



Sponsored protest

Union minister V.K. Singh says that 'sponsors' might be encouraging protests by students in Delhi

Fresh violence over CAA rocks Delhi

Massive riots break out in Seelampur and adjoining areas in the northeast part of Capital

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
| DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

The national capital once again witnessed violence and arson over the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act with massive riots taking place in northeast Delhi's Seelampur and adjoining areas.

Angry protesters demanding the scrapping of CAA torched several motorbikes, pelted stones at police personnel and damaged buses, including a school bus and two police booths when they were stopped from marching beyond Seelampur.

The police retaliated by ordering a baton charge and firing tear gas shells. They even fired some bullets in the air to disperse the protesters.

About 21 people, including 12 police personnel, were injured.

The protest march began in Seelampur around noon with people raising slogans against the CAA as well as the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Violence reportedly erupted at around 2 pm, when a large crowd of protesters, whose figure is being put between 2,000-3,000, was stopped by the police from moving forward at the Seelampur Chowk.

The situation turned ugly when the crowd started throwing stones at the police.

Plumes of smoke billowed from at least two localities as the stand off continued for around one-and-a-half hours.

Though local residents were seen holding discussions with senior police officers, and mosques were heard making appeals via loudspeaker, asking people to maintain peace and remain calm, two bikes of traffic cops



Brick-bats lie on the road as protesters clash with the police against the Citizenship Amendment Act at Seelampur in New Delhi on Tuesday.

■ ANGRY PROTESTERS demanding scrapping of the Citizenship Amendment Act torched several motorbikes and pelted stones at the police personnel.

■ VIOLENCE erupted after a large crowd was stopped by the police.

were burnt by the demonstrators.

They also vandalised two local police booths and took away the CCTV cameras installed in them.

The police has detained five people and lodged two FIRs at Zafrabad and Seelampur police stations regarding the violence.

Later in the evening, tension gripped the adjoining Mustafabad area again as a mob started pelting stones at the police.

In retaliation police used tear gas to disperse the mob.

SC tells petitioners against violence to approach HCs

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

The Supreme Court on Tuesday declined to set up a committee headed by a retired judge of top court to probe alleged police atrocities on the students of Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act that provides for citizenship to non-Muslim illegal migrants from neighbouring Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Refusing to set up a committee on the lines of one it had set up to inquire into

encounter killings in Hyderabad, a Bench of Chief Justice S.A. Bobde, Justice B.R. Gavai and Justice Surya Kant, however, asked the aggrieved petitioners to approach the high court as incidents being pointed out had happened at different places, different steps were taken with different consequences. Expressing faith in the Chief Justices of the high courts, CJI Bobde said that the Supreme Court was not a fact-finding court and said let the high courts do the job of fact-finding by appointing a committee to be headed by a former judge of the top court or

the high court. CJI Bobde said, "Each of these incidents has taken place at different places, different steps were taken, there were different consequences" and it would be too enormous a task for one committee to look into all of them. The court did not entertain either plea for 'no arrest of the students' till the high courts heard the matter.

Urging the court to hear the matter, the court was told that "there is a commonality in the situation. Protests are being held across the country, escalating and snowballing every hour".

CAA does not affect Indians

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met the Bangladesh envoy and praised Sheikh Hasina for the overall growth of Bangladesh, Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu told trainee diplomats from Bangladesh that the Indian government has clarified that the amended citizenship law is meant to give citizenship to religiously persecuted refugees and not to take away the citizenship of any Indian.

"It does not affect the citizenship of Indians of any religion," Naidu said. Naidu also told the delegation that India was fully aware of the heavy burden on Bangladesh as a result of the influx of lakhs of displaced persons from the Rakhine State of Myanmar and that it appreciates Bangladesh for its humanitarian gesture towards these displaced persons. He said that Bangladesh could count on India's full support towards bilateral efforts

with Myanmar in the repatriation of displaced Rohingyas back to Myanmar.

"We reaffirm our commitment to stand with Bangladesh as a modern, secular, prosperous, sovereign State, in keeping with the spirit of 1971 and in line with the vision of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for a developed Bangladesh. India has been consistently making efforts to strengthen the close ties between the two countries," Naidu said.

Asserting that India and Bangladesh have been able to resolve some outstanding issues including the land boundary and maritime boundary issue, Naidu said, "India-Bangladesh bilateral relations are considered as a role model of good neighbourly relations." He added that India always believed that a strong, stable and prosperous Bangladesh was in India's interest and "we would like to partner in your journey of progress to become a developed country by 2041."



Opposition leaders at Rashtrapati Bhavan after meeting President Ram Nath Kovind on the Citizenship Amendment Act, in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Oppn meets Prez over CAA

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

The Opposition parties on Tuesday kept the pressure against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and National Register of Citizens with a delegation of leaders, led by Congress president Sonia Gandhi, meeting President Ram Nath Kovind on the issue. They urged him to intervene over the violence at Central universities.

The parties included the Congress, Trinamul Congress, Samajwadi Party, CPI(M), CPI and RJD. These parties gave a memorandum to the President pointing out how the government was in a hurry to enact the law. However, Shiv Sena, the Congress' alliance partners in Maharashtra, was not part of the delegation. The BSP too said that its MPs from both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha would meet the President

on Wednesday. Mrs Gandhi accused the Modi government of "shutting down" people's voices and bringing laws that were not acceptable to them. "All of us, representatives of 12 different political parties have met the President to plead with him to intervene over the Northeast situation, which is now spreading across the country, including in the national capital because of the act," she said.

Not students, say two of the arrested

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

A Delhi court sent 10 people, arrested in connection with protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) near Jamia Millia Islamia University here, to judicial custody till December 31.

Police had arrested them on Monday for alleged involvement in violence near JMI University here and said that none of them were students.

During the hearing, Delhi Police told the court that some locals, instigated by politicians, participated in the violent protests at JMI.

"Several citizens and police officers were injured in the violent protest," the investigating officer said.

The police said the case has been registered against them under provisions of the Indian Penal Code for unlawful assembly, rioting with deadly weapon, obstructing public servant, voluntarily causing hurt, attempt to commit culpable homicide and entering into criminal conspiracy with common intention and for using explosive substance.

It said they have also been booked under sections of the Prevention of Defacement of Property Act, PTI reported.

Metropolitan magistrate Kamran Khan earlier sent the 10 arrested people — Mohammad Hanif, Danish alias Jafar, Sameer Ahmed, Dilshad, Sharif Ahmed, Mohd Danish, Yunus Khan, Jumman, Anal Hassan, Anwar Kala — to judicial custody.

Counsel for the accused said they have been falsely implicated and made a target by Delhi Police to show something.

Counsel appearing for Sameer, one of the accused, said that he is a bike mechanic and was arrested from his house.

"Some police officers came, signalled to Sameer to come to them and took him away to the police station. The camera footage from outside of his house can corroborate this fact," the lawyer said.

Counsel for another accused, Hanif, said the accused have been previously arrested for petty crimes and because of that they have been made a target this time.

"Locals have been nabbed as something should be done. My client has been made a target. He is a citizen of this country and his rights should be protected. They have been previously arrested for petty crimes. One can clearly see the connection here. They have been arrested to show something," the lawyer told the court.

When the judge asked the investigating officer on what evidence they have been arrested, he said, "There are statements of police officers who were involved in identifying the people who had caused violence." There were also disclosure statements of the accused.

The accused, however, denied that their statements were recorded. The FIR also named seven other persons, including local politicians and student leaders, according to a PTI report.

CAA STIR: GOVT STAFF TO JOIN PROTESTS

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, DEC. 17

The state administration which has succeeded in restoring peace in the trouble-torn capital city areas is set to face more challenges from Wednesday as the state government employees have announced to start a non-cooperation movement all over the state in support of the agitation against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.

Earlier, Aasu chief adviser Sammujjal Bhattacharya warned the state government to refrain from putting pressure on those joining the peaceful agitation against the controversial Act.

Responding to the indication of Assam finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma who on Monday stated that the Central government may try to reach out to agitators, Mr Bhattacharya rejected the possibility of talks.

He said, "How can we trust a government which called us for talks and within five hours took a decision to pass the CAB in Parliament."

ASSAM SETS UP S.I.T. TO PROBE ARSON

DC CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI, DEC. 17

The Assam government will constitute an SIT to probe incidents of violence at the state secretariat area and Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra, in which Youth Congress president and an NSUI activist were allegedly involved, state minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Tuesday.

Mr Sarma alleged, "We have got visual and technical evidence proving as to how Congress leaders conspired to set the Assam secretariat on fire. It was a huge conspiracy." Announcing that the Assam government has constituted an SIT, headed by a DIG of CID, Mr Sarma said that police has gathered "substantial evidence" that exposes the proactive involvement of Popular Front of India (PFI) activists in the arson and violence that went on for two days in the capital city areas. He said the police has registered 197 cases in the state and arrested over 223 people so far.

ABUSE OF POWER | HRW wants police to abide by global standards on policing

Human Rights Watch for probe

New Delhi, Dec. 17: The Human Rights Watch has urged the Centre to immediately repeal the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in view of nationwide protests against it, and said there should be an independent probe into police "brutality and excesses" against students and other protesters.

In a statement on Tuesday, the international human rights body's South Asia Director Meenakshi Ganguly said the "government failed to grasp the extent of public opposition over erosion of basic rights evident in

these protests". Its "strongest response to the protests would be to repeal" the Act and "withdraw its plan for citizenship verification that threatens marginalised communities", the organisation said.

On the police action against students of Jamia Millia Islamia, Aligarh Muslim University and others in northeastern states protesting against the law, she said the authorities should immediately order all police personnel to abide by international standards on policing assemblies.

"The police may have used excessive force against demonstrators across the country" and the government "should establish a credible independent investigation into allegations of excessive force, brutality, and vandalism" by policemen, Ganguly said.

The CAA enactment had prompted international condemnation, including from the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which urged Indian authorities to respect the right to peaceful assembly and to abide

by international norms and standards on the use of force when responding to protests, she said.

India "should address the concerns raised about CAA instead of trying to shut down the protests with excessive force".

"The right to peaceful assembly and protest is a fundamental right protected under international law, and one of the cornerstones of a society built on respect for human rights and rule of law. International human rights standards provide that law enforcement agencies should protect

and facilitate that right, and should as far as possible apply nonviolent means before resorting to the use of force," she said. "HRW is concerned about the police using unnecessary or excessive force against protesters.

About internet services being shut down in various states, Ganguly said India had used such measure several times in response to protests and "these shutdowns have largely been in violation of international legal obligations including the rights to freedom of expression and assembly". —PTI

HC directs Assam to restore internet

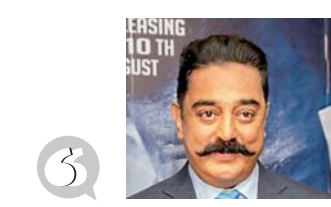
Guwahati, Dec. 17: The Guwahati High Court passed an order directing the Assam government to consider restoration of internet services, both mobile internet services and broadband, from 3.00 pm on Tuesday.

After hearing four PILs and considering the difficulties faced by the people, a division bench of the High Court, comprising Chief Justice Ajay Lamba and Justice Achintya Malla Bujur Barua passed the order on Tuesday directing the state government to consider restoration of internet services. The order

■ THE COURT said that while restoring internet, the authorities should consider the prevailing situation in the state.

also said that while restoring the services, authorities should take into consideration the input of the prevailing situation. The court fixed December 19 as the next date of hearing.

The PILs were filed by journalist Ajit Kumar Bhuyan, advocate Bonoshri Gogoi and others on the issue of suspension of internet services. —PTI



AIDMK's support to CAA in Parliament is a betrayal to Tamils and the nation

— Kamal Hassan
actor-politician

BRIEF

Maya tells Centre to withdraw CAA

Lucknow: Bahuraj Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati on Tuesday voiced concern over violent clashes in different parts of the country over the amended Citizenship Act, saying such incidents happen when the government "disregards" the Constitution to serve its selfish interests. She asked the Centre to withdraw CAA in the interest of the country and the Constitution or else it could have a damaging impact. "Such things often happen only when the government in power discriminates against people belonging to one section of society," she said.

CAA protest at Harvard, Oxford

London: Students in several premier institutions abroad, including Harvard and Oxford, have held demonstrations against the police crackdown in Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).

The protests on the campuses abroad were led by Indian students studying there. "We condemn the violence unleashed on students in Jamia and AMU among other Indian institutions. The use of police force is against students exercising their fundamental right to protests in the university spaces and elsewhere," according to a joint statement issued by students and scholars of University of Oxford.

Students at Harvard University have written an open letter to the Indian government saying, "we are deeply shocked and concerned about reports of police brutality"

'Will not sign NRC document'

Raipur, Dec. 17 Lashing out at the BJP-led government at the Centre over the new Citizenship Act and the proposed NRC, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Tuesday accused the saffron party of polarising the society and dividing people in a bid to remain in power.

The Congress CM, who completed one year in office on Tuesday, said if the National Register of Citizens (NRC) is implemented, as announced by the Narendra Modi government, he will be the first person to not sign the document, and called for opposing 'black angrez', an apparent reference to the BJP.

'WILL ENSURE CITIZENSHIP DESPITE OPPN'

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

Notwithstanding widespread protests, including violent agitations, against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) across the country, in particular by students, Union home minister Amit Shah said the Opposition parties can oppose the law "as much as they can", but the Narendra Modi government was "committed to give citizenship and a dignified life to refugees persecuted for the last 70 years".

Blaming the Opposition camp of spreading misinformation against the CAA and inciting violence, Mr Shah said the CAA was meant to grant citizenship to religiously persecuted refugees and not to take away the citizenship of any Indian.

Shah also said the Opposition was misleading students by spreading misinformation against the law for political gain, and asserted that those who were opposing it should read the full document.



Values

Disdain of religion by so-called seculars is self-defeating, says former West Bengal governor Gopalkrishna Gandhi



Pressure has to be maintained on Pakistan to stop terror fund

— Emmanuel Lenain, French ambassador

BRIEF

China backs out of discussing J&K issue

New Delhi: China apparently floated the idea of discussing the Kashmir issue at the behest of Pakistan during a "closed consultations" session this week at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) but backed out after "advice" by some of the other P-5 countries including France, sources confirmed on Tuesday. The P-5 or permanent members of the UNSC comprise US, Russia, UK, France and China. Beijing also backed out due to the forthcoming visit of Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi to India. It may be recalled that in August this year, UNSC had discussed developments in J&K informally.

6 fishermen rescued after boat mishap

Kerala: Six fishermen who had put out to sea from here were rescued on Tuesday after their fishing boat was hit allegedly by a ship. Another fishing vessel which was nearby rescued the members and took them to shore, coastal police said. "They were rescued and admitted to the Thiruvananthapuram Medical College Hospital this afternoon," police said. Sahaya Raju (52), Sahayam (48), Raymond (42) James (56) Subin (38) and Renju (27), all residents of nearby Poonthura, were rescued. Police said the alleged collision took place around 16 nautical miles off the Kerala coast.

Rape accused escapes custody

Korba: An 18-year-old man, accused of allegedly raping a minor girl, escaped from police custody in Chhattisgarh's Surajpur district on Tuesday. Six police personnel, including an assistant sub-inspector, have been suspended for alleged dereliction of duty. Suraj Vishwakarma, a resident of Ramnagar village, was arrested on Monday evening for kidnapping and raping a 17-year-old girl, Surajpur superintendent of police Rajesh Kukreja said. The accused, who was lodged in a lock-up at Kotwali police station, escaped at 5 am on Tuesday when six policemen who were on duty allegedly fell asleep, he said.

FORT WILLIAM TO BE OPEN FOR HERITAGE TOURS

Kolkata, Dec. 17: The Eastern Command is considering to open the Fort William in Kolkata for historical and heritage tours for the people, Army Commander Lt General Anil Chauhan said on Monday. He said the Vijay Smarak would be open to the public on Sundays and public holidays for the people for paying homage to the slain soldiers. "The idea is considering this Fort William and the history of Calcutta (Kolkata) they are almost synonymous," Mr Chauhan said. "We could open it up for historical and heritage kind of tours on a limited basis initially. And hopefully, the citizens of Kolkata would have something to rejoice after a month or so after we take a call," he said at Fort William, the headquarters of Eastern Command. The Army commander said the 1971 war had a special significance for the Eastern Command and for Kolkata as it was the headquarters that was controlling the war. He added that it was from Kolkata that the war was directed and the impact of the war was felt by the city more than anyone else. "And the kind of respect that the Indian Armymen draw from Calcutta is seen nowhere else," he said.

PM dares Cong to say it'll make Pakistanis Indians

Bhognadih, Dec. 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday accused the "Congress and its friends" of spreading lies over the new citizenship law, and dared them to declare they will accord Indian nationality to all Pakistanis.

He also challenged them to re-introduce Article 370 in the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir and scrap the law against instant Triple Talaq. As campuses across the country erupted in protests over police action at Jamia Millia Islamia, the prime minister asked students to try and see whether they were not being made accomplices in a "conspiracy" where "urban naxals" and others were using their "shoulders to fire" to



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a campaign rally BJP candidates ahead of fifth phase of Assembly election, in Sahibganj, Jharkhand on Tuesday. — PTI

serve their own interests. Addressing an election rally in Jharkhand, Mr Modi sought to assuage concerns of Indians

apprehensive about getting stripped of their citizenship. "The Congress is spreading lies, creating

an atmosphere of fear for Muslims over the new law. Citizenship (Amendment) Act neither takes away the rights of Indian citizens nor harms them in any manner," he told an election rally here.

The Prime minister asked his political opponents to stop "dirty politics" and not to destroy the country's social fabric. "I give an open challenge to Congress and its friends from this land of the brave... If they have courage, let them openly announce that they are ready to give Indian citizenship to all Pakistanis. "If they (the opposition) have courage, they should announce article 370 will be restored in Jammu and Kashmir... Triple Talaq will be back," he said. — PTI

Kerala snakebite: 2 teachers get bail

DC CORRESPONDENT KOCHI, DEC. 17

The Kerala High Court on Tuesday granted anticipatory bail to two teachers of a government high school in Wayanad district who were booked for alleged lapses, which caused the death of a girl student following snake bite in the classroom on November 20. Justice Alexander Thomas also granted the same relief to a Taluk hospital doctor who treated the student bitten by the reptile at the govern-

ment Sarvajana school at Sultan Bathery. The court directed them to cooperate with the police probe in the case. "If they are arrested, they should be produced before a magistrate court and granted bail the same day. If their suspension is revoked, they should be transferred to another facility," the court said. The teachers, Shajil C.V. & K.K. Mohanan, moved the court seeking anticipatory bail following allegations that the student died due to their unresponsive approach even after the students informed them that she was bitten by a snake.

CAA is India's internal issue, says France envoy

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 16

New French ambassador Emmanuel Lenain on Monday said that "nobody can say that Pakistan has fulfilled its commitment" (to take action against terrorism) made to anti-terrorism financing global watchdog Financial Action Task Force (FATF), adding that pressure has to be maintained for this. In an interaction with reporters, Mr Lenain also said that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is India's "internal matter" and that India's wonderful diversity should be maintained. Mr Lenain recently succeeded Alexandre Ziegler as the French envoy to India. Pakistan is facing the spectre of being blacklisted by FATF in February next year if it does not act on its promise of cracking down on

terror-financing. Pakistan is already in FATF's greylist. In his first interaction with reporters at the French embassy, Mr Lenain said, "Nobody can say Pakistan fulfilled its commitment. If you want Pakistan to fulfil its commitment, you keep the pressure." The French envoy made it clear that Pakistan has to crack down on financing of terrorism. "We (France) are very straight on that. We'll keep the pressure," he said. On what would happen in February during the next FATF session, the French envoy said, "If the assessment is made that no progress has been made (on Pakistan's promise), we will accordingly." On the cooperation between India and France in anti-terrorism efforts, Mr Lenain said this is a "strong area of cooperation".



Tourists ski at Kufri near Shimla on Tuesday. Most parts of north India got no respite from the icy winds and biting cold on Tuesday as the mercury continued its downward spiral and the maximum temperature in Delhi was recorded at its second lowest in 22 years. — PTI

WB Governor calls for truce

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 17

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar called for burying the hatchet between the Raj Bhavan and the Mamata Banerjee government and said they should work jointly for "democracy to succeed" after the Trinamul Congress supreme did not visit to "update" him during the day about the largescale violence over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state. "After my fruitful visit to the Assembly I had emphasised that it is time for the Raj Bhavan and the state government to set aside

their differences and work together for democracy to succeed. I await a positive response from the CM," he tweeted.

Mr Dhankhar stated that he would wait for state chief secretary Rajiva Sinha and state director general of police Virendra who later intimated the Raj Bhavan to visit him on Wednesday afternoon.

He had summoned the two top bureaucrats on Monday morning but they did not turn up.

Earlier in the morning he visited the West Bengal Assembly and took a tour before expressing his satisfaction at the arrangements that were made for him, according to sources.

FIRING IN U.P. COURTROOM, ACCUSED DIES

Bijnor/Lucknow, Dec. 17: Assaults on Tuesday opened fire in a courtroom in Bijnor, killing a murder accused and injuring two policemen, officials said. They said that another murder accused managed to escape from the spot, taking advantage of the commotion.

They said that among the three assailants arrested after the attack in the chief judicial magistrate's court was the son of the man murdered six months back.

The incident occurred when the three entered into the courtroom and showered bullets on two accused in the murder of a property dealer, Haji Ehsaan, and his nephew in Najibabad area of the district.

Both were brought to the CJM court for hearing from Tihar jail in Delhi on Tuesday afternoon when the assailants fired at them, leaving main accused Shahnawaz dead, SP Sanjeev Tyagi said. SP (City) Laxmi Niwas Misra said Shahnawaz's co-accused Jabbar managed to escape taking advantage of the commotion after the shootout. One of the policemen was referred to Meerut hospital where he was out of danger and chief judicial magistrate Yogesh Kumar escaped unhurt. Haji Ehsaan's son was among those arrested.

The incident prompted SP chief Akhilesh Yadav to attack the Yogi Adityanath government on the law and order situation. In Lucknow, director general of police O.P. Singh termed the incident the outcome of a "rivalry in which a son took revenge of his father's killing" and said that all the three accused were arrested with their weapons by the police. — PTI



India successfully conducted two separate trials of the supersonic cruise missile BrahMos on Tuesday, one each from the land and air platforms to check its capacity to hit targets with precision. The tests were deemed a success. — PTI

Posters mocking Nitish's silence over CAA pop up

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, DEC. 17

Posters mocking Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar for his silence on the issue of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) has been put up all across Patna by his political rivals.

Posters bearing images of Mr Kumar describe him as a "invisible, dumb, deaf and blind chief minister". One of the posters also urges the people to "trace his whereabouts and send him back to the state".

Sources claim that the posters have been put up by Opposition parties which have called for a state-wide protest against



Nitish Kumar

CAA and NRC on December 19 and 21.

"The posters have been put up by the general public and social activists who want Mr Kumar to break his silence and clarify his stand on the issue of the CAA and NRC. Masses feel that all this is part of a hidden agenda by the ruling party to suppress the voice of poor

and downtrodden in this country. Why is Mr Kumar silent on the issue." RJD spokesperson Shakti Yadav said.

Mr Kumar has come under attack from the Opposition over his party's support to the Citizenship Amendment Bill in Parliament.

Sources said that questions are being raised because most of his party leaders spoke openly about the issue but Mr Kumar has been silent.

Besides, two of party's prominent faces, poll strategist Prashant Kishor and Rajya Sabha MP Pavan Verma, created a flutter recently in the political circles by opposing the JD(U)'s official stand on the matter.

CHINA PLANNED ON DISCUSSING J&K AT UNSC

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

China apparently floated the idea of discussing the Kashmir issue at the behest of Pakistan during a 'closed consultations' session this week at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) but backed out after 'advice'

by some of the other P-5 countries including France, sources confirmed on Tuesday.

The P-5 or the permanent members of the UNSC, comprise the US, Russia, UK, France and China. Apparently, Beijing also backed out due to the forthcoming visit of Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi to India.

It may be recalled that in August this year, the UNSC had discussed the developments in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) informally at a 'closed consultation' similarly after China approached the UNSC. Observers point out that China seems under tremendous pressure from Pakistan to act on its behalf.

Bobde recuses from review plea of Nirbhaya rape case accused

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde on Tuesday recused himself from hearing the review petition of Akshay Kumar Singh — accused in 2012 Delhi gang rape case — seeking reconsideration of the Supreme Court's order upholding his death sentence along with three other accused.

Chief Justice Bobde, heading a three-judge bench that includes Justice R. Banumathi and Justice Ashok Bhushan, said he will constitute a bench on Wednesday at 10.30 am and the new bench will take up the review plea filed by Kumar against capital punishment at 2 pm. He recused himself saying that his nephew, Arjun Bobde, had once appeared on behalf of the victim in the case.

At the outset of the hearing, he asked solicitor general Tushar Mehta as to who was appearing for the victim's family and expressed reservation in hearing the review petition as someone close to him had appeared for the victim's mother in the case.

Though Mr Mehta said

Chief Justice Bobde, heading a three-judge bench that includes Justice R. Banumathi and Justice Ashok Bhushan, recused himself from hearing the review petition saying that his nephew, Arjun Bobde, had once appeared on behalf of the victim in the case

The Chief Justice said he will constitute a bench on Wednesday at 10.30 am and the new bench will take up the review plea filed by Akshay Kumar Singh, who was awarded death sentence along with three others in the 2012 Nirbhaya brutal gangrape, against capital punishment at 2 pm

that the matter was between the state, the accused and the court, and there was no issue in CJ Bobde being on the bench, the CJ recused himself from hearing the review petition.

Justice A.S. Bopanna will replace him at the hearing today. Akshay Kumar Singh, who was awarded death sentence along with three others in the 2012 Nirbhaya brutal gangrape that led to her death and caused national outrage, has moved the Supreme Court seeking reconsideration of its verdict upholding his death sentence.

The top court had on May 5, 2017, upheld the death sentence of Mukesh, Pawan, Vinay

Sharma and Akshay Kumar, holding that the aggravating circumstances against them far outweighed the mitigating circumstances cited in their favour.

In his plea seeking reconsideration, Akshay Singh has contended that he is from a poor and respected family and its only caretaker. Making a class distinction, he has said that the extreme penalty of death sentence is hardly ever imposed on a rich or affluent person.

Pointing out that "our criminal justice system cannot guarantee the consistent application of legal standards and rule of law", Akshay Singh asks in his review petition, "How can we allow judi-

ary to decide who will live or die?"

Referring to several countries where death penalty has been abolished, Akshay Singh has said that "capital punishment cannot be applied with certainty, consistency or fairness and it is morally indefensible" and thus it should be abolished in India as well.

Pointing to the reformation he is undergoing in jail since his incarceration, Akshay Singh, who is above 30 years of age, says, "Why death penalty, when age is reducing? It is mentioned in our Vedas, Puranas and Upanishad that in the age of Satyayug, people lived for thousands of years. Even in Treta Yuga, a man used to live for thousands of years. In the age of Dwapar Yuga, they used to live for hundreds of years. But now it is Kalayuga. In this yug the age of humans has been reduced too much.

It is now 50 to 60 years and rarely we listen of a person who is of 100 year of age." He has also pointed flaws in the evidence that has been cited by the prosecution against him.

DECCAN Chronicle

18 DECEMBER 2019

Will Kashmir ever get back to its true normal?

The Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, in an inexplicable act, has extended the custody of 83-year-old Dr Farooq Abdullah, four-time chief minister of the erstwhile J&K state and three times a parliamentarian — he currently represents Srinagar in the Lok Sabha and, ironically, is on the 21-member parliamentary consultative committee on defence. His detention under the Public Safety Act will continue till March 2020 and there is no guarantee it will end then. It is an ironic twist of fate for India's biggest champion in Kashmir.

In the dizzying heat of current events — the brute-force legislation of a Citizenship Amendment Act that has led to mass protests in Assam and West Bengal, and the police brutality against Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University students protesting against the CAA, Kashmir has been forgotten by many Indians. Perhaps many weren't moved in the first place either as they are unsure of the ground realities in Kashmir or because fear of retribution by a vindictive government. Also, many propagandists and social media trolls think nothing of passing off fake images and videos to prove to the world that "normalcy has been restored in the Valley", as home minister Amit Shah put it in Parliament on November 20.

If we borrow from former US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who came up with "known unknowns" and "unknown unknowns", perhaps what the home minister means is that Kashmir is experiencing an "abnormal normalcy". For what else would you call a situation where Tuesday marked the 135th day Kashmir went without the Internet? According to Access Now, an international advocacy group, only China and Myanmar have cut off the Internet for longer. Or perhaps "abnormal normalcy" is defined by the fact that 31 political leaders and 5,000 political workers have been detained under varying provisions of the law. Presumably, the government worries that freeing detainees like Dr Abdullah's son Omar Abdullah or former CM Mehbooba Mufti will lead to political protests and mobilisation that would prove embarrassing, given the existing international opprobrium. What, however, do they fear from an 83-year-old politician who is walking around with his wife's kidney transplanted into his body?

After all, their dismantling of Article 370 and the bifurcation of the state are now done deals, on which there will be no going back. But so scared is the Government of India of Dr Abdullah that no one is allowed to meet him — not political visitors from New Delhi, not journalists, not fellow Kashmiris. Only his family is allowed to visit him, and they refuse to speak about him to anyone because as his sister and daughter found out on October 15, the government thinks nothing of throwing women into jail, if only for a day.

So when will Dr Farooq Abdullah be released? "When things are normal," Amit Shah told Parliament when Opposition leaders questioned him on November 18. Presumably he meant when there was "normal normalcy". One can only worry, then, what "abnormal non-normalcy" would entail, both for Kashmir and for India.

Just desserts for Sengar

She is young. Ingenuous. Resilient. She chose for herself a working life, hoping to tangibly contribute to the nation's GDP, bring prosperity to her family. She was a daughter of the soil. Instead of enabling her, the powerful decided to exploit and condemn her for her good intentions and competences. Met with resistance, they took revenge on her family. Within a year, her father was dead. Deaths of two of her aunts followed. The accident that killed them has left the girl maimed. We do not know the full extent of her injuries.

Yet, unlike their counterparts in the heartlands as well as the metropolises, her family has stood by the sufferer. Though, as some would say, they paid the price for that. It marks a departure from custom, nevertheless. Of stigmatising, ostracising, cancelling the rape victim. Just like it happened in 'Nirbhaya's case. It is, therefore, fitting that the district court in Tis Hazari, Delhi, where the erstwhile Chief Justice of India had transferred all of the cases pertaining to this series of crimes (the incumbent, CJI Bobde, has now formed a panel of two Supreme Court judges to speed up hearing gendered and sexual violence cases), has now convicted Kuldeep Singh Sengar, belatedly expelled BJP MLA from Unnao, of rape under both Section 376, IPC, and sections 5(c) and 6 of the Pocco Act on December 16, the date of 'Nirbhaya's gang-rape. His co-accused, Shashi Singh, was acquitted for lack of evidence. Once smirking and full of taunts, Sengar broke down in the courtroom upon hearing the verdict. His sentence is likely to be pronounced on Friday.

It is as well that Sengar will not be served the regressive death penalty as the relevant Pocco Act amendment is not retrospective. But why has the CBI booked him only for conspiracy and not murder? Additional district judge Dharmesh Sharma has duly slammed the agency for slow, biased and shoddy investigation. In these gloomy times, his judgment is a ray of hope.

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DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax: 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-255284/2552287; Telefax: 0866-255234
Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P.), Ph: 0891-252333/252334; Fax: 0891-2755285
Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208
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Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Buranpur Village, Venkatchalam (M), Chemmundugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580
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Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Feet Road, Koramangala, Bengaluru-500 095 Ph: 080-43460500; Fax: 080-22960552
Coinbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Rannagar, Coinbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255
Kochi: No.3-B, 3rd Floor of DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavantham Road, Emakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408
Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph's Press, TC 15/1040, Cotton Hill, Thycad (PO), Thiruvananthapuram 695 014
Kozhikode: Door No 6/1002 E, First Floor of City Mall, Opp. YMCA, Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001, Fax: 0495 4019 018
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Subhani

The end of a dream, or new beginning for UK?



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

Fears and phobias haunt many societies. The Assamese have always been neurotic about being overwhelmed by Bengalis. The fanatics of the BJP fear that Muslim "terrorists" will force another "twelve hundred years of servitude" on India. Muslims expect humanity to persecuted Hindus abroad will damage their civic rights. Tales of Poles and Rumanians, Slovaks and Serbs placing an intolerable burden on jobs, housing, schooling, medical care and other social services explain why northern English voters supported Brexit. Britain has to leave the European Union, they reckon, to save itself. They forgot that giving Boris Johnson what he calls a "powerful new mandate to get Brexit done" exalts the immigrant over the native. When the job first fell into his lap because of Theresa May's ineptness, a front-page headline in the Turkish newspaper *Sozcu* screamed "Ottoman grandson becomes Prime Minister". It meant Mr Johnson's great-grandfather, Ali Kemal Bey, an Ottoman grandee and founder of its Anglophile Society, which had advocated that Turkey become a British protectorate like Kuwait or Qatar. Kemal was also a journalist who went into government but with disastrous results: he was captured in the Ottoman twilight and lynched by nationalists fighting to establish modern Turkey.

Perhaps it was to live down his ancestry that Britain's new Prime Minister affects to despise his ethnic brethren. Some years ago, he won the first prize in a competition organised by the *Spectator*, the magazine he had edited from 1999 to 2005, asking readers to compose limericks that were "as filthy and insulting as possible" about Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. There were fears that the abusive winning poem might be an impediment when Mr Johnson visited Ankara in 2016 as Britain's foreign secretary. He says Turkey's President didn't bring up the poem at all when they met. He wouldn't, would he, no matter how deeply it rankled? Mr Johnson charmed everyone by boasting of his Turkish forebears and — in the same breath — of being "the proud owner of a digital, very well-functioning Turkish washing machine".

Chutzpah is defined as murdering your parents and then seeking the court's indulgence as an orphan. It goes with opportunism and a thick skin in ensuring political success. While EU leaders criticised Mr Erdogan for harshly putting down an attempted coup, Mr Johnson praised the suppression which left more than 240 people dead. The Turks also appeared willing to forget his role in a Brexit campaign that frequently used Turkey's EU application to warn of the dangers of remaining in the bloc. A Turk from Mr Johnson's ancestral village proud-

Kemal was lynched by nationalists fighting to establish modern Turkey. Perhaps it was to live down his ancestry that Britain's new Prime Minister affects to despise his ethnic brethren.

In smashing the so-called 'red wall' in the North of England, Mr Johnson did not win over millions of working class voters. He pandered to the multitude by making common cause with them.

ly attributes his blond mop to his Turkish forefathers.

What next? An email from an English friend in industrial Lancashire on the morning of the victory claimed: "Each of us had come separately to the conclusion that Boris, as both a journalist and politician, was far better equipped to read the situation from both an insider and outsider perspective than the average parliamentarian, who has, these days, a very narrow experience of the world, and thus is in a far better position to act upon his evaluations. The average media person may have such blind spots too, as indeed the BBC seems to have demonstrated in misreading the likely outcome of the election right up to the exit poll at 10.00 pm. We find it hilarious that the media told politicians what it thought they wanted to hear, and vice versa. All the more hilarious that they repeated the errors made in calling the predicted outcome of the Brexit referendum in 2016."

Others hold that in smashing the so-called "red wall" in the North of England, Mr Johnson did not win over millions of working class voters. On the contrary, suppressing his own impeccable upper class Eton and Balliol background, he pandered to the multitude by making common cause with them. No wonder a principled Jo Swinson, the plucky young Liberal Democratic Party leader who had promised a coalition to defeat Brexit, lost her seat and resigned.

My Lancastrian correspondent concluded: "Although there will be

snags, the process of departing the EU will now proceed apace." The January 31 deadline has been revived. If so, it may be the end of a dream of regional cooperation that inspired multinational groupings in Asia, Africa and America and nourished the distant hope of global unity. But some more rational Brexiteers claim that rejection of the EU might in fact be its saving. "Do not despair over our exit", my friend writes in a second email. "I suspect some other nations will wish to follow, at which point the bureaucrats and politicians will finally accept that the EU needs drastic overhaul to make it fit for 21st century purposes and beyond. The organisation has become ossified very quickly, and those with a vested interest in obstructing reform have ensured frustration would boil over."

He finds it "unacceptable that by far the richest EU country should be one of the biggest net recipients of subsidies — Luxembourg." Apparently, the EU is riddled with corruption, which is justified with numerous creative excuses. "We're tired of them. We're tired, too, of a system in which the European Parliament is a cipher for the mandarins who cut deals in backrooms, a mere ratification chamber without legislative powers. The EU will implode when the next country quits, and be replaced by one built on democratic principles. I am a reluctant Brexiteer, and although I shall not see the day, I hope and believe that within a generation or so there will be a new European framework which is open, adaptive, and accountable. Britain will then proudly participate."

Amen to that, although I am not sure that Mr Johnson wants a strong and revived EU. Or, indeed, anything beyond his own continuation in office.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

CONTROL VIOLENCE

The country is facing the disturbances due the countrywide protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act. Even dignitaries are thinking twice to visit India. PM Narendra Modi must convene an all-party meeting to discuss ways to contain violence and establish peace at the earliest.

Gudipati Shanti Priya
Secunderabad

ACTS ARE A MUST

We should understand that the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens are not going to harm anyone. The demand by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to roll them back is unethical. Both the Acts are newly enacted that will identify intruders and safeguard us from unwarranted threat. We should remember that even if we intrude into any country, they won't accept us as their citizens.

Vaddeti Venunath
Hyderabad

SCAVENGING

According to the Manual Scavenging Act 2013, no person, local authority or agency shall engage or employ either directly or indirectly a manual scavenger. The officials are ignoring these rules is shocking. This clearly shows that the officials have put the lives of a worker to risk without providing them safety measures before entering manholes which are filled with toxic gases. Officials should be held responsible for all these deaths and should be punished as per the law.

D. Manoj Kumar
Mt Road, Secunderabad

WELL DONE, DC

Kudos to *Deccan Chronicle* and the Telengana High Court for taking the public grievances column of DC, 'Speak Out', as PIL. This is what exactly citizens want from a dedicated legal arm of the government. This will greatly cut the time delay in grievance resolving process. Well done DC, keep it up.

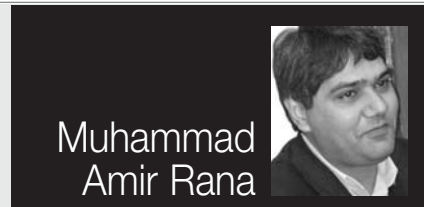
Wg. Cdr. V. Sundaresan (Retd)
Sainikpuri, Secunderabad

LAND PRICES

Land prices all over the city have shot up. The cost of plots are exorbitant even in government land auctions despite the government fixing a fair base price per square yard. In the prevailing scenario the middle-classes cannot afford to own a house. It is high time the government checks the prices of lands.

S.K. Malla
Secunderabad

Email your letters to info@deccanmail.com, editor@deccanmail.com. You can also send them to Editor, *Deccan Chronicle*, 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad-500 003.



Muhammad Amir Rana

'De-radicalising' Uighur Muslims: Is the Chinese action justified?

Tensions between China and the US have escalated after the House of Representatives' Uighur Human Rights Policy Act, 2019. The move is of a piece with the allegations of many international media and human rights organisations that China is persecuting the Uighur community and violating their rights — allegations that Beijing has denied. Calling the US action a political move aimed at damaging its international image, China says it is running a deradicalisation programme to mainstream its communities.

The Chinese claim has not been verified by independent sources and mystery shrouds its deradicalisation or re-education programme. China needs to demonstrate to the international community that it has inserted human rights safeguards in its deradicalisation measures.

On their part, the Chinese say that they are countering violent extremism (CVE) with a strategy that has

been designed after a careful examination of CVE approaches in the West and in the Muslim world. The Chinese view has been challenged by those who point out that standard global CVE practices are different from those espoused by China.

Secondly, the Chinese definition of extremism is complicated as it hardly differentiates between religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural grievances. The Chinese deradicalisation programme is also a massive exercise in the sociocultural engineering of its minority communities.

China's communist party states that 'harmony' is the core driver of state policies as exemplified in its Belt and Road Initiative vision. The idea of 'harmony' or 'harmonisation' could have been conceived as a substitute for the regular democratic process, but has, instead, become a driver of legislative and administrative reform, including 're-education' strategies. However, China is still striving to generate a framework for 'harmonising' its ethnic and reli-

gious communities. Chinese scholars believe that adopting a muscular approach to 'harmonising' minority communities is the fastest way to make the autonomous and administrative regions trouble-free.

Uighur Muslims complain they are paying a huge cost for this 'harmonisation process', which is causing them to lose their religious, ethnic, and cultural identities. They find only a few voices being raised in their support in the Muslim world. The Muslim leadership, which is greatly concerned by Islamophobia, has apparently shut its eyes to the Uighur issue. Their silence is rewarded with Chinese economic assistance and diplomatic support on international forums.

Though Chinese authorities believe they will be able to achieve their envisioned sociocultural transformation, they are nervous about their global image. This year, China opened one 're-education' centre for international visitors in Kashgar, inviting diplomats, academics and

journalists to visit it, in an attempt to counter international perceptions. But so far, such attempts have not impressed foreign visitors.

One component of China's counter-extremism framework is to challenge radical narratives, which is resulting in attempts to forge a new ethnic and cultural identity for Xinjiang's Uighur community. They are reinterpreting the history of Xinjiang and Muslims in China. According to some books and booklets, provided by the authorities to visitors, Chinese historians and scholars are making efforts to convey to their Muslim populations that they have been a part of the Chinese civilisation for thousands of years.

A booklet titled *Historical Matters Concerning Xinjiang* and published by the State Council Information Office in 2019 rejects the idea that Xinjiang has ever been referred to as 'East Turkestan'.

Chinese language courses are compulsory for Muslims because of communication barriers with Uighur

and other Muslim communities, according to the Chinese authorities. An unusual aspect of this exercise is that the authorities are attempting to introduce a local, Chinese version of Islam on the pattern of its previous exercise of nurturing socialism with Chinese characteristics. For this purpose, Beijing has established Islamic learning centres to prepare imams, or prayer leaders, who can preach the "Chinese version" of Islam. These centres are not allowed to collaborate with other Islamic institutions in Muslim countries.

It is interesting that at a time when exclusionism, supremacism, and hyper-nationalism tendencies are globally on the rise, China has decided to launch its own version of 'harmonising' society. This thinking might appear to negate the global trends but in essence, its objectives are similar, and it has little space for accepting diversity.

By arrangement with Dawn

Let Muslims be like Franciscans, espousing faith



Robert D. Crane
Q&A
DR ROBERT D. CRANE, who was an adviser to late US President Richard Nixon and a former deputy director of the US National Security Council, embraced Islam in the 1980s. In Abu Dhabi for the launch of the youth forum of the World Council of Muslim Communities, Dr Crane says, in an interview with JOHN MARY, the Muslims in India should be like the Franciscans, who, with deep commitment, declared their convictions from the housetops rather than remaining reclusive and withdrawn from public life. That's what Muslims should do, while eschewing violence.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has recommended sanctions against Union home minister Amit Shah for his stewardship of the Citizenship Amendment Bill, which introduces religion as a criterion for citizenship. What does it mean to India?

Leave aside technicalities, I'm sure this (the USCIRF stand) will be a help to the people of India to fulfil the vision of Mahatma Gandhi to build a true confederation of peoples. The opposite of the confeder-

tion is a single ruler, who could have an electoral system, but decisions are made independent of that. A totalitarian system would reduce the possibility of a confederation of peoples.

The Supreme Court verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute case in Ayodhya has caused dismay to many people, not just Muslims, because the court upheld "faith over facts" in settling the dispute in favour of a temple in place of the masjid. Most Muslims have taken it in their stride, for the sake of peace. Would you advise acceptance or back those who still opt for litigation?

I am with those who accept the verdict and have decided to move on. The advantage is that this gives India and its people time to understand their religion. Do you understand the enlightened source of authority in Hinduism, of responsibilities of people because human rights don't exist by themselves? What are the responsibilities of Hindus in Hinduism? That's the ultimate question.

How can minority communities navigate the choppy waters of majoritarianism, especially when the ruling dispensation blatantly pushes the Hindutva agenda?

Stay away from those who attack Islam and Muslims. Have a positive message. If you focus on Islamophobia, you are also popularising Islamophobia. I deleted 100 pages from my book, on Islam-



Dr Robert Dickson Crane

ophobes, because I thought I still popularised them. Don't get upset by what's going on now to the extent that you give up. It could take generations for India to return to its founding principles. Educate the youth. We are not going to determine the future of America or India, the younger people will and it depends on education.

Given your vast knowledge of different religions and finally embracing Islam, what advice would you give to minorities in a multi-religious nation?

Minorities have a choice; one is to assimilate, which I would argue is suicide of your cultural identity. The other is to integrate, but integration is often taken to be the same thing (assimilate). But I would say

integration means the opposite; you bring in the best of your religion and culture to the nation. It's mutual cooperation, learning from each other. Most of the Muslims in America choose between assimilation and integration without distinguishing between the two. In Catholicism, there are two solutions. One is the Benedict option. St Benedict, at the end of the Roman Empire, found himself monasteries to maintain the religion. The second is the Franciscan option; you take the best of your religion and best of all that you have and preach from housetops. That's what Muslims should do. But don't attack anybody in the process.

Does the American experience with tackling racial discrimination offer any

Minorities have a choice; one is to assimilate, which I would argue is suicide of your cultural identity. The other is to integrate... bring in the best of your religion and culture to the nation. It's about learning from each other.

Lessons for caste and religious discrimination in India, the legacy of centuries of invasions?

A little bit of history here. Slaveholders in America realised that with the advent of machines, it was uneconomic to maintain slaves and their families. Then Abraham Lincoln was able to outlaw slavery. But the problem was slaves were now citizens like everybody else! Once you accept human beings as nonhuman beings, how do you change that? I think we in the US had made a lot of progress. The lesson for India is to educate its youth, who should be trained in the paradigm of arts against others who would want to manage paradigms of power; they will control everything, including human thought, through the tool of artificial intelligence.

Do you think the rest of the world is intolerant of Islam and wary of Muslims as in experiencing Islamophobia?

Yes, it is only because of reasons from their point of view; there are a lot of radical

Muslims in different parts of the world. They are reacting to oppression. In the US, we don't think we oppress anybody. But they just hate us. We can't understand why they become radicals. I mean ISIS doesn't give a damn about anything, they say they will destroy everything as they refuse to accept oppression. In America, the military thinks there is a military solution to every problem. But the fact is military does not solve problems, rather creates them.

Islam is a religion of love and peace but why does it beget extreme violence in its so-called followers? Has Islam a paradigm to tackle terrorism?

The radical wing of Muslims sees political power as the ultimate goal in life. In practice, power is what they want. When some youth thought that the Muslim Brotherhood was not radical enough, they left and formed Al Qaeda and those who thought Al Qaeda was not radical formed ISIS; you can't get any more radical than ISIS. I would blame the Sufis to some extent. Sufis followed the Benedict option as in Christianity; they stayed away from public life. For about 600 years until recently, the Sufis stayed away, the intellectuals sympathised with them but the essence of Islam disappeared. The Sufis should have been active in public life, like the Franciscans. I think they will have to do it again. They are growing rapidly all over the world but they aren't influencing public life much as yet.

Is it not a fact that Judaic religions are strident, as manifest in their proselytising agenda, and this aggravates frictions in a multi-religious milieu?

Religion is misused as a tool for power. Look at Confucianism, which has been both a religion and political tool. I think the Chinese will promote Confucianism around the world and they have 3,000 Confucian centres, financed by the Communist government. So it isn't that Abrahamic religions alone are used for political purposes; all religions have their temptation. But I don't associate the Jews with trying to convert people. Most Christians believe that if you don't believe in Jesus, you will go to hell. So they convert people. I don't think Islam tried to convert anybody. Islam, in a classical sense, better reflects human nature.

You think the UAE brand of moderation will help in spreading the concept of a middle path? Does it have a major role to play?

The word moderation is misleading. Moderation means 'I'm in the middle, I don't support anything'. Rather, integration is the objective.

I would prefer peaceful engagement instead of moderation. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founding father of the UAE, was truly one of the three leading inter-faith leaders of the 20th century. It isn't just peace you want; it's building on peace to bring more peace.

Amid drama in Washington, does the truth about Ukrainegate even matter?



Freddy Gray

If you think the recent British election has been a disorientating exercise in post-truthiness, try following the latest twists in Washington. In the coming days Donald Trump will become the third American President to be impeached. Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic Speaker of the House of Representatives, is rushing the vote on the articles of impeachment through the House, so that Mr Trump's Senate trial can start before the 2020 election primary season begins.

Ms Pelosi knows that impeachment is probably a losing cause—the Republican-controlled Senate will almost certainly acquit the President. What, then, is the point? The Democrats will say that impeachment is a moral necessity, since the President is evidently unworthy of high office. Mr Trump and his allies, for their part, will insist that impeachment has always been the Democrats' objective, because they know they can't beat him at the ballot. Each side endlessly obfuscates by accusing the other of obfuscation.

Mr Trump is accused of abusing presidential powers and obstructing the congressional investigation into his conduct. He allegedly coerced Ukraine by withholding military aid until the new government in Kiev launched an investigation into

former vice-president Joe Biden, the man who leads the polls to be the Democratic nominee in 2020. That, according to Congressman Adam Schiff, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, amounts to "soliciting" foreign interference in the 2020 election. "The facts are not seriously contested," he says. The Republicans are about to prove him wrong. Mr Trump, it is claimed, pressured Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in the now notorious telephone call between the two leaders on July 25 this year. "Do me a favour, though," said Mr Trump, and then talked about Joe Biden's son Hunter, who was paid large sums of money by a Ukrainian energy company for no good reason. Meanwhile, Mr Trump's personal attorney, former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani, conducted a somewhat quixotic investigation into Ukrainian corruption that involved fishing for dirt on the Bidens.

According to the Democrats, through Mr Giuliani's activities and the President's hints, the administration made it clear that America's provision of about \$400 million in military aid was contingent on Mr Zelensky launching an investigation into Mr Trump's would-be 2020 opponent. There are a number of flaws in this argument. For starters, the aid was

The point about Ukrainegate is that it is a matter of interpretation. If you don't like Mr Trump, you see a pattern of sinister behaviour that amounts to a campaign to coerce Ukraine. If you like him, you'll think the real conspiracy is against him.

not withheld, merely paused, and Mr Zelensky never launched an investigation into the Bidens. Mr Zelensky insists that he never felt pressured. He would say that, say the Democrats, but then they would say that Mr Trump can always argue that he was simply requesting that Ukraine clear up its evident corruption, including suspicious relationships between the Obama administration and Ukrainian power brokers, before he handed over masses of American aid. So far, no hard evidence proves otherwise.

Facts don't care about your feelings, they say — to which the only sane answer today is: yeah, right, whatever. The point about Ukrainegate is that it is a matter of interpretation. If you don't like Mr Trump, you see a pattern of sinister behaviour that amounts to a campaign to coerce Ukraine. If you like him, you'll think the real conspiracy is against him. The truth is slippery. Certainly, if this were a criminal case, the prosecution would struggle to prove Mr Trump guilty.

Ah, say the anti-Trumpers, but impeachment is not a legal process. America's Founding Fathers intended it to be a polit-

ical mechanism to remove bad men from high office. That brings us to a dodgy valve at the heart of the American Constitution. A political system is always going to be politicised, and impeachment inevitably becomes a partisan device for a party to take down an opponent.

That's what is happening in the case of Mr Trump. The House of Representatives will find him guilty because it has a Democratic majority. The Senate will acquit him because it has a Republican majority (a two-thirds majority is required to remove him). Trumpists will celebrate the enduring resilience of the Constitution. The Democrats will moan that the system is broken.

Which brings us back to the question: why bother? The Democrats must hope that the American electorate will be sufficiently disgusted by Mr Trump's behaviour that they boot him out of the White House in November. Justice will be restored, and America set back on a path towards righteousness, progress and transgendered bathrooms.

But Mr Trump's opponents have spent the past three years hyping up various congressional trials and witness testimonies as the moment when, in a Hollywood-style denouement, Mr Trump will be exposed as a villain and the horror of 2016 undone. It's a fantasy. As we saw in the exhaustive inquiry into Mr Trump's alleged "collusion" with Russia, these deus ex machina moments always fall flat. Yes, the Senate trial of a sitting President is indisputably dramatic — and Mr Trump is box-office material — but the Democrats are taking a huge gamble in assuming history

must be on their side. Some polls do suggest that voters are disturbed by Mr Trump's alleged "quid pro quo" antics. But most Americans don't care about Ukraine and find the allegations arcane. Voters tend to worry about issues such as jobs and immigration, and Mr Trump can claim successes on those fronts.

Unemployment remains at record lows and, while he has failed to build the wall, reports this week suggest that his latest "remain in Mexico" campaign has caused a 75 per cent reduction in illegal immigration on the southern border. Mr Trump's approval ratings have ticked up slightly, and a survey this week found that since the impeachment proceedings began, his popularity has surged in crucial swing states.

Impeachment intensifies the polarisation in politics that everyone worries about. That's why Mr Trump fine. Another divisive story broke last week. The department of justice's inspector-general released a 476-page report on the FBI's inquiry into the Trump campaign back in 2016 — the investigation into Russian interference which Team Trump characterises as a Deep State hit job against their man. Most news agencies reported that the IG had found no evidence of political bias, thus vindicating the FBI. But Mr Trump found the IG findings "incredible, far worse than I ever would have thought possible". His fans agree. Who cares what's true? In Trumpworld, you see anything you want, and feelings don't care about your facts.

By arrangement with the Spectator

South Asia must view climate change through regional lens



Aisha Khan

It has taken the world 25 years of negotiations to reach the point where countries are now required to put words into actions. The Conference of Parties (COP) provides an international platform for bringing states together to build consensus on global climate agreements that would otherwise remain intractable.

The Paris Agreement was a feat of diplomatic success that brought 196 nations to agree on the Agenda of Solutions and became operational with the finalisation of the Rule Book. However, each COP is criticised for not finding solutions that are fair and equitable for carbon-neutral targets for all.

The three parallel activities at the COPs include negotiations by party delegates, side events for knowledge sharing and civil society marches. COP25 in Madrid was no exception to this standard format and response. The main outstanding agenda at COP25 was to reach agreement on the unresolved Article 6 that split nations into vanguard and laggard. As part of the Paris Agreement countries had agreed to set up new global carbon market systems to de-carbonise economies. However, since the Paris Agreement fails to describe how systems will work or what rules will ensure real emission cuts, reaching an agreement continues to pose the biggest challenge at COP25.

The discussions on Article 6 centre on bilateral and voluntary agreement to trade carbon units, creating the Sustainable Development Mechanism to replace the Clean Development Mechanism through a centralised governance system for countries and the private sector to trade emissions reduction anywhere in the world, and a framework for cooperation between countries to reduce emissions outside market mechanisms such as aid. Although these negotiations are technical they do tend to become politicised. At best, a partial resolution will be cobbed to show progress narrowing down the agenda for discussion at COP26 in 2020. However, reaching an agreement on a common set of rules to govern transactions is critical to the integrity and success of the Paris Agreement as weak rules can camouflage emissions and, in fact, result in increased global emissions.

The other important item on

the agenda at COP25 was on long-term finance. Developed countries opposed LTF discussions under UNFCCC post 2020. This effectively means that the commitment of \$100 billion per annum by developed countries will no longer be mandated after 2020. As of now it is difficult to say what the new terms and conditions will be, but should there be a scaling down on commitments it will translate into less money available to developing states for adaptation and mitigation.

The emerging global scenario after years of negotiations doesn't appear to be of 'one humanity and shared responsibility'. It is time to reconcile with some harsh realities. As the resource base shrinks and populations grow, each country will put itself first, and exclusive agendas will find more traction with governments and citizens. Moreover, no one is ready to shift from capitalism and make the changes that are necessary to reduce production patterns and challenge corporate interests. Civil society marches/strikes would be more effective if the thousands that congregate make a personal commitment to reduce demand. If enough people become vegetarians the emissions from livestock will go down. If people refuse to buy commodities manufactured from carbon-intensive technologies, emissions will go down.

Industry responds to demand, and if demand goes down market forces will adjust accordingly. For Pakistan, the highlight at COP25 was the launching of the Ecosystem Restoration Fund by the adviser on climate change. This is the first such initiative by Pakistan at a COP.

Housed in the National Disaster Risk Management Fund and financed by the World Bank, the programme has five thematic areas that will build the ecological integrity through sustainable strategies. The secretary of the climate change ministry, CEO, NDRMF, Nadeem Ahmed and Ambassador Khayyam Akbar also attended the event.

All eyes are now on 2020 but the pathway to emissions reduction is through people and not the governments. The answers lie in action not words. If we want to save the planet then we must reduce our individual carbon footprint and the rest will follow. It is also time for South Asia to view climate change from a regional lens and work on collaborative strategies to build resilience. A regional COP before December 2020 will set the stage for a stronger ask for climate justice at COP26.

By arrangement with Dawn

Reclaiming our true nature



Moin Qazi

There was once a great spiritual master. Seekers from far would flock to him in search of enlightenment. There was one student who was allowed to leave after a very short stay. He departed with the generous blessings of a highly impressed master. Some of the inmates at the sanctuary were amazed at such an early discharge given to a raw and new initiate.

One of them was courageous enough to enquire from the master the reason for this gesture. "The stick was dry and it caught fire quickly," was the

master's repartee. Nobody can be given evidence of this radical ecstatic transformation because it can be perceived only by those who have a foretaste of it. A moist matchstick will not ignite even by repeated rubbing — it will simply snap. But a dry one will enflame even with a gentle rub. The pure and clear heart, unstained by worldly dross, is like the inflammable matchstick. Even the greying embers that have lost their cruel redness can kindle the fire in such a heart. But the heart of a worldly man, soaked in lust is a moist matchstick.

Man is today mired in greed, envy and selfishness. He lives in a sick and ailing world. We all acknowledge and believe in common human values. We are one at the core of our humanity. We all value the worth of human life. We all agree that poverty is a sick-

ness, injustice cannot be tolerated, and there should not be any distinction by way of gender, colour, religion, age or status. Yet look at how people are chafing at each other's throats. It is a crazy world in which people know the truth and yet are so distanced from it.

It doesn't make sense if we make progress externally when we are overlaid internally by hatred, jealousy and violence. Humans are meaning-seeking animals. We need to tap into the wellsprings of faith to spark our mind to fix the world for our needs instead of trying to fix ourselves for this world. Therein lies our salvation.

Moin Qazi is a well-known banker, author and Islamic researcher. He can be reached at moinqazi123@gmail.com.





Strategic competition

US defence secretary Mark Esper says he wants to reduce the number of US troops in Afghanistan 'with or without' a peace agreement to focus on strategic competition with China



UN has no choice but to ship humanitarian aid across Syria borders

— Antonio Guterres
UN secretary-general

IN BRIEF

Superman's film fetches \$200K

Los Angeles: Superman's very first movie cape was sold for nearly \$200,000 Monday alongside a collection of rare Hollywood memorabilia, the auction house said. The prop from Christopher Reeve's "Superman", which went for \$193,750, headlined Monday's sale of about 400 cinephile items at Julien's Auctions in Los Angeles. Only six capes in total were used while shooting the film, which came out in 1978. Multiple costumes from "Star Trek" also found buyers.

Myanmar nabs 200 Rohingyas

Yangon: Almost 200 Rohingya Muslims sailed more than 1,500 kilometres to escape Bangladesh refugee camps only to be arrested by Myanmar's navy, the country's military said Tuesday. The boat seizure came just days after Myanmar's leader and Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi addressed the United Nations top court to deny allegations of a genocidal campaign against the ethnic minority.

Pope abolishes pontifical secrecy

Vatican City: Catholic clergy will no longer be able to cite papal secrecy in sexual abuse cases after Pope Francis changed the rules, the Vatican said on Tuesday. Francis' instructions referenced two articles of Vatican law that refer to sexual abuse cases, specifying that "the pontifical secret does not apply to accusations, trials and decisions" involving such offences. So-called pontifical secrecy is a rule of confidentiality designed to protect sensitive information related to the governance of the Roman Catholic Church.

Bombing kills 10 in Afghanistan

Khost, (Afghanistan): Ten members of the same family were killed Tuesday when their car detonated a roadside bomb as they were travelling to a funeral in eastern Afghanistan, officials said. The victims had been driving in Khost province in a large station wagon-type vehicle when the blast occurred, according to local and national officials. "The casualties include five men, two women and three children all from one family," Talib Mangal, a spokesman for Khost's governor, told AFP. They were travelling to Logar province to attend a funeral.

'MR SMILE' IS SOUTH KOREA PRIME MINISTER

Seoul, Dec. 17: South Korean President Moon Jae-in appointed an anodyne former parliamentary speaker known as 'Mr Smile' as prime minister on Tuesday, after a previous cabinet appointment triggered a corruption scandal and mass protests. Chung Sye-kyun, a six-term lawmaker and former commerce minister, earned the sobriquet for his mild demeanour, and local reports say he has six times been voted the "most gentlemanly lawmaker" by reporters covering the National Assembly. "He has always pursued politics that listen, by valuing dialogue and compromise with his gentle personality," Moon said. Under South Korea's strong executive presidency, the prime ministerial job is largely ceremonial. Chung's nomination comes after Moon's first choice as justice minister, Cho Kuk, was forced to resign as a huge scandal swirled over academic privileges.

Pak court sentences Musharraf to death

Pakistan army furious, says ex-army chief can't be traitor

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, DEC. 17

A Pakistani court on Tuesday sentenced former military ruler Pervez Musharraf to death in high treason case.

Military spokesperson Major General Asif Ghafoor immediately said that the armed forces were furious over the verdict as a former army chief cannot be a 'traitor'.

He said Mr Musharraf had fought wars for Pakistan, adding the case was heard in urgency.

A three-member bench comprising Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Waqar Seth, Justice Nazir Akbar of Sindh High Court (SHC) and Justice Shahid Karim of Lahore High Court (LHC) announced the verdict that was reserved on December 5.

During the hearing, Justice Seth said that former military ruler had been found guilty of violating the Article 6 of the Constitution by clamping the state of emergency on November 3, 2007.

According to the High Treason (Punishment) Act, 1973, "any person who abrogates or subverts or suspends or holds in abeyance, or attempts or conspires to abrogate or subvert or suspend or hold in abeyance the Constitution by use of force or show force or by any other unconstitutional means shall be guilty of high treason." The sentence for high treason is death or lifetime imprisonment. The verdict was split 2-1 and a detailed ver-

Democracy has won, remarks Bilawal on Musharraf verdict

DC CORRESPONDENT ISLAMABAD, DEC. 17

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chief Bilawal Bhutto on Tuesday said that democracy had won after former military ruler Pervez Musharraf was sentenced to death by a court in a treason case.

"Democracy is the best revenge," Bilawal said in response to the special court verdict. PPP leader Aitzaz Ahsan also welcomed the deci-

sion and said that Pervez Musharraf had violated the constitution several times. Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) senior leader Ahsan Iqbal said that martial law would have never been imposed if decision like this had been announced 50 years ago.

Earlier, a special court in Islamabad sentenced Pervez Musharraf to death in high treason case. A three-member bench comprising Chief Justice

of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Waqar Seth, Justice Nazir Akbar of Sindh High Court (SHC) and Justice Shahid Karim of Lahore High Court (LHC) has announced the verdict that was reserved on December 5.

During the hearing, Justice Seth said that ex-president has been found guilty of violating the Article 6 of the Constitution by clamping the state of emergency on November 3, 2007.



Pervez Musharraf

dict will be issued in 48 hours. Later, defence lawyer said Musharraf, currently residing in Dubai, has been informed about the decision and that he will challenge the special court's judgment. Earlier, Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf filed a plea in special court requesting to name more accused in treason case.

Dictator's downfall

November 3, 2007: He declares a state of emergency and fires several prominent judges to consolidate his grip on the courts.

December 15, 2007: The state of emergency is lifted by Musharraf.

August 2008: Musharraf resigns after the two main governing parties agree to launch impeachment proceedings against him.

July 31, 2009: Pakistan's Supreme Court rules that November 3, 2007 acts of Musharraf as unconstitutional and abrogation, subversion of the Constitution.

November 27, 2019: The Islamabad HC stops special court from announcing verdict in the treason case against Musharraf.

December 5, 2019: Special court says it will announce the verdict in the case on Dec. 17.

December 17, 2019: Special court hands Musharraf death sentence in the high treason case against him.

PIO builder gets life term in murder case

London, Dec. 17: An Indian-origin builder has been sentenced to life imprisonment by a UK court for stabbing a colleague to death while on a refurbishment job.

Sulakhan Singh, 39, was found guilty of murdering Sukhwinder Singh last week following a trial at Leicester Crown Court. He was also found guilty of possessing a bladed article in a public place.

This week, he was sentenced to life imprisonment and ordered to serve a minimum of 22 years before he is eligible for parole at the same court. He was also given a three year and six month prison sentence for the bladed article offence which will run concurrent.

Chief Inspector Tony Yarwood, from the East Midlands Special Operations Unit major crime team, said on Monday: "Sulakhan Singh must now face up to the consequences of his

actions. "Although no period of imprisonment will bring Sukhwinder back, I hope his family feel a sense of justice that he has been found guilty of murder and is now serving a life sentence. The incident took place at an address in the city of Leicester on July 2. Both men were carrying out refurbishment work at the property, when they became involved in an argument. Sulakhan fatally stabbed Sukhwinder

Singh, before leaving the address on foot. Officers from Leicestershire Police were called to the address by colleagues from the East Midlands Ambulance Service and Sukhwinder was taken to the Leicester Royal Infirmary, where he was pronounced dead and a murder probe was launched. Sulakhan had run off, but other men working at the property told police he was responsible and he was arrested hours later. —PTI

THOUSANDS SIGN PETITION IN HIROSHIMA

Tokyo, Dec. 17: Thousands of people signed an online petition against the planned demolition of two early 20th-century buildings that remained intact after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima devastated the Japanese city.

A local government official confirmed on Tuesday they had received the petition signed by 12,000 citizens calling for the preservation of the buildings that stand 2.7 km from the 1945 blast. The three-storey red-brick buildings are part of a cluster of four built in 1913 and used to manufacture Japanese military uniforms. Earthquake inspection two years ago revealed they would not withstand a strong tremor. —AFP

Anger in France



People march in Nantes on Tuesday during a rally as part of a third countrywide day of multi-sector protests over a government pensions overhaul, with the government showing no signs it will give in to union demands to drop the plan. Unions have been striking since Dec 5 in their biggest show of strength in years. —AFP

Journalism a dangerous profession, warns watchdog 49 scribes killed worldwide in 2019

Paris, Dec. 17: Forty-nine journalists were killed across the world in 2019, Reporters Without Borders said Tuesday, the lowest death toll in 16 years.

The historically low number mostly died covering conflicts in Yemen, Syria and Afghanistan, the Paris-based watchdog said, which warned that journalism remains a dangerous profession.

Some 80 journalists a year have lost their lives

supposedly at peace was still alarmingly high, with 10 dying in Mexico alone. "Latin America, with a total of 14 reporters killed across the continent, has become as deadly as the Middle East," he added.

While he said that the fall in the number of fatalities in conflict zones was something to celebrate, "more and more journalists are being assassinated for their work in democratic countries, which is a real challenge to democ-

racy." While fewer journalists are dying, more are ending up behind bars, according to RSF.

Some 389 were locked up in 2019, up 12 percent on last year.

Nearly half were imprisoned in three countries — China, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which was blamed for the gruesome murder of columnist Jamal Khashoggi at its embassy in Istanbul last year. "China, which has intensified its repression of the

(mostly Muslim) Uighur minority, alone holds a third of the journalists locked up in the world," RSF said.

Meanwhile, 57 journalists are being held hostage across the globe, mostly in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Ukraine. "There has been no notable freeing of hostages this year despite major developments in Syria," the RSF said, which has led it to fear for the worst for many of those abducted. —AFP

UK PM to outlaw Brexit extension beyond 2020

London, Dec. 17: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was seeking Tuesday to outlaw extending the Brexit transition period beyond the end of 2020, as he prepared to put the EU divorce deal before MPs.

Johnson won a big majority in last week's general election on a promise to "get Brexit done" by taking Britain out of the European Union by the end of January.

A transition period will then follow, during which London and Brussels hope to negotiate a trade agreement before the end of December next year.

European leaders have said the 2020 deadline would be too tight to com-



Boris Johnson

plete a comprehensive deal, reviving fears of a "no-deal" outcome that could cause fresh uncertainty and chaos.

"That was enough to pull the pound sterling lower in late trading in New York. Johnson held his first

cabinet meeting since the election on Tuesday, welcoming back his ministers after what he called a "seismic" result.

"The voters of this country have changed this government and our party for the better and we must repay their trust now by working flat out to change our country for the better," he said during the meeting at his Downing Street office.

The government's agenda should be focused on social justice, better infrastructure and "extending opportunity across the whole of the United Kingdom", he added. Johnson plans to put the EU Withdrawal Agreement Bill before MPs on Friday. —AFP

WORLD BRIEFS



DOCUMENTARY ON GRETA

Los Angeles: Hulu has set up a documentary detailing the life of Greta Thunberg, the current face of climate change fight movement. According to Deadline, the documentary is being produced by B-Reel Films, which has an office in Stockholm, and directed by Nathan Grossman.

TURKEY ACTION IRKS US

Washington: US Defence Secretary Mark Esper said on Monday he wants an explanation from Ankara over threats to close two strategic military bases used by the United States in Turkey. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday threatened to close the Incirlik and Kurecik bases while speaking to a pro-government television channel. The two bases sit on Turkey's southwest coast, near the border with Syria.

PAK ISSUES PERMITS TO QATAR ROYALS TO HUNT

Islamabad, Dec. 17: Pakistan has issued special permits to the Emir of Qatar and nine others of the royal family to hunt 100 houbara bustards, an endangered bird species, notwithstanding growing criticism in the country against the move, according to a media report on Tuesday.

Originally an inhabitant of the colder central Asian region, the houbara bustard, in order to avoid harsh weather conditions, migrates southwards every year to spend the winter in a relatively warm environment in Pakistan. The Dawn News reported that the permits have been issued for the 2019-20 hunting season.

MACAU SET TO CELEBRATE 20 YRS OF RETURN TO CHINA

Macau, Dec. 17: The former Portuguese colony of Macau will this week celebrate 20 years since its return to China, with Beijing's leaders praising a pliant city that has grown rich on gambling and deference to authoritarian rule.

The jubilation will be in contrast to the mood in neighbouring Hong Kong, the only other region run under the "one country, two systems" model which has endured six months of often violent pro-democracy protests. Chinese President Xi Jinping will attend Friday's anniversary celebrations in Macau.

CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR HK INJURED PROTESTERS

Hong Kong, Dec. 18: Hong Kong residents have been gathering across the city on weekends and in lunch breaks to write Christmas cards to injured protesters and those in detention as anti-government demonstrations grind on through the holiday season. "I don't even want to celebrate because so many people are seriously injured," said office worker Felix Wong, 35, choking up in tears as she spoke. "We didn't forget about them. We're not partying ... 'We can celebrate later, not now', Felix Wong said when asked what she had written in her cards.

Plea to lift curbs against N. Korea

Beijing, Dec. 17: China on Tuesday urged the UN Security Council to unanimously back its joint proposal with Russia to ease sanctions on North Korea, warning that dialogue to resolve nuclear tensions must not regress.

The nuclear-armed North has issued increasingly strident declarations in recent weeks, even promising an ominous "Christmas gift" if Washington does not come up with some concessions. For his part, US President Donald Trump said Monday that he would be "disappointed" if North Korea had "something in the works," warning that if it did, "we'll take care of it." "We're watching it very closely," Trump said at the White House.

Negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang have been largely stalled since the collapse of a February summit in Hanoi between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

The North is under heavy US and United Nations sanctions over its nuclear program, but it has been frustrated at the lack of relief after it declared a moratorium on nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) tests.

"It is an important and sensitive period for the peninsula, and the urgency of a political solution has further increased," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a regular press briefing in

Beijing. The international community should "prevent the peninsula from falling back into tense confrontation, and avoid a serious reversal of the situation," Geng added.

Russia and China introduced a draft joint resolution at the United Nations on Monday seeking to lift some of the punitive measures that have been enforced on Pyongyang over its nuclear activities. "We hope that the Security Council will unanimously support the political settlement of the Peninsula issue" and encourage Washington and Pyongyang to "respect each other's concerns," Geng said.

He said "contact should be restored as soon as possible to break the deadlock and to prevent the dialogue process from derailing or even regressing." While Beijing is Pyongyang's most important diplomatic ally and key economic lifeline, it has backed sanctions against its neighbour in the wake of its nuclear activities. The draft text, obtained by AFP, said the Council "shall adjust the sanction measures towards the DPRK as may be needed. —AFP



iPod idea

Apple removes Rewound, an app that turns an iPhone into a virtual iPod with a click wheel like an MP3 player, from its App Store

SHORT TAKES



'AI'S MISTAKES ARE USERS' MISTAKES'

Hyderabad, Dec. 17: A couple of years ago, the Australian government was rocked by the 'robodebt' scandal. Between July 2017 and March 2018, as many as 7,456 debts were reduced to zero and another 12,524 were partially reduced but not wiped entirely.

In a discussion paper on the impact of new technologies on human rights in the country, Australian human rights commissioner, Ed Santow, has proposed that people be held accountable for the mistakes AI and algorithms make on their behalf, said on Tuesday.

The Guardian reported that after the Australian government backed down on the use of automatic debt notices based on income averaging, and had legislation for its facial recognition system rejected by a government-dominated parliamentary committee, Santow said it was time to set some rules to govern how these new technologies are used.

"Robodebt is just a prominent example of data science and government AI being used in decision-making," he said.

— Agencies



FIRM FINDS BUG IN WHATSAPP GROUP CHAT

New Delhi, Dec. 17: Check Point Research, the Threat Intelligence arm of Check Point Software Technologies Ltd., a leading provider of cyber security solutions globally, recently helped mitigate a new vulnerability in WhatsApp that could allow a bad actor to deliver a malicious group chat message that would crash the app for all members of the group. To regain use of WhatsApp, users would need to uninstall and reinstall it, then delete the group which contains the message.

To create the malicious message that would impact a WhatsApp group, the bad actor would need to be a member of the target group (WhatsApp allows up to 256 users per group). From there, the bad actor would need to use WhatsApp Web and their web browser's de-bugging tool to edit specific message parameters and send the edited text to the group. This edited message would cause a crash loop for group members, denying users access to all WhatsApp functions until they reinstall WhatsApp and delete the group with the malicious message.

Oded Vanunu, Check Point's head of product vulnerability research, said, "Because WhatsApp is one of the world's leading communication channels for consumers, businesses and government agencies, the ability to stop people using WhatsApp and delete valuable information from group chats is a powerful weapon for bad actors. All WhatsApp users should update to the latest version of the app to protect themselves against this possible attack."

Check Point research disclosed its findings to the WhatsApp bug bounty programme on August 28. WhatsApp acknowledged the findings and developed a fix to resolve the issue, available since WhatsApp version number 2.19.58. Users should manually apply on their devices. "WhatsApp responded quickly and responsibly to deploy the mitigation against exploitation of this vulnerability," said Oded Vanunu.

"WhatsApp greatly values the work of the technology community to help us maintain strong security for our users globally," said WhatsApp software engineer Ehren Kret.

Fake reviews, the next big danger

Paid, biased reviewers all over e-commerce

New York, Dec. 17: There are a lot of bargains online during the holidays, but also plenty of ways to get scammed, even at established outlets like Amazon.

How can you be sure you are reading a legitimate review, not one coming from a company employee? How can you flag sponsored placements and other ads — and protect your credit card once you buy?

Although there is no magical solution, try some of these practices to be a savvy online shopper.

Online reviews at major retailers such as Amazon and Walmart and listing services such as Yelp look like a good place to get first-hand information from people who have tried a product or merchant.

But investigations by The Washington Post and BuzzFeed have described networks of fake reviewers paid to inflate ratings for lesser-known sellers on Amazon. Merchants might also have their own employees write favourable reviews or trash competitors.

Amazon has waged a legal battle against fake reviewers since at least 2015, when it claimed in a

The US government accountability office, in a report last year, said 20 of the 47 items it bought from online stores with third-party marketplaces were counterfeit.

court filing that "an unhealthy ecosystem is developing outside of Amazon to supply inauthentic reviews."

The US federal trade commission recently settled with a cosmetics merchant that, it charged, had its own managers create fake accounts and direct employees to write good reviews on Sephora.com.

Beyond that, many so-called social media influencers also write reviews after receiving free products. Saoud Khalifah, who founded the service Fakespot to help consumers avoid being influenced by fake and biased reviews, suggests looking beyond text reviews.

Search for video reviews on YouTube; you can at least tell that the reviewer has used the product, though it is not always easy to tell if they've been compensated.

Text reviews can still be helpful once you learn to spot unusual patterns, such as lots of five-star

ratings in a short period of time.

If a service lets people rate reviews as helpful or not, look for reviews with an unusually high number of 'helpful' votes. Khalifah said merchants might try to game the system by artificially inflating favourable reviews as helpful so they show up more prominently.

Other patterns are harder to spot. A reviewer might have been banned from one service, but still write for others. Websites and apps such as Fakespot can help by flagging the same person's reviews elsewhere and offering a revised rating.

Just because you are shopping on Amazon doesn't mean you are buying from Amazon.

The online shopping giants, like eBay, Walmart and others, has vast third-party marketplaces where anyone can sell goods.

The problem: That's where fraudsters try to sneak in their brand-name counterfeits.

In a report last year, the US government accountability office said 20 of the 47 items it bought from online stores with third-party marketplaces were counterfeit.

— AP



DECADE'S TOP APPS & GAMES

Facebook and Subway Surfers topped the app store intelligence firm App Annie's Decade in Review analysis, which identifies the most popular apps and games of the decade across iOS and Android platforms. Communication and social media apps dominated the list, claiming seven out of the 10 top spots, while Netflix and Tinder claimed the top-2 spots in consumer spend category. Clash of Clans and Monster Strike stood out in the all-time consumer spend category.

TOP 10 APPS (ALL-TIME DOWNLOADS)
Facebook
Facebook Messenger
WhatsApp
Instagram
Snapchat
Skype
TikTok
UC Browser
YouTube
Twitter

TOP-2 APPS (CONSUMER SPEND)
Netflix
Tinder

TOP 10 GAMES (ALL-TIME DOWNLOADS)
Subway Surfers
Candy Crush Saga
Temple Run 2
My Talking Tom
Clash of Clans
Pou
Hill Climb Racing
Minion Rush
Fruit Ninja
8 Ball Pool

TOP-2 GAMES (CONSUMER SPEND)
Clash of Clans
Monster Strike

AURORA WORKS ON SELF-DRIVING CARS SAFETY

Hyderabad, Dec. 17: Multiple self-driving car accidents have ensured that a large-scale commercial deployment has not seen the light of the day. However, with the advancement in technology, many companies that provide the service are planning multiple layers of safety.

Aurora, a startup that counts Amazon as an investor, feels a system of remote monitors acting much like air-traffic controllers is one way to gain public acceptance, a Forbes report said on Tuesday.

The Palo Alto-based company, founded by three autonomous tech veterans from Google, Tesla and Uber, is investing in a system it is calling 'teleassist' as it works to perfect the software, computers, sensors and vision system that allow its test fleets in the Bay Area and Pittsburgh to handle a range of road conditions. Under the programme, trained technicians will access a vehicle's sensors when needed, and offer suggestions and guidance for unusual developments. During the communication, Aurora vehicles would safely pull over to the side of the road.

"Our system will alert remote teleassist personnel when the need arises, either because a rider or another user of the vehicle in a logistics network has requested it or because the vehicle has called for help," co-founder and chief product officer, Sterling Anderson said.

— Agencies

APPLE IPHONE 4 (2010)
The iPhone 4 was Apple's first phone to sport a Retina Display, an A-series processor and FaceTime. It was a remarkable upgrade from the original iPhone and the iPhone 3G.

SAMSUNG GALAXY NOTE (2011)
The Galaxy Note was one of the first smartphones to sport a massive screen and a vibrant OLED display. It also had a built-in stylus, an 8 MP rear cam and a replaceable battery.

GOOGLE NEXUS 4 (2012)
The Nexus 4 was stylish, super fast, and it was one of the first phones to support Qi wireless charging. It helped pave the way for a legacy of slick stock Android devices like the Nexus 5, Nexus 6P, and Nexus 7 in the years to come.

HTC One M7 (2013)
The One M7, one of the most important phones of 2013, had good dual front-facing speakers and HTC was using its Ultrapixel technology to increase the quality of low-light photos. However, HTC never made a phone of this standard again.

AMAZON FIRE PHONE (2014)
The Amazon Fire Phone had a 4.7-inch (1280x720) IPS LCD screen, a 13MP main camera and a 2.1MP selfie camera.

BLACKBERRY PRIV (2015)
The BlackBerry Priv was unique in having a hardware keyboard, and it had some cool BlackBerry software features, while having a lot of Android features.

SAMSUNG GALAXY NOTE 7 (2016)
Samsung Note 7 had a brand new iris sensor, a bunch of new S-Pen features, and a big 5.7-inch display, and a huge 3,500 mAh battery. But the battery kept exploding.

APPLE IPHONE X (2017)
10 years after the launch of the original iPhone, Apple's iPhone X marked a completely new era for iPhones. The phone replaced Touch Ids and introduced gestures to replace the home button.

GOOGLE PIXEL 3 (2018)
Combining components like a rear fingerprint sensor, colourful OLED screen, and Qi wireless charging with nifty features like Google's Now Playing song identification and Call Screen, the Pixel 3 had the right balance of tech and smarts.

SAMSUNG GALAXY FOLD (2019)
Although the Fold is far from perfect, the gadget has the power to work like a tablet, an e-reader and a lot of other devices. Considering the scope of design and innovation it offers, the Fold seems like a promising gadget.

NOKIA LUMIA 1020 | Perhaps the first phone to see how important camera technology would be in future devices was the Nokia Lumia 1020.

PEBBLE | In 2013, the Pebble smartwatch arrived with a design and functionality that positioned it as a second screen for smartphones. With notifications about emails, calls, and messages routed to the Pebble, it allowed smartphone users to leave their devices in their pockets.

AMAZON ECHO (2014) | Echo was the first viable voice assistant ever. Echo products led to smart home products interacting with each other.

DJI PHANTOM 3 (2015) | First released in 2013, the white quadcopter was sometimes called 'the iPhone of drones' because of its various capabilities and easy to use features.

AIRPODS (2016) | AirPods are perhaps one of Apple's most successful products this decade. They are one of its most impressive technologies ever.

WOMAN | POWER Company asked to allow users to choose from search engines

Google says no to partners in Turkey

Istanbul, Dec. 17: Google has told its Turkish business partners it will not be able to work with them on new Android phones to be released in Turkey, after the Turkish competition board ruled that changes Google made to its contracts were not acceptable.

Turkey's competition authority had fined Google 93 million lira (\$17.4 million) in September 2018 for violating competition law with its mobile software sales. The company was given six months to make changes to restore compe-

tion. Turkey's competition board ruled on November 7 that changes which Google made in its contracts with its business partners in line with the board's demands were inadequate as they still did not allow changes to the default search engine.

"We've informed our business partners that we will not be able to work with them on new Android phones to be released for the Turkish market," the Google statement said. "Consumers will be able to purchase existing

device models and will be able to use their devices and applications normally. Google's other services will be unaffected," it said, adding that it was working with the authority to resolve the issue.

Google made the announcement via a Turkish public relations company, which sent the statement to Reuters on Monday after Turkey's Haberturk reported the move at the weekend.

The competition board said it imposed a fine on Google of 0.05 per cent of its revenue per day over the violation and that this

would remain in place until all demands were met. Google was given a 60-day period to challenge the ruling.

The regulator had asked Google to change all its software distribution agreements to allow consumers to choose different search engines in its Android mobile operating system. The probe was triggered by a filing by Russian competitor Yandex.

Haberturk had reported Google had shared in its letter to business partners the contact details of Turkey's trade minister

and the head of its competition authority and called on them to exert pressure in order to change the decision.

In January 2019, the competition authority also said it had launched an investigation into whether Google broke competition law with algorithms it uses for searches and to target advertisements.

That probe followed a complaint that Alphabet Inc's Google unit had "abused its dominant position and made the efforts of other companies difficult", the authority said.

— Reuters

Probe into Google's takeover of data co

London, Dec. 17: Britain's competition watchdog said Tuesday it launched a formal inquiry into Google's takeover of cloud data analytics company Looker Data Sciences, as it intensifies scrutiny of technology deals.

The competition and markets authority said it had notified the two companies on Monday that it was opening an initial inquiry and would decide on February 13 whether to escalate it to a more in-depth investigation.

The authority said this month it was looking into

whether the \$2.6 billion acquisition would result in less competition in the UK market.

Google said in a statement that "the acquisition of Looker has received regulatory approval in the US and Austria and we continue to make progress with regulators in the UK."

The US tech giant said in June it was buying Looker, which helps customers visualise data, as it seeks to compete with rivals, including Amazon in the lucrative cloud service business.

— AP

India slips
to 112th
place on
gender gapSugar
exports
poised to
reach
record
5 MTquick
BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	41,352.17 1.01%
Nifty 50	12,165.00 0.92%
S&P 500	3,194.41 0.09
Dollar (₹)	70.975 -0.049
Pound Sterling (₹)	93.77 -1.19
Euro (₹)	79.21 0.12
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	38,771.11 +0.02
Brent crude (\$/bbl)	66.05 1.09
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.744 -0.050
US 10-Yr T-bill yield	1.857 -0.032

* As of 9:30 pm IST

National
Broadband
Mission launched

The government promised broadband access in all villages by 2022, as it launched the ambitious National Broadband Mission entailing stakeholder investment of Rs 7 lakh crore over years. The mission will facilitate equitable access to broadband services across the country. It also involves laying of incremental 30 lakh route km of optical fibre cable.

Patanjali given a
week more to
buy Ruchi Soya

The NCLAT granted another extension, of one week till Dec. 23, to Baba Ramdev-led Patanjali Ayurved for completion of the Rs 4,350-crore resolution plan to acquire Ruchi Soya. Earlier, on Nov. 20, the tribunal had extended the deadline till Dec. 16. The tribunal granted liberty to the Ruchi Soya lenders to approach it if Patanjali fails to make payment.

Karvy case: SAT
asks Sebi to
hear Axis plea

The Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) asked the Sebi to pass an order within 15 days on the Axis Bank's plea in the Karvy Broking matter. Axis Bank said the regulator's ruling is preventing it from accessing securities pledged by the broking firm. A Sebi directive to the NSDL in November that prevented banks from accessing the pledged securities.

Rajasthan sets
up ₹1,000 crore
farmers fund

The Rajasthan government has constituted Rs 1,000 crore Farmers Welfare Fund to provide them a reasonable price for agricultural produce and boost their income. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot launched the fund at a 'Kisan Sammelan' held in Jaipur on completion of one year of the government. The welfare fund was announced by the chief minister in the Budget in July.

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Sensex hits new record peak, FII resume buying
Stocks gain momentum on
global cues, budget hopes

A slew of global factors drove the market to record highs on Tuesday, with the Sensex gaining over 413.45 points, or 1.01 per cent, to end at an all-time high of 41,352.17 points.

The sentiments were boosted after the US suspended planned tariff hikes on Chinese imports, scheduled for December 15 and on reports that UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson would change the law to guarantee that the Brexit transition phase is not extended beyond end-2020.

Analysts said there could be more foreign buying, as India's weightage in the MSCI Emerging Market Index is set to rise, as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday confirmed implementation of the Budget announcement of raising the foreign portfolio investment limit in a company from 24 per cent to sectoral foreign investment limit from April next year.



Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) started pouring money into Indian equities lately.

FIIs have invested net Rs 850 crore in the equity segment, as per data available on the NSE. In December, however, FIIs have net withdrawals of Rs 3,000 crore.

The market has been stalling but has discounted the easing of global market worries such as Brexit and US-China trade war. Amid easy monetary policy and improvement in liquidity, the market should continue with the current momentum.

Stock prices reflect everything and the momentum seen now is based on expectations from the finance minister, which are elevated after the corporate tax cut and sector-specific packages, analysts said.

"Positive global sentiments, buoyed by easing trade war tensions between the US and China, continue to pump market. Economic growth remains on the lower side while risk appetite of investors are gradually improving on expectation of further steps from the government in the upcoming budget to revive consumption and attract investments," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

On Tuesday, metal stocks gained on US reaching an in-principle trade deal with China. Brokerage firm CITI Research said global steel prices are likely to rise on signs of China easing monetary and government policies and a demand upswing in India also pushed metal stocks higher.

Domestic steel prices have increased by 4.6 per cent from the lows in October 2019, led by gradual recovery in domestic demand and regional prices. A warm winter in China has resulted in better demand from construction, as reflected in inventory de-stocking and low exports. With higher prices and coking coal-led cost deflation, margins should recover partially in the third quarter of fiscal 2020 and considerably in the fourth quarter of FY20, said Kotak Institutional Equities.

Telcos have
to pay for
outgoing
calls in 2020

New Delhi, Dec 17: Telecom operators will continue to pay 6 paise per minute for every outgoing call made to their competitors' network till December 31, 2020 following sector regulator Trai's decision, announced on Tuesday. These charges were proposed to become zero from January 1, 2021.

Telecom industry body COAI sees it as a relief for the debt-ridden sector and expects that continuing with six paise mobile call termination charge will not have any impact on consumers as operators have already absorbed this charge in their recently hiked mobile call and data rates.

"For wireless to wireless domestic calls, termination charge would continue to remain as Re 0.06 (paise six only) per minute up to December 31, 2020," the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India said.

The rate were reduced to 6 paise from October 1, 2017 from 14. —PTI

NBCC bid for
Jaypee Infra
gets most votes

New Delhi, Dec. 17: State-owned NBCC on Tuesday won approval of financial creditors to take over debt-laden Jaypee Infratech Ltd, rekindling hopes of homebuyers finally getting their promised flats over the next four years.

A week-long voting on the takeover proposals submitted by NBCC and Mumbai-based real estate firm Suraksha Realty ended close to the midnight, with results going in favour of the state-owned firm with an overwhelming majority of 97.36 per cent favouring it.

This is the third round of bidding process to find a buyer for Jaypee Infratech, which went into Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) in August 2017.

The successful resolution will provide a big relief to over 20,000 homebuyers across various housing projects launched by Jaypee Infratech in Noida and Greater Noida (Uttar Pradesh).

As many as 13 banks and over 21,000 homebuyers have voting rights in the Committee of Creditors

(CoC). Buyers have 57.66 per cent voting rights, fixed deposit holders 0.13 per cent and lenders 42.21 per cent. For a bid to be approved, 66 per cent votes are required.

In a filing to the BSE, Jaypee Infratech's Interim Resolution Professional Anuj Jain informed that NBCC got 57.66 per cent vote of homebuyers and 0.13 per cent of fixed deposit holders. The public sector firm got 39.57 per cent votes of lenders out of total 42.21 per cent votes.

IFCI, which has voting rights of 1.21 per cent, abstained from the voting process, while ICICI Bank (1.31 per cent) and SREI Equipment Finance Ltd (0.12 per cent) voted against NBCC's bid.

Suraksha managed to get 2.12 per cent votes as only fixed deposit holders and two banks—Axis Bank and The Jammu and Kashmir Bank—favoured it.

Out of 21,781 homebuyers that are part of the CoC, as many as 12,147 flat owners voted on NBCC's resolution plan, of which 97.02 per cent were in favour. —PTI

Byju's more than doubles
revenue, reduces lossesSANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, DEC 17

Think and Learn, the holding company of ed-tech start-up Byju's has grown its revenues by 177 per cent and cut its losses in FY19.

At the end of FY19, the consolidated revenue of Think and Learn stood at Rs 1,305 crore against Rs 471 crore in the previous fiscal. Net loss for the fiscal was Rs 8.82 crore against Rs 37.15 crore in FY18, according to the financial statement accessed by PaperVC and seen by Financial Chronicle.

Total assets of the company grew to Rs 4,383 crore from Rs 913 crore in the previous fiscal. The total liabilities too grew to Rs 191 crore from Rs 66 crore. Basic and diluted earnings per share stood at Rs 192 against Rs 307 in the previous fiscal.

In a statement, Byju's said its net revenue increased from Rs 490 crore in FY17-18 to Rs 1,341 crore with a net profit of Rs 20 crore in FY18-19.

Its gross revenue rose from Rs 520 crore to Rs 1,480 crore.

"Expanding our base across smaller towns and cities and introducing new products have been pivotal to our growth," Byju's Chief Operating Officer Mrinal Mohit said.

Mohit said in the current financial year, the compa-



ny is on track to double its revenue to Rs 3,000 crore.

"We will also be launching Byju's Online Tutoring which will further accelerate growth and profitability in the coming year," he said.

The financial statements of the subsidiaries of Think and Learn—incorporated in November 2011—are included in the consolidated financial statement. These subsidiaries include, Specadel Technologies, Infiken Internet Labs, Span Thoughtworks, Byju's K3 Education, Think and Learn Inc, Byju's Inc and Tangible Play Inc.

Specadel Technologies is into online tutoring, publishing, and marketing educational products. Infiken Internet Labs, does the information technology related activities. Span Thoughtworks Private Limited is engaged in the business of research, development (R&D) and delivery of career develop-

ment content and services via internet, TV and radio. Think and Learn Inc, a 100 per cent subsidiary of the Parent, incorporated in April 2017, provides K12 learning app, which offers learning programmes for students in classes K12.

Byju's K3 Education, incorporated in August 2018, trains students in India and abroad for various educational programmes and does R&D for products of teaching aids to supplement education through mediums like internet, television and computers.

Delaware-based Byju's Inc is also an education technology company incorporated for the development of learning apps which offer highly adaptive, engaging and effective learning programmes for students in the US. Tangible Play Inc, incorporated in Delaware, is headquartered in Palo Alto, California. It is an educational gaming company.

Govt sets ₹1.1 lakh cr monthly GST
target; asks taxmen to buckle up

New Delhi, Dec 17: Amid concerns that the government may fall short of the tax collection target in a slowing economy, the Centre has set an ambitious Rs 1.1 lakh crore monthly GST target for the remaining four months of the current fiscal and asked taxmen to step up efforts to achieve the goal.

Revenue Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey held a video conference meeting with top tax officials of departments looking after both income tax and indirect taxes such as GST and asked them to step up efforts to achieve tax targets, finance ministry sources said.

While taxmen have been

asked to plug evasions, Pandey impressed upon them to achieve targets without harassing honest taxpayers.

Taxmen were told in no uncertain terms that both the GST as well as the Rs 13.35 lakh crore target for direct taxes for 2019-20 will have to be achieved.

In the meeting, the GST target was set at Rs 1.10 lakh crore every month between December 2019 and March 2020. Of these four months, Rs 1.25 lakh collections has to be achieved in at least one month, the sources said.

Gross GST collections, which include the share of both Centre and the states, crossed Rs 1 lakh crore

mark in four out of the eight months of the current fiscal and only once was above Rs 1.1 lakh crore. At the current trend, the GST tax collection target is likely to be missed by at least Rs 1 lakh crore.

The sources said the revenue department is taking concerted measures to augment collections in the next four months and has exhorted its senior officers, including Members of Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) and Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), as well as other top officials to achieve tax targets both for direct and indirect taxes. —PTI

Vocational jobs score over engg, MBA
with double-digit growth in salariesSANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, DEC. 17

The widening demand-supply gap has led to a double-digit growth in salaries of vocational jobs and the trend is likely to continue in the coming years.

The salary growth of vocational skilled talent is higher than that of professional degrees holders from poorly ranked institutions, finds a study by

Teamlease Services. During the period 2017-2018, the average salaries for vocational jobs grew by 18 per cent whereas engineering and MBA jobs rose only by 4 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively.

The salaries are higher for visual merchandiser in apparel segment, service technician in automobile sector, network technician in BFSI and FinTech, surveyor in con-

struction, gemmologist in gems & jewellery, quality inspection supervisor in logistics and interior designer in retail segments.

For instance, the average salary of a network technician with five-year experience grew from Rs. 38,000 in 2016 to Rs 51,600 per month in 2018, the salary of an engineer with similar years of experience grew from Rs 37,200 to only Rs. 41,500.

Women's share in life biz, policies rising

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, DEC 17

The financial literacy among women seems to be increasing. Women's share in the number of life insurance policies sold in 2018-19 as well as the first year premium has increased over the previous year. The number of women in the agency workforce too has moved up.

Share of women purchasing life policies moved up to 36 per cent in FY19 and their share in the first year premiums too rose to 37 per cent from 32 per cent in both cases in FY18. In the last

fiscal 2.86 crore life policies were sold with a first year premium of Rs 97,690 crore. The number of policies bought by women went up from 90 lakh to 103 lakh and the first year premium from Rs 29,800 crore to Rs 36,525 crore, according to Irdai.

"We see that women today are far more independent and have much better financial awareness and understanding," said Karthik Raman, CMO & Head - Products, IDBI Federal Life Insurance.

In an emerging trend, transgenders bought 1286 policies with a first year premium of Rs 45 crore

in FY19.

The share of women buyers among private life insurers was 27 per cent and it was 39 per cent in case of LIC. Out of the 103 lakh policies bought by women, more than one-third was purchased by three states- West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. Out of the Rs 36,525 crore first year premium received from women buyers also these three states had more than one-third share.

West Bengal has made significant improvement in women participation as it is also topper in the percentage of women purchasers against total num-

ber policies bought in the state.

Though the number of women working as life insurance agents went up in FY19, their share remained almost flat. As many as 6,03,208 women were working as agents last fiscal against 5,79,220 women in FY18. Their share among the total agency force stood at 27.5 per cent against 27.8 per cent in FY18.

While private insurers increased their women agent force from 49.53 per cent in FY18 to 52 per cent in FY19, LIC became leaner with 48 per cent women agents against 50.47 per cent in FY18. Max Life

continued to have the highest number of women agents followed by IDBI Federal Life Insurance as in the case of the previous year.

"With many women keen on a second career post marriage and children, life insurance is an attractive career option as it affords them financial independence while allowing them the flexibility to work at their own pace and be their own boss. As a result, more and more women are being drawn towards life insurance sales as a career," finds Raman of IDBI Federal Life.

However, V. Viswanand,

Deputy Managing Director of Max Life Insurance finds that insurance industry is still striving towards achieving a gender-balanced workforce.

According to him, women are intuitive and bring healthy competition to the table. "Challenging the conventional thinking process to enable innovation and creativity in business approach, they naturally exhibit soft skills such as creativity and communication, adding value to the organizational operations and enabling effective customer service and relationship," he said.

Significantly, the credit profile of spinners has weakened in the recent quarters, with earnings from operations and liquidity position facing pressures in H1 FY2020, amid rising debt levels. The scenario is quite similar to FY2012, when cotton prices fell sharply, resulting in high inventory losses and tight cash flows for spinners.

The impact on debt-coverage metrics and liquidity is expected to be more adverse for leveraged companies that have undertaken a sizeable debt-funded capital expansion in recent years and have higher repayments scheduled.



Hospitalised

Pakistan's left arm pacer Usman Shinwari is unlikely to play in the second Test against Sri Lanka after being hospitalised with high fever, head coach Misbah-ul-Haq said on Tuesday

India feel the heat

Kohli & Co. fret over bowling combination, West Indies aim to lock series



The team should be set and players should know that they are playing the T20 World Cup.

— Harbhajan Singh says the team should be finalised four months prior to the Cup

SHORT TAKE

Mandhana in ICC's ODI, T20 teams

Dubai: India opener Smriti Mandhana was on Tuesday named in both the International Cricket Council's ODI and T20 teams of the year, capping off a memorable season. Mandhana has Jhulan Goswami, Poonam Yadav and Shikha Pandey for company in the ODI team of the year and all-rounder Deepti Sharma in the T20 side. The 23-year-old Mandhana has played 51 ODIs and 66 T20s for India, besides a couple of Test matches. She has a combined tally of 3476 runs in T20s and ODIs. Australia's Alyssa Healy was chosen as the T20 cricketer of the year following her record-breaking 148 against Sri Lanka earlier this year. The ODI cricketer of the year honour went to Australia's Ellyse Perry, who scored 441 runs at an average of 73.50 and took 21 wickets at 13.52. Perry also pocketed the Rachael Heyhoe-Flint award for being the cricketer of the year across formats. Perry has had a stellar year across formats, with three hundreds including one in the women's Ashes Test. She also became the first player to complete 1,000 runs and 100 wickets in T20 cricket. "It's an amazing honour and I'm a little bit shocked, given how many amazing performances there have been across the year," said Perry. — PTI

BCCI EO summons Kapil & Gaekwad

New Delhi: BCCI ethics officer DK Jain has asked Kapil Dev and Anshuman Gaekwad to appear in Mumbai later this month to explain conflict of interest allegations against them even though they have already resigned from the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC, comprising Kapil, Gaekwad and Shantha Rangaswamy, had resigned after getting conflict of interest notices from Jain in September, following the complaint filed by Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association (MPCA) life member Sanjeev Gupta. There is no CAC in place anymore but they have been asked to depose in person on December 27 and 28. "Though they have stepped down, the ethics officer has sought some clarifications from them," a BCCI source said. A livid Kapil said he will not go to Mumbai and called the complaint a publicity stunt. "I won't be going as I have much more important work to do. As I have said it in the past, it was a one off task we were assigned (to pick coach). We did that. It wasn't a two year job or something like that and it was honorary," a miffed Kapil said. "Where is the question of any conflict? It is a good way to get publicity, dragging cricketers into all this," he said. When contacted, Gaekwad said he will go to Mumbai to attend the hearing. — PTI

Visakhapatnam, Dec. 17: India will have to get their bowling combination right after failing to stop the West Indies from executing a perfect chase in Chennai when they take on the buoyant visitors in the second ODI here on Wednesday, aiming to keep the three-match series alive.

A series win here would certainly raise Kieron Pollard's profile from a T20 freelancer to an able leader but a blinder from Rohit Sharma or another hundred from skipper Virat Kohli on a batting belter can't be ruled out. It wasn't a nightmarish bowling performance in Chennai by any stretch of imagination but not being able to defend 287 on a slow track left the team management with a few points to ponder.

Kohli had blamed it on the conditions. "We thought six bowling options will be good enough, specially with the pitch being slow and Kedar as an option...I think the ball wasn't holding enough for the fast bowlers," Kohli had said after the loss. With the par-score at the ACA-VDCA stadium here set to be in the 320-plus range, a fifth specialist bowling option could be mullied upon considering the plight the hosts faced in the last game with Shimron Hetmyer and Shai Hope beautifully planning the chase with their respective hundreds.

The biggest reason for the setback in Chennai was spinners Ravindra Jadeja (0/58 in 10 overs) and Kuldeep Yadav (0/45

LIVE on TV
India vs West Indies
2nd ODI
on STAR Sports 1, HD
FROM 1.30 PM

in 10 overs) being rendered ineffective. Hope and Hetmyer didn't murder the attack but did enough during the middle overs to ensure 103 runs came without taking any adventurous route. They chose their bowlers perfectly and as a result, debutant Shivam Dube leaked 68 runs in 7.5 overs, indicating that he is certainly a "work in progress" as far as his bowling is concerned. However, it's a tricky path for India to tweak their XI considering what exactly they have in their reserves.

They have Mayank Agarwal, the reserve opener, who is unlikely to get a chance as Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul are set at the top. Then they have Manish Pandey, the reserve middle-order batsman, who can only be replaced at No 6 in place of Jadhav. And Jadhav did nothing wrong in Chennai, scoring 40 off 33 balls with his typical 'chip and charge' game. The questions that people are raising is about Jadhav not being given another go after he was hit for 11 in his solitary over.

On a Chennai track, if he couldn't be risked for a second over, what will happen on a batting friendly Visakhapatnam pitch where he could be

hit through the line easily. So will Pandey, with a better range of strokes, be an option instead of Jadhav? If that's the case then they will have to go for a specialist fifth bowler — either seamer Thakur or leg-spinner Chahal.

In case India go for either of the two, then the axe may fall on one of the two all-rounders, Dube or Jadeja. Dube was sent to bat at No.8 in the last game and might not get to bat here irrespective of whether India bat first or second. — PTI

Shai keen on pipping Virat, Rohit in top run-getters list

Visakhapatnam, Dec. 17: West Indies opener Shai Hope is quite "sure" that some of his teammates will have Thursday's IPL auction on their minds during the second ODI against India but for him it will be "secondary" to beating Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in the 2019 top run-getters' list.

Hope, a chip of the old bloc, carried his bat through with a century in the first game

but one number nugget that could interest the uninitiated is the runs he scored in ODIs this year. Talk about whether IPL auction will be on his mind, Hope sounded dismissive.

"I am sure it would be but I am sure that's secondary. We came here to play a series against India so whatever comes secondary is secondary." Hope said on the eve of the second game. "I am sure some of the guys will be looking forward to the auction but we have an India series to play and that's the main thing right now," he added.

Hope is currently third in the ODI run-getters' list this year with 1225 runs behind Virat Kohli (1292 runs) and Rohit Sharma (1268 runs). — PTI



West Indies' Shai Hope during a training session ahead of the second ODI at Visakhapatnam. — Murali Krishna

IPL was easier route to India colours: Chahar

Visakhapatnam, Dec. 17: A remarkably candid Deepak Chahar on Tuesday said he understood early in his career that switching his focus to white ball cricket and IPL was the fastest and easiest route to the India dressing room.

The Agra-based Chahar started with a brilliant 8 for 10 in his Ranji Trophy debut against Hyderabad, but for all practical purposes, knew that a speed of 125 kmph with the red ball would take him nowhere near international cricket.

"When I changed my action to gain speed, I struggled with my state team. Now suddenly, I found that my road towards entering the Indian team to be very difficult. If I had to take the Ranji route, then I would have had to play more matches, play a whole first-class season, play Duleep Trophy. That's a longer road," Chahar said.

"But if you do well in IPL, then you can quickly play for India and during that phase of my career, I decided to concentrate on white ball cricket," Chahar, who is an automatic choice in T20 cricket now, said ahead of India's

second ODI against the West Indies.

The medium pacer came into India reckoning after two seasons with IPL franchise Chennai Super Kings. The most impressive aspect of an interaction with Chahar was the clarity he has about his shortcomings and what he is doing to improve them.

"When I came to the Ranji Trophy, I used to bowl 125 kmph. My struggle with injuries was due to my efforts to increase pace. Because I knew that I won't be able to survive with that kind of pace at the international level. I had to increase it close to 140 clicks and get it to swing.

"A swinging delivery at 135 to 137 kmph is the most difficult delivery for any batsman. I can vouch that even 150 km on a flat track can be easier to handle."

As focus shifted on becoming a good white ball bowler, Chahar realised that swinging a white ball is twice as difficult as the red ball. "A red ball will even (reverse) swing if it's shiny on one side. That's why, at the Ranji level, bowlers can move the ball both ways. In white ball, the swing is not because of the shine. It is derived through action. So I worked on that and increased my pace." — PTI

If you do well in IPL, then you can quickly play for India. — DEEPAK CHAHAR



Shardul Thakur and Jasprit Bumrah during a training session at Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. — Murali Krishna

Bumrah shows no signs of rustiness

Visakhapatnam, Dec. 17: Jasprit Bumrah showed no signs of rustiness as he went full tilt at Rishabh Pant but the resurgent Prithvi Shaw looked far from being fit for international cricket during his session with trainer Nick Webb at India's optional practice here on Tuesday.

Bumrah has been out with a stress fracture of the back and is expected to be available for the New

Zealand tour next year while Shaw, after serving his eight-month doping ban, has already made a comeback in domestic cricket.

The Indian team management, as part of its policy, wanted to have "a word" with both players while checking their fitness levels. A peek into the training was an indicator that re-induction of a proven match-winner like Bumrah is just a matter of time. — PTI

RCB WILL COVER ALL BASES: KOHLI

Bengaluru, Dec. 17: Virat Kohli on Tuesday said Royal Challengers Bangalore will have all their bases covered heading into Thursday's IPL actions. Kohli had a message for all RCB fans. "We've had a few discussions to build a team around, strong core that we already have and we assure you that we are going to cover all the bases that are required and build a very strong team." — PTI

Ashwin bundles out Himachal for 158

Dindigul, Dec. 17: Ace off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin starred with a five-wicket haul to help Tamil Nadu bundle out Himachal Pradesh for 158 in 71.4 overs on the opening day of the Ranji Trophy Group 'B' match here on Tuesday. B. Aparajith, leading the team in the absence of Vijay Shankar who missed out due to a niggle, elected to bowl and the bowlers justified the decision as Ashwin (5 for 67) and left-arm spinner R Sai Kishore (3 for 22) had the HP batsmen in a spin. The visiting team looked in danger of being bowled out for a sub-100 score before Akash Vashist (35, 94 balls, 4 fours) and Mayank Dagar (33, 62 balls, 3 fours) got together at 76 for 7 to add 53 runs and lend respectability to the total. Ashwin, who had taken eight wickets (four in each innings) during the narrow

BRIEF SCORES

Group B
Uttar Pradesh 232/5 (Aryan Juyal 109, Mohammed Saif 56 batting; Abhimanyu Mithun 3-45) vs Karnataka.

Himachal Pradesh 158 (Akash Vashist 35, Mayank Dagar 33; R. Ashwin 5-65, R Sai Kishore 3-22) vs Tamil Nadu 8 for no loss.

loss to Karnataka in the opening round, was at it again as he bowled beautifully to trouble all the batsmen. The lanky off-spinner brought his experience to the fore and looked dangerous in every spell. He bowled 29 overs of which six were maidens to capture five wickets.

Medium-pacer K Vignesh struck the first blow for Tamil Nadu, dismissing Prashanth Chopra for 4, caught by N Ganga Sridhar Raju. Ashwin struck with his second ball, having

Group A
Delhi 215 in 70.5 overs (Nitish Rana 51, Lalit Yadav 50; KV Sasikanth 5/38, Paidikalva Vijaykumar 3/47, Cheepurapalli Stephen 2/72) vs Andhra 16 for 2 in 6 overs (Navdeep Saini 1/8, Pawan Suyal 1/4).

Hyderabad 242 in 81 overs (Kolla Sumanth 79, Himalay Agarwal 68; Gurkeerat Singh 4/34, Mayank Markande 3/65, Sandeep Sharma 2/27) vs Punjab.

Priyanshu Khanduri caught in the covers by Ganga Sridhar Raju. He also removed captain Ankit Kalsi (11), Nikhil Gangta (0) and Sumeet Varma (30) to hand Tamil Nadu the advantage. Ashwin troubled all-rounder Rishi Dhawan with some lovely bowling before Sai Kishore got him.

The resistance by Vashist and Dagar revived the floundering Himachal innings. The two played cautiously and kept Ashwin & Co at bay with some resolute

defence before Vignesh (2/42) ended Dagar's resistance.

Tamil Nadu openers Abhinav Mukund and debutant K Mukunth made eight runs from three overs before bad light ended play for the day.

Earlier, Tamil Nadu made five changes to the side that played Karnataka, bring in Ganga Sridhar Raju, K Mukunth, T Natarajan, J Kousik and M Shahrulkhan in place of Dinesh Karthik, M Vijay, Vijay Shankar, M Ashwin and M Siddharth. — PTI

Delhi bowled out for 215 on Day One

Delhi put up a disappointing batting performance to be bowled out for 215 on the opening day against Andhra here on Tuesday.

By stumps, Andhra were also struggling at 16 for two, with both their openers back in the hut. Playing their second match of the season following the draw against Kerala, Delhi lost the previous game's century, Kunal Chandela, early after being put in to bat.

Kunwar Bidhuri and Nitish Rana repaired the innings with a 60-run stand for the fourth wicket before a mini collapse pushed them on the back foot.

Rana, who had scored a match-saving century against Kerala last week, saved Delhi the blushes again with a run-a-ball effort comprising nine fours and a six. — PTI

Yuvraj blasts think tank for World Cup debacle

New Delhi, Dec. 17: Yuvraj Singh on Tuesday slammed the Indian team management for the country's World Cup ouster in the semifinals, saying its planning for the 50 over tournament was "completely wrong".

Pre-tournament favourites India went into the World Cup without settling the number four spot and it affected the team as Virat Kohli's men made a semifinal exit from the marquee event. "In this World Cup, they dropped (Ambati) Rayudu and then they had Vijay Shankar, who had some injury and then Rishabh Pant came in. I have nothing against them but both played five ODI games, I mean how do you expect a guy with such less experience to win big matches," Yuvraj ques-



Yuvraj Singh

tioned. "My issue is what the think-tank was doing. Dinesh Karthik was going through the tournament and suddenly he plays the semifinals and a guy like MS Dhoni is batting at no 7. It was all hotchpotch. You can't do that in such big matches, you have to be sure. "Your No. 4 batsman had a

highest score of 48, so I thought the planning was really poor, because they were thinking that Rohit, Virat is in good form but teams don't win like that. If you look at Australia, if you look at 2003, 2011, 2015, they had set batsmen, so I thought the planning was completely wrong."

Rayudu was earmarked for India's number four slot after some fine performances in Asia Cup last year. However, he was dropped from the World Cup squad following an ordinary series against Australia at home.

Yuvraj, who had announced his retirement from international cricket in June this year, was disappointed with the way the team management handled Rayudu's case in the lead up to the World Cup. — PTI



Best boy

World championship silver medallist Deepak Punia has been named the 'Junior Freestyle Wrestler of the Year' by United World Wrestling

Air Olympic trials, says Nikhat

New, Delhi, Dec. 17: Nikhat Zareen on Tuesday demanded a fair Olympic selection trials and asked the national federation (BFI) to telecast live the fight after her much-anticipated showdown against M.C. Mary Kom in the Indian Boxing League was cancelled.

Tuesday but now with the fight not happening she has demanded a fair decision from the Boxing Federation of India (BFI). At the trial scheduled for December 27 and 28 here, each weight category will have four contenders. Three places are already secured in the 51kg women's division after Jyoti Gulia and Ritu Grewal won the gold and silver in the women's national in Kannur while Mary Kom is assured of a spot after she won the

bronze at the women's World Championships in Ulan-Ude, Russia in October. The toss up now for the fourth spot is between Nikhat and Pinki Rani. Nikhat said she is disappointed because the BFI had assured her the spot if she fared well against Mary Kom on Tuesday. "I was looking forward to the bout with Mary Kom but unfortunately it's not happening today. So I have to fight the reserve boxer — Darshana Dutt. I was all

ready for this bout but at the last moment I got to know that she is not playing," Nikhat said. "It was an opportunity for me to showcase my boxing skills, people could know that Nikhat Zareen is there and she has challenged Mary Kom," she added. When asked that the trails will be videographed by the federation, Nikhat said: "Yes, it will be videographed but it will be under BFI's custody. I am not worried but still someone where down the line there

remains a doubt whether it will be a fair decision. Being a boxer and after going through such troubles you can't easily trust anyone. Nikhat claimed that she couldn't participate in the nationals as the BFI wanted her to play the IBL. "BFI wanted me to play the league so I didn't play the nationals and that's why I am right now the fourth choice boxer for the trails in 51kg. I was told by the BFI to play the league," Nikhat said. —PTI



Real Madrid's Luka Modric (right) and teammate Eder Militao during a training session at the Real Madrid City sports facilities in Madrid on Tuesday, eve of their Spanish League match against Barcelona at Camp Nou. — AFP

Battle lines drawn Real face Barca in El Clasico

Madrid, Dec. 17: Zinedine Zidane and Ernesto Valverde might have been fearing for their jobs if they had lost a Clasico back in October but its postponement means that on Wednesday they can face each other feeling more secure.

Stalling in the autumn, Real Madrid and Barcelona have rolled through the gears in the lead-up to Christmas, meaning the winner of Wednesday's crunch meeting at Camp Nou will move seven points clear of third place.

More importantly, in what increasingly looks like a two-pronged title chase, the winner will pull three ahead of the loser, with one round Liga matches left before the two-week winter break.

The gap in the table will be small and considering where both these teams were only a few weeks ago, when every week brought a new name linked with coaching jobs and every goal conceded planted another seed of doubt.

For Real Madrid, Jose Mourinho was out of work and in the public eye, his increasingly frequent media showings even appearing to irk the usually immovable Zidane.

"Football forgets what you've done in the past," Zidane had said a couple of

I am happy we are about to play a Clasico. It was the same when I was a player, these are the matches you live for, and you are focused only on what happens on the field.

— ZINEDINE ZIDANE
Real Madrid coach on playing the season's first El Clasico

months ago, in October. "I'm not going to tell you what they say doesn't bother me, but I can't prevent people giving their opinions," Zidane added.

For Barcelona, Ronald Koeman had surged into view after the Dutch Federation confirmed a clause in his contract that allows him to join Barca after Euro 2020 next summer.

Barcelona's malaise was short-lived. They won only two of their opening five games. Results improved but performances were ponderous and the weaknesses all-too familiar, the kind that had also gone unfixed before, only to prove costly later in the season.

In that sense, Valverde was carrying the weight of previous disappointments and he was blamed for a

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Barcelona vs Real Madrid from 12.30 am (Thursday) on Facebook

leaky defence, lack of style and failure to get the best out of Antoine Griezmann. "At the start of the season, it's not about winning one title, it's about winning three or four," said Valverde in November. "So the frustration when you don't win a game is high," the Barcelona coach added.

Meanwhile, Zidane has said he is not worried about the Clasico being overshadowed by Catalan independence protests.

Zidane also shouldered burdens from last season. Even if it was not his team that limped its way through the final months, he was in charge and some wondered why nothing had changed.

"I am not worried about anything," Madrid coach Zidane said.

"I am happy we are about to play a Clasico. It was the same when I was a player, these are the matches you live for, and you are focused only on what happens on the field," the former World Cup winner added.

— AFP

REDS UP FOR MONTERREY CLASH

Doha, Dec. 17: Jürgen Klopp insists Liverpool are fully focused on winning this week's Club World Cup ahead of their semifinal against Monterrey of Mexico but hit out at the timing of the competition and questioned FIFA's plans to expand the tournament in future.

"We are here now and we are completely focused on it, but if you had asked me beforehand if I think that there should be a Club World Cup in the middle of our season, I would say no, in my honest opinion,"

Klopp told journalists at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha, where Liverpool face Monterrey on Wednesday.

The Anfield club have had to take time out from their seemingly relentless march towards the Premier League title to travel to Qatar for the tournament, in which they are Europe's representatives thanks to their Champions League triumph last season.

If Liverpool win against the Mexicans, they will advance to a final on

Saturday against either Flamengo of Brazil or Saudi side Al Hilal, while even if they lose their semifinal they will remain in Qatar for a third-place play-off at the weekend.

Their Premier League trip to West Ham United, scheduled for this weekend, was postponed as a result, and they have been forced to play their League Cup quarterfinal at Aston Villa on Tuesday with a squad of academy players due to the lack of alternatives in a packed schedule.

— AFP

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