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WINDOWS



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Exports continue to fall; FM vows more stimulus measures

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New Delhi: The Doklam standoff with China has led the Indian Army to propose the setting up of a new all powerful deputy chief of strategy. The Indian Army is awaiting clearance from the Cabinet to start implementation of the new setup. Full report on Page 3

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Forecast: Light rainfall

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Durmuhurtam: 6.41 am to 8.09 am
Rahukalam: 9 pm to 10.30 pm

SUNSET TODAY 5.26 PM
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Violence continues in Upper Assam, but Guwahati calmer Abe-Modi summit off as protests rock Northeast

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

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Anti-CAB stir up in Bengal, arson in train

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West Bengal Chief minister Mamata Banerjee, who announced a Trinamul rally against the NRC and CAB on Sunday, has appealed to people to maintain peace. More on Page 2

Dhaka summons India HC as Bangla diplomat is attacked

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Anti-CAB protestors on December 11 night attacked Bangladesh assistant high commissioner Tanvir Mansur's convoy while he was on way to his residence from Guwahati airport. More on Page 2

States can't block CAB: Centre

Bengal, MP, Punjab, Kerala, C'garh CMs vowed not to implement it

AGE CORRESPONDENT
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The Union home ministry says that state governments do not have any powers to stall implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in their states since it was enacted under the Union List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution. There are 97 items which are under the Union List, which include defence, external affairs, railways, citizenship and naturalisation, in addition to others.

A senior ministry official said states do not have the power to decline to implement a Central law which is in the Union List.

The ministry's view was made public after the refusal by the chief ministers of West Bengal, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Chhattisgarh, among others, who have categorically declared that they will not implement the law in their states. Most of these states

are rule either run by the Congress or other Opposition parties.

Under the revised Citizenship Act, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan till December 31, 2014 in the wake of religious persecution will be granted Indian citizenship.

According to the provisions of the law, these refugees will now be

given Indian citizenship after residing in India for five years, instead of 11 years earlier. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, and by the Lok Sabha on Monday.

Earlier, both Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan and West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee had launched a scathing attack on the new law. Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh had also said his

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Boris sweeps polls, vows Jan. 31 Brexit

Labour's worst show since 1935, loses strongholds

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, DEC. 13



British PM Boris Johnson is greeted by the staff as he returns to 10 Downing Street after meeting Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace on Friday. — AP

Election-weary British voters gave Prime Minister Boris Johnson a "powerful new mandate" in the historic December 12 general election as his Conservative Party on Friday won a commanding majority in the House of Commons to allow him to finalise UK's divorce deal with the European Union next month.

Mr Johnson, 55, who vigorously campaigned on a simple slogan "Get Brexit Done", vowed that he will work "flat out" to repay the trust of voters after the Conservatives' most emphatic majority since the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher.

A 365-seat haul gave the Conservative Party a solid 80-seat majority in the 650-strong House of Commons. The Conservatives won St Ives — the final seat to declare — by 80 votes.

Mr Johnson met Queen Elizabeth II at the Buckingham Palace to formally seek her permission to form his new government. Earlier, addressing a victory rally, Mr Johnson hailed



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Labour's Jeremy Corbyn, who led his party to its worst defeat in decades, leaves his home in north London on Friday. He has said he will not lead it in the next election.

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a "new dawn" which "unarguably" broke the Brexit deadlock and vowed not to let down the "sacred trust" placed in

him by voters, who turned out for the first winter election in decades to register a 67 per cent turnout.

Mr Johnson, who won his own seat in London's Uxbridge and South Ruislip, hailed the Conservative Party's triumph as a "powerful new mandate" to move

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India happy, PM greets Boris

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The victory of Britain's Conservative Party led by Boris Johnson in Thursday's election came as a major relief for India, after sections of Labour Party including its chief Jeremy Corbyn were seen to have taken a pro-Pakistan line on the Kashmir issue. New Delhi was swift to congratulate British PM.

"Many congratulations to PM @BorisJohnson for his return with a thumping majority. I wish him the best and look forward to working together for closer India-UK ties," Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted.

The Labour Party's position on Kashmir infuriated large sections of the British-Indian diaspora, who had threatened to vote against Labour and in favour of the

Conservatives. Seizing the opportunity, Boris Johnson also went all out to secure the UK Indian vote by visiting Hindu temples in Britain and endearing himself to the community.

In contrast, almost the entire UK Pakistani community as well as those hailing from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir were reportedly voting in favour of Labour. More on Page 3

Buzz in Jharkhand on hung House scenarios

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While the final arithmetic will be clear only

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The one party both the Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress, which is in alliance with JMM, are hopeful of bailing them out is the Sudesh Mahato-led All Jharkhand Students Union, which is a former BJP ally but fought independently this time.

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Rahul, BJP spar over 'rape in India'

BJP demands his apology for campaign remark, Rahul hits out at Modi

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PM's response on why he had destroyed the economy and had "snatched jobs" from young people.

The BJP protest, led by the party's women MPs who assembled near the Well to attack Mr Gandhi, derailed the Lok Sabha's regular business and forced Speaker Om Birla to adjourn the proceedings twice. Friday was the last day of the Winter Session.

Amid the din in the House, DMK MP K.

Kanimozhi defended Mr Gandhi as Congress members also came out of their seats in protest, and asked the Speaker to take up Question Hour. She said Mr Gandhi did not make the remarks in the House and that he was referring to cases of sexual assaults and violence against women in India.

Ms Kanimozhi's reaction came as parliamentary affairs minister Prahlad Joshi asked her

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Down but not out

RJD chief Lalu Prasad says he is still 'capable of taking on enemies, despite having suffered a thousand wounds'

Parts of Assam still reel under protests over CAB

Violence continues to rock Upper Assam, protestors pelts stone on Army ■ BJP leader resigns to join protest



MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, DEC. 13

Ulfa chief Baruah appeals for calm

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, DEC. 13

In what has surprised many a security analyst, outlawed Ulfa-I chief Paresh Baruah on Friday called up several local television channels to make an appeal to the people of Assam to end violence and solve the issue in a "democratic manner".

The Ulfa-I chief, who has been waging an armed struggle against the state for last two decades, said, "All protesters should follow democratic process against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB). There are some criminal-minded people who turned to violence in Guwahati and burnt vehicles, tyres and shops."

Mr Baruah, who appeared on local satellite

channels one after another over the phone also warned, "We are strictly monitoring the agitation and we found that there was no student involvement in vandalism. This is the act of some forces with vested interests, who instigated others to resort to violence."

In his long uninterrupted voice telecast, Mr Baruah defended the youths and students for their peaceful protest and said, "The Bharatiya Janata Party government should withdraw army presence from the streets of Assam. The students and civil society has the right to protest against the Anti-Assamese bill. The government should identify the miscreants who took to violence, but allow peaceful protests to take place."

The government is trying to intimidate the media by issuing advisories. Is this Emergency 2?

— Derek O'Brien, TMC leader

IN BRIEF

Sharma demands all-party meeting

New Delhi: Senior Congress leader Anand Sharma on Friday demanded in Rajya Sabha that the Prime Minister should immediately convene an all party meeting on the worsening law and order situation in the Northeast, including Assam, following passage of the Citizenship Amendment Bill in Parliament. Raising the issue during the Zero Hour, Mr Sharma said an all party meeting was a must in view of the fallout in India's external relations particularly with Bangladesh. "I will urge the government to immediately convene an all party meeting (with) chief ministers of all the states," he said.

Students skip exam, hit streets in A'chal

Itanagar: Protests against the amended Citizenship Act continued to rage across northeast, with students' unions in Arunachal Pradesh on Friday boycotting their examination to hit the streets across cities, seeking immediate revocation of the law. Thousands of agitators, led by Rajiv Gandhi University Students' Union and Students' Union of NERIST, marched from the varsity to Raj Bhavan, covering a distance of around 30 kilometres on the hilly terrain. Local people, along with those belonging to the Assamese community, also joined the rally.

Implement CAB in Maharashtra: BJP

Mumbai: BJP leader Ashish Shelar on Friday wrote to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, demanding immediate implementation of the amended Citizenship Act in Maharashtra. He also said that the CM should clarify his government's position, after Congress leader and minister Nitin Raut opposed implementation of the law. He criticised the Congress for opposing the law in the state. State BJP chief spokesperson Madhav Bhandari said the Congress's stand reflects contempt for the Constitution and challenges Parliament's powers.

EXEMPT N-E FROM PURVIEW OF CAB: AGATHA

Shillong: National Peoples Party (NPP) leader Agatha K. Sangma has asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to exempt the entire Northeast from the purview of the Amended Citizenship Act to ensure that peace returns to the region. The Tura MP had written a letter to the Prime Minister on Thursday night. According to the Act, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan till December 31, 2014 and facing religious persecution there will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship. "The Northeast is a complex region that needs a holistic protection, the government must revisit the CAB and exempt the entire region from its purview. This is the only way peace and confidence can be built among our people," Agatha said in a letter to the Mr Modi. She said the CAB has been vehemently opposed by the people of the Northeast because they fear demographic changes will affect the security and identity of the local tribals of the region. Ms Sangma in her letter said, "Efforts made through long hours of consultations are going futile and the narrative that is being given out is that the BJP-led government is anti-Northeast."

However, there have been reports of violent protests in Upper Assam's Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts. Security sources said that in Dibrugarh, protesters set a Scorpio on fire while in the Khwang area near Moran in Tinsukia district, protesters pelted stones on army vehicles.

Meanwhile, hundreds of people cutting across age groups Friday once again peacefully defied curfew and joined the hunger strike called by AASU at Chandmari field to oppose the new citizenship act. A large number of people, including artists, singers and film stars, observed the 10-hour fast.

The AASU announced that it will file a PIL in the Supreme Court challenging the law. "There is no way Assam or the Assamese people will accept it. Besides peaceful protests, we will continue the legal battle against the law," said AASU chief adviser Sammujjal Bhattacharya.

Besides AASU, several other organisations in Assam including Assam Public Works - which originally petitioned in the Supreme Court for updating the National Register

of Citizens in Assam — have decided to file separate PILs in the top court.

The AASU also announced that they are suspending all kinds of protests after sunset for a week. "We are going to hold a Satyagraha movement at the sub-division level all over the state from December 16 to 18. Our slogan will be — either scrap CAB or arrest us," said the AASU leadership, which reiterated their commitment to 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 posts in protest of the citizenship act.

Meanwhile, the indefinite curfew which had been imposed since Wednesday evening, was relaxed for six hours starting 7am Friday in Guwahati and Dibrugarh. As soon as the curfew was relaxed, people gathered outside grocery shops and at vegetable markets in Guwahati to buy essen-

tials. There was also a rush to withdraw money from ATMs, buy medicines and procure fuel.

However, mobile Internet and broadband services continue to remain affected. The suspension of mobile Internet services was extended for another 48 hours Thursday. The 10 districts where mobile internet has been suspended include: Lakhimpur, Tinsukia, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Charaideo, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Kamrup (metro) and Kamrup.

Mobile internet and messaging services were also suspended in neighbouring Meghalaya for 48 hours beginning 5pm Thursday after incidents were reported of vehicles being vandalised. Areas under two police stations in the state capital Shillong were placed under curfew. The curfews were relaxed during the day but will continue during the night.

The death toll in the Thursday night police firing rose to three Friday, with one more among those critically wounded succumbing to bullet injuries.



Protesters from the Muslim community burn tyres during a demonstration against National Register of Citizens and Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in Howrah district of West Bengal on Friday. — PTI

Mob unleashes violence in 2 districts in Bengal

RAJIB CHOWDHURI AND PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI
KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE, DEC. 13

The raging protests against the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) spread from Assam to West Bengal Friday afternoon, as angry demonstrators attacked the crowded Coromandel Express train and systematically unleashed arson and looting at railway properties in two separate districts.

So much so, that governor Jagdeep Dhankhar and chief minister Mamata Banerjee were forced to appeal for peace. The day also witnessed an aged man in a district along the Indo-Bangladesh border die in fear of the NRC and CAB and a senior BJP leader being attacked.

At around 3.22pm Friday, a furious mob of 250-odd people took to the railway tracks of both Up

and Down lines and started pelting stones on the Chennai-bound Coromandel Express, bringing it to a grinding halt at Uluberia in the Howrah-Kharagpur section of the south-eastern railway (SER) soon after the train's departure from Howrah station at 2.50 pm. The train driver and a railway staff were injured. The panicked passengers closed the doors and windows of their coaches even as the mob went on rampage at the Uluberia station.

The SER spokesperson Sanjoy Ghosh said, "Massive damage was caused in the attack. ₹4 lakhs in cash, eight computers and unreserved tickets were taken away from the booking office at the station, which is now in total darkness."

Following the violence at Uluberia, six trains including the 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 mid-way, and 11 EMU local and passenger trains were detained and controlled at various stations.

In Murshidabad, angry protesters set parts of the railway tracks on fire, damaged signals at the Beldanga railway station, and vandalised the Beldanga police station and Block Development Office around 3.25 pm. Rejinagar, Murshidabad and Jangipur stations in the district; Krishnanagar in Nadia; and Baruipur in South 24 Parganas; also witnessed agitations.

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Assam CM blames Cong for violence

Guwahati, Dec. 13: Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Friday blamed opposition Congress and "communal forces" for the wide-spread violence in the state over the last two days, saying strong action will be taken against those involved in arson and vandalism during the anti-citizenship bill protests.

Mr Sonowal also said the violence was part of a political conspiracy against the BJP-led government in Assam and asserted that he was committed to protecting the rights of the indigenous people of the state. "The Congress and some communal forces are behind the violence. Even some ultra Left have joined the mob. It is a political conspiracy," he said.

The chief minister said the government will not tolerate any violence and strong action will be taken against anyone who is involved in vandalism.

"No one, who is involved in violence, will be spared," he said. The chief minister's comments came after two days of continuous violence by a section of protesters in the state against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019. Frenzied mobs blocked roads in different parts of Assam with burning discarded tyres and menaced commuters by bludgeoning their vehicles with sticks and stones.

Two railway stations were torched while houses of several legislators, including the private residence of Sonowal, were attacked by mobs.

"I am committed to protecting the rights of the indigenous people and want to assure that interests of the indigenous people will not be harmed," he said. —PTI

B'desh protests diplomat convoy attack in Guwahati

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

The Bangladesh Foreign Office on Thursday summoned Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Riva Ganguly Das to protest against the attack on the convoy of its diplomat by anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Bill protesters in Guwahati and vandalism of Chancery signposts while asking India to increase the security of its diplomats and missions in the Northeast. Anti-CAB protesters on Wednesday night attacked Bangladesh assistant high commissioner Tanvir Mansur's convoy while he was on way to his residence from Guwahati airport. Sources said that both Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Mr Mansur were stranded at the airport for several hours before the police escorts took them out. It is learnt that one of

the escort vehicles in his convoy was blocked by the protesters while the envoy vehicle was not touched. Besides, on Thursday a crowd pulled down two signposts of the Bangladesh mission in Guwahati just few metres away from the Chancery building. The Indian government has increased the security of Bangladeshi diplomats and the Consulate in Guwahati.

However, while registering protest against such act of vandalism, acting foreign secretary of Bangladesh, Kamrul Ahsan, told Ms Ganguly that he hoped that "the attack on the convoy of the Assistant High Commissioner and vandalism of the signposts is a one-off incident" and "will not affect the excellent bilateral relations that Bangladesh and India enjoy."

In a statement issued to Bangladesh media, Bangladesh foreign ministry said Mr Ahsan "protested about the attack on the convoy of the (Bangladesh) Assistant High Commissioner and vandalism of the signposts of the Bangladesh Chancery in Guwahati) and requested for protection of personnel and property of the mission by the host government."

The statement further added that Ms Ganguly assured Mr Ahsan that Indian authorities are being immediately alerted to enhance security of Bangladesh Chancery and its assistant high commissioner's residence in Guwahati."

Shah's visit to N-E states cancelled

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

Home minister Amit Shah's visit to the two Northeastern states — Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh — scheduled for Sunday and Monday has been cancelled in wake of largescale protests in Assam and Meghalaya against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.

Frenzied mobs blocked roads in different parts of Assam with burning discarded tyres and menaced commuters by bludgeoning their vehicles with sticks and stones. Two railway stations were torched while houses of several legislators, including the private residence of Sonowal, were attacked by mobs.

"I am committed to protecting the rights of the indigenous people and want to assure that interests of the indigenous people will not be harmed," he said. —PTI



Protestors take part in a hunger strike organised by All Assam Students Union in protest against the Citizenship Amendment Bill in Guwahati on Friday. — PTI

Dozen anti-CAB pleas filed in SC

Claim legislation is unconstitutional

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

The day Central government notified the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act, 12 petitions were filed in the Supreme Court on Friday challenging the constitutional validity of the law that grant citizenship based on religion.

TMC Lok Sabha member Mahua Moitra member approached Chief Justice S.A. Bobde's court seeking an urgent hearing of her petition, after which the day saw more than 11 petitioners approaching the top court to challenge the law, which is at the root of turmoil in Assam and other Northeastern states.

Following Mr Moitra, there were petitions by Congress lawmaker in Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh, former high commissioner Deb Mukherjee, the Uttar Pradesh-based Peace Party, NGOs Rihai Manch and Citizens Against Hate, Ehtesham

Hashmi, Pradyot Deb Barman, Jan Adhikaar Party, advocate M.L. Sharma and students from Symbiosis Law School.

The court was also moved by the All Assam Students Union which has contended that the Section 2, 3, 5 and 6 of the Citizenship Amendment Act are unconstitutional.

A petition by the leader of Opposition in Assam Assembly Debabrata Saikia stated that the amended citizenship law violates the Assam accord. In essence, the basic contention of all the petitions is that the controversial Act negated not only secularism, which is a part of the Preamble of the Constitution, but also the liberal ethos, equality and justice.

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

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

Termining the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) a new way to distract people from the real issues plaguing the country and economy, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath on Friday accused the BJP government of practising "politics of distractions."

"The CM added that any law that divides people and the country will be opposed vehemently by the Congress party and he will not allow CAB or NRC to be implemented in Madhya Pradesh.

Mr Nath joins the list of CMs who are opposing CAB. Already West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan and Punjab CM Capt Amarinder Singh have declared that CAB and NRC will not be implemented their states.

"The stand of the Congress in any law that divides society will be the stand of the MP government," said Kamal Nath during an interaction with journalists at the Indian Women's Press Corps.

The CM also accused the Modi-government of not following the norms of

MP may shun law, CM hints

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, DEC. 13

Chief minister Kamal Nath on Friday dropped enough hints that Madhya Pradesh would shun the Citizen (Amendment) Bill (CAB) passed in the Rajya Sabha a couple of days ago.

"I feel sorry that Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not bother to discuss a sensitive issue like CAB with the chief ministers before taking a decision (to place the bill in Parliament)," he said.

He added that country that fails to meet the aspirations and demands of its people is doomed to collapse.

ple's imagination. Every time there is an economic slowdown, a bill is introduced, a decision is taken to distract people... But all things have a shelf life. Just like the Emergency had its shelf life, Rajiv Gandhi getting majority with 404 seats in Lok Sabha had a shelf life, even BJP has a shelf life and even this (CAB and NRC) too has a shelf life. Nothing remains permanent," Mr Nath said.





N-E focus

Northeast development ministry should play role of facilitator for other ministries, says Union minister Jitendra Singh



The BJP can't just bulldoze the states to implement citizenship bill

— Mamata Banerjee, West Bengal CM

IN BRIEF

Youth proposes girl at 'gunpoint', held

Bhubaneswar: High drama unfolded near Gangadhar Meher College in Odisha's Sambalpur district on Friday as a youth allegedly proposed a girl of the educational institution while threatening her with a toy gun. The youth, a resident of Kendrapara, reportedly had a one-sided love affair with the girl. Locals nabbed the youth and handed him over to the Sambalpur Town police. The cops seized the toy gun and detained him at the police station for questioning. "The girl told us that the youth proposed her by brandishing the gun. We have detained the youth and a probe is underway," the police said.

Neighbour rapes minor in Odisha

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha police on Friday arrested a youth for allegedly raping a minor girl at Keshpur village under Rambila panchayat of Bhadrak. The accused was arrested hours before he was planning to leave the state to avoid legal action against him. According to reports, the survivor, who belongs to the tribal community, was raped on December 10 but out of fear she chose to remain silent. However, after her health condition deteriorated, she narrated the ordeal to her mother. Later, the survivor was admitted to district headquarters hospital in a critical condition.

Woman leaves dead at home, casts vote

Bokaro, Jharkhand: Taking her husband's death in her stride, a woman preferred to honour democracy first by casting her vote before performing the last rites of her husband on Thursday. Renu Devi left her husband's body at home and went to booth number 87 at Karo Basti in Bermo block and cast her vote during the third of the five-phase polls on Thursday. Later she sent her husband's body to the crematorium. "I learnt to cast my vote before everything from my husband," she said. — PTI

WON'T ALLOW TO IMPLEMENT CAB IN BENGAL: DIDI

Digha, West Bengal: Lashing out at the BJP-led Centre over the amended Citizenship Act, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee on Friday said she would not allow its implementation in the state "under any circumstances". Addressing a press meet, Ms Banerjee, who is also the Trinamul Congress supreme, said the saffron party would not be able to bulldoze the states to enact the law. Rebuffing her assertion, the BJP leadership, however, alleged that the CM was supporting the infiltrators to "secure her vote bank". Announcing a series of protests next week, the chief minister said she would hit the streets seeking revocation of the "draconian" Act. Expressing solidarity with the people of Assam and the Northeast, where violent protests have been raging over the issue for the past few days, she blamed the BJP government at the Centre for the growing tension and the deteriorating law and order situation in the region. "We will not implement the amended Act, even though it has been passed in Parliament. The BJP can't just bulldoze the states to implement it," Ms Banerjee said. Iterating that her fight against the amended Act was the "second war of independence", the CM also stressed that her government would not cooperate with the Centre for enacting the "divisive" law. — PTI

Cong, BJP fear hung House, eye AJSU aid

Final math in J'khand to take shape only on Dec. 23

SREEPARNA CHAKRABARTY RANCHI, DEC. 13

Even before the final two rounds of polling for the Jharkhand Assembly elections are over, the cobweb of coalition politics here with permutations and combinations being worked out by both the ruling BJP and Opposition JMM-Congress.

While the final arithmetic would take shape only on the result day on December 23, speculation is rife on possible scenarios in case of a hung Assembly.

Jharkhand has an 81-member Assembly and 42 is the halfway mark needed to form government. The one party which both the BJP and Congress, which is in alliance with the JMM, are hopeful of bailing them out is the Sudesh Mahato-led All Jharkhand Students Union, which is a former ally of the BJP but fought independently in these polls.

While local BJP leaders hope that in case the party falls short of the majority mark, the AJSU would help prop



UP CM Yogi Adityanath waves at supporters during an election rally in Giridih district on Friday. — PTI

up an NDA government, the Congress-JMM coalition has also kept open its options to rope in the regional party in case it is a wee bit short of the magic number.

However, the AJSU is playing its cards close to its chest. Officially, Mr Mahato told this newspaper that any option can be explored only after the actual results are out.

Sources in his party though feel that Mr Mahato was unlikely to support a BJP government led by current chief minister Raghubar Das and would, this time, go for the kill seeking to become the CM

himself with any party's support, if he got the correct numbers. The AJSU has fielded candidates in 53 of the 81 Assembly seats in the state.

In the Congress camp too, leaders feel that the AJSU option can be explored if the alliance came close and fell short of a few seats.

"The problem in this case would only be the fact that JMM chief and former chief minister Hemant Soren and Sudesh Mahato are both tribal leaders and might not want to share space and the vote bank," a senior leader of the Jharkhand Congress stated.

Army mulls post to deal with strategies

PAWAN BALI NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

The Doklam standoff of 2017 with China has led the Indian Army to propose the setting up of a new, all powerful Deputy Chief of Strategy. The Indian Army is institutionalising the committee formed to deal with the Doklam standoff through Deputy Chief of Strategy, to be headed by a Lt. Gen. rank officer.

According to sources, during the Doklam standoff a "war group" called "Operation and Planning Steering Committee" was set up under the Vice-Chief to deal with the situation.

Personnel from different verticals were brought in the group to advise and deal with the emerging situation. It had personnel from branches of operations, intelligence, logistics, coordination and perception management. "Each personnel crucially con-

tributed during the crisis," sources said.

"The Deputy Chief of Strategy will have people from such fields under him so that ad-hoc arrangements do not happen in the future. Over a period of time, we want to make the Army more agile to quickly assess and respond to emerging situations," sources added.

This will be the third deputy chief post which is being created in the Indian Army headquarters. The Army is awaiting clearance from the Cabinet to start implementation of the new setup.

The new Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy) will deal with all operational and force planning. As per the plans, he will have DG military operations, DG military intelligence, strategic planning, operational logistics branches, as well as the newly-created information warfare branch under him.

Modi to review Namami Gange project today

Kanpur, Dec. 13: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in the city on Saturday to have a first-hand experience of the impact of the ambitious Namami Gange project.

The Prime Minister, who is likely to reach the city around 10.25 am, will take a special steamer for a 50-minute journey through the Ganga to review the project.

SP (East) Raj Kumar Agarwal said after his arrival at the Chakeri airport, the PM will go to CSA University by a helicopter.

"PM Modi will hold a Ganga Council meeting there with Union ministers, chief ministers of UP, Uttarakhand and Bihar and secretaries of various central departments," a senior district official said.

Apart from holding the meeting, the PM will visit Atal Ghat, where he will take the steamer for the journey through the river, the official added. — PTI

PM congratulates Boris on win

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

The victory of the Conservative Party led by Prime Minister Boris Johnson for his return with a thumping majority. I wish him the best and look forward to working together for closer India-UK ties," Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted.

It may be recalled that in September this year, the MEA had said, "The (Indian) government has noted certain developments at the Labour Party Conference (in UK) on September 25 pertaining to the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir. We regret the uninformative and unfounded positions taken at this event. Clearly, this is an attempt at pandering to vote-bank interests. There is no question of engaging with the Labour Party or its representatives on this issue."

The Labour Party's position on Kashmir had infuriated large sections of the British-Indian diaspora who then threatened to vote against the Labour Party and in favour of the Conservatives. Seizing the opportunity, British PM Boris Johnson also went all out to secure the British-Indian vote by visiting Hindu temples in Britain and endearing himself to the community.

SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL

General Public is hereby informed that one girl (depicted in the photo) namely Neha D/o Sh. Vinod Kumar R/o H.No. C-9, ID Hospital Staffs Quarter, Kingsway Camp, Delhi Aged-17 Years has been reported missing since 17.11.2019 vide FIR No.554/19 u/s 363 IPC Dated 18.11.2019 registered at Police Station Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-



Neha

Complexion: Fair, Height: 5'2", Face: Round, Built: Medium, Clothing: Yellow colour suit, salwar and slipper in feet. Any person having any information/Clue about this missing girl, may inform SHO, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi at E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in or website: <http://cbi.nic.in> Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641 Sd/- FAX No. : 011-24368639 SHO, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi DP/9569/NW/19 Tel.: 011-27654674, 27654675

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that a girl namely Ruksana, D/o Taiyab Ansari R/o H.No. 31/03, Indra Vikas Colony, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped since 26.11.2019. In this regard, FIR No. 569/19 u/s 363 IPC dated 27.11.2019 has been registered at P.S. Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the missing/kidnapped girl but no clue has come to light so far. The description of the missing/ kidnapped girl is as under:



Ruksana

Name: Ruksana, Gender: Female, Age: 17 years 11 months, Height: 5'3", Complexion: Fair, Face: Long, Built: Thin, Wearing: Red colour and yellow colour suit and salwar and pink colour jutti in her feet. If anyone has any information regarding this missing/ kidnapped girl, kindly inform SHO/ Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi. E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641 Fax : 011-24368639 Sd/- P.S. Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi Ph. No. 011-24368638, 24368641 DP/9570/NW/19

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Corrigendum Tender notice 185-DRM-MB-19-20 dt. 09.12.2019 Date of Opening 07.01.2020 In NIT header of Tender invited vide Tender notice No. 185-DRM-MB-19-20 dt. 09.12.2019 to be open on 07.01.2020, for the work of Raising of standard high level and extension of PF No. 4 & 5 to 24 coach train length at HRI station in the section of SSE/W/HRI under ADEN/HRI-I, published in Hindustan news paper on 12.12.2019 vide advertisement No. 3950/19. Due to typographical mistake the tender Notice No 185-DRM-MB-19-20 dt. 09.12.2019 should be read as 185-DRM-MB-19-20 dt. 09.12.2019. The other terms & conditions of the tender will remain same. 3981/19

NORTH DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER-(M)-II NEAR SINDHI PARK, OLD RAJINDER NAGAR KAROL BAGH ZONE : NEW DELHI-110060 No. 27/EE-(M)-II/TC/KBZ/2019-20 Dated : 10.12.2019 Executive Engineer (M-II), Karol Bagh Zone, invites on behalf of the Commissioner, North Delhi Municipal Corporation, sealed percentage rates tender from the approved and eligible contractors registered with the MCD (General Wing) as per following schedule:

S. No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount in (₹)	Earnest Money in (₹)	Time of Completion
1.	Imp./Dev. of lane and by lanes in Arya Nagar by laying RMC M-20 and drainage system in Ward C-93/KBZ.	4066587/-	81350/-	19/66/XL-VIII-S/P-854 5M
2.	Imp./Dev. of lane and by lanes in Chandiwala and Mantola Pahar Ganj by pdg. RMC M-20 in Pahar Ganj Ward C-93/KBZ.	4544911/-	90900/-	19/66/XL-VIII-S/P-854 3M
3.	Imp./Dev. of Gali No. 1 Multani Dhandu upper side and lower side, Gali No. 8, Chuna Mandi & road behind Punjab & Sind Bank by pdg. RMC M-20 in Ward C-93/KBZ.	3294658/-	65900/-	19/66/XL-VIII-S/P-854 2M
4.	Imp./Dev. to Gali No. 41, 42, 44 and Gali No. 3 Beadon Pura by pdg. RMC M-20 KBZ in Ward C-93.	2734769/-	54700/-	19/66/XL-VIII-S/P-854 3M

Note : From Sr. No. 1 to 4 for above mentioned each work Head of A/c : XL-VIII-S; Rates Hold Good for : 5 Month; Tender Cost : ₹500/- EMD and Tenders cost to pay through online mode only. You can opt for Challan no. in mode of payment for paying form fee details through E-Payment/NEFT/RTGS. All the circulars issued from time to time by MCD up to the date of issue of this NIT shall be applicable. The detail of the tender can be seen at <http://www.tenderwizard.com/NORTHDMCETENDER>. R.O. No. 186/DPI/North/2019-20 Ex. Engineer-(M)-II/KBZ

POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH, CHANDIGARH
Tender Notice No. PI(EP)/19-20/11 Phone No. 0172-2756469

Scaled tenders are invited from the manufacturers or their sole authorized distributors/ agents on the prescribed form for purchase of various items against tender No. 1-24. The manufacturers and their authorized dealers / distributors can offer their minimum rates as per terms & conditions contained in the Tender Form:-

Sr. No.	Equipment/Item Name	Quantity	EMD	Opening Date	Deptt. Name
Pre Bid Cases					
1.	Supply, Installation & Commissioning of Equipments/ Instruments and Upgradation of the existing MORTUARY on Turnkey basis	As per detailed technical specifications as laid down under heading "Technical Specifications for the Mortuary Upgradation, equipment/installations on Turnkey basis" running into 50 pages attached to this NIT.	21,61,000/-	07-01-2020	Forensic Medicine
2.	High Energy Linear Accelerator with Latest Technology	01No's	40,00,000/-	-do-	Radiotherapy
3.	Central Computerization Observation Station	01No's	3,92,000/-	-do-	Hepatology
4.	Blood Donation Camps Vehicle-01 No.	01No's	70,000/-	-do-	Transfusion Medicine(BTD)
5.	Central Monitoring System with 20 Monitors-01 Set	01 Set	3,00,000/-	-do-	Anaesthesia
6.	Autostainer with Automated Cover Slipper	01No's	1,50,000/-	-do-	Cytology
7.	Operating Microscope for Emergency OT and Trauma OT	01No's	4,00,000/-	-do-	Neurosurgery
8.	Ultrasound System for main OT NS Ward and EW3	01No's	1,50,000/-	-do-	Neurosurgery
9.	Trans Pulmonary (Minimal Invasive) Cardiac Output Monitors	01No's	60,000/-	08-01-2020	Neurosurgery
10.	Endoscope with HD Recording system with fluorescence filter for main OT	01No's	1,50,000/-	-do-	Neurosurgery
11.	Thromboclastometer	01No's	80,000/-	-do-	Hematology
12.	Computerized System (Software and Hardware)	As per technical specifications	1,00,000/-	-do-	BTD
13.	High Resolution Analytical Balance	As per technical specifications	32,000/-	-do-	Stem Cell
Non Pre Bid Cases					
14.	Ventilators (Adult)	07No's	4,00,000/-	-do-	Hepatology
15.	Cell Counter	01No's	20,000/-	-do-	CSH
16.	Cold Room	01No's	28,000/-	-do-	SGR-Medical Microbiology
17.	-80 degree C Deep Freezer	02No's	30,000/-	09-01-2020	Nephrology
18.	Computer with Computer Carts-10 nos.	10No's	28,000/-	-do-	Anaesthesia
19.	Pulse Oximeter for Neonates	10No's	30,000/-	-do-	Paediatrics
20.	Endoscopic Doppler System	01No's	20,000/-	-do-	Hepatology
21.	Intra-operative Doppler System (8mlh and other freq.) with Endo Nasal Probe-01 No.	01No's	40,000/-	-do-	Neurosurgery
22.	Spectrophotometer-01 No.	01No's	38,000/-	-do-	Exp.Medicine
23.	Enhaled Nitric Oxide Equipment (Fraction of Nitric Oxide), FENO Analyzer	01No's	30,000/-	-do-	Paediatrics
24.	Slide Printer	01No's	50,000/-	-do-	Cytology

Tender List can also be downloaded from website www.pgimer.edu.in and Item wise Tender Form with specifications can be downloaded from website www.pgimer.gov.in. Cost of Tender is Rs.200/- (non-refundable) which can be deposited in the shape of Demand Draft in favour of Director, PGIMER, Chandigarh. Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) must be in the form of FDR/TDR valid for a period of one year from any scheduled bank in the name of the Director, PGIMER, Chandigarh. EMD in any other form will not be accepted. Tender can be dropped in the tender box placed in the Procurement Branch (Import) manually by 2:30 PM on or before the date mentioned against respective item. The tenders shall be opened on the same date at 03:00 PM in the presence of the authorized intending tenders. Tenders not submitted on the prescribed form, not accompanied with valid Earnest Money and tender cost shall be summarily rejected straightaway. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders received without assigning any reason therefor. "PRE-BID CONFERENCE" WITH INTENDING BIDDERS FOR ITEM Sr. No. 01 to 13 shall be held on 18-12-2019 from 3:00 P.M. ONWARDS IN THE PREP, OFFICE, PGIMER, CHANDIGARH For more details contact: 0172-2756469 at Procurement Branch (Import). NOTE: If any of the tender opening dates happens to be a holiday in PGIMER, Chandigarh, then the same shall be opened on next full working day. Professor In-Charge (EP)



On silver screen

Biopic to be made on former Goa CM Manohar Parrikar soon

Larger bench order in Sabarimala case not last word: SC

Top court declines to pass any order

PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

CJI said that earliest could only be after a 7-judge Constitution bench answers the reference (made on November 14, 2019)

The Supreme Court on Friday said that 2018 top court judgment permitting the entry of the women of all ages in Lord Ayyappa's Sabarimala temple in Kerala was not the last word as the matter has been referred to a still larger bench of seven-judges...

Observing that the 2018 judgment by a five-judge Constitution bench was not the last word as the matter has been referred to a larger 7-judge bench, Chief Justice S.A. Bobde heading the bench also comprising Justice B.R. Gavai and Justice Surya Kant declined to pass any order on the plea seeking police protection for entering the temple...

Declining to pass any order, the court said, "Some issues in this country become explosive and this is one of those issues."

"We know there is no stay, the (2018) order should be complied with," said CJI Bobde.

"This is an age old practice going on for thousands of years. Balance of conveniences requires that order should not be passed in your favour now. The matter is under reference and if it is ultimately decided in your favour, we will protect

you", the court said. The court said this on two petition filed by Rehana Fathima, Bindu Ammini and others, seeking police protection for entering the temple, which is open to the pilgrims only for a shorter duration during a year.

As senior counsel Indra Jaisinh told the court that there was a dissenting judgment by two judges in the reference order of November 14, 2019, CJI Bobde said that "one judge's judgment is not weightier than that of the other".

At this Jaisinh urged the court that in that case the petitions pending before the court seeking the reconsideration of 2018 judgment should be heard at the earliest.

CJI Bobde said that earliest could only be after a 7-judge Constitution bench answers the reference (made on November 14, 2019). The Supreme Court by its December 14 verdict had referred to a 7-judge Constitution bench a batch of petitions seeking the reconsideration of its 2018 judgment permitting the entry of menstruating women in the age group 10 to 50 years in Lord Ayyappa's Sabarimala temple.

College girl gangraped in Patna

Accused threatens to release video of act ■ 2 accused surrender, 3rd on run: Cops

NAYEAR AZAD PATNA, DEC. 13

Amid public outrage over rising crime against women in Bihar, a college student was allegedly gang-raped in Patna by four youth.

The incident had occurred earlier this week but came to light on Friday, when students created ruckus on the streets of Patna demanding justice for the victim.

Sources said that the girl was called by her friend to a house, where she was threatened and raped by

four youth. The victim in her statement to the police, said that the accused also threatened to release the video of the act on the internet if she refused their demands.

However, the police said that two accused in the case have surrendered in the court and hunt is on to arrest others, who went into hiding after the incident was reported by the victim.

"Two accused, including the victim's friend has surrendered in the court. We have obtained a warrant of arrest for two oth-

More than 1,165 cases of rape have been reported from across the state till October, this year. In Patna alone, 85 cases of rapes were registered this year, which is highest in the state.

ers, who have been absconding after the incident was reported. We are also waiting for the medical report of the victim", ASP law and order Swarn Prabhat told reporters in

Patna on Friday. Chief minister Nitish Kumar and the state government has been facing criticism for deteriorating law and order scenario and rising crime against women in Bihar. As per an assessment, more than 1,165 cases of rape have been reported from across the state till October, this year. In Patna alone, 85 cases of rapes were registered this year, which is highest in the state.

"The police will not spare anyone no matter how important the person is. In this case, also police

officials have been asked to conduct raids and nab all the accused, who have been evading arrest", officer-in-charge of the women police station, Aarti Jaiswal said.

Sources said that the Opposition parties, especially the RJD youth wing is likely to extend its support to the protest against rising crime against women in the state. A section in the party said that the RJD youth wing is also planning to join the student's agitation on the issue of Patna gang-rape incident.

The Congress has always fulfilled its promises and announcements

Sachin Pilot, Rajasthan deputy CM

BRIEF

Auto driver rapes teen in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: An 18-year-old girl was allegedly raped by an autorickshaw driver under the pretext of taking her to her grandmother's house, police said here on Friday. They said the girl and her 10-year-old sister lost their way while going to their grandmother's house from their home on the night of December 8. The man's elder brother, also an autorickshaw driver, spotted them and took them to his house. However he was ticked off by his mother, who asked her younger son to take the girls back home. The man instead took them to a lodge at Nampally area and raped the teenager. — PTI

Parrikar gave his 'josh' to me: CM

Panaji: Goa chief minister Pramod Sawant on Friday said late Manohar Parrikar had transferred his "josh" (spirit) to him, and this allowed him to work for "15-16 hours a day" after taking over the coastal state's top post. Parrikar died in March this year after battling a pancreatic ailment. Speaking on the birth anniversary of the former CM, Sawant said, "Bhai (Parrikar) had asked the youth there (at the inauguration of a bridge on Mandovi river) how is the josh (a punchline of a popular film on the surgical strike after the Uri attack). He had further said I transfer my josh to you." — PTI

Maoists confirm Ramanna's death

Bhopal: Maoists on Friday confirmed the death of Ravula Srinivas alias Ramanna, their top leader in Bastar, on December 7. A press release issued in the name of Vikalpa, spokesman of Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee (DKSZC), said Ramanna (56) was ill for some time and died at around 10 pm on December 7. The press release said Ramanna was initiated into Left-wing extremism in 1983 and given the responsibility of expanding the base of CPI (Maoist) in Bastar in Chhattisgarh then. He had played a key role in building a strong base of CPI (Maoist) in Bastar over a period of time and became secretary of DKSZC.

SUSPECTED PAK INTRUDER SHOT DEAD IN SAMBA

Jammu: A suspected Pakistani intruder was shot dead by BSF personnel while he was trying to cross the International Border (IB) in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir on Friday, officials said. The troops guarding the IB at Manguchak area of Samba sector noticed the man moving towards this side under the cover of darkness amid heavy rains in the early hours of the day, they said. According to the officials, Border Security Force (BSF) troops fired a few shots after the intruder paid no heed to their repeated warnings, resulting in his death. "The body of the deceased was retrieved from near the Zero Line this evening and later, handed over to police for legal formalities," a BSF official said. The area had become very slushy due to incessant rains and it was difficult to carry out a thorough search during the day. A comprehensive search was conducted in the area after dusk and the intruder's body was recovered, he said. Nothing incriminating was seized from the deceased, he added. A police official said the body was taken to the district hospital, Samba for a post-mortem. "The identity of the deceased could not be ascertained as he was not carrying any documents," he said. — PTI



PARLIAMENT DIARY

BY GAUTAM LAHIRI

OPPOSITION PLANS A GRAND MEETING AGAINST CITIZENSHIP BILL

On the last day of the Winter Session of the Parliament, some Opposition leaders were on Friday sounded out for a possible grand meeting to frame a strategy against the BJP government. Most of the party presidents or chairmen of the parliamentary parties will attend that meeting. One of the main issues of the meeting will be to campaign against BJP on Citizenship Amendment Bill. West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee is very keen to rally most of the Opposition parties on the issue.

AS SESSION ENDS TALKS BEGIN OVER FUTURE OF 6 RETIRING RS MPs FROM MAHA

Maharashtra will again see the right alliance for the upcoming Rajya Sabha polls in April next year to ensure maximum number of seats. As NCP chief Sharad Pawar and industrialist Raj Kumar Dhoot of Shiv Sena will also retire, there will be six vacancies from the state. Election might be announced in January next year. According to the arithmetic of Maharashtra Assembly, if Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress come together they can easily pull off three seats and can put up a fight for the fourth seat. Mr Pawar will be renominated for sure. But there is doubt over renomination of Mr Dhoot if the buzz in the Parliament House is true.

TRINAMUL RS MP JOGEN CHOWDHURY WANTS TO GO BACK TO PAINTING

Rajya Sabha term of Jogen Chowdhury, an internationally acclaimed painter, will come to end on next April. He has already requested Trinamul Congress supreme Mamata Banerjee not to renominate him. He wants to involve himself in painting again. Five Rajya Sabha seats will be vacant from West Bengal. According to party strength, TMC can win four seats straightaway. Rest one seat can go to Left and Congress combined. Last year, Ms Banerjee supported Congress candidate Abhishek Manu Singhvi. This time, speculation is about who will be Abhishek-2 so that contest can be avoided.



Sharad Pawar

RS adjourned sine die, records 100% productivity

AGE CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

The historic 250th session of the Rajya Sabha was adjourned sine die on Friday after Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu summed it up as one marked by 'seriousness and brevity'.

"I am overall happy for this session, but for the small disappointment which also could have been avoided," he told the House. Mr Naidu complimented the members for making this session productive and for improving the quality of debates. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was present in the House during the valedictory remarks at the completion of the 250th session by Mr Naidu.

"I am glad that collectively, all of you have risen to the occasion and kept up the happy tide. I would like to sum up the course of this historic session as one marked by 'seriousness and brevity'." Mr Naidu said. He said the seriousness is borne out of a definite sense of purpose of enhancing the dignity of this august institution.

He said while the last session recorded productivity of 104 per cent by availing more than available time for transacting business, this session too has clocked 100 per cent productivity. "This is perhaps for the first time that this House has recorded 100% productivity for two successive sessions. For me, this is a certain proof of this ship being steered and all of you deserve credit for it," Mr Naidu said.



Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and others at Parliament in New Delhi on Friday after paying tribute to the martyrs of 2001 Parliament attack on its 18th anniversary. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

PM reiterates India's commitment to strong, peaceful Male India, Maldives review bilateral ties

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

External affairs minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and Maldivian foreign minister Abdullah Shahid co-chaired the sixth Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) between India and Maldives on Friday in New Delhi, where the "ongoing cooperation in our security and defence partnership was reviewed". Three pacts in various fields were also inked between the two sides. The "restoration of Hukuru Miskiiy/Friday Mosque was identified as a priority and the JCM welcomed the fact that an Indian technical team is

already in male for its conservation". The Maldivian foreign minister also called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who "reiterated India's commitment to partner the government of the Maldives for a strong, democratic, prosperous and peaceful Maldives" and "noted with satisfaction the enhanced level of engagement between India and Maldives and the positive outcomes of bilateral cooperation during the last one year". The Maldivian foreign minister also expressed his deep appreciation to PM Modi "for India's support in various development cooperation initiatives that are currently being imple-

The 'restoration of Hukuru Miskiiy Mosque was identified as a priority' 3 pacts in various fields were also inked

mented in Maldives" and also "conveyed the commitment of the leadership of Maldives to its 'India First' policy and to further strengthening the relationship with India". The two countries signed three pacts — an MoU on cooperation between the Election Commissions of India and Maldives, an Exchange of MoU on cooperation between the Financial Intelligence

Units of India, and a Exchange of Instrument of Ratification for the treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in criminal matters. "Ongoing cooperation in our security and defence partnership was reviewed. India-Maldives defence cooperation includes key infrastructure projects such as construction of the Composite Training Centre for the Maldivian National Defence Forces, and ministry of defence building, and the setting up of the Coastal Surveillance Radar System, as well as training programmes for MNDF officials in India, joint exercises, medical camps, etc.", the MEA said.

Rahul, BJP spar over 'rape in India'

Continued from Page 1

NCP leader Supriya Sule to express their opinion on Mr Gandhi's remarks. Mr Joshi termed her response "unfortunate". Speaking at a public meeting in Jharkhand, where Assembly elections are under way, Mr Gandhi said on Thursday that Mr Narendra Modi had promised "Make in India" but "wherever you see now you find 'rape in India'" in different parts of the country. The BJP seized on his "rape in India" barb to corner the Congress.

The protests began as soon as the House assembled. Tearing into the Congress leader, Union minister Smriti Irani said he had "insulted" the women and men of India and claimed his remarks amounted to inviting people to rape women. Seeking his apology, Ms Irani said that he should be punished.

Joining in, defence minister Rajnath Singh attacked Mr Gandhi and said such MPs don't have the moral right to be members of the House. Ms Irani also said Mr Gandhi referred to rape cases to make a mockery of his political rivals, which she said was condemnable. She said Ms Kanimozhi's defence of Gandhi was "distasteful, to say the least". Earlier in the morning, as the ruckus continued for over half an hour, the Speaker adjourned the pro-

Boris sweeps UK polls, promises Jan. 31 Brexit

Continued from Page 1

forward with his deal to leave the 28-member economic bloc on January 31. Fed up with the prolonged political turmoil over Brexit, voters gave Mr Johnson a huge mandate so that he can get the UK out of the European Union by January — no ifs, no buts. "It does look as though this One Nation Conservative government has been given a powerful new mandate to get Brexit done — and not just to get Brexit done but to unite this country and to take it forward," he said.

"We did it, we pulled it off, didn't we? We broke the deadlock, we ended the gridlock, we smashed the road-block."

Mr Johnson, who was accompanied by his girlfriend Carrie Symonds and their pet dog Dilyn at the rally. "With this election I think we've put an end to all those miserable threats of a second referendum," he said, as he got the crowd to repeat "Get Brexit Done" numerous times during an energetic victory speech. The Opposition Labour Party was down to just 203 seats, a disastrous performance for the party in decades which resulted in leader Jeremy Corbyn announcing that he would not lead the party in the next election. "It has been a very disappointing night for Labour... I will not lead the party in any future general election campaign," said Mr Corbyn, 70, as he won his own seat in London's Islington North constituency. It marked a crushing defeat, which is almost entirely being blamed on Mr Corbyn's leadership and his failure to take a clear stance on Brexit as well as counter the growing allegations of anti-Semitism within party ranks. A perceived anti-India stance since the Labour Party passed an

Abe-Modi summit

Continued from Page 1

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.

The cancellation comes even as the Centre had discussed two other options of either going ahead with the summit in Guwahati or holding it somewhere else, such as New Delhi. But finally, the third option of deferring the event was decided upon. The two countries recently held their 2+2 Dialogue at the foreign and defence ministers' level in New Delhi, which had prepared the ground for PM Abe's visit. Our Guwahati cor-

'States can't block CAB'

Continued from Page 1

government will not implement the legislation. Another Congress chief minister, Bhupesh Baghel from Chhattisgarh, said the act was clearly unconstitutional and the same view was expressed by his counterpart in Madhya Pradesh, Kamal Nath, who claimed: "Whatever stand the Congress Party has taken on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, we will follow that. Do we want to be a part of a process that sows the seeds of divisiveness?"

respondent adds: On the ground in Assam, while the overall situation has started limping back to normal with the protesting groups, led by the All Assam Students Union, deciding to confine their agitation to daytime and dissociating from those indulging in violence, there were reports of violent protests in Upper Assam's Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts. In Dibrugarh protestors set a Scorpio on fire while in Khwang, near Moran in Tinsukia district, protesters pelted stones on Army vehicles. With new additional DGP G.P. Singh taking over, and new officers taking over trouble-torn districts after a major state police shakeup, the Assam police also intensified patrolling in Guwahati and elsewhere. A defence spokesman said a total of eight columns of the Assam Rifles have been requisitioned and all Army and Assam Rifles columns have managed to restore normality in their areas of deployment.



Twitter record

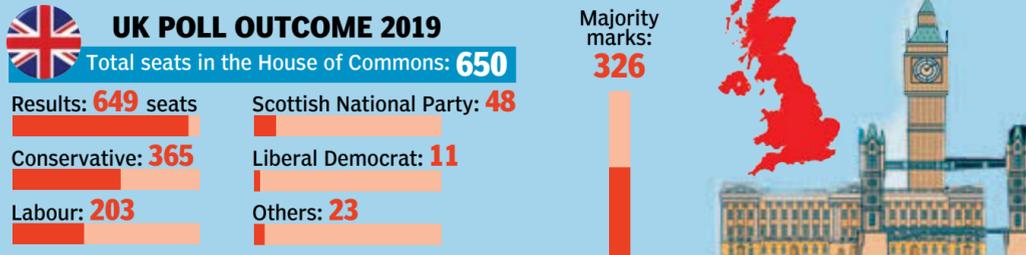
President Trump set a personal record for use of Twitter in a single day since taking office, blasting out more than 120 tweets or retweets in 24 hours

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



LEADERS REACT

Britain and the United States will now be free to strike a massive new Trade Deal after BREXIT. This deal has the potential to be far bigger and more lucrative than any deal that could be made with the EU Celebrate Boris!
— DONALD TRUMP
US President

Many congratulations to PM @BorisJohnson for his return with a thumping majority. I wish him the best and look forward to working together for closer India-UK ties.
— NARENDRA MODI
Indian PM

Congratulations to Prime Minister Boris Johnson for his success in the UK General Elections. I look forward to working with him and continuing the cooperation between our two countries.
— IMRAN KHAN
Pakistan PM

I don't know to what extent such expectations are appropriate in the case of the Conservatives
— DMITRY PESKOV
Kremlin spokesman

The mutual trust between China and the United States is damaged
— Wang Yi
Senior Chinese diplomat

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 Charfi. 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. 13: 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.

Wizard of words to political star

London, Dec. 13: 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 rumpus, 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 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. — AP

NRN son-in-law among Indian-origin winners

London, Dec. 13: 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. — PTI

EU LEADERS MEET ON BREXIT AFTER POLLS

Brussels, Dec. 13: EU leaders on Friday debated Britain's departure from the bloc. It's the first time that a country will leave the world's biggest trading bloc. Though many EU leaders are relieved that the Brexit saga is finally coming to an end, more than three years after Britons voted to leave, just as many are saddened at the departure of such a heavyweight member state. The sense of relief was evident among European business groups too, though it was tinged with some regret. Irish PM Leo Varadkar said. However, he conceded that "it's always easier for us to be able to negotiate with a partner who has a strong personal mandate and can control a majority in their parliament." Luxembourg PM Xavier Bettel said: "I still regret the outcome of the referendum but I respect it." — AP

Greta's gives a fitting reply to Prez Trump

Washington, Dec. 13: 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 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. 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. — AP

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED GIRL

General Public is hereby informed that one girl (depicted in the photo) namely Shweta D/o Dinesh Kumar R/o H.No.2590, Gali No.25-B, Near Shiv Mandir, Swatantra Nagar, Narela, Delhi Aged-16 Years has been reported missing/kidnapped since 23.11.2019 from the area of P.S. Narela, Delhi vide FIR No.498/19 u/s 363 IPC Dated 23.11.2019 registered at Police Station Narela, Delhi. Her physical description is as under-
Complexion: Fair, **Height:** 4', **Face:** Round, **Clothing:** Blue coloured jeans and T-Shirt.
Any person having any information/Clue about this missing/kidnapped girl, may inform SHO, Narela, Delhi at E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in or website : <http://cbi.nic.in>
Tel. No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641 Sd/-
FAX No. : 011-24368639 SHO, Narela, Delhi
DP/845/ON/19 Tel. : 011-25282350, 27285839



SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General Public is hereby informed that one girl namely Saraswati, D/o. Sh Jitender Giri, R/o Jhuggi No. 28/C-195, CSA Colony, WPIA, Ashok Vihar, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped from her house from the area of P. S. Ashok Vihar, Delhi since 26.11.2019. In this regard a case vide FIR No. 499/19 u/s 363 IPC, dated 26.11.2019 has been lodged in P. S. Ashok Vihar, Delhi. The description of missing/ kidnapped girl is as under-**Age:** 15 years, **Height:** 5', **Complexion:** Fair, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** School dress blue colour shirt, white colour salwar and black colour shoes in her feet. If anyone having any clue/ information about this girl, kindly inform the undersigned.
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> SHO
E-Mail ID - cic@cbi.gov.in P.S. Ashok Vihar, Delhi
Fax No. 011-24368639 **Ph. Nos.:** 011-24368638, 24368641
DP/9574/NW/19 8750870221

EAST DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

Office of The Executive Engineer M-II Shah, South
Vishwakarma Nagar, Jhilmil, Delhi-110095
NIT No. E.E. (M-Shah, S)-II/19-20/25 Dated : 13.12.19
SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER
For Online Tendering at <http://mcdetenders.com> Sealed percentage rate tenders are invited for the execution of the following works by the EDMC from approved and eligible contractor and will be received as per time table :-

Seq. No.	MCD Stage	Contractor Stage	Start Date & Time	Expiry Date & Time
1.	Release Tender		13.12.2019 10.00	13.12.2019 18.00
2.		Download Tender Document	13.12.2019 18.01	19.12.2019 15.00
3.		Bid Preparation and Hash Submission	13.12.2019 18.01	19.12.2019 16.00
4.	Close for Bidding		19.12.2019 16.01	19.12.2019 17.30
5.		Re-encryption of online bids	19.12.2019 17.31	20.12.2019 12.00
6.	Opening of Financial Bid		20.12.2019 12.01	20.12.2019 17.30

S.No. : 1, **Name of Work :** Construction of Dhoobi Thada Rooms at R-Block Dilshad Garden and other different location at Dilshad Garden area in Ward No. 29E Shah, South, F.T.C. No. 18/66/XL/VIII-S-I/MLC-854, H/A : XL-VIII-S-I, Estt. Amt. : Rs. 36,41,000/-, **Tender Amt. :** Rs. 30,46,667/-, E.M. : Rs. 60,950/-, **Time of Completion :** 04 Months, **Time of Rates hold good :** 5 Months, **Cost of Tender Form :** Rs. 500/-, **Tender No. :** 317948.
Detailed NIT can be seen from the following website or from the office of the undersigned :
<http://mcdetenders.com>, [www.mcdonline.gov.in](http://mcdonline.gov.in)
R.O. No. 116/DPI/East/2019-20 EE (M)-II Shah, South
EDMC's Citizens Helpline No. : 155303

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-NOTICE INVITING TENDER
For and on behalf of President of India, Sr. Divisional Security Commissioner(Cord)/RPF/Northern Railway, Delhi Division, New Delhi invites 'E- Tender' in prescribed tender form for the following work.

1. Name of the work with its location	Hiring of one multi utility road vehicle (Innova Crysta, Tata Hexa, Scorpio or equivalent) along with vehicle driver for movement of day & night (24 hrs.) under jurisdiction of Sr.DSC/RPF/Delhi, Delhi Division on monthly basis for a period of Two years.
2. Office Address	Sr.DSC (Co-ordination)/RPF, P.K. Road, New Delhi
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4. E.M.D (Rs)	Rs. 20,700/-
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Train No. & Train Name	Diverted Route
15910 Lalgarh-Dibrugarh Awadh Assam Express	Via Moradabad-Chandausi-Bareilly Cantt. instead of Moradabad-Bareilly-Bareilly Cantt.
15211 Darbhanga-Amritsar Jannayak Express	

RESCHEDULING OF TRAINS ON 16.12.2019
Train No. 12358 Amritsar-Kolkata Durgiana Superfast Express will be rescheduled at 06.55 hrs instead of 05.55 hrs
Train No. 14258 New Delhi-Varanasi Kashi Vishwanath Exp. will be rescheduled at 12.35 hrs instead of 11.35 hrs
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THE ASIAN AGE

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' 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.

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

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.

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T. VENKATRAM REDDY
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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 ad 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,

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 @ambksingh.

LETTERS

CAB TO BACKFIRE

The BJP thinks it will gain electorally from the National Register for Citizens and the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill. It will be able to polarise West Bengal and sweep up the Hindu votes. But the situation here is a little different, just a little so. Even if we take it for granted that marginalising the Muslim will quench their ostensible thirst for historical justice, Will the Bangladeshi-origin Hindu like to go through the rigmarole of exclusion from the NRC and then finding validation via the route of CAB? Beware. This move might well go the way of demonetisation as far as fulfilling its goals is concerned.

Abhijit Chakraborty
Howrah

LOST CAUSE

THE SUPREME COURT has rejected all the petitions filed for review of its November 9 verdict. The historic verdict settled a longstanding and most bitter dispute between the two leading communities of the country. The verdict was hailed and accepted by the country except a few who had a vested interest in keeping the dispute alive. All India Muslim Personal Law Board secretary Zafaryab Jilani has said he will consult the counsel, Rajiv Dhawan, regarding filing a curative petition. Instead, he should rethink on his senseless idea of filing such a petition which is only to be rejected by the court. After all, the Babri Masjid is heritage lost. It cannot be restored and Muslims as well as other Indians must now live with this fait accompli.

M.C. Joshi
Lucknow

BEAUTY WITH SOUL

SOUTH AFRICA'S Zozibini Tunzi is the new Miss Universe. The sixth black woman to win the pageant. One told to wear a wig to hide her Afro crop but who defied naysayers. Ms Tunzi, the first with her hair to win the crown, had a powerful message about leadership for young girls. "We should be teaching young girls to take up space," she said. Ms Tunzi herself had to fight for every inch that came her way. As a child, the 26-year-old had been withdrawn from school education by her parents who had hit a rough patch.

Sudeshna Dixit
Gurugram

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

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

After sweep, can BoJo deliver on Brexit vow?



Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings

"I waited for twilight to come through the window
But the evening sun was smothered in mist
So the dark fell through without due warning
The longing of lovers who've never been kissed."

— From Cogito Ergo Quarrelsome by Bachchoo

which one should stay in bed and pray. It proved so for the Labour Party which disastrously lost 59 seats — but for Boris Johnson's Conservative Party it was the luckiest day since Margaret Thatcher formed a Tory government in 1979. BoJo's party won 364 seats, a majority over the Opposition of 68 or possibly 69 seats.

Very many of the Tory victories are the result of what commentators call "smashing the Red Wall". Unlike Donald Trump's unbuilt material wall, this "Red Wall" is a metaphorical description of those Midland and Northern England constituencies who have, for generations, voted Labour.

Not this time. Whole swathes of these constituencies for the first time in decades voted for BoJo and the Tories. Hence his resounding victory.

I think it was Winston Churchill who said democracy is the worst system of government. Or perhaps he said it's the best-worst, but without looking up quotes on the Internet, you get his drift.

BoJo has finally got a clear democratic mandate. Till Friday the 13th, he was occupying 10 Downing Street having been elected to the prime ministerial position by a percentage of the members of his Tory Party,

The voters in these constituencies, denied any socioeconomic relief or reconstruction through the last 10 years of Tory rule, now see the European Union and its workers who migrate to Britain to work as the source of their impoverishment

about 0.06 per cent of UK's population. Democratic?

The simplistic slogan of his party in this election, apart from the wild promises they've made on taxation, the National Health Service, schools and police, was "Get Brexit Done". He now has a majority in Parliament which will, he promises, deliver on the democratic decision of the 2016 referendum to leave the European Union and pass a "Withdrawal Bill" before Christmas.

Since that referendum, the economic facts about what leaving the EU would mean have emerged and very many people who voted to leave the EU have changed their minds. The Opposition parties have, as a consequence demanded a second referendum as the polls show that the

vote for "Remain" is now 56 per cent versus 44 per cent who still wish to Leave. One of the first announcements BoJo made was to rule out any second referendum. Too much democracy!

So why did the Red Wall collapse? Speculative opinion puts this startling desertion of confidence in Labour down to the personality of Jeremy Corbyn. Some attribute it to his dithering on Brexit, not committing to one or other position and favouring a second referendum which the Red Wall constituencies don't want. Others say the constituents, in their democratic wisdom, can't see him as a prime ministerial figure.

The truth, perhaps, goes deeper. All the Red Wall constituencies have historically been dependent on coal mining or heavy industries. For generations, and even centuries, these constituencies and communities were dependent for employment and even for their *raison d'être* on these industries.

Under the Tory government of Margaret Thatcher, through democratic procedures in Parliament, the mines were shut and coal imported from places like Poland in the European Union, reducing the cost of fuel for industrial capital and as a consequence devastating the mining

communities through unemployment. So also with heavy industry such as steel and textiles, the import of which killed the local industries.

The voters in these constituencies, denied any socioeconomic relief or reconstruction through the last 10 years of Tory rule, now see the European Union and its workers who migrate to Britain to work as the source of their impoverishment. Despite the fact that the Tories have imposed "austerity" on the country for nine years, Brexit is all.

Having persuaded the voters that they want to "Get Brexit Done", the Tories will have to define precisely what this means. He has insisted that if he gets a mandate, Britain will leave the EU by the 31st of January 2020 and by the end of 2020 he will have negotiated every detail of the trade, customs, freedom of movement treaties and regulations between Britain and the EU. The spokespersons for the latter say this is virtually impossible to do in 12 months. The elephant in that negotiating room will be the definition of Brexit. Will BoJo's 364 MPs all have the same idea of the future relationship between the EU and the UK?

Which of course brings us to the election results in Scotland, which sent 44 Scottish National Party MPs out of a possible 59 to Westminster. Scotland

voted with over 60 per cent to remain in the EU and the SNP are now demanding their own referendum to declare independence from the UK.

Boris, the democrat, says he will deny them such a referendum, despite their democratic majority demanding it. He calls himself a "one nation" Tory and is faced with the threat of it breaking "democratically" into two nations.

Despite the massive majority he enjoys and the spot-in-the-sun he can bask in by passing the "Withdrawal Agreement" from the EU in days, BoJo should scour the skies for dark clouds ahead.

The EU is not going to make the trade talks easy or quick. Then there's Donald Trump who says he's ready with a trade deal with Boris and Britain, but the US President's record on generosity in deals — trade, diplomatic or military — is not the most reliable. Boris, who wants to be known as the Winston Churchill of our times, can't without mass betrayal make the UK (with or without Scotland?) a satellite of Trump's Make America Great Again strategy.

Perhaps the biggest questions in the coming years is where is he going to get the finance to make the Red Wall constituencies he has breached Great Again?

Britain's general election was held over a single day earlier this week and I sat through the night of December 12-13 watching TV as the exit polls and then the actual election results were announced and discussed.

Friday the 13th is, according to superstition, an unlucky day on

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 over-ruled 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 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,

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?

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 development 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, *Jhatpat* 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

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.

Death anniversary or Urs, it's an occasion to rejoice for Sufis



Ghulam Rasool Dehvi

The death anniversary (Urs) of Delhi's prominent Sufi mystic, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya will be celebrated at his Dargah from 17th Rabi al-Akhir, which is falling on December 15. Urs means "wedding" and in Sufism, death

anniversaries of mystics are celebrated as wedding ceremonies. For them, death is an occasion to rejoice, not to mourn. They call it Urs (wedding) and sometimes *Visal* (union) because death of a Sufi saint is realised as the most mystical merging with the Divine. Thus, the death anniversary of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia will be celebrated as his "wedding" by thousands of pilgrims from across the world.

Popularly known as *mahbub-e-ilahi* (beloved of the divine), Hazrat Nizamuddin was born in 1325 and emerged a pioneer of

the Chishti tradition in Delhi which spread widely in the Indian subcontinent. Ziauddin Barani, an eminent historiographer of the 14th century who chose to be a disciple of the saint, notes his overwhelming influence on the psychological and social life of his times. At a time when people were discriminated against irrationally, Nizamuddin empowered them to transcend all distinctions of faith, caste, creed and race. This strikingly reflected in the legacy and poetry of his closest disciples, like Amir Khusrau, who said in Persian:



*Kafir-e-ishqam musalmani mura darkaar neest:
Har rage man taar gashta hajate zunnaar neest.
(I am a pagan, and a worshipper of love: I do not need the creed [of Muslims]; Every vein of mine has become taunt like a wire, I do not need the*

[Hindu] girdle).

For Mahbub-e-ilahi, true love for the Divine was translated into a sincere love for humanity at large. The surest way to attain personal relationship with Allah (*wisal-e-ilahi*), in his view, is to render selfless social service in a manner that one realises that there is no 'I'. There is only the divine. This realisation attains its perfection at the time of death which turns into *visal* (complete union).

The Chishti tradition of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia was strengthened in Delhi at a time

when sultans like Muhammad bin Tughlaq were belligerent towards Sufi saints. But several officials of the sultan still became disciples of the then Chishti master, Khwaja Naseeruddin Chiragh Dehvi, himself a disciple of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia. In his exhortation to his disciples, Khwaja would often relay this Persian couplet:

*Muraad-e-Ahl-e-Tariqat Libaas-e-Zaahir Neest,
Kamar Ba Khidmat-e-Sultan Be-band-o-Sufi Baash!*

Meaning: Divine lovers don't aim to attract admiration. They

remain a [true] Sufi [who serves mankind], even while being in the service of a king.

This divine realisation of the ultimate union with both God and mankind is celebrated at the times of Urs at the Dargah through *Qawwalis*, *Zikr* and *Wird* (chanting) of verses like this: "*Mera ishq vi tu Mera yaar vi tu*. (You are my love, my ardour. You are my lover.)"

Ghulam Rasool Dehvi is an alim (classical Islamic scholar) and a Delhi-based writer. He can be contacted at: grdehvi@gmail.com.



Fresh plans

Barbra Strycova said she pondering the doubles title defence at Wimbledon before retiring from the sport, a move she has lately been suggesting

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.

In the affected districts in Andhra Pradesh, it is officially stated that more than 1,000 Naxalites have been arrested as also 50 persons from the plains. In the regular combing operations and raids the police seized 282 weapons of different types some quantity of material to manufacture bombs and Marxist literature.

The extremists technic of attack, according to officials here, clearly indicate that there may be some "Central training centre," where the young recruits are taught the use of fire arms, taking cover and initiating attacks on "vulnerable" points. Fortunately for the Government some of the weapons available to the Naxalites are of poor quality.

At the co-ordination meeting, it is learnt, several officials of both the States stressed the need for having something corresponding to the Preventive Detention Act when it lapses this month. The Andhra Pradesh Government, while taking stringent measures to check the violent activities of the Naxalites in the Tribal belt, is also making special arrangements for the economic improvement of the Tribals.

The consensus at the official lever co-ordination meeting seems to be that, though the Naxalite threat had somewhat abated in certain areas, the extremists might select new places for their activities. Therefore, there was need to maintain vigil.

— ANS

Messi takes leadership in his stride to clinch 6th *Ballon d'Or*



Madrid: Lionel Messi won a record-breaking sixth Ballon d'Or on Monday after another sublime year for the Argentinian, whose familiar brilliance remained undimmed even through difficult times for club and country.

Despite Barcelona's collapse at the end of last season and Argentina losing to Brazil in the semi-finals of the Copa America, Messi's genius was ever-present in 2019, for which he now stands alone in the history of the game's most prestigious individual prize.

Four years after his last Ballon d'Or, Messi pulled clear of the five next to the name of Cristiano Ronaldo, and now owns twice as many as Johan Cruyff, Michel Platini and Marco van Basten.

In 54 appearances this year, Messi has managed an astonishing 46 goals and 17 assists while for Barca alone he hit 41 goals and 15 assists in 44 matches, which included seven doubles and three hat-tricks.

"It's like he is extra-terrestrial," said Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde in March. "Every time he gets the ball something extraordinary seems to happen."

Messi's first season as club captain brought a third consecutive La Liga title and he scored the winner in the game that clinched it, a 1-0 victory over Levante.

He also claimed his sixth Pichichi Trophy as the division's top scorer, with 36 goals in 34 matches. But Barcelona unravelled as their 3-0 advantage over Liverpool — to which Messi contributed a brace — went up in smoke at Anfield and the club crashed out in the semi-finals of the Champions League.

They were then beaten by Valencia in the final of the Copa del Rey, when Messi's tap-in proved a consolation, but it was his voice that spoke loudest in defence of coach Valverde, whose survival owed much to the support of his captain.

Messi had led the way on the pitch too, particularly during the run-in when he scored 16 goals in 12 games as Barcelona put together a relentless winning streak. "This league has one person's name on it," wrote Diario Sport.

50TH CAREER HAT-TRICK

He scored his 50th career hat-trick in a 4-2 win at Sevilla and in April, another hat-trick began with a free-kick into the top corner and ended with a sweeping chip from the edge of the area that was so good even the Real Betis fans felt compelled to applaud.

When asked about their reaction, Messi said: "To be honest I don't remember anything like that."

Trail-blazer Rapinoe completes honours sweep at *Ballon d'Or*

Paris: Megan Rapinoe completed an unprecedented clean sweep of honours on Monday as the trail-blazing World Cup star and feminist icon added the Women's Ballon d'Or to her collection of accolades.

The 34-year-old striker was the star of this year's Women's World Cup, scoring six goals as the United States successfully defended their title.

Rapinoe's tournament goals tally earned her the Golden Boot for top-scorer while she was also awarded the Golden Ball for the best player.

Rapinoe had already picked up the FIFA's Best Women's Player award in September, and it was inevitable she would claim what was only the second edition of the Ballon d'Or Feminin, won by Norway's Ada Hegerberg in 2018.

"It's been an incredible year," Rapinoe said in a recorded video message shown at the ceremony at the Chatelet Theatre in Paris, having been unable to travel to the event.

"I want to say a huge thank you to my team-mates, the coaches, the US Soccer Federation, for all of the support to allow me to be who I am and do what I do on the field but also be the person who I am off the field."

The honour crowns a remarkable year for Rapinoe which has seen her enhance her reputation as a warrior both on and off the pitch.

Her performances at the World Cup were a critical part of the United States' title defence, but Rapinoe has garnered almost as much attention in 2019 for her unflinching advocacy of social justice off the field.

That readiness to speak her mind famously brought her into conflict with US President Donald Trump during the World Cup.

Rapinoe had provoked Trump's ire in comments made several months before the tournament when she stated bluntly that she would not attend a White House reception for the US team if they brought home the World Cup. "I am a big fan of the American Team, and Women's Soccer," Trump wrote on Twitter. "But Megan should WIN first before she TALKS! Finish the job!"

Rapinoe did finish the job several days later, scoring the opening goal in a 2-0 defeat of the Netherlands in the final in Lyon.



Since then, Rapinoe has happily kept on talking.

At a victory parade in New York in July, Rapinoe, who is gay, saluted the diversity of the all-conquering US team while calling for unity. "We have to be better," Rapinoe told a cheering crowd of thousands.

"We have to love more, hate less. We got to listen more and talk less. "It's our responsibility to make this world a better place," she added.

Rapinoe returned to that theme at a recent awards ceremony, when she was honoured as one of Glamour magazine's "Women of the Year".

She used the event to draw attention to the plight of former

San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who ignited controversy in 2016 after kneeling during the US national anthem in a protest against racial injustice.

Rapinoe was one of the first athletes to kneel in solidarity with Kaepernick, who has effectively been frozen out of the league since his season of protest.

Rapinoe said Kaepernick's plight made her determined to continue her fight for social justice and equality.

"It would be a slap in the face to Colin, and to so many other faces, not to acknowledge, and for me personally, to work relentlessly to dismantle that system that benefits some over the detriment of others, and frankly is quite literally tearing us apart in this country," she said.

— AFP

football

In 54 appearances this year, Lionel Messi has managed an astonishing 46 goals and 17 assists while for Barcelona alone he hit 41 goals and 15 assists in 44 matches, which included seven doubles and three hat-tricks

Coach proves deafness is no hindrance to career on touchline

London: Ben Lampert is not a stereotypical football coach. Instead of yelling from the touchline, the deaf trainer issues his instructions in sign language.

The 34-year-old, who is a coach with Brentford FC Community Sports Trust, is proving to be an inspirational mentor to both deaf and hearing children and has been nominated in one of the categories at the UK Coaching Awards on Thursday.

Lampert, a member of the British football squad that won the 2005 Deaflympics title in Australia, ultimately wants to coach a professional team. "The dream of mine is just to be coaching at the highest level of football, whether it be the academies or the club side," he told AFP before taking a session with a group of 10-year-old boys. "Just to be that sort of living embodiment that these barriers can be broken down and can be overcome. The age group would

not matter. I don't know whether up to 18 or older. It's a matter of sort of achieving and becoming an example where deaf people can look up and say 'Ben's done it, why can't I?'"

Lampert, a father of two boys, said there is a perception that it is difficult for deaf people to get their message across but he believes this is misplaced.

"They think that it's impossible for me to do it or any deaf person to do it," he said, speaking through an interpreter, who also helped him during the session in west London.

"You know, they think it's not something that can happen, but it is possible. When I have the opportunity to speak with these people, they realise this.

"It's all just about communication. At the end of the day, there's other methods for communication, it's not just a one-way thing."

Lampert, who took part in the 2012 Olympics torch relay, said



communicating in sign language was a similar challenge to that faced by managers for whom English is not their

native tongue. "They have the skills or the requisite skills to be a top manager. It's just the language barrier," said Lampert, who is nominated for an award in the Changing Lives category.

"You know, that's the only thing to support them in the way. There's no difference, in my view, to a deaf person in that sense."

Lampert, who is also a coach with England's deaf football team, said his deafness is not an impediment to how he sees the game, describing it as a "very visual thing". "As a deaf person it is absolutely perfect for me and thinking about people's positions on the pitch and tactics, where to place players."

'FIGHT FOR EQUALITY'

Jamie Tompkins, football development manager for the trust at Brentford, who play in England's second-tier Championship, says Lampert's

dream to coach professionally is realistic.

"There's no reason why it cannot work in mainstream football as well, because he's still communicating with players in the right way," he said.

"He is still getting his message across to support them in their development and ultimately support the teams he's working with as well."

Lampert believes Britain is lagging behind the United States when it comes to the awareness of deaf issues. He cites the case of NFL fullback Derrick Coleman, who overcame deafness to win a Super Bowl with the Seattle Seahawks.

"It's hats off to America for me as far as I'm concerned, because their awareness is outstanding in that respect," he said.

"In England, I think we should have it the same. If that can be done in the Super Bowl, then why can we not do it here?"

Awareness is the key thing here."

A group of boys who were experiencing Lampert's coaching for the first time — a mix of showing them what he wants done by playing with the ball or through his interpreter — largely gave him a thumbs up.

Kuba Zygumt admitted: "I would never understand sign language in 100 years" but he added there was plenty of scope for the relationship to develop.

"As a community, it is really impressive," he said. "It's really impressive that we can communicate with this new coach and maybe learn about something new."

Lampert believes succeeding is all about being positive.

"It's important to be confident and to be assertive and to fight for equality," he said. "You know, I want to get the message out there that deaf people can do anything and I am an example myself."

— AFP

Textile
sector's
credit
exposure
declinesSuper 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 ▼ 232 +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

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 (RSBVL) 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, RSBVL had said it has picked up 85 per cent stake in NowFloats Technologies. — PTI

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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 slumpFC 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 predict 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 \$25.98 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 diamondsSANGEETHA 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 yearSANGEETHA G.
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.

	(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. —

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 Mauriti Suzuki ended as the top gainers among the Sensex pack.

On the contrary, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Auto, and Asian Paints settled as top laggards. "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 copy-righted 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 Bräunl, 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

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

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

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



Robeco. "You can therefore have some flight-to-quality unwind in the gilt market."

The pro-growth bet for Stuttard's team is being long two-year gilts against 10- and 30-year maturities. He's also considering returning to a long position in sterling versus the euro.

"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 UK markets. Going into the Thursday vote, global funds remain decidedly underweight on UK 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



New managers at Nasa are shown the movie *Armageddon* to spot as many errors as possible. At least 168 have been found.

OUR CRITIC'S RATING Outstanding ★★★★★ | Great ★★★★ | Good ★★★ | Okay ★★ | Poor ★ | Truly Terrible TT

Powerful performances that dip into our rage

Mardaani 2 (106 min)

CAST: Rani Mukherji, Vishal Jethwa
DIRECTOR: Gopi Puthran
RATING: ★★★★★

SUPARNA SHARMA

Commercial cinema, by its very definition, cashes in on emotions. And the more contemporary, more current these emotions, the more currency it rakes in.

Mardaani 2, starring Rani Mukherji as IPS officer Shivani Shivaji Rao, whom we first met in 2014, dips into the impotent rage we often wake up to in our Bharat *desh* where 93 women are raped every day.

Read that line again, please. Ninety-three women. Every day.

We repeatedly read of these crimes, and though we often remain numb to the violence of it, sometimes the savagery of these acts, especially ones that seem close to us, awaken the dead within and we try to at least articulate our shock, register our anger.

Mardaani 2, written and directed by Gopi Puthran, hits the ground running and takes hold of us, physically and emotionally, from get-go with a kind of creeping, stalking fear that we are unable to shake off till the end.

This is a feat of the film's writing and acting.

What lifts *Mardaani 2* above the usual rape-revenge films is its sharp politics, and the way it shows misogyny as the guiding principle underpinning not just violent crimes against women, but also, often, rather regular male-female interactions.

And then, in the film's last scene, it again dips into that rage in a way that is so overwhelming in its catharsis, that though it seemed primitive, it felt so right that I could not stop my tears.

Sometimes, good commercial

films know what we need more that we do. Or, perhaps, they show us what we rightfully deserve.

Mardaani 2's last scene, powered by Rani Mukherji's superb acting as she channels her character's raw rage, is iconic. It's a scene that, even when watched in isolation, will move you.

Mardaani 2 is set in Kota, around the time of Dusshera and Diwali. We are at a *mela* where a young man, Sunny (Vishal Jethwa), is limping and talking directly to us, completely ignoring the fourth wall, as if it never existed.

He's looking at Latika, a young girl we barely know. But the moment we see her, we feel as if we know her.

He leans at her and tells us, with a terrifying smile, what he's going to do, why and how.

He talks to us as if it's nothing, as if what he's planning is not a big deal. We get the sense that he has done this before. That she's just another girl for him. Irrelevant. Whereas his guile, his skill, this chase, this kill is what's important. It's what keeps him entertained.

This does two things — at one level Sunny tries to recruit us as his accomplice, co-conspirator in a crime that's abhorrent to us, more so because the victim is wholly innocent. And at the same time it dips into our very real helplessness that we often experience — most recently on reading about a girl who was set on fire on her way to the court to testify against her rapists. And the woman studying to be a veterinarian who was gangraped, and later doused with diesel and petrol and set on fire.

We sit frozen, but also riveted — fearing that yet another girl will be raped and we won't be able to do anything.

Enter our saviour — the newly-appointed SP of Kota, Shivani Shivaji Rao (Rani Mukherji).

But just then, the

film dips.

Shivani has barely arrived and is already on top of things — so much so that in a few seconds she decides that the rapist-killer was left-handed, that he took out his anger on the victim, and that he used a belt to kill her.

As she does so, another cop, Brij Shekhawat, who is senior to her in years but junior in designation, talks of "aisi choriyan" (girls like her), irritating Shivani with his overt misogyny.

This character and this acrimonious relationship between Shivani and Shekhawat is a parallel thread that runs in the film, all the time mirroring the rapist, his attitude towards his victims, and the way he violates them.

Like Sunny talks of how he hates women's *chul* (swag), Shekhawat repeatedly talks of the need for women to stay in their *aukat*, of not acting too smart, of behaving in a certain way. He resents Shivani simply because she is a woman who is his superior, i.e. has more power than him — in the police force and in this world. This upsets his worldview, and he

tries to bring back balance in his world in the only way he can.

This casual, common, almost regular misogyny which at one level tries to drag down women who men feel challenged and dwarfed by, not by any action of theirs, but just by being competent and superior in education and class, but more than that because these women don't pander to fragile male egos, don't have time to worship *mardangi*, ties in seamlessly with Sunny's uncontrollable urge to "fix" such women.

This mirroring is done very cleverly, and the film keeps this two-pack misogyny intact throughout, showing us how it seeks to damage and undermine women — at times through micro-aggressions, at times through malevolent, violent crimes.

And then the film's plot, which seemed like it was going to be a straight cat and mouse chase, coils and tightens its grip around us and Shivani as Sunny, taking a sickening interest in her.

He begins stalking her, finding ways to be around her, watch her even as he carries out a murder for cash. This scene too is a surprise because of the cold-hearted manner but shocking finesse with which Sunny conducts it.

All the while Sunny follows her, watching each step, destroying clues that may lead to him.

Though he keeps playing her, as another rape is committed, Shivani seems to get him. There is some psychobabble that is a bit annoying and presumptuous, as if she is a psychic and not a cop.

As the deadline for Shivani's departure from Kota comes close, the game begins, where he seems one step ahead, continually challenging her. But then comes the climax, violent but cathartic, with a dash of MeToo as a belt gets handed from one woman to the other. It again dips into our frustration, but now it lets us exhale, finally.



Roger Ebert's Great Movies



DEPARTURES (JAPANESE)

Released in 2008
Director: Yojiro Takita

Death is for the living and not for the dead so much.

That observation from the mourner of a dead dog in Errol Morris' *Gates of Heaven* strikes me as simple but profound. It is the insight inspiring "Departures," the lovely Japanese movie that won this year's Oscar for best foreign film.

The story involves a young man who apprentices to the trade of "encoffinement," the preparation of corpses before their cremation. As nearly as I can recall, there is no discussion of an afterlife. It is all about the living. There is an elaborate, tender ceremony carried out before the family and friends of the deceased, with an elegance and care that is rather fascinating.

The hero is a man who feels he is owed a death. The father of Daigo (Masahiro Motoki) walked out on his mother when the boy was 6 years old, and ever since Daigo has hated him for that abandonment. Now about 30, Daigo is a cellist in a small classical orchestra that goes broke. He and Mika (Ryoko Hirose), his wife, decide to move back to a town in the north of Japan and live in his childhood home, willed to him by his recently departed mother. He finds no work. He answers a want ad for "departures," which he thinks perhaps is from a travel agency.

The company serves clients making their final trip. Daigo is shocked to discover what the owner (Tsutomu Yamazaki) does; he cleans and prepares bodies and painstakingly makes them up to look their best. The ritual involves undressing them in behind artfully manipulated shrouds in front of the witnesses. The owner is a quiet, kind man, who talks little but exudes genuine respect for the dead.

Daigo doesn't tell his wife what he does. They need the money. His job is so low caste that an old friend learns of it and snubs him. The clients are generally grateful; one father confesses cheerfully that the process freed him to accept the true nature of his child.

A lot is said about the casting process for a movie. Director Yojiro Takita and his casting director, Takefumi Yoshikawa, have surpassed themselves. In a film with four principal roles, they've found actors whose faces, so very human, embody what "Departures" wants to say about them. The earnest, insecure young man. His wife who loves him but is repulsed by the notion of him working with the dead. The boss, oracular, wise, kind. His office manager, inspirational but with an inner sadness. All of these faces are beautiful in a realistic human way.

The enterprise of undertaking is deadly serious, but has always inspired a certain humor, perhaps to mask our fears. The film is sometimes humorous, but not in a way to break the mood. The plot involves some developments we can see coming, but they seem natural, inevitable. The music is lush and sentimental in a subdued way, the cinematography is perfectly framed and evocative, and the movie is uncommonly absorbing. There is a scene of discovery toward the end with tremendous emotional impact. You can't say it wasn't prepared for, but it comes as a devastating surprise, a poetic resolution.

Some of the visual choices are striking. Observe the way Takita handles it when the couple is given an octopus for their dinner and are surprised to find it still alive. See how vividly Daigo recalls a time on the beach with his dad when he was 5 or 6, but how in his memory his father's face is a blur. And how certain compositions suggest that we are all in waiting to be encoffined.

In this film, Kore-eda's *After Life* and of course Kurosawa's great *Ikiru*, the Japanese reveal a deep and unsentimental acceptance of death. It is not a time for weeping and the gnashing of teeth. It is an observation that a life has been left for the contemplation of the survivors.

By arrangement with Asia Features

Not just a cancer story, but a love story

Ordinary Love

(UA) 92 min
CAST: Lesley Manville, Liam Neeson
DIRECTOR: Lisa Barros D'Sa & Glenn Leyburn
RATING: ★★★★★

DEBORAH ROSS

Ordinary Love stars Lesley Manville and Liam Neeson as a long-married couple whose lives are disrupted when she is diagnosed with breast cancer. Not very Christmassy, but it's not a "cancer story", as has been said in some quarters, it's a love story, told profoundly and beautifully and honestly rather than cloyingly or sentimentally.

The screenplay is by the Northern Irish playwright

Owen McCafferty whose wife Peggy underwent breast cancer treatment, and the film is directed by Lisa Barros D'Sa and Glenn Leyburn. Set in Belfast, it takes us from one Christmas to the next, with Manville playing Joan and Neeson playing Tom and first things first: how often do you see middle-aged love stories on screen? Almost never, so in its way this is quite radical. What's more, Joan and Tom are still loving and have sex and everything (imagined) and although they've experienced a great sadness (as we later discover) their world is now each other and they are content with that.

They have their routines, like their brisk evening walk, and they still make each other laugh as when they're in the supermarket and she teases him about his tomato-juice habit. "Can't you just eat more



tomatoes?" Their lives are not exciting. The addition of Worcester sauce to their lunchtime soup is an event. But all this lived-in comfort and ease is shattered when she is in the shower and discovers a lump in her breast. Joan undergoes a year of treatment. Surgery, chemo, the works. The cancer nurses and technicians are all real cancer nurses and technicians so that all feels true,

as does so much else. When Joan's diagnosis has yet to be properly made and the doctor says that on a scale of one to five, the chances of it being cancer is three, they bicker about what this means. Tom says three is closer to one, which means she's in the clear. She says no, it's closer to five, which means she has it for sure. And you just know it's what you would think, if it were

you, and what you would say if it weren't. Heck, I have been there, one way or another — hasn't everyone? — and this is exactly where your mind goes.

Their love isn't tested, as it's plainly here to stay. Instead, this is about the coping and the pain and the fear and the shoring up; and being side-by-side but also alone. At one point they lose their tempers with each other. "We are both going through this," he shouts. "We are not. I am going through this," she rages. They are both right, of course. Other moments are purely tender. "I never liked your hair anyway," he jokes, when she loses it all. There's also a sex scene where they say goodbye to her breasts, in effect. This is raw, and devastating, but also deeply moving and surprisingly erotic. I have seen nothing like it at the cinema ever.

The film is directed sensitively, so it never feels exploitative, and the lighting is beautiful, with the warm brown glow of their home contrasting sharply with the cold blues and whites of the hospital. And the performances are powerhouse performances, Manville's especially. How she can convey deep, complex emotions with just a twitch of a lip, I don't know. It's miraculous.

Neeson has the lesser role and towers above her physically but his Tom can be small and vulnerable and frightened. I'd forgotten, actually, how excellent Neeson can be when he isn't otherwise occupied with killing bad guys or fighting wolves. (The action here doesn't amount to more than Tom driving his old VW very slowly while fretting about hospital parking fees.) The pair have terrific chemistry.

Brilliant, funny, wildly entertaining

The Two Popes

(UA) 125 min
CAST: Anthony Hopkins, Jonathan Pryce
DIRECTOR: Fernando Meirelles
RATING: ★★★★★

DEBORAH ROSS

The Two Popes stars Anthony Hopkins and Jonathan Pryce — that's two reasons to buy a ticket, right there — as Pope Benedict XVI and his successor Pope Francis I, and it is wildly entertaining, so now you have a third reason too. True, it does, as others have noted, shy away from directly tackling the most difficult questions currently facing the church. But is that really the film you want to see? Rather than this affectionate and literate bromance that does, in fact, nudge us towards the bigger

picture, but slyly? Also, it is brilliantly comic. Pope Benedict, for instance, doesn't get jokes but does try to tell one, which no one else gets. "It's a German joke, so it doesn't have to be funny," he then explains. I laughed my head off. Unquestionably, it is the most papal fun I've had in years.

The Two Popes is directed by Fernando Meirelles (*The Constant Gardener*, *City of God*) and written by Anthony McCarten (*Darkest Hour*, *Bohemian Rhapsody*, *The Theory of Everything*), based on his own stage play of 2017. It is "inspired by true events" and explores the resignation of Pope Benedict, formerly Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, and his replacement by Argentinian Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, the current Pope Francis. My word, that sounds dreary, but I promise you it isn't.

The conceit, which may or may not be preposterous, imagines meetings between the two when Bergoglio has arrived at the Pope's summer palace with,



in fact, no thought of being elevated to the papacy as he wishes to resign.

Benedict is fiercely conservative and does not hold with moving with the times. "Marry the spirit of the age and you become a widow in the next," he

says. Bergoglio is much more progressive and is unhappy with the way the church has dealt with the child abuse scandals. "I am a salesman for a product I cannot endorse," is how he puts it. Bergoglio loves Abba and football and tango

but, just as Benedict doesn't get jokes, he doesn't get popular culture either, yet he has been equipped with a Fitbit. "Don't stop now, keep moving," it is always clamouring, so we know what side the film is on. It is visually sumptuous. The

opening, set during the conclave of 2005, and featuring all the red-clad cardinals, is as wonderfully choreographed and stunning as anything from *The Handmaid's Tale* — that's what it put me in mind of — but set cheekily to Abba's "Dancing Queen". Also, the Vatican has been magnificently and opulently recreated, especially the Sistine Chapel. But essentially this is a showcase for Hopkins and Pryce and their Pope-off, if you like. The two characters are opposites on paper. Benedict, previously an academic theologian, has never "lived life", as he admits, while Bergoglio, a Jesuit, has always worked among the poor. But both, it turns out, are haunted by sin. For Bergoglio, it's his role in Argentina's Dirty War, as shown in flashback, while for Benedict it is the church's handling of child abuse claims and his failure to deal with problem priests. Or is it? Bergoglio hears his confession but the sound drops away, so we're never entirely sure. Weird, and

maybe a cop-out, but this would be an entirely different proposition if it got too deeply into that, and went beyond the sly nudges.

The film opts, ultimately, for a fond, odd-couple vibe, although it is strangely imbalanced. Why Bergoglio's back story and not Benedict's? Why do crowds shout "Nazi!" at Benedict? You'll have to look that up for yourself. And it is static and talky with iffy accents. Hopkins, God bless him, mostly resorts to sounding Welsh. But he and Pryce are a wonderful double act, capable of being serious but playful simultaneously, which is a phenomenal skill, and there are the brilliantly comic moments. Especially enjoyable is one of the Popes trying to book his own plane flight, and also one watching his favourite Austrian TV show which involves a German shepherd that is a detective. (It exists. I checked.) Is it worth the price of a ticket or your Netflix sub? Is the Pope... you know the rest.



Emotional intelligence

Students who can understand and manage their emotions effectively perform better at school than their less skilled peers, says a study



Depression is the leading cause of ill health and disability in the world

— Deepika Padukone, Actress

IN BRIEF

Love Island host charged with assault

London: Love Island host Caroline Flack has been charged with assault by beating following an incident at her north London home, BBC reported. The police were called to the 40-year-old's home in Islington, where she lives with her partner, tennis player Lewis Burton, at 05:25 GMT on Thursday. Officers attended after reports of a man being assaulted. The man was not seriously injured, police said. Ms Flack will appear at Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court on 23 December. She was bailed until that date. — Agencies

10-foot python found in a Christmas tree

Brisbane: There are many ways to decorate a Christmas tree but for one woman in Australia, the seasonal theme was very big snakes, when she got home to find a 10-foot python adorning her tree, CNN reported. Leanne Chapman and her partner returned to their home in Brisbane and noticed a commotion on their balcony and discovered a snake in the tree. Couple left the snake alone, and later that night, it slithered away. — Agencies



Luxury yacht turns into a submarine

Rome: It looks like something straight out of a James Bond movie, but this concept might just signal that the future of superyachts is sub-aquatic. Dreamed up by Italian-based naval architect Elena Nappi, the hybrid vessel can travel on both the surface of the sea and underwater, CNN reported. Known as the "Carapace", it submerges to a depth of 985 feet for up to 10 days at a time, offering amazing views of marine life. Nappi envisions it being hired for private trips and business meetings that require "complete secrecy." — Agencies

Taylor Swift blasts 'toxic male privilege'

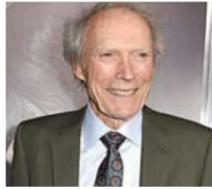
Los Angeles: Taylor Swift was named Billboard's woman of the decade on Thursday night — but her speech contained none of the usual award show platitudes. Instead, the star criticised "toxic male privilege" in the music industry, championed fellow female artists and escalated her feud with Scooter Braun. "Women in music are not allowed to coast," she observed. "We are held at a higher, sometimes impossible-feeling, standard." "I've seen a lot," she added, BBC reported. Swift, who turned 30 on Thursday, opened her 15-minute speech by reflecting on the last decade of her career, and the struggles she had faced. She said that in her early days, critics had speculated that "a male producer or co-writer" was the real reason for her success; or that a "savvy record label" was responsible for making her a star. "It wasn't," she said pointedly. "People want to explain away a woman's success in this industry." "In the last 10 years, I have watched as women in this industry are criticised and measured up to each other and picked at for their bodies, their romantic lives, their fashion," she continued. — Agencies



Reporter Kathy is depicted trading sex with FBI agent for info

Eastwood slammed over 'sex for stories' portrayal

Los Angeles: Oscar-winning director Clint Eastwood was at the center of a firestorm Thursday over his latest movie depicting a reporter trading sex for stories — prompting legal threats over the "shocking" and "untrue" portrayal from her real-life newspaper.



Clint Eastwood

Richard Jewell dramatizes the story of the innocent man who found himself targeted in a devastating media frenzy following a deadly blast at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

Jewell was initially hailed as a hero after he spotted the pipe bomb but was soon identified by journalists including the Atlanta Journal-Constitution's Kathy Scruggs as an FBI suspect. Scruggs, portrayed by Olivia Wilde, is depicted in the movie trading sex with an FBI agent in exchange for learning the suspect's identity.

"The portrayal of our reporter is shocking, untrue and an obvious Hollywood trope," editor Kevin G. Riley told AFP.

"The film commits the very sin that it purports to accuse the media of. It literally makes things up in telling the story."

Never arrested or charged, Jewell was cleared by the FBI after 88 days. But TV networks camped outside his home for the duration, hounding Jewell, who became the subject of wild speculation and ridicule.

Cox Enterprises, the newspaper's owner, on Monday sent a letter to Eastwood and Warner Bros demanding it release a public statement stating "some events were imagined for dramatic purposes."

The letter says the paper and its staff are "portrayed in a false and

Olivia Wilde 'had no say' in Clint's film, Richard Jewell

Los Angeles: Olivia Wilde has broken ranks with the makers of a new film that has sparked anger by suggesting the late reporter she plays traded sex for information, BBC reported.

The ex-House star plays Kathy Scruggs in Richard Jewell, Clint Eastwood's drama about a media frenzy following the 1996 Atlanta Olympic bombing.

The actress said she did not believe Scruggs "traded sex for tips", and did not mean to suggest that was the case.

But she "did not have a say in how the film was ultimately crafted", she said.

According to reviews the film strongly implies that Scruggs had sex with an FBI agent played by John Hamm in return for information about a suspect.

Scruggs died in 2001 and her old paper, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, has threatened to sue Eastwood and Warner Bros.

— Agencies

defamatory manner."

It also demands a prominent disclaimer be added to the film to that effect. The film currently has a disclaimer, stating it is "based on actual historical events" but created some dialogue and events "for the purposes of

Traditional Thai massage gets Unesco heritage tag

Massage originated in India and is practiced in Thailand

Bangkok: At Bangkok's Reclining Buddha temple, Krairath Chantrasri says he is a proud custodian of an ancient skill — the body-folding, sharp-elbowed techniques of Thai massage, which was added Thursday to Unesco's prestigious heritage list.

Originating in India and practiced in Thailand for centuries, the massage was popularised when a speciality school opened in the 1960s to train massage therapists from around the world.

Nuad Thai's addition to Unesco's list of "Intangible Cultural Heritage" practices "is historic," said the Thai delegate at the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organisation meeting in Bogota, Colombia.

"It helps promote the practice of Nuad Thai locally and internationally," he said.

From upscale Bangkok spas and Phuket beach fronts to modest street-side shophouses, "nuad Thai" is ubiquitous across the kingdom, where an hour of the back-straightening discipline can cost

Morocco's Gnawa musical culture listed by Unesco

Rabat: Gnawa culture, a centuries-old Moroccan practice rooted in music, African rituals and Sufi traditions, was on Thursday added to Unesco's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Gnawa refers to a "set of musical productions, fraternal practices and therapeutic rituals where the secular mixes with the sacred", according to the nomination submitted by Morocco. Often dressed in colourful outfits, Gnawa musicians play the guembri, a type of lute with three strings, accompa-

nied by steel castanets called krakebs. They practice "a therapeutic ritual of possession... Which takes the form of all-night ceremonies of rhythms and trance combining ancestral African practices, Arab-Muslim influences and native Berber cultural performances," the nomination document reads. The tradition, which includes the veneration of Islamic holy men, dates back to at least the 16th century.

Gnawa was popularised by a festival that started in 1997. — AFP

as little as \$5. Krairath, who teaches at the Reclining Buddha School inside the famed Wat Pho temple, helps thousands of Thai and foreign students who flock to the centre each year.

The son of a masseuse, he takes great pride in his role sharing the ancient discipline at a temple whose certification is a proud banner for any massage shop. At Wat Pho's complex, trainees run through a catalogue of moves targeting the body's acupuncture points with thumbs, elbows, knees and feet while also incorporating deep stretches and contortions. — AFP

Man held for dressing as mom in driving test

Rio De Janeiro: A 43-year-old man has been arrested in northern Brazil for dressing up as his mother to take her driving test, BBC reported.

When Heitor Schiave's 60-year-old mother, Maria, failed her test three times, the mechanic decided to step in.

On the fourth attempt at the driving test, Heitor impersonated his mother Maria Schiave — an elderly woman in the small town of Novo Mutum Parana in the Brazilian Amazon.

He had arrived two hours late. Wearing a floral blouse and sporting painted nails, make-up and a wig, he drove around Nova Mutum Parana and his plan appeared to be paying off. The other candidates had already completed their attempts at parallel parking.

"I sensed a certain nervousness from the school's owner," driving test examiner Aline Mendonça, 38, told the Guardian.

But suspicions were soon raised that the woman in the driving seat

► 'He confessed that he wasn't the woman in question but the son, her son who was trying to pass as his mum so that she would be able to pass this driving test,' the instructor said

was not the woman on "her" ID.

"He tried to be as natural as possible. He wore lots of make-up with his nails nicely done and [wore] women's jewellery," instructor Aline Mendonça told G1.

The police were called and he was arrested at the driving school for fraud and misuse of someone's identity. "He's already confessed. He confessed that he wasn't the woman in question but the son, her son who was trying to pass as his mum so that she would be able to pass this practical driving test," the instructor added. Mr Schiave reportedly said that his mother did not know of the plan. — Agencies



Lauren Jauregui (left) and Evie Irie at Billboard's 2019 Woman of the Year at the Hollywood Palladium in Los Angeles on Thursday. — AFP, AP



President Donald Trump with First Lady Melania Trump walk from the residence to speak in the Grand Foyer of the White House during the Congressional Ball in Washington on Thursday. — AP



Members of the Irish band U2, Bono, The Edge and Adam Clayton during their visit to Mani Bhavan (Mahatma Gandhi's residence) in Mumbai on Friday. — PTI

Ukraine leader mocks Russian TV for pulling his sitcom

Kiev: Ukraine's leader Volodymyr Zelensky has ridiculed a Russian TV channel for abruptly cancelling his popular comedy series after one evening, saying the show had its impact on "someone with a nuclear weapon."

Zelensky's Servant of the People premiered in Russia on Wednesday evening after a high-profile summit with Zelensky and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

But entertainment channel TNT, owned by Russian gas giant Gazprom, on Thursday said it would no longer air the series.

"I am very sorry," the show was scrapped, Zelensky said during a late-night talk show appearance on Thursday evening.

"You know, someone has a nuclear weapon, and someone has Servant of the People," the former comedian said, hinting at the protracted conflict between Ukraine and its former Soviet master Russia.

"They showed two episodes, and now all the people who had the opportunity to watch these two episodes will definitely watch (the rest) on YouTube," he said.

Servant of the People premiered in Ukraine in 2015 starring Zelensky as Vasyil Goloborodko, a history teacher who suddenly becomes president, roots out corruption, and takes on powerful oligarchs.

Zelensky, 41, was inaugurated in May after winning election. — AFP

DROP THAT DONUT! MEXICO PAYS PORTLY COPS TO SLIM DOWN



Mexico City: It's a sunny morning in Mexico City, and police officers drip with sweat as they do push-ups and squats, part of a program for overweight cops in one of the world's most obese countries.

The two dozen officers grimacing through their workout on the pavement of the station house yard — most with round bellies bulging beneath their drenched T-shirts — are just a handful of the more than 1,000 across the capital who have enrolled in the program, "Healthy Police." They get a bonus of about \$50 a month to participate.

But those who stick with the program, which was launched three months ago, say it can be life-changing. "This was all completely new to me... The first month was tough, both mentally and physically," said one, Mauricio Barrera.

"But the program has helped me understand that obesity is an illness," the 26-year-old told AFP. Barrera, who now looks fit, cracked a grin when he revealed how much weight he has lost since he started: 16 kilos.

"This program is a way to fight the obesity problem we have in Mexico," said Javier Ramirez, the buff fitness instructor guiding the cops. — AFP

'High sugar, holiday food may trigger depression'

Washington: High sugar consumption, which is common during the holiday season, may trigger depression, according to a study which suggests that people prone to the mental illness should control their year round sugar intake.

Along with dwindling light in wintertime, and corresponding changes in sleep patterns, high sugar consumption may lead to a "perfect storm" that adversely affects mental health, the researchers, including those from the University of Kansas (KU) in the US, said. "For many people, reduced sunlight exposure during the winter will throw off circadian rhythms, disrupting healthy sleep and pushing five to 10 per cent of the population into a full-blown episode of clinical depression," said study co-author Stephen Ilardi, who is also KU associate professor of clinical psychology.

The study which is published in the journal Medical Hypothesis, noted that these symptoms of "winter-onset depression" can prompt people to consume more sweets. — PTI

Nasa maps wind flow pattern on Mars

Washington: In a first-of-its-kind study carried out on any planet, Nasa scientists have mapped the global wind circulation patterns in the upper atmosphere of Mars — 120 to 300 kilometres above the Red Planet's surface.

The researchers reprogrammed probes aboard Nasa's Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution (MAVEN) spacecraft to collect wind measurements on the Red Planet. The reprogramming allowed an instrument called the Natural Gas and Ion Mass



► The researchers said the wind flow patterns observed in the Martian upper atmosphere matched what was predicted from theoretical models

Spectrometer (NGIMS) aboard MAVEN — that was normally stationary — to "swing back and forth like a windshield wiper fast enough," the scientists said in a statement.

They added that this tweaking enabled them to gather data on the

winds flowing across the Martian surface.

The study, published in the journal Science on Thursday, was based on data collected by MAVEN two days per month from 2016 to 2018.

"It's a clever re-engineering in flight of how to operate the spacecraft

and the instrument," said Mehdi Benna, study co-author from Nasa Goddard Space Flight Centre (GSFC) in the US.

"And by doing both — the spacecraft doing something it was not designed to, and the instrument doing something it was not designed to do — we made wind measurements possible," Benna said.

The researchers had said that the wind flow patterns observed in the Martian upper atmosphere matched what was predicted from theoretical models. — PTI

महाराष्ट्र रेल इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर डेवेलपमेंट कॉर्पोरेशन लिमिटेड
MAHARASHTRA RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED
 (महाराष्ट्र सरकारचा आणि रेल्वे मंत्रालयाचे संयुक्त उपकरण)
 (A Joint Venture of Govt. of Maharashtra and Ministry of Railways)

Notice Inviting E-Tender
MRIDC/e-TENDER/ROB/2019/51

MRIDC is inviting E-bids from the eligible bidders for the work mentioned below:

a) Name of Work: Construction of Road Over Bridges (ROBs) at 3 Locations (i.e. Wardha - Warora Section at LC No. 19 - km 804 / 12-14 and Nagpur - Wardha Section at LC No. 108 - km 800/36-38 & LC No. 116 - km 817 / 22 - 24) in Lieu of LC Gates in Maharashtra area on Nagpur Division of Central Railway. b) Estimated Cost: ₹ 60,10,96,149/- c) Completion Period: 300 days. d) Last Date and Time for Submission of Bid: 10/01/2020 till 15:00 hrs.

The detailed e-tender notice is uploaded online. Interested bidders who wish to participate should visit www.maharail.com or www.tenderwizard.com/MAHARAIL to bid their offer. All revisions, clarifications, Addendum / Corrigendum, time extensions etc will be hosted online only.

MANAGING DIRECTOR
 MRIDC



NEW DELHI SATURDAY 14 DECEMBER 2019

SPORT | Cricket

Dwayne Bravo backtracks on retirement

14

SPORT | Basketball

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

15



GUIDE TO FORTUNE

Tick the answer and check them below.

1 How many countries border France?

- 6
- 4
- 8

2 Which city was founded in 1718 by the French in North America?

- New York
- New Orleans
- Newark

3 In 2015 Manny Pacquiao fought Floyd Mayweather in a fight billed as what?

- Fight of the Century
- Rumble in the Jungle
- Kings of the Ring

SHORT TAKES

5 held for stealing cables from Metro

Ghaziabad: The Ghaziabad police has arrested five persons for allegedly cutting and stealing Delhi Metro power cables from near the Electronic City metro station. Assistant superintendent of police Keshav Kumar on Friday said that the five arrested persons are Dharma Veer, Shivam, Faizal, Rashid and Riyazuddin alias Piyaru of Ghaziabad's Khoda village neighbouring Niuda. He said the police also recovered four bundles of power cable, measuring over 200 meter, besides the wire cutters from the five accused. The ASP said the five used to cut off the Delhi Metro overhead cable on metro tracks stretches between two stations by climbing up on the track. The five confessed that before cutting the power cable, they used to interrupt power supply by throwing a naked iron wire across the transmission lines of the metro rail network, he said.

33-year-old jumps before Metro, dies

New Delhi: A 33-year-old man ended his life on Friday by jumping in front of a train at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium metro station, police said. The deceased was identified as Bharat J., a native of Chennai, they said. The police were informed about the incident at platform 2 of the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium metro station at about 11.27 am. He was immediately rushed to the nearest hospital where he was declared dead, a senior police officer said. His family is being informed and inquest proceedings are in progress. Further legal action will be taken accordingly, police said.

Man arrested for snatching purse

New Delhi: A 26-year-old man was arrested here hours after he allegedly snatched a woman's bag containing jewellery worth ₹10 lakh in a train, police said on Friday. The accused, identified as Pawan Sharma, was arrested from Delhi's Sarai Kale Khan area on Thursday. His associate, Nand Kishore (22), is absconding, they said. A case was registered after the woman lodged a complaint stating that two men snatched her purse around 4 pm on Thursday when she was travelling from Gwalior to NDLS, the police said. After snatching the woman's bag, the accused jumped off the moving train, they said. DCP (Railways) Haredra K. Singh said the accused were identified with the help of a photo taken by the woman, which also showed the point where the accused had jumped off the train.

50 students, 12 cops in hospital after protest against CAB turns violent

Jamia campus turns into warzone

SUNIL THAPLIYAL
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

The Delhi Police on Friday fired teargas and baton-charged after a march organised by Jamia Millia Islamia University students to protest against the passage of Citizenship Amendment Bill turned violent.

The university campus turned into a warzone after a clash broke out between the students and the police when students took to the streets for a march to the Parliament House.

Following the clash at the varsity gate, around 50 students were detained and taken to Jaitpur and Badarpur police stations. Around 50 students were injured in the incident and 12 police personnel also suffered injuries.

Even some locals joined the protest, sources said, adding that the crowd threw stones at policemen who responded by firing teargas shells. The injured have been admitted to the Holy Family Hospital. Section 144 has reportedly been clamped around the university campus.

According to police, two policemen with relatively serious injuries are under observation in ICU. The University administration said around 100 students sustained injuries in the clash and around a dozen students were seriously injured.

The students alleged that the police used teargas 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. Videos circulated by students on social media showed police caning the protestors.

The police had cordoned off the road and protestors were seen climbing onto barricades. The university's gate was later closed. "We were heading towards Parliament and



Students of Jamia Millia Islamia clash with police during a protest against the passage of Citizenship Amendment Bill in New Delhi on Friday. Police fired teargas and baton-charged after the protest in the campus allegedly turned violent.

and it was a peaceful march but the police asked us to move backwards. Then they pelted stones in response to which students picked up stones too," said Junaid, a student at Jamia.

Another student alleged that police resorted to pelting stones and then used teargas that resulted in many students being injured. Police, however, denied the allegations.

Around 200 alumni of Jamia Millia Islamia, strongly condemned the violence and brutality meted out by the Delhi Police against the students of the university.

A large number of protesters, including Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind leaders, protested at Jantar Mantar on Friday against the amended citizenship law, which they described as "anti-constitutional" and "divisive", and demanded its immediate withdrawal.

► The university campus turned into a warzone after a clash broke out between the students and the police when students took to the streets for a march to the Parliament House

► Crowd threw stones at policemen who responded by firing teargas shells. The injured have been admitted to the Holy Family Hospital.

► Around 50 students were detained and taken to Jaitpur and Badarpur police stations. Around 50 students were injured in the incident and 12 cops also suffered injuries

► The police had cordoned off the road and protestors were seen climbing onto barricades. The university's gate was later closed.

A protest was also organised by the Delhi Congress in Seelampur area of East Delhi.

The protesters at Jantar Mantar, led by JUH general secretary Maulana Mahmood Madani, carried placards with slogans like "Save-Constitution, Withdraw CAB", "Division on basis of religion unacceptable" and "CAB nahin Rozgar Chahiye". JUH leaders termed the law a "draconian"

legislation and urged the President to stop it from coming into effect.

Madani said the law "is against the Constitution of India which denies discrimination on the basis of religion." He urged Muslim youths to maintain peace and tranquillity. The organisation held protests across the country against the law, according to a Jamiat statement. In Seelampur, thousands of Congress workers, a

majority of them from the minority community, protested against the bill with the party asserting that it will wage an "all out fight" to protect the Constitution.

Congress Delhi unit president Subhash Chopra said the bill was a "calculated attempt" by the BJP to create "unease and communal divide". "There have been attacks on secularism not once, but many times. But the people of India have always rejected the agenda of divisive forces like the BJP," he stated.

Mr Chopra "condemned" the police lathicharge on students of Jamia, and demanded a probe into it. As a precautionary measure, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) closed the entry and exit points at Patel Chowk and Janpath Metro stations following Delhi Police's advisory.

Hoax bomb call from UAE puts cops in a tizzy

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

The Delhi police has written to telecom service providers to trace the United Arab Emirates caller who made a "hoax bomb call" to the office of an airline at the Delhi Airport, the police said on Friday.

The police was informed about a "bomb in flight" call at around 6.00 pm on Monday, it said.

According to the police, one Pankaj of the Etihad Airlines received a call on a landline number wherein the caller stated that there was a bomb under a seat of one of the planes of the airline, which was scheduled to land at the Delhi Airport from Abu Dhabi.

"At least 12 such phone calls were received from the same number within a span of half an hour, it said, adding that the call was traced to the United Arab Emirates," police officials said.

After two hours of thorough checking by the security agencies and investigations, the call was declared as "non-specific," the police added.

"The call was made from Dubai and we have

► Etihad Airlines received a call on a landline number wherein the caller stated that there was a bomb under a seat of one of the planes of the airline, which was scheduled to land at the Delhi Airport from Abu Dhabi

► At least 12 such phone calls were received from the same number within a span of half an hour, it said, adding that the call was traced to the United Arab Emirates

written to all the telecom service providers to identify the network and seek details of the owner of the number from which the calls were made," said deputy commissioner of police (airport) Sanjay Bhatia.

He said Etihad Airlines' flight number 244 landed safely at 6.38 pm at the Delhi Airport from Abu Dhabi, adding that a case was registered in the matter.

In total, 161 passengers on board the flight arrived safely at the airport, he said.

City records highest Dec. rainfall in 22 yrs

New Delhi, Dec. 13: The national capital, on Friday, recorded its highest 24-hour December rainfall in the last 22 years, which led to a dip in temperatures and pollution levels, the meteorological department officials said.

The Safdarjung Observatory, figures of which are considered official for the city, recorded 33.5 mm rainfall—the second highest after 70 mm in December 1997—till 5.30 pm. The all-time high of

► City recorded its highest 24-hour December rainfall in the last 22 years, which led to a dip in temperatures and pollution levels. The all-time high of 75.5 mm was recorded on December 3, 1923.

75.5 mm was recorded on December 3, 1923. Meanwhile, the Palam weather station registered

an all-time December high of 40.2 mm in the last 24 hours. It had gauged 33.7 mm rainfall on December 3, 1967, the officials said.

Delhi recorded a low of 12.8° Celsius and a high of 21.5° Celsius, which was two notches below normal. The heavy rainfall and high-velocity winds led to a significant improvement in the city's air quality.

The overall air quality index in the city read 240 at 4.00 pm on Friday. It was recorded in the "severe" category (430) on

Thursday.

The weatherman said Punjab, Haryana, and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan also received rains on Thursday and Friday.

The precipitation and cold, dry winds from the hilly region will cause the mercury to drop. The minimum temperature is expected to dip to 8° Celsius on Sunday.

Moderate to dense fog is expected on Saturday and Sunday, the officials said.

Man held at IGI with ₹41L mobile phones

New Delhi, Dec. 13: Customs officials at the Indira Gandhi International Airport have seized 44 brand new iPhones and 2 Samsung mobile phones worth ₹41.73 lakh from a man's possession.

The items were seized on Thursday when the passenger arrived from Addis Ababa.

"Delhi airport customs seized 44 brand new iPhones and 2 Samsung mobile phones valued ₹41.73 lakh on Thursday from an Indian arriving from Addis Ababa. He has been arrested after admitting to smuggle brand new iPhones valued ₹124.4 lakh in the past," said customs department. —ANI

₹5,000cr futuristic hub to come up in East Delhi, says Gambhir

New Delhi, Dec. 13: East Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party MP Gautam Gambhir on Friday said that the Centre has given approval to the 'Integrated Development of East Delhi Hub' project and it will be inaugurated by Union home minister Amit Shah on Dec 26.

East Delhi will soon get this modern and futuristic hub to cater to the residential, commercial and cultural needs of East Delhi people, Mr Gambhir said in a statement, thanking the Prime Minister for the project.

"The Delhi Development Authority has entrusted the work of this project to NBCC for which an MoU was signed on Feb. 27 this year. The hub will be



Gautam Gambhir

located at a prime location near Anand Vihar ISBT," Mr Gambhir said.

The estimated cost of the project is ₹5,000 crore, he said.

The project includes a massive central green lung, concourse-level connectivity of metro with commercial buildings and towers, universal barrier-free access in public

► According to Gautam Gambhir, Centre has given approval to the ₹5,000 crore and it will be inaugurated by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Dec. 26

areas, environmental/green building features like skywalk connectivity among others, he said.

It will also have schools, dispensaries, libraries, community halls, and multipurpose halls with provisions for indoor games, creches and other civic amenities, he added. —PTI

HC pulls up JNU as it fails to give protesters' info

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

Describing as "shocking" that the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) had no idea about the academic details of the students against whom it has filed a contempt petition for protesting within 100 metres of its administrative block, Delhi high court's Justice A.K. Chawla directed the university to file an affidavit giving details of the students named in the petition, including their courses, their status, and duration of stay in the campus. The court listed the matter for hearing on next Friday.

"It is shocking you file a contempt (case) and don't know anything about the students, one of whom was convicted for contempt last year also. You only know the room numbers (of the students)," the court said, after the registrar of Jawaharlal Nehru University and other officials, present in the hearing, were unable to give details about one of the nine students, Geeta Kumari, who according to the varsity was held guilty of contempt last year by the high court for protesting near the administrative block.

It asked about the student's details after Central government standing counsel Monika Arora, appearing for Jawaharlal Nehru University, said that Ms Kumari was held guilty of contempt last year by the high court for being part of an agitating group that blocked access to the admin block.

Ms Arora told the court that in August 2017, the high court had directed that students will not hold protests within 100 meters of the administrative block and will not block access to it. The high court had also

► Delhi high court's Justice A.K. Chawla directed the university to file an affidavit giving details of the students named in the petition, including their courses, its status, and duration of stay in the campus. The court listed the matter for hearing on next Friday

directed the police to intervene and provide assistance if and when protesting students block access to the block, she said, and added that since October 28 this year, despite repeated requests by Jawaharlal Nehru University, the police did not come to its aid. Hence, both the agitating students and police has violated the high court's August 9, 2017 order, she said.

"So one statutory authority not recognising request of another statutory authority and court's intervention is required," it observed. Jawaharlal Nehru University's contentions were opposed by Delhi government standing counsel Ramesh Singh, who appeared for the police, saying the petition was an attempt to "browbeat" the agency.

"This is browbeating. Complete browbeating. How can contempt be filed against commissioner of Delhi police when Jawaharlal Nehru University has made the requests to the SHO? The SHO could have been made a party. In such sensitive matters, some sensitivity should be shown," he said.

The court, however, disagreed with Mr Singh's contentions, saying in service matters often chief or principal secretaries are made a party.

Nirbhaya's mom wants rapists to be hanged on Dec. 16

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

A Delhi court will hear on Wednesday (December 18) a plea seeking issuance of death warrants against the four people convicted in the Nirbhaya gangrape and murder case.

Nirbhaya's mother, however, said she wants those convicted in the case to be hanged on December 16, the day her daughter 'Nirbhaya' was brutally assaulted and left to die on the road seven years ago.

The mother, who has moved the Supreme Court against the review plea by one of the men sentenced to death in the case, said she will keep fighting for their execution till she is alive.

"I will keep fighting for justice for my daughter and for the death penalty of those who snatched her from me. I want them to be hanged before December 16," she told reporters.

Additional sessions judge Satish Kumar Arora deferred the matter till December 18 noting that the review petition of one of the convicts was pending before the Supreme Court for Tuesday. "At least I have to wait till the time the review petition is pending," the judge said.

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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 affects 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 282-6 from an overnight total of 263-6, 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 pacer 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 its 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 CHENNAI, DEC. 13

Not long ago, the wrist spin was 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. — DC

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 us 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 our matches just by one skill alone," Arun added.

Shardul to replace injured Bhuvneshwar

GE 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 Bharat 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 bat-

ting line-up. "With Shikhar (Dhawan) not being there it again gives KL 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

Bravo eager to contribute again

West Indian all-rounder backtracks on retirement

NEHA SURANA CHENNAI, DEC. 13

West Indies all-rounder 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 inter-



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 T20s. 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. — 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. — AFP

Brief scores: Australia 416 (Labuschagne 143, Head 56, Wagner 4/92, Southee 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 opt-

ing 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 all-rounder 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.



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, so I've sort of been floating around." — PTI



Injured Ribery

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

PRESIDENTS | CUP

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.

Tiger Woods won again, but his United States team had to battle back from a bleak position to stay within three points of the International side at the end of Day Two Australia.

The US went into the alternate shot or four-somes 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, who had looked to be closing on the Internationals' first victory since 1998.

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 playing-captain Woods leading wild celebrations.

Els, who has been meticulous in his planning, played in the Internationals' lone triumph 21 years ago and showed his team video highlights to instill how much it means to win. They again responded admirably, winning two, losing two and halving one on a pulsating day.

With 30 points at stake over the week, they need another nine from Saturday's eight matches and the 12 singles on Sunday for a famous victory.

The omens looked good for the Internationals in a heavyweight opening clash

that pitted former world number one Dustin Johnson and Matt Kuchar against the experienced Louis Oosthuizen and Adam Scott.

They started well, clinching the opening hole with Johnson driving off the tee then draining a birdie putt. Oosthuizen then missed a simple putt to hand the US a two-up lead by the fifth, before the International pair began clicking to win the sixth and eighth.

They turned the screws as the crowd roared them on to win at the 11th, 13th and 14th and whiplash the dejected Americans 3 and 2.

Behind them Canada's Adam Hadwin gave his team a lead on the first hole after a beautiful approach shot from young Chilean Joaquin Niemann against Xander Schauffele and Patrick Cantlay.

In a see-sawing tie, the advantage kept changing hands before Cantlay stepped up to sink a massive pressure putt on the last to get the US team on the scoreboard.

Inspired, Woods and Justin Thomas, the only US pair to win on Thursday, matched the exploits. — AFP



United States team captain Tiger Woods hits to green during Day Two of the Presidents Cup golf tournament in Melbourne on Friday. — AFP

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.

before he was replaced by Adam Silver. Before that he was deputy commissioner under Russ Granik from 1990 to 2006.

During Stern's 30 years as commissioner, the league added seven new franchises, relocated a half-dozen others and dramatically increased revenues. The average player salary went from \$250,000

in 1984 to \$5 million. Well wishes came from fans and people around the league such as former Los Angeles Laker Magic Johnson.

"Join Cookie and I in praying for my good friend who helped save my life," former NBA Commissioner David Stern, Johnson wrote on Twitter, referring to his wife. — AFP

Neymar-Mbappe duo a hit

Paris, Dec. 13: 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 Mbappe 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

Ferrari admit to talks with Hami

Milan, Dec. 13: Ferrari chief executive officer Louis Camilleri said on Thursday that it was premature to talk about a possible move of six-time world champion Lewis Hamilton to the Italian team. Camilleri confirmed that Mercedes driver Hamilton has had "conversations" with Ferrari chairman John Elkann, but not with him nor Team Principal Mattia Binotto.

"(But) that was a little exaggerated. While it was at a social event, they have mutual friends. It would be premature to decide anything today," added Camilleri.

Hamilton, who comes to the end of his Mercedes contract next season, will be bidding for a record-equaling seventh world title in 2020.

Meanwhile, Camilleri pointed out that Ferrari have a "long-term agreement" with Charles Leclerc, the 22-year-old driver from Monaco who joined the team in 2015 and

Lewis Hamilton, who comes to the end of his Mercedes contract next season, will be bidding for a record-equaling seventh world title in 2020.

is under contract until the 2022 season.

Leclerc is the junior driver to four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel, whose contract at Ferrari ends after the 2020 season.

"We need to see both the performances, the way he adapts to the car (for the 2020 season) and his motivation for the future," said Binotto of Vettel.

But 2021 will in any case be "too early" for one of the young drivers to move up from the Ferrari Driver Academy, the Italian said.

"It will be important to have drivers with some (Formula One) experience because the cars will be completely new," added Binotto.

Among these is 20-year-old Mick Schumacher, son of Ferrari legend Michael, who finished 12th in his first Formula 2 run. — AFP

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



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



I'm obviously over the moon. But the points are for Leicester.
— Jamie Vardy, Leicester City striker, on scoring 16 goals in 16 games for the Foxes

SHORT TAKES

Hockey introduces ranking system

Lausanne: The International Hockey Federation (FIH) on Friday unveiled a new world ranking system for 2020, which will be a match-based instead of tournament-based calculation for a "better reflection of current performances". The new system will come into effect from January 1 next year. The FIH said the new world ranking system has been launched after 12 months of painstaking research, analysis and testing. The outgoing FIH world ranking system was in existence since 2003, being originally devised to allocate teams into pools at tournaments. The FIH cited "numerous restrictions" of the tournament-based system for the change. The new match-based world ranking system involves an exchange of points between two teams competing in each FIH-sanctioned match played. The number of points exchanged depends on a trio of factors — the result of the match, the relative ranking of the teams and the importance of the match. — PTI

Boxer Prasad pulls Punjab level

New Delhi: Punjab Panthers' P.L. Prasad secured a unanimous points verdict over Ashish Inshah of Bengaluru Brawlers to help his team draw level 1-1 after the first two bouts in the Big Bout Indian Boxing League here on Friday. After 18-year-old Anamika opened with a fine win over Panthers' debutant Darshana Doot in the women's 51kg bout, Prasad asserted his superiority over Ashish Inshah in no uncertain terms in the 52kg class fight. A lot was riding on Prasad since he knew that the team expected him to win the bout on a night when it made a slew of changes in the line-up. Having picked up 12 points in their earlier matches, Punjab Panthers fielded four Big Bout debutants in their fourth match. They rested the likes of skipper M.C. Mary Kom, Uzbek star Abdulmalik Khalakov and Manoj Kumar against Bengaluru Brawlers who had won only six points from three earlier matches in the tournament being held in New Delhi. — PTI

SWEDEN BEAT INDIAN U-17 GIRLS 3-0

Mumbai: The opening match of the U17 Women's Football Tournament 2019 saw India go down 0-3 to Sweden, who scored twice in the first half and once in the second half at the Mumbai Football Arena on Friday (December 13, 2019). As the match began, the away side took an early lead four minutes into the game, with Matilda Vinberg converting a spot-kick. India came close to equalising only a few minutes later, creating two chances in consecutive minutes. Lynda Kom charged down the left and took a shot from the edge of the box that was saved by the Swedish custodian in the 11th minute. Moments later, Sunita Munda beat her marker down the right flank and put in a cross towards Sumati Kumari. However, the Swedish defender came in with a last-minute challenge and the defence cleared the ball away. The game became a midfield battle as both sides looked to pass their way past the opposition. India goalkeeper Manju Ganju showed great alertness on two occasions. In the 21st minute, Lynda broke through once again and registered a powerful effort that drew a good save from the Sweden keeper. Manju made another save in the 24th minute but a minute later, Sweden doubled their advantage through Ida Weidenberg. — Agencies



Diogo Jota (right) of Wolverhampton Wanderers scores his side's second goal during their UEFA Europa League Group 'K' football match against Besiktas at the Molineux stadium in Wolverhampton, central England, on Thursday. Wolverhampton won 4-0. — AFP

Wolves come to the fore

Substitute Jota's 11-min 'trick' inspires Wolverhampton win

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

However, Bundesliga leaders Borussia Moenchengladbach and Italian power Lazio made surprising exits.

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, Juan Mata converted a penalty. 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



Manchester United's Mason Greenwood (left) celebrates with teammate Juan Mata after scoring his side's fourth goal during their UEFA Europa League Group 'L' match against AZ Alkmaar at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, on Thursday. United won the game 4-0. — AFP

Bragging rights battle heats up in Spain

Madrid, Dec. 13: Barcelona and Real Madrid could be playing to be first in La Liga over the Christmas break on Wednesday but both are at risk of pre-Clasico defeats if their focus wavers this weekend. There are few tougher fixtures in the league than Barca's away at Real Sociedad on Saturday or Madrid's trip on Sunday to a revived Valencia, who have won three games of the bounce and beat Ajax in Amsterdam to win their group in the Champions League.

Already qualified in Europe, Barcelona and Real Madrid had the luxury of rotating key players in midweek but as the emphasis shifts towards their crunch meeting at Camp Nou, the danger is that they underestimate the tasks in front of them. Both have hit their stride in recent weeks, pulling away from the chasing pack while leaving behind early-season bumps that had placed the futures of their coaches in doubt. Barcelona have won 13 of their last 15 games and seven out of their last

12, if their own surge has been slightly less consistent than Barca's in terms of results, their performances have been more convincing. In their last 10 games, they have scored 28 goals and conceded only five. In normal circumstances, both might therefore have been expected to come away from Anoeta and Mestalla with victories but each have reason to be wary. Off the pitch, the threat of political unrest around the Clasico lingers, with Catalan independence

demonstrations expected at Camp Nou both before and during the game next week. Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu called for calm on Thursday and insisted the match would not be postponed again but, with families and friends in the city and likely to attend the game, it would be understandable if his players' minds were not fully on football this weekend. Valencia and Real Sociedad are hardly opponents to be taken lightly either. — AFP

THE RESULTS

Manchester United (Ashley Young 53, Mason Greenwood 58, 64, Juan Mata 62-pen)	4	Lugano (Aratore 45)	1
AZ Alkmaar	0	F.C. Basel (Widmer 22, Stocker 72)	2
Standard Liege (Bastien 47, Amallah 69)	2	Trabzonspor	0
Arsenal (Alexandre Lacazette 78, Bukayo Saka 81)	2	Getafe (Cabrera 76, Molina 78, Kenedy 86)	3
Wolves (Diogo Jota 58, 63, 69, Dendoncker 67)	4	Krasnodar	0
Roma (Diego Perotti 7-pen, Edin Dzeko 19)	2	LASK Linz (Trauner 23, Klaus 38-pen, Raguz 90+3)	3
Wolfsberg (Florenzi 10-og, Weissman 64)	2	Sporting Lisbon	0
Partizan Belgrade (Soumah 4, Sadiq 22, 76, Asano 26)	4	CFR Cluj (Burca 49, Djokovic 70)	2
Astana (Rotariu 79)	1	Celtic	0
Slovan Bratislava (Sporar 42, Rhapsalla 70)	2	Eintracht Frankfurt (Da Costa 31, Kamada 38)	2
Braga (Rui Fonte 44, Francisco 72, Bozhikov 75-og, Paulinho 90+3)	4	Vitoria Guimaraes (Rochinha 8, Al Musrati 85, Edwards 87)	3
APOEL (Savic 61)	1	Trangers (Morelos 30)	1
Sevilla	0	Young Boys (Barisic 89-og)	1
Garabag (Gueye 90)	1	Porto (Luis Daz 14, Malacia 16-og, Soares 34)	3
Dudelange (Bougrine 63)	1	Feyenoord (Bottighin 19, Larsson 22)	2
F.C. Copenhagen (Papagiannopoulos 77-og)	0	Wolfsburg (Paulo Otvio 52)	1
Dynamo Kiev (Tsygankov 90+4)	1	Saint-Etienne	0
		Gent (Depoitre 7, 16)	2
		Olexandria (Miroshnichenko 54)	1
		Borussia Moenchengladbach (Thuram 33)	1
		Istanbul Basaksehir (Kahveci 44, Crivelli 90+1)	2

Sindhu ends with a 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



P. V. Sindhu in action during her women's singles match against He Bing Jiao of China at the World Tour Finals in Guangzhou on Thursday. Sindhu won 21-19, 21-19. — AP

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. Sindhu failed to reign in

her errors even after the break, hitting the shuttle wide and long as Bingjiao jumped to a 18-9 lead. However, the Indian affected a massive recovery, rattling off nine

straight points to draw parity at 18-18. Bingjiao managed to break the run of points before a deceptive return to serve took Sindhu to 19-19. The Indian then gathered the remaining two points to edge past Bingjiao in the opening game. Sindhu carried her momentum in the second game, opening up a 7-3 lead initially and then moving to 11-6 advantage at the interval. Bingjiao punished the two weak returns from Sindhu but then started committing unforced errors as the Indian lead 15-10. The Chinese soon narrowed the gap to 16-18 before Sindhu won a point after a gruelling rally. — PTI

Goa lock horns with ATK in ISL

Goa, Dec. 13: What do you expect when two of the most attacking sides in the Hero Indian Super League lock horns with each other? Plenty of action, drama and definitely goals. That's all probably a certainty as FC Goa hosts ATK at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here on Saturday. The hosts, known for their fluid attacking style, have not exactly been at their best this season due to a variety of factors including injuries and suspensions. ATK's attack, carries an equal if not a greater threat. Led by Roy Krishna and David Williams, ATK have the ability to score at will. — Agencies

Blasters rally for a draw in ISL

Kochi, Dec. 13: There was no shortage of entertainment as Kerala Blasters FC and Jamshedpur played out a 2-2 draw in a Hero Indian Super League clash at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here on Friday. Kerala had the better chances to score but it was a Piti (38') penalty that broke the deadlock. CK Vineeth (71') added the visitor's second before Raphael Messi Bouli scored a brace (75', 87') to pull his team level. With the spoils being shared, Jamshedpur are third with 13 points from eight matches while Kerala sit seventh with seven points. Mario Arques, who was deemed fit to start after a

lengthy layoff, nearly got his team off to a splendid start. Seityasen Singh nicked the ball on the right flank and cut inside to deliver a threatening cross that was headed straight at the goalkeeper by the Spanish midfielder at the far post. The visitors were careless in possession early in the game, with Jeakson stealing the ball off Aitor Monroy to set Raphael Messi Bouli free, but the Cameroonian striker couldn't keep his shot on target. With three minutes left for the end of regulation time, Kerala found an equaliser. Seityasen Singh dribbled into the box. — Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool take on Watford

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.

Pep Guardiola takes his stumbling Manchester City team to face Arsenal while Manchester United look to keep up their push for a top-four spot at home to Everton.

NORWICH BRACE FOR VARDY ATTACK

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. The former England man has struck in all of those victories.

If Vardy nets against Norwich and Manchester City 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.

LAMPARD'S CHELSEA HOST BOURNEMOUTH

Frank Lampard is desperate not to squander the good work he has done with his young side in the early months of the season but is weighing up where he can strengthen now he is able to sign players in January.

Chelsea host plummeting Bournemouth on Saturday and Lampard knows he must get the balance right to strengthen Chelsea's hopes of securing a Champions League. — AFP

Live on TV

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE
Liverpool vs Watford from 6 pm on Star Sports Select 1, 1 HD
Sheffield United vs Aston Villa from 8.30 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
Burnley vs Newcastle from 8.30 pm on Star Sports Select 2, 2 HD
Southampton vs West Ham from 11 pm on Star Sports Select 2, 2 HD