

Key envoy

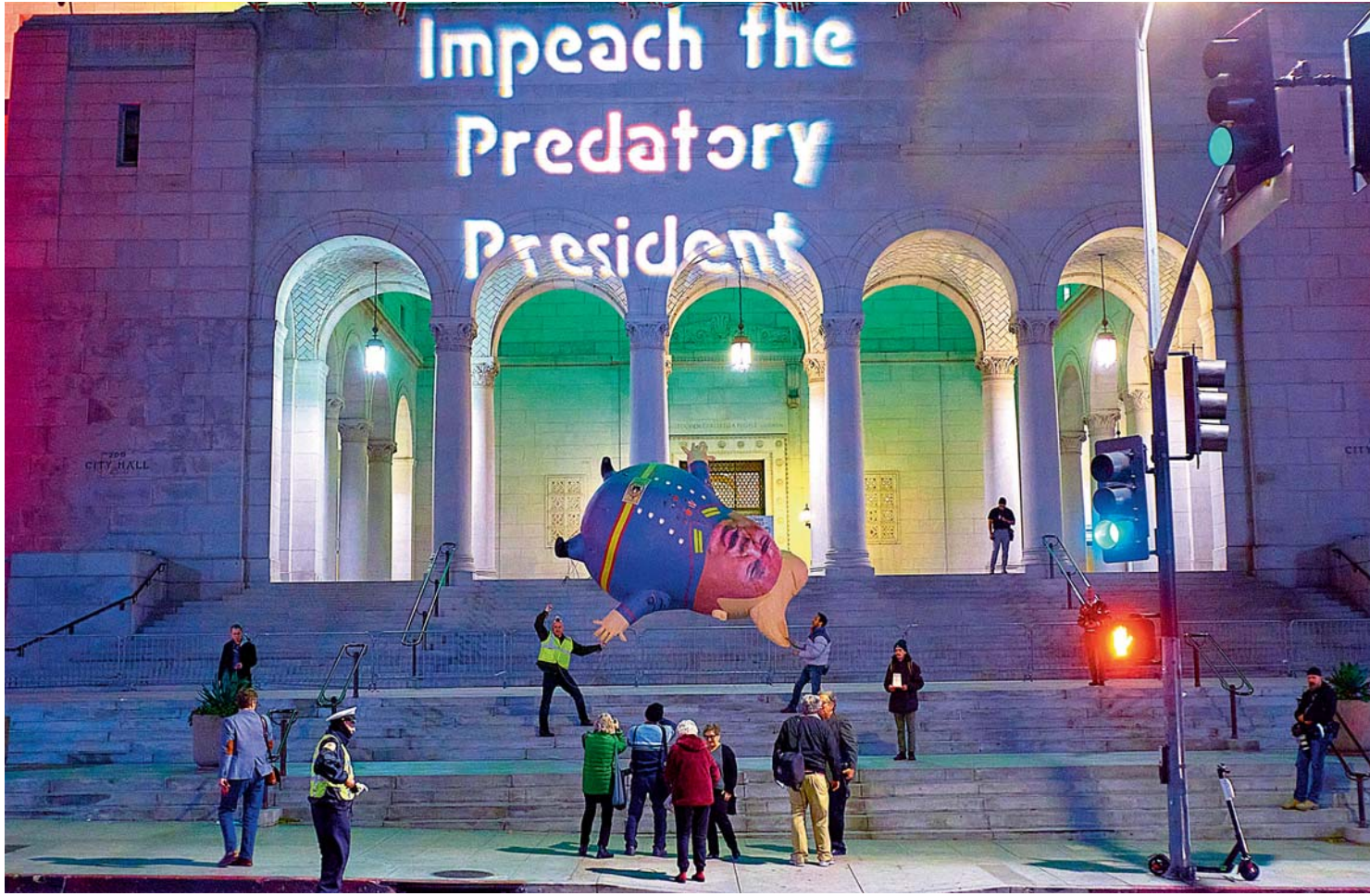
William Taylor, the acting US ambassador to Ukraine, whose appearance to Congress built the case for impeaching Trump, will step down at the end of the year



Stage set for impeachment vote

Pelosi calls Trump threat to U.S. in House debate before the vote on crucial issue

Washington, Dec. 19: U.S. House of Representatives speaker Nancy Pelosi called Donald Trump an ongoing threat to American democracy as the bitterly divided chamber engaged in an impeachment debate before historic votes on two charges accusing the Republican president of abusing his power and obstructing Congress. The Democratic-controlled House launched a planned six hours of debate on the two articles of impeachment — formal charges — arising from the president's actions toward Ukraine, with time equally divided between the parties and no amendments. Trump would become only the third U.S. president to be impeached. "Today we are here to defend democracy for the people," Pelosi, the top Democrat in Congress, said in a speech on the House floor after reading the pledge of allegiance, drawing applause from lawmakers in her party. As the debate unfolded, Trump on Twitter called the Democratic-led proceedings "AN ASSAULT ON AMERICA".



A baby Trump Balloon floats outside City Hall in Los Angeles on Wednesday. — AP

BILL FOR US GOVT PROGRAMMES, WALL PASSED

Washington, Dec. 19: The Democratic-controlled House voted to pass a \$1.4 trillion government spending package, handing President Donald Trump a victory on his U.S.-Mexico border fence while giving Democrats spending increases across a swath of domestic programs. The hard-fought legislation also funds a record Pentagon budget and is serving as a must-pass legislative locomotive to tow an unusually large haul of unrelated provisions into law, including an expensive repeal of Obama-era taxes on high-cost health plans, help for retired coal miners, and an increase from 18 to 21 in the nationwide legal age to buy tobacco products. The two-bill package, some 2,371 pages long after additional tax provisions were folded in on Wednesday morning, was unveiled on Tuesday afternoon and adopted less than 24 hours later as lawmakers prepared to wrap up reams of unfinished work against a backdrop of Wednesday's vote on impeaching Trump. The House first passed a measure funding domestic programmes on a 297-120 vote. But one-third of the Democrats defected on a 280-138 vote on the second bill, which funds the military and the Department of Homeland Security, mostly because it funds Trump's border wall project. The spending legislation would forestall a government shutdown this weekend and give Trump steady funding for his U.S.-Mexico border fence. — Agencies

IN BRIEF

Nevada objects to plutonium mission

Reno: Nevada wants a federal judge to declare illegal what it calls the US government's secret plutonium smuggling operation and order the removal of weapons-grade material already shipped to a security site north of Las Vegas over the state's objections. The latest filing in a year-long legal battle asks US district judge Miranda Du in Reno to reject the government's motion to dismiss the state's lawsuit. Nevada is challenging the energy department's covert shipment of the highly radioactive material from South Carolina last year. The department insists the issue is moot because it already has promised that no more plutonium will be brought to Nevada.

Macron to better pension plan

Paris: French President Emmanuel Macron will not drop his plan for a single points-based pension system, but is "willing to improve" it in the face of fierce union resistance, an official in the presidency said on Wednesday. "The President will not abandon the project nor water it down, though he is willing to improve it," said the official. The official added: "An improvement is possible concerning the pivot age" of 64 at which a worker would qualify for a full pension — a particular target of union ire that has sparked two weeks of massive public transport strikes.

Thousands in Poland protest

Warsaw: Thousands gathered in cities across Poland on Wednesday to protest against a proposal by the ruling nationalists that would allow for judges to be fired if they question the legitimacy of the government's judicial reforms. Poland's ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party has vowed to keep reforming its justice system after winning an election in October, putting it on a collision course with the European Union which has repeatedly argued the reforms are in breach of EU law and Poland's constitution. PiS says its reforms are necessary to make the court system more efficient. Several thousand people gathered in front of Poland's parliament in Warsaw, where protesters chanted "Free courts!" and "We will win!" while waving Polish flags. "An enslaved cop leads to an enslaved nation... I've seen how communist mechanisms work and I don't want a repeat. It's also my country, not just the ruling government's," said Ewa Karbowska, 59, who attended the Warsaw protest. Protesters also gathered in the cities of Wrocław, Torun, Poznan, Szczecin, Katowice and Białystok, among others, carrying EU flags.

14 DIE AS GANGS BATTLE IN PANAMA PRISON

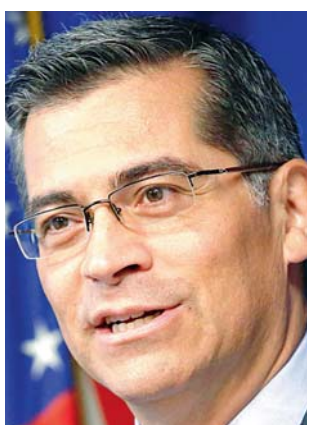
Panama City, Dec. 18: Rival gang members opened fire in a crowded Panamanian prison killing 14 inmates and wounding around a dozen others, the government announced on Wednesday. The gunbattle, involving AK-47 automatic rifles and other firearms, erupted on late Tuesday in La Joyita penitentiary, one of the country's largest prisons, east of Panama City. "After the fight in Hall 14 of the La Joyita penitentiary we can report that 14 prisoners have died," the interior ministry said on Twitter, updating an earlier toll of 12 dead. The country's prisons director Walter Hernandez said 14 prisoners were wounded, one seriously. The shooting broke out among young inmates in a section of the prison known as Hall 14, which houses around 500 prisoners, authorities said. Deputy director of National Police Alexis Munoz said the shooting arose from "disputes" between inmates. — AFP

Majority of US House for impeachment

Washington, Dec. 19: President Donald Trump is on track to be impeached by the House with the majority now in favor ahead of voting, according to a running tally compiled by *The Associated Press*. No Republicans have indicated they will support impeachment, setting up a party line vote carried by Democrats. One by one centrists, including many freshmen lawmakers who risk re-election in districts where the president is popular, announced this week that they would support the articles of impeachment. The first article on abuse of power now has a majority. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is all but certain to have the numbers as debate began on Wednesday on the two articles of impeachment that charge Trump with abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. Trump is angrily objecting to the impeachment charges, accusing Democrats of "perversion of justice and abuse of power" in their effort to remove him from office. In a fiery letter to Pelosi on the eve of his expected impeachment, Trump maintained that he did nothing wrong in seeking foreign investigation of political rivals, and he attacked Democrats for focusing on impeachment rather than other issues. Trump also repeated his objections to the process of the House inquiry, claiming "more due process was afforded to those accused in the Salem Witch Trials." — Agencies

Infosys to pay ₹5.6 cr over California tax fraud case

Washington/New Delhi, Dec. 18: Indian IT major Infosys has agreed to pay \$8,00,000 (nearly ₹5.6cr) to settle allegations of misclassification of foreign workers and tax fraud, officials said on Wednesday. Infosys will pay California \$8,00,000 to resolve allegations that, between 2006 and 2017, approximately 500 Infosys employees were working in the state on Infosys-sponsored B-1 visas rather than H-1B visas, California attorney general Xavier Becerra said. This misclassification resulted in Infosys avoiding California payroll taxes such as the unemployment insurance, disability insurance, and employment training taxes. H-1B visas also require employers to pay workers at the wages prevailing in the state, an official statement said. "Wednesday's settlement shows that attempting to evade California law doesn't pay. Infosys brought in workers in order to underpay them and avoid paying taxes. With this settlement, California has been made whole," Becca said. In the settlement, Infosys,



Xavier Becerra California attorney general

however, denied the allegations and asserted of no wrongdoings. Further, the company on Wednesday informed Indian stock exchanges that it has reached a settlement with California attorney general.

In the regulatory filing, it said the case is being dismissed with prejudice and was reached to avoid the time, expense, and distraction of protracted litigation on allegations dating back more than 13 years. "The agreement — which notes that Infosys strongly disputes the allegations and in which Infosys admits no wrongdoing — will result in the case being dismissed," Infosys said. The company asserted that it maintains robust policies and procedures to ensure adherence with all applicable regulations and laws. In 2017, Infosys had agreed to pay the state of New York \$1 million to settle allegations of submitting wrong documents to federal authorities. The Californian settlement that was carried out in November was released to media on Wednesday. California initiated legal actions against Infosys after a complaint was filed by whistleblower Jack "Jay" Palmer, a former Infosys employee. Palmer had sued the Indian IT major in 2017. — PTI

Slain Sikh cop's memorial proposed

Houston, Dec. 18: Houston Community leaders in Houston are working towards establishing a permanent memorial to honour slain Indian-American police officer Sandeep Singh Dhalliwal, who was shot dead on duty during a traffic stop. Harris county commissioners court on Wednesday recommended naming a section of the Sam Houston Tollway after Dhalliwal. The court members unanimously approved the request made by Precinct 2 commissioner Adrian Garcia to rename the section of the roadway between Texas 249 and US 290 as the Deputy Sandeep S. Dhalliwal Memorial Tollway. However, such a request would have to be approved by the Texas department of transportation, which will review and provide final approval to the resolution. Welcoming the recommendation, Indiano-American Chamber of Commerce Greater Houston founding secretary Jagdip Ahluwalia and its president Swapan Dhairayawan said that this will be a fitting memorial for honouring the Indian-American hero. — PTI

Genome found in 'ancient' chewing gum

London, Dec. 18: For the first time, researchers have extracted an entire ancient human genome from a sample other than bones, in a gum chewed by a 5,700-year-old female, unearthing details about the diet and oral microbes of stone age people. The researchers, including those from the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, extracted the complete ancient human genome from a sample of birch pitch — a gummy substance derived from the distillation of the birch tree's bark. According to the study, published in the journal *Nature Communications*, the 'chewing gum' was found during archaeological excavations at Syltholm in southern Denmark. "It is amazing to have gotten a complete ancient human genome from anything other than bone," said study co-author Hannes Schroeder from the University of Copenhagen. Based on the analysis of the genome, the researchers could tell that the birch pitch was

chewed by a female hunter-gatherer from mainland Europe than hunter-gatherers from central Scandinavia," the researchers wrote in the study. "The individual who chewed the pitch was female and that she was genetically more closely related to western

The archeologists also found that she probably had dark skin, dark hair, and blue eyes. Additionally, the scientists could also extract DNA of oral bacteria and infectious microbes from the pitch sample, proving that these kinds of gums can be a very valuable source of ancient DNA, especially for time periods which have no human remains. According to the researchers, the environmental conditions at the site where the birch pitch was found contributed to preserving the sample. "Syltholm is completely unique. Almost everything is sealed in mud, which means that the preservation of organic remains is absolutely phenomenal," said Theis Jensen, a study co-author from the University of Copenhagen. The study noted that Syltholm is one of the biggest Stone Age sites in Denmark. According to the findings, the people who occupied the region were heavily exploiting wild resources well into the Neolithic Age, which began about 12,000 years ago. — AFP

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A 5,700-year-old type of 'chewing gum' made from birch pitch found during archaeological excavations at Syltholm, southern Denmark. — AFP

बिहार सरकार

जल संसाधन विभाग
कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय
सिंचाई प्रमण्डल, विहारशरीफ

निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या-05/2019-20 दिनांक 16.12.2019
पत्रांक 1553
राष्ट्रीय स्पर्धा निविदा
(केवल ई-टेंडर पद्धति के अनुसार वेबसाइट www.eproc.bihar.gov.in पर)

शुभ रंग	कार्य का नाम	प्राकल्पित राशि (करोड़ ₹0 में)	अंशुम की राशि (करोड़ ₹0 में)	परिमाण विवरण का मूल्य (अनुस्यूणीय) (केवल ऑनलाईन मोड में मुताबेक)	बैटन का वेय (अनुस्यूणीय) (केवल ऑनलाईन मोड में मुताबेक)	कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि (माह में)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Detailed Survey & Investigation, Planning & Design, Supplying all materials, labours, equipments & machineries, Construction, execution & installation, Testing, Commissioning along with successful Trial run period of 3 months and Comprehensive Operation and Maintenance for 60 months after successful Trial run of Gangs Water Lift Project for Drinking Water, Phase-I on Turn-key basis.	2495.44	25.0544	10,000/-	17,700/-	19
2	विज्ञानमाता का पदनाम एवं पता	कार्यपालक अभियंता, सिंचाई प्रमण्डल, विहारशरीफ।				
3	निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना निर्गल करने की तिथि	दिनांक 16.12.2019				
4	निविदा कागजात झरनलोज करने की अवधि	दिनांक 03.01.2020 से 15.01.2020 को 3:00 बजे अपराह्न तक। केवल वेबसाइट www.eproc.bihar.gov.in पर।				
5	ग्री-बीड मीटिंग की तिथि, समय एवं स्थान	दिनांक 07.01.2020 को 2:00 बजे अपराह्न में सिंचाई भवन, पटना स्थित सभाकक्ष में।				
6	निविदा अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	दिनांक 16.01.2020 को अपराह्न 3:00 बजे तक। केवल वेबसाइट www.eproc.bihar.gov.in पर।				
7	लकनौकी बीड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय	दिनांक 18.01.2020 को अपराह्न 3:30 बजे। केवल वेबसाइट www.eproc.bihar.gov.in पर।				
8	बिचीय बीड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय	सक्षम पदाधिकारी द्वारा बाद में वेबसाइट www.eproc.bihar.gov.in पर घोषित की जायेगी। केवल वेबसाइट www.eproc.bihar.gov.in पर।				
9	निविदा खोलने का स्थान	120 दिन।				
10	निविदा बैठाता की अवधि	120 दिन।				
11	विशेष जानकारी प्राप्त करने हेतु वेबसाइट	www.eproc.bihar.gov.in & www.prdbihar.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है।				

कार्यपालक अभियंता, सिंचाई प्रमण्डल, विहारशरीफ।

PR. No. 12427 (WRD) 2019-20

जल एवं पेड़ बचाएँगे, धरती पर हरियाली लाएँगे, 19 जनवरी 2020 को मानव श्रृंखला बनाएँगे।



Attempt to convince

Jane Fonda reveals she attempted to meet Trump with a group of 'beautiful' climate activists including Pamela Anderson to convince him to tackle global warming

Deadly strike



Smoke plume billows following a Syrian government air strike on a residential district of Maaret al-Numan in the northwestern Idlib province on Wednesday. 23 civilians have been killed in the air strikes and artillery fire in the northwest of the country.

Xi in Macau amid Hong Kong unrest

Macau, Dec. 18: Chinese President Xi Jinping landed in Macau on Wednesday as the city prepares to mark 20 years since the former Portuguese colony was returned, a celebration that stands in stark contrast to months of unrest in neighbouring Hong Kong.

HONG KONG ACTIVISTS DENIED TRAVEL TO MACAU

Security has been ramped up ahead of Xi's three-day visit which culminates on Friday's anniversary. Ahead of Xi's arrival, activist Leung Kwok-hung and about 10 protesters held up posters of Xi in a Hong Kong shopping center. At the city's airport, a troupe of school children waving Chinese and Macau flags behind him.

Hong Kong, Dec. 18: A ferry company barred a group of Hong Kong protesters, including a well-known pro-democracy activist, from boarding a boat on Wednesday to Macau, where Xi arrived. China's authoritarian leadership is keen to showcase Macau as a successful example of its "one country, two systems" model, with party leaders heaping praise on a pliant city of 700,000 that has grown rich on gambling and deference to authoritarian rule.

"The Chinese people and the central government are proud of the achievements and progress Macau has made in the past 20 years since its return to the motherland," Xi said on arrival. Since the 1999 handover by Lisbon, Macau has witnessed little of the dissent that has exploded in Hong Kong during six months of often violent pro-democracy protests.

Failing to negotiate a new deal after Brexit would hurt Britain more than the EU — Ursula von der Leyen European Commission chief

Turkey warns on US' Cyprus move

Ankara: Turkey has warned that US moves to lift a decades-old arms embargo on Cyprus would be a "dangerous escalation", as relations deteriorated further between the Nato allies. The US Congress voted on Wednesday to end the embargo on the island, which was imposed in 1987 to avoid an arms race and encourage the conflict's resolution. Cyprus has been divided since 1974 when Turkey invaded in response to a coup engineered by the then military regime in Athens.

Student in kill list plot ordered held

Albuquerque: A Saudi Arabian student who prosecutors say illegally obtained a gun in the US and told someone he wanted to kill a professor and others was ordered Wednesday held until his trial on a federal gun charge. US magistrate judge Laura Fashing ruled that Hassan Alqatani posed a danger and should be kept in federal custody after she heard allegations of domestic violence and threats reportedly made to others. Witnesses told investigators that the Alqatani, 27, had physically attacked his wife, a US citizen, and threatened a girlfriend who he was dating while married.

5 traffickers could be killed in Bali

Bali: Five accused drug smugglers from Hong Kong, Chile, Switzerland and Thailand who were caught in Bali could face the firing squad if convicted, police on the Indonesian holiday island said on Wednesday. The group, arrested in separate incidents this month and in November, were paraded in shackles and orange jumpsuits at Bali's airport customs office, escorted by machine-gun toting police — a common practice in Indonesia. Muslim-majority Indonesia has some of the world's toughest drug laws, including the death penalty for traffickers. While death sentences are often reduced to long jail terms, Indonesia has executed foreign nationals in the past, including two Australian masterminds of the Bali Nine heroin gang who were shot in 2015. Two of the five are men from Hong Kong, who were caught with 3.2 kg and 4 kg of methamphetamine, respectively, police said.

8 KILLED IN MEXICO SHOOTOUT

Mexico City, Dec. 18: Mexico's National Guard said seven gunmen and one of its officers died in a shootout Wednesday in the north-central state of Guanajuato. A second officer was wounded. Authorities said the suspects opened fire on a National Guard patrol on a highway near the city of Irapuato and the officers returned fire. Guanajuato was once considered a relatively peaceful agricultural and industrial state. But so far this year it has registered more homicides than any other state in Mexico, including some with much larger populations. The state recorded 3,211 homicides in the first 11 months of the year, well above the second most violent state, Baja California. Much of the violence in Guanajuato is caused by gangs that steal fuel from pipelines. Since the government cracked down on the illegal taps, the gangs have unleashed a campaign of extortion.

India emerges third in global research output

China tops in publishing scientific papers, US is second

Washington, Dec. 18: India has emerged as the world's third largest publisher of science and engineering articles, according to a latest US report. China, which accounts for 20.67 per cent of all global publications in scientific articles, is at the top position, followed by the US at 16.54 per cent, as per the statistics compiled by the US National Science Foundation (NSF).

India's emergence as third largest publisher is mainly due to a phenomenal double-digit growth rate in the last one decade from 2008 to 2018

country now accounts for 5.31 per cent of the total world publications in science and engineering. In China, the number of global scientific publications increased from 2,49,049 in 2008 to 5,28,263 in 2018, in a growth rate of 7.81 per cent per annum. The US, the total global publications in science and engineering articles

grew at a rate of 0.71 per cent from 3,93,979 in 2008 to 4,22,808 in 2018. Though a long way to go, as compared to the US and China in terms of the number of scientific article publications, India's emergence as third largest publisher is mainly due to a phenomenal double-digit growth rate in the last one decade from 2008 to 2018, the report noted. The global research output, as measured by peer-reviewed science and engineering (S&E) journal articles and conference papers, grew about four per cent annually over the last 10 years. The other countries

LAB RESULTS OF 15M CANADIANS HACKED

Ottawa, Dec. 18: Privacy watchdogs have launched an investigation into a hack of health records, which a laboratory said may have compromised data on up to 15 million Canadians or nearly half the population. LifeLabs, which does blood work and other tests across Canada, said in a letter to customers that their names, contact information, health card numbers and lab test results were exposed in a cyber attack on its computers in early November. Most of those affected are in Ontario or British Columbia. The company also said it paid an undisclosed sum to the hackers to retrieve the data, and has retained experts to isolate and secure its affected computers.



Firemen investigate a double-decker bus after its crash on a highway in Hong Kong on Wednesday.

Five dead in Hong Kong bus crash

Hong Kong, Dec. 18: Five people were killed and dozens injured in Hong Kong on Wednesday when a double-decker bus smashed into a tree, police said. Live footage showed firefighters trying to reach victims on the vehicle's top deck, which had been turned into a tangled mess of twisted metal and shattered glass, leaving some passenger

seats dangling to the side. Victims were seen being removed in a black body bags and placed next to a sign reading "Temporary Mortuary" on a highway-close to Chinese border. Police said five people were certified dead at the scene with dozens injured. Authorities said it had activated its "major incident" plan in response to the crash.

No order to special court in Musharraf's case: Pak SC

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, DEC. 18 Pakistan's Supreme Court on Wednesday has clarified that Chief Justice of Pakistan Asif Saeed Khosa did not give any directive to special court on the treason case against former military ruler Pervez Musharraf. A spokesperson of the top court said that CJP's media interaction was presented out of context. "The news being aired on channels is baseless, wrong and fabricated," he said. On December 17, special court in Islamabad had 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) announced the verdict

DEMOCRACY OR PUPPET GOVT, BILAWAL ASKS

DC CORRESPONDENT ISLAMABAD, DEC. 18 Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chief Bilawal Bhutto on Wednesday expressed that people and politics were not free in Pakistan, and the masses have to decide whether they want a democratic or puppet government. Addressing a workers' convention, he said that the puppet rulers are governing the country. He said cases were being registered against everyone including student unions who try to protest. that was reserved on December 5. During the hearing, Justice Seth said that the ex-president had been

found guilty of violating the Article 6 of the Constitution by clamping the state of emergency on November 3, 2007. The verdict was split 2-1 and a detailed verdict will be issued in 48 hours. Meanwhile, Chief Justice Asif Saeed Khosa said that they were focusing on the training of lawyers, judges and staff. Addressing a ceremony in Islamabad on Wednesday, he said that in view of the nation's progress, on the basis of investigations, the judge can review all aspects of the case. The Chief Justice said that process of reforms without knowing the values of a society is ineffective, adding that the best lawyers should go for practice in the tribal districts. Chief Justice Khosa went on to say that research programmes should be encouraged in the country.

Australia has its hottest day on record, worst to follow

Sydney, Dec. 18: Australia this week experienced its hottest day on record and the heatwave is expected to worsen, exacerbating an already unprecedented bushfire season, authorities said on Wednesday. The average nationwide temperatures of 40.9°C on Tuesday beat the previous record of 40.3°C in January 2013, the Bureau of Meteorology said. "This heat will only intensify further today," meteorologist Diana Eadie said. The heatwave is another alarm bell about global warming in Australia, where this year's early and intense start to regular summer bushfires has heaped pressure on the Australian government to do more to tackle climate change. Hundreds of bushfires have been raging across Australia for months, including a "mega-blaze"



A firefighter douses a bushfire in Dargan, 130 kilometres north-west of Sydney on Wednesday.

burning north of Sydney, the country's biggest city. Smoke from the fires has engulfed Sydney, raising air pollution to hazardous levels in an event leading doctors have labelled a "public health emergency." At least three million hectares of land has been torched across Australia, with six people killed and about 700 homes destroyed. Scientists say the blazes have come earlier and with more intensity than usual due to global warming and a prolonged drought that has left the land tinder dry and many towns running out of water. The fires have sparked climate protests targeting the conservative government, which has resisted

pressure to address the root causes of global warming in order to protect the country's lucrative coal export industry. Record spot temperatures were recorded this week in Western Australia, where firefighters have also been battling blazes raging across thousands of hectares of land. The hot weather is drifting across the country's arid centre toward the east. Parts of New South Wales are forecast to reach the mid-40s Celsius on Thursday. On Saturday, as conditions worsen, west Sydney is due to tip over 46°C. Turbulent winds of up to 100 kmph are forecast to also hit the east coast and worsen the blazes. "Over the next few days we are going to see firefighters, the emergency services and all those communities close to fires... challenged with a new threat," an official said.

Journalist says winning case doesn't mean rape didn't happen, hopes for change

Japan scribe awarded \$30K over #MeToo allegation

Tokyo, Dec. 18: A Tokyo court on Wednesday awarded 3.3 million yen (\$30,000) in damages to journalist Shiori Ito, who accused a former TV reporter of rape in one of the most high-profile cases of the #MeToo movement in Japan. The civil case made headlines in Japan and abroad, as it is rare for rape victims to report the crime to the police — according to a 2017 government survey, only four per cent of women come forward. Ito, 30, has become an

outsoken symbol for #MeToo in Japan, where the movement against sexual harassment and abuse has struggled to take hold. She had sought 11 million yen (\$1,00,000) in compensation from Noriyuki Yamaguchi, a former TV reporter with close links to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, alleging he raped her after inviting her to dinner to discuss a job opportunity in 2015. Yamaguchi continues to deny any wrongdoing and had filed a counter-suit against Ito, seeking 130

million yen in compensation. "We won. The counter-suit was turned down," said Ito outside the court, holding up a banner that read "victory" as supporters cheered and clapped. "Honestly I still don't know how I feel," she told reporters, struggling to hold back the tears. "However, winning this case doesn't mean this (sexual assault) didn't happen... This is not the end," she added. She said she hoped the case would change what



Shiori Ito she called the "underdeveloped" legal and social environment surrounding rape in Japan.

Japan hiked minimum jail terms for rapists from three to five years and widened the definition of sexual assault victims to include men for the first time in 2017. Lawmakers decided unanimously to update the 1907 statute to impose tougher penalties on sex attackers and make prosecutions easier, as they look to boost Japan's low number of convictions. The latest World Economic Forum report on the gender gap published on the eve of the

case ranked Japan 121st out of 153 countries, slipping even further down the list from 110th the previous year. Yamaguchi announced he would appeal "immediately" against the ruling, saying, "I have not done anything that goes against the law." He claimed the court had failed to acknowledge inconsistencies and "falsehoods" in Ito's argument while ignoring his own arguments. He said the significant international media atten-

tion around the case might have clouded the judgement of the court and vowed to be more vocal in future. Ito spoke out in 2017, shortly before the #MeToo movement, and this was "viewed as odd, especially in Japan," she said. When the #MeToo movement emerged, "I thought 'it wasn't only me!' and I believe there were others who thought so too," she said. "I saw women in Europe or the US actively discussing it and standing up together," she said.



Crisis management

Former Italian football federation president Giancarlo Abete was named emergency commissioner of Italian league

SHOOTING | NATIONALS

Rahi, Sanjeev right on target

New Delhi, Dec. 18: Tokyo 2020 Olympic quota winners continued their fine form at the ongoing 63rd National Shooting Championship Competitions (63rd NSCC) Rifle/Pistol in Bhopal, as Sanjeev Rajput, Rahi Sarnobat, Manu Bhaker and Aishwary Singh Tomar, all returning winners.

● **Sanjeev Rajput, Rahi Sarnobat, Manu Bhaker and Aishwary Singh Tomar won gold in their respective events at the 63rd National Shooting Championship Competitions (63rd NSCC) for rifle and pistol underway in Bhopal.**

After Divyansh Panwar had won the Men's Air Rifle on the opening day, senior shooter Sanjeev Rajput on Wednesday won the Men's 50m Rifle 3 Positions (3P) while Rahi Sarnobat, Manu Bhaker and Aishwary Singh Tomar, all returning winners. Sanjeev representing Haryana, shot a solid 1176 to top qualification before a sublime 459.6 to seal gold while Maharashtra's Rahi shot 41 in the final to dominate Manu Bhaker who shot 32 for the silver. This after Rahi shot 589 to

top qualification and Manu 582 to follow her through to the finals. Manu also won the junior women's 25m Pistol gold while Aishwary Tomar, who had won the junior Air Rifle earlier in the championships, won the junior Men's 3P with a 455 in the final. The teenager from Madhya Pradesh had also shot a fine 1175 in qualification.



Manu Bhaker (centre) is flanked by her parents after winning gold in the junior women's 25m pistol at the 63rd National Shooting Championship Competitions (63rd NSCC) for rifle pistol in Bhopal on Wednesday.



Aston Villa's Jonathan Kodjia's (left) shot is deflected by Liverpool's goalkeeper Caoimhin Kelleher during their English League Cup quarterfinal match at Villa Park in Birmingham, central England, on Tuesday. Aston Villa won 5-0. — AFP



It was a weird game, the weirdest one I've been involved in.

— Dean Smith, Aston Villa manager, after their win 5-0 win over Liverpool in the quarterfinal of the League Cup

INDIAN LEAGUE

Bagan, Bengal Derby put off

New Delhi: The upcoming I-League derby between Mohun Bagan and East Bengal in Kolkata was on Wednesday postponed after organisers failed to get "security assurances" from the state police for an expected full house. The clash was scheduled to be held on December 22 and though the All India Football Federation (AIFF) did not specify the exact reason why security assurances couldn't come through, sources in the apex body said "it was related to the ongoing protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act." In a letter, the police conveyed its inability to provide security. "With reference to the much-awaited Hero I-League match between Mohun Bagan AC and Quess East Bengal originally scheduled to be held at Kolkata's Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan (VYBK) on Sunday, December 22, 2019, a formal letter from the office of the Dy. Commissioner of Police, Bidhannagar to Mohun Bagan has cited that "organising a full-scale match shall be quite challenging," the AIFF said. — PTI

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Liverpool drown

Villa beat Reds 5-0 in English League Cup quarters

Birmingham, Dec. 18: Liverpool's youngest ever team suffered a harsh lesson as Aston Villa ran out 5-0 winners to reach the League Cup semifinals, with Jonathan Kodjia scoring twice.

An unrecognisable Liverpool line-up contained five debutants and an average age of 19 years, six months and three days with the European champions' first team and coaching staff, including

manager Jurgen Klopp, in Qatar for their Club World Cup semifinal against Monterrey on Wednesday.

That inexperience showed defensively on Tuesday despite a much better performance from the visitors than the scoreline suggests.

Harvey Elliot became the youngest player to ever play in the Premier League just a month after his 16th birthday last season when at Fulham

before a summer move to Anfield.

And he was the standout performer of Liverpool's young crop as his driven effort produced a good early save from Orjan Nyland.

However, the floodgates opened 14 minutes in when Conor Hourihane's free-kick evaded everyone and flew under Caoimhin Kelleher's grasp.

The Irish under-21 international goalkeeper was

unfortunate again moments later when Ahmed Elmohamady's attempted cross deflected off Morgan Boyes and looped in at the far post for an own goal.

Kodjia had not scored this season prior to kick-off with his chances in Smith's first team severely restricted by the signing of Brazilian striker Wesley in the summer.

"It was a bit of a weird game, probably the weird-

est one I've been involved in for a quarterfinal of a major competition," said Villa boss Dean Smith.

"I came through coaching those sorts of age groups. It was great to see them on that stage tonight, so we had to be very professional," Smith added.

Villa, meanwhile, can look forward to a first cup semi-final in five years with the other three quarter-final ties taking place on Wednesday. — AFP

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