Australia, Cricket Victoria and the Stars for



Glenn Maxwell

giving me that space and allowing me to have that time away from the game and get myself right."

Maxwell said it was his girlfriend, who first noticed the change in him. "It was actually my partner who suggested I speak to someone, she was the first one who noticed it, so I should probably thank her as well. Once I had that initial conversation it was a big weight off my shoulders," he said.

"My girlfriend was probably No.1, it wasn't an easy job for her to deal with me

going through my mood swings for the first few weeks, but Michael Lloyd was the guy I had the initial conversation with, he's been someone who I've confided in since back in the academy days, so I've known him for well over a decade now."

On a comeback trail now, the 31-year-old will make his domestic cricket return, captaining Melbourne Stars in their opening Big Bash match later this month. "It probably took a bit longer than I thought it was going to take, it was an interesting six weeks, away from the game and there was probably times I thought I was going to come back earlier," Maxwell said.

"I've been getting back in the swing of things for a while, I've been around the Vics change rooms for the last two or three weeks now," he added. — PTI





**Klopp retained**  
Jurgen Klopp has agreed a contract extension with Liverpool until 2024

## Man U make knockouts

Paris, Dec. 13: Teenager Mason Greenwood again grabbed his chances for Manchester United, scoring twice in a 4-0 thrashing of AZ Alkmaar in the Europa League.

Earlier Arsenal came back from 0-2 down to draw 2-2 at Standard Liege on Thursday and also make sure of a place in the last 32 as Group 'F' winners.

With Wolves, who crushed Besiktas 4-0, also advancing, English clubs ended with a full house in Europe with the three Europa League entries following the Premier League's four Champions League teams into the knockout rounds.

Spanish clubs also completed a full set when Getafe

THE RESULTS			
<b>Manchester United</b> (Ashley Young 53, Mason Greenwood 58, 64, Juan Mata 62-pen)	<b>4</b>	<b>Arsenal</b> (Alexandre Lacazette 78, Bukayo Saka 81)	<b>2</b>
<b>AZ Alkmaar</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Wolves</b> (Diogo Jota 58, 63, 69, Dendoncker 67)	<b>4</b>
<b>Standard Liege</b> (Bastien 47, Amallah 69)	<b>2</b>	<b>Besiktas</b>	<b>0</b>

joined already-qualified Sevilla and Espanyol by scoring three times in the last 14 minutes to beat Krasnodar 3-0 in a show-down for second place in Group 'C'.

However, Bundesliga leaders Borussia Muenchengladbach and Italian power Lazio made surprising exits from the Europa tournament.

At Old Trafford, in a battle for top spot in Group 'L', Alkmaar matched a youthful United side until the 53rd minute when veteran Ashley Young smashed the home team ahead.

Greenwood pounced on a loose ball to snap the second into the corner of the net. After Greenwood was

fouled, Spanish midfielder Juan Mata converted a penalty and slotted United third goal.

Then the Spaniard set up Greenwood for another crisp low left-footer inside the post.

Alexandre Lacazette and Bukayo Saka were on target in the space of three second-half minutes as Arsenal survived a scare to win their group.

They lived on their nerves as Eintracht Frankfurt were poised to knock them off top spot when the Germans led Guimaraes 2-1. However, the Portuguese side, already eliminated, scored twice in the last five minutes to claim a 3-2 win.

— AFP

## Sindhu out of Worlds with victory

Guangzhou, Dec. 13: Already out of reckoning, India's P.V. Sindhu recorded a consolation win over China's He Bingjiao in the third Group A match to end her campaign on a positive note at the year-ending BWF World Tour Final here on Friday.

Sindhu, whose title defence lay in

tatters after her second successive loss on Thursday, scripted an incredible turnaround after being 9-18 down in the opening game to eventually outwit Bingjiao 21-19, 21-19 in minutes and finish third in the group.

This win also snapped Sindhu's run of four straight losses to the Chinese,

making their head-to-head record 6-9. The Indian struggled with her precision initially, allowing Bingjiao to lead 7-3 at one stage in the opening game. The left-handed Chinese cruised to a 11-6 advantage at the break with the Indian misjudging a shuttle.

— PTI

## LIVERPOOL TAKE ON WATFORD IN PREMIER LEAGUE

London, Dec. 13: Liverpool will seek sign off their pre-Christmas Premier League duties in style against their whipping boys Watford this weekend while Leicester attempt to stay in touch before a summit meeting later this month.

Jurgen Klopp's men are eight points clear of their nearest pursuers as they prepare to jet out to Qatar for the Club World Cup.

Watford, with new manager Nigel Pearson at the helm, will not be relishing the trip to Anfield, where they have lost 1-6, 0-5 and 0-5 on their past three visits.

Jamie Vardy, who turns 33 next month, is out on his own at the top of the Premier League goalscoring charts, with 16 goals in 16 games. Those goals have helped Leicester win a club-record eight consecutive top-flight matches by an aggregate score of 25-3. If Vardy nets in Leicester's next two games, he would give himself the chance to equal his own Premier League record of goals in 11 straight games against Liverpool on December 26.

— AFP

**LIVE ON TV**  
Liverpool vs Watford from 6 pm on Star Sports Select 1, 1 HD; Chelsea vs Bournemouth from 8.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, 1 HD; Leicester City vs Norwich City from 8.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, 1 HD.

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