

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | FRIDAY 18 | DECEMBER 2020

## WEATHER



**Max:** 27°C  
**Min:** 20°C  
**Rainfall:** 2 mm

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Margazhi 3  
**Tithi:** Chaturthi  
**Star:** Thiruvonam  
**Rahukalam:**  
10.30 am to 12 noon  
**Yamagandam:**  
3 pm to 4.30 pm

### PRAYERS

**Fajar:** 5.07 am  
**Jumma:** 12.09 pm  
**Asar:** 3.19 pm  
**Maghrib:** 5.45 pm  
**Isha:** 7.01 pm

**SUNSET TODAY 5.47 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.25 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 9.46 AM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 9.30 PM**

## CORONA COUNT

CASES

(+26,030)  
99,77,110

DEATHS

(+329)  
1,44,816

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,181)  
TN: 8,02,342 11,931

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

7,48,91,296

### DEATHS

16,61,906

COUNTRIES,  
AREAS WITH  
CASES 218

worldometers.info

## Anti-Sterilite violence: Rajini may be summoned again, says Commission

**Thoothukudi:** The one person inquiry commission probing the May 2018 anti-Sterilite violence here in which 13 people were killed in police firing, may once again summon top Tamil actor Rajinikanth, following his remarks of “anti-social elements” infiltrating the protest.

## California sees record cases, deaths

**Los Angeles:** California has reported more than 53,000 new coronavirus cases and 293 deaths, setting new records as hospitals struggled to keep up with the surge. State health officials said Wednesday a change in data processing added 15,337 previous cases to the count, but the new virus cases remained a daily record.

## COUNTER POINT



**Before you give it to me, test it on my bodyguard!**

## 2 healthcare workers develop allergic reactions to Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine

**New York, Dec. 17:** Two healthcare workers, who received Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine, developed “concerning reactions”, even as the US rolled out the vaccine to frontline healthcare workers and high-risk individuals amid increasing Covid-19 infections across the country.

A report in *The New York Times* said the two health care workers at Bartlett Regional Hospital in Alaska developed concerning reactions just minutes after receiving Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine this

week.

One staff member was hospitalised for a few days. One of the healthcare workers, a middle-aged woman, had no history of allergies but had an anaphylactic reaction 10 minutes after receiving the vaccine.

She experienced a rash over her face and torso, shortness of breath and an elevated heart rate, the NYT report said adding that anaphylaxis can be life-threatening, with impaired breathing and drops in blood pressure that usually occur within

minutes or even seconds after exposure to a food or medicine, or even a substance like latex to which the person is allergic. The second worker received his shot on Wednesday and developed eye puffiness, lightheadedness and a scratchy throat 10 minutes after the injection, the hospital said in a statement. He was taken to the emergency room and treated with medication including epinephrine and Benadryl. The worker was back to normal within an hour and released. — PTI



## STATE | 3

**Set up regional benches of SC: DMK MP Wilson**



## WORLD | 5

**Ro Khanna is Dem vice chair of India Caucus**

## SPORT | 8

**Red balls pathetic for Tests: Warne**



## French prez Macron tests positive for virus

**Paris, Dec. 17:** French President Emmanuel Macron has tested positive for Covid-19, the presidential Elysee Palace announced on Thursday.

It said the president took a test “as soon as the first symptoms appeared.” The brief statement did not say what symptoms Macron experienced. It said he would isolate himself for seven days.

“He will continue to work and take care of his activities at a distance,” it added. — AP

## DAC weapons acquisition proposals approved

**PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, DEC.17**

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by defence minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday in a meeting granted Acceptance of Necessity (AoNs) for proposals worth Rs 28,000 crore including Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) Systems for the Indian Air Force. These Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) Systems will be designed and developed by DRDO.

## Vaccine ‘hesitancy’ rises among Indians as virus cases fall: Survey

**Mumbai, Dec. 17:** MANY Indians appear hesitant to get vaccinated for COVID-19 as infections have fallen sharply since a mid-September peak and some people are worried about possible side-effects here, according to a survey of 18,000 people released on Thursday.

India reported 24,037 new infections on Thursday - fewer than 30,000 for a fourth straight day - taking its total to 9.96 million, the second highest in the world.

More than 144,000 people have died.

Until early last month, India had looked set to overtake the infection tally of the United States but the gap between them has since widened significantly. U.S. cases have now risen to more than 16 million.

The government says it could soon approve some of the vaccines that have sought emergency use authorization, including the Oxford-AstraZeneca one and the Pfizer/BioNTech shot, which is already being used in the United States and Britain.

— Reuters

## ‘BAD FOR FAMILY’

## CM slams Kamal’s Big Boss show, movies

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC. 17**

Accusing Makkal Needhi Maiam founder Kamal Haasan of ruining families through his films and the Bigg Boss reality television show that he hosts, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said the actor had no intention of doing any good to the people of the country.

“He is 70 years old. He is retired. How can someone who hosts Bigg Boss conduct himself in politics?” Palaniswami asked when media persons in Ariyalur raised a question based on Haasan’s recent remark on the unearthing of bribe money from government

officials.

Reacting to Palaniswami’s remarks, Haasan tweeted: I am glad that the Chief Minister also watches Bigg Boss. His earlier tweet, government officials were just following the path of the government, was the one that prompted the query at the media interaction with the Chief Minister.

“He has started a party recently. What does he know? Why do you ask me questions on what he had said,” the Chief Minister retorted and clarified that the raids on the officials were conducted by the government, which wanted to correct every mistake that happened.

■ **More on P3**

## Sonia may meet 23 Congress rebels soon

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 17**

As the Congress’ internal elections draw close, the top leadership wants to bridge the gap with the 23 letter writers demanding a change in the party’s working style and an “active and present” leadership. Insiders claim a meeting between Congress president Sonia Gandhi and some of the letter writers was expected by the coming

weekend. Acting as a bridge between the two sides is former Madhya Pradesh CM Kamal Nath, who has in the last couple of days met the letter writers as well as Mrs Gandhi in a bid to find a middle path.

The parleys between the leadership and the letter writers had come to an abrupt end when senior leader Ahmed Patel contracted Covid-19 in early October and passed away in late November.

## WEST BENGAL ASSEMBLY

## Adhikari’s resignation not a big issue: TMC

**Kolkata, Dec. 17:** In the wake of Shubhendu Adhikari severing all ties with Trinamool Congress on Thursday, a senior party leader said that one or two people leaving the party will have no effect on it.

Adhikari relinquished his primary membership of Trinamool Congress after submitting his resignation from West Bengal assembly on Wednesday fuelling speculation that he will join the saffron brigade.

Speaking to reporters here, senior TMC leader Subrata Mukherjee said “As far as my knowledge goes Suvendu is awaiting a meeting with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. He (Shubhendu) has said categorically that ‘I am waiting for Didi. I will talk to her’”.

Asked about the impact of Adhikari’s departure on the future of Trinamool Congress before the state assembly polls, Mukherjee said “TMC is a big party. The party’s fate does not depend on one or two persons. Is it possible? See the large number of people who turn out at the meetings of Mamata Banerjee”.

Besides, Speaker Biman Banerjee has said that Adikari’s resignation is not

as per rule, he added. Mukherjee, who is also the state minister for panchayat and rural development, said Adhikari leaving the party could be a big issue for the media but not for the party members.

“We (TMC) work for the people. Show us any other political party in the country which is going from door to door,” he said referring to ‘Duare sarkar’ programme of TMC. Listing the work done by the rural development department of the TMC government, Mukherjee said the economy of the countryside has improved manifold since the party came to power in 2011. He claimed that be it rural housing or rural roads, making villages open defecation free, MNREGA or pension for those living below poverty line, the government has been able to provide all round development across the state. — PTI

## Farmers have a right to strike, SC says

**SANJAY KAW AND PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 17**

Acknowledging the right of farmers to hold non-violent protests, the Supreme Court on Thursday suggested that the Centre put on hold the implementation of its new agricultural laws, putting forward the idea of setting up an impartial and independent committee to end the impasse. The Centre said the farmers would not come forward for negotiations if the implementation of the farm laws was put on hold.

The Centre told the court it was not possible to hold implementation of the laws. While solicitor-general



Tushar Mehta said it couldn’t be done, attorney-general K.K. Venugopal said he would come with the response of the government on the proposition.

Chief Justice S.A. Bobde asked Mr Venugopal to give an assurance that the laws will not be implemented in the interim period “till we hear the matter”. The A-G, however, said this could stall the negotiations. To

this, the CJI said a statement to this effect by the Centre could only enable the discussions with the protesting farmers and resolve the standoff.

Mr Venugopal then asked for time to discuss it with government officials and come back during the vacation, when the CJI indicated a bench will be set up to hear the matter even during the winter break. Friday is the last working day for the court before its 15-day winter recess, that ends on January 3.

The Supreme Court also refused to order eviction of farmers from Delhi’s borders, where they are camping for 22 days, without hearing them.

## PM to visit Dhaka in March for 50 yrs of B’desh freedom

**SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 17**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday held a virtual summit with Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina that included “comprehensive discussions covering all areas including connectivity and trade, development

cooperation, border management and river water sharing”, after which it was announced Mr Modi would visit Bangladesh in March 2021 to “join the celebrations on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh’s independence and 50 years of Bangladesh-India diplomatic relations”. ■ **More on P4**

## Kejriwal tears copies of Centre’s farm laws

## Cannot ‘betray’ ryots, says Delhi CM

**New Delhi, Dec. 17:** The Delhi Assembly on Thursday passed a resolution against the Centre’s three new agriculture laws with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tearing up their copies, saying he cannot betray the farmers of the country.

Addressing the Delhi Assembly, the chief minister also alleged the laws have been made for “electoral funding of the BJP and not the farmers”.

“I am pained that I have to do this. I did not intend to, but I cannot betray the farmers of my country who have been sleeping on the streets in the cold... when the temperature is just 2 degrees Celsius,” Kejriwal said, while tearing up the copies of the three laws.

“I am a citizen of this country first, a chief minister later. This assembly rejects the three laws and appeals to the central government to meet the demands of the farmers,” he said. Kejriwal further said 20 protesting farmers have died so far and asked the Centre when it will “wake up”. He said the Centre should not be under the impression that



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal along with Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia speaks to media after a special assembly session on Centre’s new farm laws, in New Delhi, on Thursday.

— PTI

the farmers camping at the protest sites will simply return to their homes, adding that in 1907, a farmers’ protest continued for nine months till the British rulers repealed some laws. “When asked about the benefit of the laws, every BJP leader says farmers can sell their produce anywhere in the country... But where should farmers go to sell their crop at minimum support price (MSP)?” the CM asked. He also claimed that due to the three new laws “big capitalists will sell pro-

duce at a higher price”, which will lead to price rise. After the assembly passed the resolution by voice vote, AAP MLAs trooped into the well of the House, tore off copies of the laws and raised slogans demanding that the government repeal them. Speaker Ram Niwas Goel adjourned the House proceedings till 5:15 pm. When the House reconvened, the AAP MLAs again gathered in its well, following which proceedings were adjourned till 11 am on Friday. — PTI



PSLV-C50 lifts off successfully from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota on Thursday.

— DC

## Isro launches comm satellite with latest tech

**Sriharikota, Dec. 17:** India successfully launched its latest communication satellite CMS-01 on board its Polar rocket from the spaceport here on Thursday, the second and last launch this year amid the Covid-19 pandemic. ISRO’s trusted polar satellite launch vehicle — PSLV-C50 — injected the satellite into the pre-defined orbit around 20 minutes after the lift-off from the second launch pad at the spaceport of Sriharikota. CMS-01 is the 42nd communication satellite of the space agency. — PTI



## Shah holds meeting with Union ministers, BJP general secretaries

**New Delhi, Dec. 17:** Home minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah on Thursday held a meeting with Union ministers Nirjala Sitharaman, Piyush Goyal and Narendra Singh Tomar to discuss the ongoing farmers’ agitation.

The meeting was held at the BJP head office here and was also attended by the party’s general secretaries CT Ravi, Dushyant Gautam and Arun Singh among others. It lasted for more than an hour.

According to sources, during the meeting Shah reviewed the BJP’s outreach programme through press conferences and ‘chaupals’ or open meetings across all districts of the country to allay fears on the new farm laws. Since the large-scale farmers’ agitation began a few weeks ago, the BJP has been organising press conferences and ‘chaupals’ in all the districts of the country on the new agriculture-related bills passed recently by the Central government. — PTI

## Moon rocks in hand, China prepares for future missions

**Beijing, Dec. 17:** Following the successful return of moon rocks by its Chang’e 5 robotic probe, China is preparing for future missions that could set the stage for an eventual lunar base to host human explorers, a top space program official said Thursday.

China’s next three lunar missions are on track, along with programs for returning samples from Mars and exploring asteroids and the planet Jupiter, Deputy Chief Commander of the China Lunar Exploration Program Wu Yanhua said.

“Exploring the truth of the universe is just beginning,” Wu said at a news



A model of China’s Chang’e 5 lunar orbiter and lander are displayed before a press conference at the State Council Information Office in Beijing, on Thursday. — AP

conference held hours after the Chang’e 5’s capsule parachuted to a land-

ing in Inner Mongolia carrying the first lunar samples to be brought to Earth

in more than 40 years.

Named after the Chinese goddess of the moon, the Chang’e program has made three landings there, including on its less explored far side. Chang’e 6, scheduled for a 2023 launch, is to collect more samples from the lunar south pole, while its two successors are to conduct detailed surveys and test technologies needed for the construction of a science base on the moon.

No dates have been given for Chang’e 7 and 8, or for a crewed mission to the moon that China says is in the works, or for the construction of a lunar base.

“China is willing to keep

on contributing to the world and enhancing human well-being with Chinese space solutions,” Wu said.

The capsule of the Chang’e 5 probe and its cargo of samples were flown to the space program’s Beijing campus after landing just before 2 a.m. on Thursday.

The mission achieved firsts for China’s lunar exploration program in collecting samples, launching a vehicle from the moon’s surface and docking it with the capsule to transfer the samples for their voyage to Earth, the China National Space Administration said in a statement issued following the landing. — AP



## SHORT TAKES

**I-T dept detects ₹700cr after raids on TN contractor group**

New Delhi, Dec. 17: The Income Tax Department has detected black income of about ₹700 crore after it raided a Tamil Nadu-based group that undertakes civil government contracts, the CBDT said on Thursday.

The department also seized ₹ 21 crore "unaccounted cash" during the searches. The raids were carried out on December 14 at 15 premises in Erode and Chennai against the group which is a "leading civil contractor for government works, specialised in erecting sea wave breakers along the coastlines and is also diversified into bus transport, running marriage halls and food masala business". "It was found that the group indulges in inflation of purchases and other work contract expenses. Such inflated payments made to the suppliers and sub-contractors are received back in cash regularly," the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said in a statement. — PTI

**Hemnath produced before RDO**

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, DEC. 17

Husband of late television actor VJ Chitra, Hemnath was produced before the Sriperumbudur Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) for an inquiry.

Hemnath was arrested by the Nazarethpet police on the night of December 14 on the grounds of abetment to suicide. He has been lodged in Puzhal jail after. Sources said the RDO enquiry would reveal if Chitra had faced dowry harassment. Earlier Chitra's mother had said during the enquiry that they had offered 50 sovereigns for Chitra and 20 sovereigns for Hemnath as marriage surety.

In the meantime, police sources revealed that an audio clip in the actress mobile phone revealed some crucial information.

According to police sources, the audio clips that were retrieved from Chitra's mobile played a piece of important evidence that led to the arrest of Hemnath.

The audio clip allegedly was a conversation between Chitra and her father-in-law. In the audio, VJ Chitra had said that Hemnath had repeatedly objected to her playing intimate scenes with the male artists in the serials.

She shared that she was reportedly abused by Hemnath in the pretext of suspecting her character and conduct. VJ Chitra had sought her father-in-law's help to resolve the issue with Hemnath. The clips that were allegedly deleted by Hemnath were retrieved by the cyber crime police after Chitra's suicide.

It may be recalled that the popular television actor Chitra was found dead at the hotel room she was staying in, with her husband Hemnath, during the early hours of December 9. The actor was best known as Mullai, a role she played on the television serial Pandian Stores.

**Dirty fight over cleaning lake**

Members of the DMK got into an argument with the officials of the Chennai Corporation over cleaning the Puzhuthivakkam lake on Thursday. According to the DMK functionaries, who were led by former Chennai mayor M. Subramanian, they had received permission from the Chennai Corporation to carry out cleaning works at the lake. But the corporation officials said the local body had already started the cleaning the lake and it was not necessary for the members of the DMK to do the same. However, the DMK men alleged that the local body did not act swiftly in removing the vegetation and the corporation staff had come there only after they (the DMK workers) reached the spot. Officials pacified Subramanian, who left the spot along with his party cadre after getting an assurance from the corporation that they will work till the vegetation is completely cleared from the waters of the lake.

— DC

**CBI books Chennai Port Trust official in ₹97L bribery case**

New Delhi, Dec. 17: The CBI has booked a Chennai Port Trust official, who allegedly took a bribe of over ₹97 lakh from an elderly man on the purported promise of getting his son appointed as an assistant traffic manager in the trust, officials said on Thursday.

It is alleged that K Poopathy, who worked as the personal assistant to the chief engineer of the trust and is currently under suspension, met complainant N Devaraj (63) on a train journey, they said. During a conversation, Poopathy allegedly told Devaraj that the chief engineer has wide powers to appoint people in the port, the officials said. He allegedly told Devaraj that by spending ₹1 crore, his son Sathyaprakash, a diploma holder in mechanical engineering and shipping logistics, can get a job of assistant traffic manager

**“Devaraj became suspicious of Poopathy as he stopped taking calls and coming for personal meetings”**

in the port, which is a gazetted officer's position. Based on his assurance, Devaraj allegedly paid over ₹97 lakh in cash and cheques to the accused between December 17, 2016 and November 20, 2019, the officials said. In order to secure a bright future for his son, Devaraj used his retirement funds, savings, pledged his daughter's gold jewellery at a local pawn shop, mortgaged his house as well as took loans from private persons on interest, they added.

Devaraj became suspicious of Poopathy as he stopped taking calls and

coming for personal meetings, the officials said. It is alleged that some unidentified people threatened Devaraj in February and took his signatures on a document that said all his payments to Poopathy were returned to him, they said.

Devaraj filed a complaint with the vigilance officer of the Chennai Port Trust, along with documents of transactions, mortgage, pawn receipts and audio recordings of conversations between Poopathy and his son Sathyaprakash, the officials said.

The Chennai Port Trust subsequently suspended Poopathy, they added. Devaraj also approached the CBI with his complaint, which has now been taken up by the agency for investigation after registering an FIR against Poopathy under the Prevention of Corruption Act. — PTI

**Fever camps, containment zones help control corona spread****Chennai gives thumbs up to city corporation**

T. SUDHEESH I DC  
CHENNAI, DEC. 17



The year 2020 kept people indoors with the tentacles of the Covid-19 pandemic instilling fear in the minds of people even as our system, right from the Centre to local civic bodies, functioned in an unprecedented way. Be it containment activities, awareness campaigns, public distribution services or the migrant crisis, the local bodies functioned round the clock, offering services to the people.

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) is the one of the urban civic bodies that faced the pangs of Covid-19 from the beginning of the pandemic's foothill in India. In that period, the common people, in a large way, realised for the first time the necessity of reaching out to the civic body administration and seeking its services, sitting at home.

For example, in the pre-pandemic period, the GCC's twitter handle was followed by nothing less than a thousand people. Months after the virus hit the city, it went up to over 1,10,000.

It would be pertinent to ponder over why people developed concern over the support from the civic body? Undoubtedly, the reason for this was fear and anxiety the spread of Covid-19 brought to city. It may be recalled that Chennai (still) accounted for more than half of Tamil Nadu's total Covid-19 positive cases resulting in a surge of public health worry among Chennaiites that made them think about ways to keep the pandemic at bay apart from the dwindling state of economy and its consequential job losses.

One of the biggest and successful outreach programmes the civic body introduced in this tough year was the Advanced Tour Programme (ATP) for local level fever camps. According to the GCC administration, nearly 1 lakh fever clinics were conducted in Chennai since May attended by over 40 lakh people. Over 2

lakh symptomatic patients were identified and tested for Covid-19.

The higher turnout at these camps helped the GCC administration to contain the spread of virus in the city, which has a population of over 87 lakh, to a large extent. The GCC launched it after realising that at least 20 per cent of Covid-19 deaths in the city took place due to the failure of the residents in revealing symptoms to the health workers who visited their homes as part of surveys.

In addition to this, the civic body launched the state government's containment zone plan quite effectively following Tablighi Jamaat cases which became a cluster across the state in mid-

**‘DON'T TAX US DURING PANDEMIC’**

While much of the city's attention remained squarely focussed on the public health challenge, there are hopes of better days in 2021. Perhaps, the streets of Chennai will soon become pandemic-proof as the vaccines are on the way to the world.

Today, Chennai, one of the hubs of smallscale industries and manufactures, has started bustling to emerge from darkness as the new dawn of a fresh year rises. Yet, the civic body has still to do many things to make things going steady and stronger. "While we appreciate the government in managing the spread of Covid in the city, it's time the corporation wakes up to the challenges small industries and manufacturers are facing by providing tax breaks and a favourable working atmosphere," said

id K.E. Raghunathan, former national president of All-India Manufacturers' Organisation.

"Local industrialists had been asking for exemptions from property tax, rent payments, etc ever since the lockdown was announced, citing the examples in other states. But it has not materialised. Instead, the civic body has imposed a penalty on the default of property tax now. We are hopeful that Chennai will recover from the current economic stress.

However, to make it happen, the government should not leave onus on the city's intricate links with the rest of India's economy. But their moral support providing better service with a human touch is the need of hour to recover industries from stress of pandemic," he said.

**WATER BODIES REJUVENATED**

A silent revolution the city witnessed during the pandemic year was the rejuvenation of water bodies and lakes. The administration had restored 33 ponds and renovated seven community wells spending

Rs 23.90 crore. J. Jayant, a social expert with Chennai Rivers Restoration Trust, says the pandemic year in a way had made a positive impact in the city. "In 2020, our lakes were flowing with quality water. The restoration works including clearing bushes, establishment of con-

crete bunds and de-silting, covering about 4.43lakh sqm", also acted as a catalyst," he said.

Yes, it is a fact that the entire machinery of GCC was tireless in the last 12 months.

They were unable to give much focus to perennial issues like the drinking water crisis during the summer to come. But, it seems rain gods had realised the corporation's helplessness and blessed the city, making its reservoirs full in advance. For GCC, summer in 2021 is done in winter. Thank you 2020!

March though the first case in the city was reported on March 9. The number of zones was expanded after the Koyembodu vegetable market turned a super spreader of the virus in the city last week of April.

Meghanath Reddy, deputy commissioner (works), GCC, is satisfied when he looks back at his team's efforts in serving people during the crisis. According to him, the

biggest success of the GCC administration in handling the Corona crisis was its ability to coordinate various agencies including health, revenue, railways and police.

"The best administration is always the result of selfless team work", Reddy reiterated. "We are lucky we had a team of hardworking and dedicated officials as well as volunteers to make the services efficient and quick. It was

also the time the administration realised the importance of social media. I always got myself convinced by that fact as I frequently interact with people via my Twitter handle. The social media enables any administration able for a mass contact and quick disposal of grievances. When we face such an unfamiliar crisis, we need to be ready for direct interaction with people. Social media makes it happen. That was the first lesson the administration learnt during the pandemic times", he said.

When asked about the controversy about the barricading of the house premises of Covid positive patients, Reddy said that it happened as the administration was a novice in response to contain a novel virus. "Like any other administration, we learned from the mistakes and rectified it. At the end of the day, we are pretty clear the administration had lived up to the expectations of people. And this outgoing year that brought the pandemic and cyclones has changed the attitude of the GCC administration," he said.

**30 choirs to celebrate Xmas together online**

T. SUDHEESH I DC  
CHENNAI, DEC. 17

Chennai residents have always embraced the Christmas season by putting up Christmas trees, singing and watching carols. However, the pandemic has limited the city's Christmas cheer as the prominent choir groups are celebrating online while many other teams cancelled their plans. For the first time this year, Chennaiites are all set to experience carol music

online by the decades-old choir groups.

Kishor Das, vice-president, Madras Musical Association (MMA), said the 63-year-old legacy of Carols By Candlelight at MMA took a change this year as they decided to turn it online. "We are determined to keep the tradition alive. Thus we decided to go with a virtual Carols By Candlelight that will be streamed on Saturday. https://youtu.be/ubdjQHCkSWM," he said.

He added that over a

thousand people used to be part of the event every year. It always brought in the best choirs and ensembles of the city together on the last Saturday before Christmas, presenting a rich choral music. "This year we will see 30 choirs participating online for the first time. Each choir will present one choral piece keeping the tradition. We have requested each choir to sing one stanza of Silent Night and it will be mixed at our end and presented together

along with the other choirs," he added.

The Madras Musical Association, founded at St Andrews Church (the Kirk) in 1893, is the longest surviving Western music organisation in the city. Since 1957, MMA Carols by Candlelight has become a much-loved and highly anticipated Christmas tradition.

But other prominent choir groups, which entertained the Chennaiites during the Christmas season, could follow suit in

days to come.

A member with St Thomas Orthodox Cathedral Choir, Madras Christian College (MCC) choir, said that they had not yet decided whether to conduct the carols this year. "Most probably we will conduct a low-key online choir this year. Gifford, secretary of the Minstrels Choir, said that they cancelled this year's programmes. 'We found it difficult to conduct online. So we decided to put off the event by Easter next year,'" he said.

**IIT fallout: Limping back to normalcy with fear**

B. Vijayalakshmi

**Viewpoint**

The sudden spike in the number of corona positive cases on IIT-M campus this week to 191 triggered anxiety among Chennaiites. Allaying public fears, the state health department said several measures had been taken to prevent the spread of the virus in the institute. As a fallout of IIT cases, the government intensified testing in all colleges. Six hostel students of Anna University's College of Engineering, Guindy, had tested positive for coronavirus. Also, the college authorities on the instructions of the health department have begun providing take away food in colleges with hostels and in colleges which have a common mess and dining area to avoid the spread of the virus.

Meanwhile, the state government has given the nod for organising political and



For illustrative purpose only: An intensive statewide campaign on TV and social media on wearing masks and maintaining social distance will contain further spread of the deadly virus. — DC

public meetings, religious gatherings, cultural and sports events with a maximum of 50 per cent capacity in open places, from December 19. Crowding during Christmas, New Year and Pongal celebrations may facilitate spread of the virus. As Margazhi music season

went virtual this year, the crowding in sabhas and canteens has been prevented.

In a related development, Puducherry has decided to reopen all schools January 4 after they were shut in March. Its neighbour Tamil Nadu cancelled the half-yearly exams for students of

government and government aided schools in the state due to pandemic. Private schools have been allowed to conduct exams online. With archaeological monuments and beaches also open now, people have begun flocking to these places. The city is almost back to normalcy albeit with fear.

An intensive and focussed statewide campaign by authorities especially on TV and social media on the necessity of wearing masks properly and maintaining a distance from each other at public places will help in controlling further spread of virus.

**Commissioner inaugurates 139th police station in city**

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, DEC. 17

Chennai City Police Commissioner Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal on Thursday inaugurated 139th police station in the city.

The new police station, S-16 Perumbakkam, was inaugurated by the top cop started functioning from Thursday at the 91st block of the TNSCB tenements.

With the formation of the new police station, the workload of the existing Pallikarai police station would be reduced and special attention would be given to the places attached to the newly-formed police station to prevent crime and other occurrences.

Places within the panchayat of Perumbakkam, Chitlapakkam, Ottiyambakkam and adjoining areas which were earlier under the jurisdiction of the S-10 Pallikarai police station, now come under the jurisdiction of the Perumbakkam police



CoP Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal on Thursday inaugurates new police station S-16 at Perumbakkam. — DC

station. As the area under the Pallikarai jurisdiction is vast, there was a necessity for bifurcation of the existing police station. The commissioner's sought the co-operation of residents to make the jurisdiction free from any law and order issues and petty issues.

Additional Commissioner of Police, South R.Dhinakaran, Joint Commissioner of Police A.G. Babu and Deputy Commissioner of Police, St. Thomas Mount K.Prabhakar were present

on the occasion. Ranjithkumar, inspector of police, has been posted as a station house officer for the Perumbakkam police station to look after both law and order and crime. To assist the inspector, sub-inspectors and other ranks of police personnel have been posted.

Members of the public residing within the limits of the newly-formed police station can share their grievances with the inspector of police, through the mobile numbers 9840619597 and 9498143067.



## SHORT TAKES

## 100 held for blocking train

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, DEC. 17

Police took into custody hundreds of volunteers of the Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam and Manithaneya Makkal Katchi, including its district president Udhuman Ali, when they blocked the Mayiladuthurai-Coimbatore Jan Shatabdi Express train at Fort railway station at Tiruchy on Thursday.

Mr. Udhuman Ali told the media that they organized the rail roko agitation in support of the ongoing nationwide farmers agitation in Delhi demanding the withdrawal of the union government's farm laws.

## Farmers union threatens to intensify stir

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, DEC. 17

The Desiya Then Indhiya Nathal Inaippu Vivasayeegal Sangam in Tiruchy has said that if the union government does not withdraw the recent farm laws, it will send 30 farmers to New Delhi to commit suicide every day.

Sangam's state president P. Ayyakannu told the media on Thursday that a resolution to this effect was adopted at the meeting. It was also decided to translate the farm laws into Tamil and distribute them in every village in the state to create awareness among the farmers about its bad impact, he added.

It was also decided to launch a relay fasting agitation in Tiruchy and Chennai.

He said Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami should speak about the farm laws only after understanding them in detail.

## DMK women to protest against LPG price hike

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, DEC. 17

The DMK's women's wing would organize peaceful demonstrations at all the district headquarters of the State on Monday, December 21, in protest against the unprecedented price hike of Rs 100 for domestic LPG cylinders in a matter of 15 days.

The party's women's wing secretary Kanimozhi Karunanidhi would lead the agitation, DMK President M K Stalin said in a statement, adding: 'Let the voice of Tamil Nadu women be heard in Delhi'.

The protest, which would be held from 3.30 pm on Monday, was also to demand the rollback of the price hike, which came into effect two times in a matter of 15 days, the release said.

## Puducherry adds 40 new Covi-19 cases, tally rises to 37,622

**Puducherry, Dec. 17:** The union territory of Puducherry logged 40 new coronavirus cases while no fresh fatality was reported in the last 24 hours, a top Health department official said on Thursday.

The 40 fresh infections took the overall tally to 37,622, Director of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said in a release. The death toll remained at 622 as no death was reported from any of the four regions-Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam- in the last 24 hours ending 10 AM Thursday. Of the 40 new cases identified at the end of the examination of 3,144 samples, the Puducherry region reported 21, followed by Mahe (13), Karaikal(5) and Yanam(one). He said the fatality and recovery rates were 1.65 per cent and 97.5 per cent respectively. A total of 32 patients were discharged during the last 24 hours. —PTI

## Both major alliances likely to be intact

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC  
CHENNAI, DEC. 17

The two major political coalitions formed for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in the State are likely to remain intact and continue in the 2021 Assembly polls with the possible entry of actor Rajinikanth making no impact on the alliances.

Since the ruling AIADMK and the prime opposition DMK have already drawn the electoral battle lines with the aim of forming the next government on their own, both the alliance leaders are seemingly ungenerous in allotting seats to the partners.

Unlike the 2016 Assembly elections that saw the formation of a third front called the People's Welfare Alliance, led by Vijayakanth's DMDK with MDMK, CPI, CPM, TMC and VCK being part of it, there is no indication of the traditional parties ganging up to fight the DMK and AIADMK

alliances.

Only the yet to be launched party of actor Rajinikanth and the Makkal Neethi Maiaam of Kamal Haasan, which was formed before the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, could possibly challenge the domination of the two Dravidian majors, which would have others under their wings.

For, the PMK and the BJP, which went alone (BJP had a minor partner IJK with it) in 2014, joined the front led by AIADMK in 2019 and so did the DMDK and the TMC from the third front. Similarly MDMK, CPI, CPM and VCK gravitated towards the DMK for the Lok Sabha polls and benefited substantially.

Now with the bugles being blown for the next elections, none of the small parties seem to be keen on rocking the boat though some of the parties have become ambitious and want a bigger share of seats to contest from.

Those parties like the

BJP, PMK and DMDK even handed out a threat of moving to the opposite camp in the event of the alliance leader not allotting seats according to their demands, which portended switching of loyalties at least by the parties other than the BJP.

It is said that all the three parties sought close to 40 seats each. If the AIADMK were to give in to the demands it would have to part with 120 seats to just these three allies and would not be able to contest the number it aspires to – around 160 with a view to forming a government of its own.

Other than the BJP, the two parties had also tried to negotiate with the DMK, which is rumoured to have been firm on its plan to restrict the number of seats allotted to partners. That had stonewalled the negotiations for a switch over and the parties have no alternative to remain where they are now.

DMK's message to its long-time partner

Congress, too, was on the same lines. It means the demand of the Congress, which was allotted 40 seats in 2016, that it be given at least the same number might not be acceded to. That the Congress won only 8 seats out of the 40 and that the DMK has other new partners to satisfy now are cited as reasons.

So, those old parties are likely to accept the number of seats given to them by the coalition leaders and a third front as such could emerge only if the Haasan and Rajinikanth go for a tie up and rope in some other parties.

However, it is learnt that Rajinikanth and Haasan are averse to taking in most of the parties. So, apart from Edappadi K Palaniswami of the AIADMK, M K Stalin of the DMK and the two top film stars, the only contender to the throne at Fort St George would be actor Seeman, whose Naam Tamilar Katchi is known for its penchant to plough a lonely burrow.

## No face masks: ₹13K netted as fine in Nilgiris

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, DEC. 17

In a surprise inspection held for a day by a team of officials here, a fine of Rs 13,000 was collected from those who failed to wear face masks in compliance to Covid-19 health norms.

Collector of Nilgiris J Innocent Divya, said that in an effort to rein in those who defy the ban on plastics, and also take stock of the solid waste management measures here, a team of officials organized surprise inspections in all the municipal, town panchayat and panchayat limits on December 13.

During the inspection, the teams collected a fine amount of Rs 13,000 from those who were found to be moving without wearing face masks. This apart, the teams also seized banned plastics weighing 26.10 kgs from shops and collected a fine amount of Rs 64,000 from offenders who clandestinely stocked up banned plastic items.

The collector has appealed to all residents, traders and tourists to avoid using banned plastic items like plastic pet water bottles, plastic soft drink bottles and other plastic products, to keep the hills free from plastic. She also appealed to the hill residents and tourists to comply with the solid waste management norms here and avoid littering in public places and on road sides.

## NIA court jails B.Tech grad from Chennai in ISIS conspiracy case

**New Delhi, Dec 17 :** A special NIA court here has convicted a B.Tech graduate from Chennai who pledged his allegiance to the Islamic State terror group in a bid to fight along with it in Syria, an official said on Thursday.

The NIA Speical Court at Patiala House, New Delhi, pronounced the judgement against Mohammad Naser on Wednesday. The case, registered by the NIA in December 2015 under sections of the IPC and UA(P) Act, pertains to the criminal conspiracy hatched by the ISIS to establish its base in India by recruiting Muslim youths for ISIS, a proscribed terrorist organisation, through different social media platforms. "As a result, a few known and other unknown Indian youths expressed their solidarity, allegiance and support to the ISIS in different forms and left India or their place of residence for abroad and joined ISIS under the influence of persist-

ent indoctrination by their handlers," an NIA spokesperson said.

After completion of investigation, the NIA filed chargesheets against 16 accused including Naser on June 3 this year. In this case, 15 accused were earlier sentenced to up to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment by the NIA Special Court on October 16 this year for the conspiracy hatched by ISIS handlers based in Syria and subsequent formation of a group namely "Junood-ul-Khilafa-fil-Hind" owing its allegiance to ISIS.

Naser, a B.Tech (IT) and certified ethical hacker from Chennai, was working as a Web Developer and Graphic Designer in Dubai in 2014, the NIA official said. He got radicalised and motivated to join ISIS through the lectures delivered on YouTube by Islamic scholars namely Anjem Choudary and Abu Barra, the official said. Naser was fully convinced that ISIS was

following the true edicts of Islam and struggling to create a Caliphate, which will be governed on the basis of Sharia, the NIA official said. Hence, he made frantic efforts to find persons who could facilitate his travel to Syria/Libya for joining ISIS, the official said. On persistent efforts, he came across some online handlers and left Dubai to join ISIS/ISIL for Libya via Sudan, but, he was interdicted by the Sudanese authorities and deported to India in December 2015, according to the NIA official.

After completion of investigation and subsequent trial, the NIA Special Court convicted Naser for the various offences committed by him and sentenced him to rigorous imprisonment for seven years and slapped a fine of Rs 40,000 on Wednesday, the official said. Trial continues against chargesheeted accused Imran Khan. —PTI



VULTURE RESCUED

Endangered Egyptian Vulture was rescued near Suler in Coimbatore and handed over to vulture researcher Dr.R Venkitachal arn, Assistant Professor, Department of Zoology in Kongunadu Arts and Science College. —DC

A ARUL PALANI | DC  
CHENNAI, DEC. 17

DMK's Rajya Sabha member and senior advocate P. Wilson on Thursday, in a letter, urged Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad to introduce a Bill

to amend Article 130 and establish permanent regional benches of the Supreme Court in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata.

Mr Wilson recalled that the standing committees of Parliament had recom-

mended the setting up of regional benches of the Supreme Court in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2008 and various law commissions had also favoured establishment of the regional benches.

The framers of the

Constitution believed that a time may come when the Supreme Court must sit at other places apart from Delhi. Hence, Article 130 was framed by them as "The Supreme Court shall sit in Delhi or in such other place or places, as the Chief

Justice of India may, with the approval of the President, from time to time appoint."

Currently the access to the Supreme Court is restricted only to those with the economic means to travel to Delhi and afford

a lawyer in Delhi. A person who cannot afford to go to Delhi, or afford the fees of the lawyers in Delhi, which is invariably higher due to demand, is left without an appellate remedy.

"If justice has to reach every corner of the coun-

try, it is essential to establish the benches of the Supreme Court.

According to a study the Supreme Court's workload in 2011 depicted that 34.1% of the cases represent only 7.2% of the total population of India", he said.



TOKEN OF GRATITUDE

Students who were admitted to MBBS course this year under the government's seven percent reservation for government school students, met Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami, at the Ariyalur collectorate on Thursday, and presented him a memento expressing their gratitude, for the CM's effort in securing the reservation. Govt chief whip S. Rajendran, Collector T. Ratna and others are also seen. —DC

## CM: Kamal no good in politics; MNM a flop

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC  
ARIYALUR, DEC. 17

Coming hard on Makkal Needhi Maiaam (MNM) leader, Kamal Haasan, and the 'Bigg Boss' (Tamil show), Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami said the party headed by the actor-turned-politician cannot do any good for the people of Tamil Nadu.

Slamming the 66-year-old star, the Chief Minister said that Kamal Haasan was new to politics who recently retired from acting, and does not know even the fundamentals of governance.

Accompanied by government Chief Whip Thamarai S Rajendran, the chief minister was here on Thursday to review the development activities and the preventive measures taken to manage Covid-19. Collector T Rathna, party MLAs Ramanujalingam (Jayankondam), RT Ramachandran (Kunnam) and others, also accompanied him.

Later, listing out various achievements of his government to newsmen, the chief minister slammed the MNM leader Kamal Haasan and also DMK president and Opposition leader MK Stalin for their anti-government stance.

Reacting to MNM leader Kamal's tweet that officials were following the footsteps of the state government in corruption, pointing to the seizure of unaccounted money from RTOs and other offices by the DVAC, Palaniswami said, "The DVAC comes under the state government. Raids only show our intention to prevent malpractices. But the show 'Big

Boss' hosted by Kamal Haasan for a private television channel, will only spoil families. He joined politics recently after retiring from acting and does not know anything."

Proudly claiming that various government departments received national awards and that Tamil Nadu stood first among other states of the country in several fields, the chief minister dismissed allegations of DMK president MK Stalin that the government machinery was inefficient.

To a question, he said, due to the non-compliance of government norms and regulations against COVID-19, more number of Madras IIT students have now become infected, but they are getting proper treatment. Land transfer process is going on for the proposed ATMS hospital at Madurai, he added.

The chief minister said the government will consider establishing a memorial for Chola King - Rajendra Cholan. He also justified the government's recent mini clinics named in English as 'Mini clinics' instead of 'Tamil, because he wanted the scheme to reach the people easily.

Earlier, the chief minister declared open 39 development works of various departments at a cost of Rs 36.73 crore and laid the foundation stone for 14 new projects at an estimated cost of ₹ 26.52 crore. He also distributed welfare benefits to the tune of ₹129.34 crore to 21,504 beneficiaries.

Speaking at a review meeting, Palaniswami said there were 4,613 persons affected by COVID-19 in the

district, of which 4,554 were fully cured and only 11 are under treatment. Due to the precautionary measures taken by the district administration, COVID-19 is now under control in the district, he added.

He said the PWD undertook 14 works including the construction of six check dams and renovation of eight water bodies at an estimated cost of ₹63.95 crore during the year 2019-2020, of which 13 works have been completed and the rest are nearing completion.

He said the district administration has given 6,316 free house site pattas during 2019-2020 as against the target of 6,000 house site pattas. Under the national highways development programme on NH-45C, the four-laning road work is going on for a distance of 50 km at an estimated cost of ₹1,460 crore. This apart, under the World Bank additional assistance, new four-laning road work will be taken up under the Tamil Nadu road development scheme between Ariyalur and V Kaikatti, at an estimated cost of ₹200 crore, he added.

Work is going on to provide individual drinking water lines to 60,309 houses in 397 villages across Ariyalur district under phase-I at an estimated cost of ₹45.47 crore, under the Jal Jeevan Mission, he added. Later, Palaniswami held similar meetings at the Perambalur collectorate with Collector P Sri Venkatapriya, party MLA S Tamil Selvan (Perambalur) and RT Ramachandran (Kunnam) and others.

## Rajini likely to testify in Sterlite firing

ARULOLI. M | DC  
THOOTHUKUDI, DEC. 17

Film star Rajinikanth is to be summoned again by the Justice Aruna Jegadeesan Commission probing the incidents leading to the police firing during the Anti-Sterlite agitation of may 2018.

The one-man panel earlier summoned Rajinikanth for a deposition on February 25 this year, as the film star after visiting the victims'

families and the injured in the Thoothukudi government hospital on May 30, 2018, told the media that 'intrusion' of anti-socials in the protests had triggered the violence, which ultimately culminated in the police firing, resulting in the death of 13 anti-sterlite agitators.

However, Rajinikanth sought an exemption to appear before the commission in person, and hence, he was represented by his

lawyer, Ilamparudhi, at the hearing in Thoothukudi on February 25. The advocate was handed over a set of questions for Rajinikanth to submit his reply in writing. It was also told that Rajinikanth would be summoned to appear before the commission in person, if he failed to respond on time for the questions given through his lawyer.

The commission advocate, Arul Vadivel Sekar, on Thursday said that the com-

mission has decided to summon Rajinikanth to appear before it in person, but the date would be decided after preparing the witness list for the next hearing, probably in January 2021.

The commission so far held 23 sessions, in which a total of 586 witnesses including Naam Tamilar Katchi coordinator, Seeman, gave their witness statements in person and submitted 775 documents pertaining to the tragedy.

## Set up regional benches of Supreme Court: DMK MP Wilson

## Report possibility of tapping minerals in Thamirabarani river: HC to Centre

J.STALIN | DC  
CHENNAI, DEC. 17

Pointing out that though the presence of atomic/heavy minerals was detected even during the British regime, no steps have been taken either by the Central government or by the state government to tap these minerals for the past 75 years, the Madras high court has directed the authorities of the department of atomic energy, Union of India, to visit the subject area, assess the river Thamirabarani as

well as the percentage of minerals found therein, in general and on the report of the Advocate Commissioner and report the possibility of tapping the minerals by the government.

A division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and B.Pugalendhi gave the directive while passing further interim orders on a Public Interest Litigation filed by Balakrishnan, which sought to prevent the illegal quarrying of sand mining from Thamirabarani river.

The bench said at the instance of the petitioner and the court-appointed Advocate Commissioner, a Treasure of heavy minerals is found in the river Thamirabarani, near Agaram Kudiurpupp, Village, Sivaigundam Taluk, Thoothukudi district.

The bench said Advocate Commissioner, who visited river Thamirabarani on the subject matter of this petition for the purpose of ascertaining the quantity of sand taken from the river,

has reported that his survey revealed the presence of substantial percentage of heavy minerals, like Garnet, Limenite, Rutile, Zircon, Leucosene, Sillimanite, Kyanite and Monazite in the river Thamirabarani. These heavy minerals reported by the Advocate Commissioner were classified as Atomic minerals in Part B of the First Schedule of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, the bench added.

The bench said in fact, the presence of the valuable

Atomic/heavy minerals was detected during the British regime in the year 1942-43, by Dr.K.Jacobson. A government order dated July 15, 1944 had also been published by the then Government of Madras, Development Department, on the presence of Atomic/heavy minerals in the coast of Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram and Tanjore Districts (East Coast). "Though the presence of Atomic/heavy minerals was detected even during the British regime, no

steps have been taken either by the Central Government or by the State Government to tap these minerals for the past 75 years. The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act came into force in the year 1957 and a separate department is also functioning for Geology and Mining. Even then, the presence of these Atomic/heavy minerals in the river Thamirabarani was not detected by the Government, so far", the bench added.

Referring to the scientific and systematic study in the

subject area, conducted by the Advocate Commissioner from November 30, 2020 to December 2, 2020, using advanced technology, and his submission that the heavy minerals as per schedule falls under the category of Atomic minerals, which can be regulated only by the Central government, the bench said though the presence of Atomic/heavy minerals was found even during the British regime, as early as in the year 1942-43, the government has introduced the relevant pro-

vision under section 11-B of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, (power of Central government to make rules for regulating atomic minerals specified under Part B of First Schedule) only in the year 2015 and enacted the Atomic Minerals Concession Rules in the year 2016, thereby allowed the erosion of such valuable minerals for the past 75 years, the bench added and posted to December 21, further hearing of the case.



## SHORT TAKES

ADHIKARI LOYALIST  
TIWARI QUILTS TMC,  
TO JOIN BJPRAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, DEC. 17

Former West Bengal minister Shubhendu Adhikari and his loyalist Jitendra Tiwari, also Pandabeshwar MLA, severed their long ties with the Trinamul Congress in a span of few hours on Thursday, over their revolt against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

After dealing the double blow to their party, the duo, along with two-time Burdwan East TMC MP Sunil Mondal, is now set to join the BJP in the presence of Union home minister Amit Shah at a rally in Midnapore on December 19 upon his arrival on a two-day state tour this weekend.

Adhikari, who resigned as an MLA of Nandigram on Wednesday, wrote to Banerjee politely in a letter, "I am writing to tender my resignation as a member of All India Trinamul Congress as well as from all other positions held by me in the party and its associate organs with immediate effect. I am thankful for all the challenges and opportunities that has been afforded to me and I will always value my time spent as a member of the party."

NCB ISSUES NOTICE  
TO KARAN JOHAR  
OVER VIRAL VIDEO

Mumbai, Dec. 17: The Narcotics Control Bureau has issued a notice to Bollywood filmmaker Karan Johar over a viral video allegedly showing drugs being consumed at a party at his house last year, NCB sources said on Thursday.

The notice has been sent to Johar to check the video's veracity, an NCB official said.

The central agency is conducting an anti-drugs probe that began in connection with the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput in June this year.

The video, which also shows several top stars, is being investigated as part of NCB's probe, the official said.

The NCB had received a complaint regarding the video of a party, which was attended by top Bollywood stars last year, the official said.

The complaint was about movie stars apparently seen in a 'drugged' state in the video.

CONG LEADERSHIP  
WORKING TO END  
INTERNAL TIFFDC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

As the internal elections in the Congress draw close the top leadership wants to bridge the gap with the 23 letter writers who were demanding change in the working style of the party and an 'active and present' leadership. Insiders claim that a meeting between Congress president Sonia Gandhi and representatives of letter writers is expected as soon as coming weekend.

Acting as a bridge between the two sides is the veteran party leader and former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath. In the last couple of days he has met with the letter writers and also with the Congress president in a bid to find a middle path to the internal strife going on.

The parleys between the leadership and the letter writers had come to an abrupt end when senior leader Ahmed Patel had contracted Covid in early October and finally passed away in late November.

SC UPHOLDS HC  
ORDER ON  
KAHEEL KHAN

New Delhi, Dec. 17: The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to interfere with the Allahabad High Court verdict which had quashed the detention of Dr Kafeel Khan under the National Security Act (NSA) and ordered his immediate release, saying it is "a good judgement".

"We will not interfere in the judgement. However, the observation will not impact any other proceedings," said the bench comprising Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian. The bench was hearing the Uttar Pradesh government's plea challenging the high court's September 1 verdict. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the state, told the bench that observation made by the high court exonerates Khan in the criminal proceedings. "Criminal cases will be decided on their own merits," the bench observed.

## Chilling out



Workers warm themselves around a bonfire amid the snow-laden area at Sonamarg in Ganderbal district of Central Kashmir on Thursday. The minimum temperature across Kashmir plummeted several degrees below the freezing point on Thursday owing to a clear sky as the valley reeled under cold conditions, with Srinagar experiencing the coldest night of the season -6.4.

— PTI

Modi to join Hasina in  
March for 'Bijoy Dibosh'SRIDHAR  
KUMARASWAMI | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday held a virtual summit with his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina that included "comprehensive discussions covering all areas including connectivity and trade, development cooperation, border management and rivers water sharing" after which it was announced that PM Modi would be visiting Bangladesh in March next year to "join the celebrations on the occasion of 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's Independence and 50 years of Bangladesh-India diplomatic relations".

It may be recalled that the Pakistan Army had surrendered to the Indian Army in Dhaka on December 16, 1971, marking the liberation of the erstwhile East Pakistan which emerged as an independent nation Bangladesh.

In response to a question at a special MEA briefing on the summit in the evening regarding Sheikh Hasina's recent reported statement that Bangladesh can never forget or forgive Pakistan for the atrocities committed in 1971 and also on demands for an apology from Pakistan, India

also took a dig at Pakistan, with New Delhi saying, "There is no denying that at state-sponsored oppression against Bangladesh's just war of oppression led to the death of more than 3 million, more than 2 lakh women were raped and tortured. We deeply respect and understand the sentiments expressed by PM Sheikh Hasina."

In his remarks, Modi told Sheikh Hasina, "Following the Victory Day, our meeting today is of even more special significance. It is a matter of pride for us to celebrate the historic victory of Bangladesh over Anti-liberation forces as the Victory Day with you. Today, when Bangladesh is celebrating forty nine years of independence, I pay homage to the martyrs of both the countries who sacrificed their lives. On the occasion of Victory Day, yesterday I paid tributes at the National War Memorial in India and lit a 'Golden Victory Torch'. These four 'Victory Torches' will tour all over India and will be taken to all the villages of our martyrs. Since 16 December, we are celebrating the 'Golden Victory Year', during which many events will be organised across India."

The two Prime Ministers "jointly unveiled a com-

memorative postal stamp issued by the Government of India on the occasion of birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, while PM Modi also "thanked the Government of Bangladesh for issuing a stamp in honour of Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary celebrations earlier in September 2020".

In all seven agreements were signed at the virtual summit between the two countries in the areas of hydrocarbon, culture, agriculture, high-impact community development projects. A decision was also taken "to expeditiously conclude the ongoing joint study on the prospects of entering into a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement". The joint statement said, Modi also "assured that (Covid) vaccines would be made available to Bangladesh as and when produced in India".

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina "highlighted the need for early signing of interim agreement for sharing of the Teesta waters, as agreed upon by both the governments in 2011" and Modi "reiterated India's sincere commitment and continued efforts in that regard", a joint statement said.

DAC APPROVES  
11 OFFSHORE  
PATROL VESSELSPAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by defence minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday in a meeting granted Acceptance of Necessity (AoNs) for proposals worth ₹28,000 crore including airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) systems for the Indian Air Force.

These airborne early warning and control systems will be designed and developed by DRDO. These are reported to be deployed on six Airbus aircraft to be acquired from Air India. AEW&C which are airborne help in detection and tracking of attacking enemy aircraft, missiles and drones much before ground based radars. They also provide crucial inputs during dogfights with the enemy fighter jets and give information on troops deployment by enemies on ground.

DAC also approved proposals for 11 next generation offshore patrol vessels for the Indian Navy and modular bridges for the Indian Army.

In a major push to Make-in-India, six proposals out of seven for which AoNs were granted will be sourced from the Indian industry.

MHA transfers 3  
WB IPS officersMamata Banerjee govt refuses to accept the  
Centre's order; likely to challenge it legallyRAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, DEC. 17

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has accused the Narendra Modi government of "colourable exercise of power" after the Union home ministry ordered the central deputation of three IPS officers of her government on Thursday. The Trinamul Congress supremo also refused to accept the Centre's order which her government, according to sources, may challenge legally.

Banerjee, who is now in North Bengal, Tweeted, "Go's order of central deputation for the three serving IPS officers of West Bengal despite the state's objection is a colourable exercise of power and blatant misuse of emergency provision of IPS Cadre Rule 1954. This act is nothing but a deliberate attempt to encroach upon state's jurisdiction & demoralise the serving officers in WB."

● **BANERJEE SAYS**  
Centre's order despite the state's objection is a colourable exercise of power and blatant misuse of emergency provision of IPS Cadre Rule 1954.

She added, "This move, particularly before the elections is against the state's tenets of the federal structure. It's unconstitutional & completely unacceptable! We wouldn't allow this brazen attempt by the Centre to control the state machinery by proxy! West Bengal is not going to cow-down in front of expansionist & undemocratic forces."

The IPS officers are Rajeev Mishra, inspector general (South Bengal), Praveen Kumar Tripathi, deputy inspector general (Presidency Range) and Bholanath Pandey, superintendent of police (Diamond Harbour Police District) in South 24 Parganas.

In August last year a video of Mishra, touching

the feet of the CM at Digha in East Midnapore went viral.

The Centre has assigned Mishra, a 1996 batch officer, to the Indo-Tibetan Border Police. Tripathi, of the 2004 batch, has been sent to Sasashastra Seema Bal while Pandey, from the 2011 batch, has been deputed to the Bureau of Police Research and Development. All the three organisations are under the ministry of home affairs headed by Amit Shah. The officers came under the MHA's scanner for security lapses after Trinamul workers attacked the convoy of BJP president J.P. Nadda last week at Diamond Harbour.

The MHA, the nodal controlling authority of the IPS cadre, requisitioned them for central deputation while asking the state government for their release. Furious, the Chief Minister then held them back which only prompted the MHA to act this time strongly.

PM to address MP  
farmers' todayDC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually address farmers in Madhya Pradesh on Friday even as some farmer unions have been protesting at Delhi borders against the three recently passed farm sector-related legislations. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will also distribute relief amount for crops loss to around 35 lakh farmers during the event which will be attended by around 20,000 farmers across the state.

Meanwhile, Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar, home minister Amit Shah, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and railways minister Piyush Goyal held a meeting with some BJP general secretaries at the party headquarters on farmers issue.

During the meeting, sources said, Shah reviewed the party's out-

● **CHIEF MINISTER**  
Shivraj Singh Chouhan will distribute relief amount for crops loss to around 35 lakh farmers during the event.

reach programme through press conferences and "chaupals" across all districts of the country to allay fears on the new farm laws. The party has been holding chaupals at all districts across the country highlighting the three legislations and how they are aimed at benefiting farmers, mainly small and marginal farmers and countering the propaganda by some farmer unions and opposition parties against the legislations and how MSP and APMC will continue to exist.

The meeting at the BJP headquarters was held on the day the Supreme Court heard a plea related to the farmers' protests against the Centre's three new agriculture laws.

CORONAVIRUS  
CASELOAD  
CROSSES 99.56LDC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

With 24,010 fresh cases in a day, the country's Covid-19 caseload crossed 99.56 lakh, while the number of people who have recovered from the infection surged to 94.89 lakh. According to the Union health ministry, the total Coronavirus cases mounted to 99,56,557 and the death toll rose to 1,44,451 with 355 new fatalities in a day.

As per the health ministry data, active recoveries outnumbering new cases on a daily basis have ensured a high recovery rate among patients. The total recovered cases are nearing 95 lakh (94,89,740). The recovery rate has improved to 95.31 per cent on Thursday. The gap between recovered cases and active cases is also increasing consistently, and presently stands at 91,67,374. The Covid-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.45 per cent.

Kejriwal  
indulged in  
cheap theatrics:  
Harsimrat

New Delhi, Dec. 17: Former union minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal on Thursday accused Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal of indulging in cheap theatrics by tearing copies of the farm laws.

She said his government in Delhi was among the first to notify one of the central laws related to agriculture.

The Delhi Assembly on Thursday passed a resolution against the Centre's three new agriculture laws with Kejriwal tearing their copies, saying he cannot betray farmers of the country.

In a statement, Badal said the Delhi CM was known as a "dramebaaz" but this time he indulged in "cheap theatrics" and "unparalleled hypocrisy" by tearing the same laws in the Vidhan Sabha, one of which he had notified on November 23.

Asking Kejriwal to have "mercy" on farmers, Badal said it is strange that the Delhi CM has suddenly discovered that farmers are sitting out in the open in cold wave conditions and over 20 of them have died.

The Delhi chief minister is only shedding crocodile tears in a desperate bid to wipe away the blot he has put on his name by rushing to notify the farm laws on the directions of the central government. These dramas however won't help.

— PTI

Farmers have a right  
to strike, SC says

FROM PAGE 1

The court said farmers have the right to protest, but without inconveniencing other people.

The court said it would ask the Centre if the manner of protest could be slightly altered so it doesn't affect citizens' right of movement. "Farmers have the right to protest. We won't interfere with it, but we will look into the manner of protest ... and slightly alter it so that it doesn't affect the citizens' right of movement," the judges said.

The farmers' unions remained adamant on their demand that the laws must be withdrawn first. Agreeing with the court that the issue must be resolved soon, Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesman Rakesh Tikait said the future course of

action will be decided after discussions with panchayat leaders. They noted that the protesters had not blocked roads, it was the police that had put up the barricades.

The ongoing protests have already cost the lives of 22 farmers, including several women. Eight victims died due to accidents while returning home, 12 due to heart attacks, three due to cold and a Sikh priest killed himself in protest against the farm laws.

The latest victim was a Punjab farmer protesting near the Delhi-Haryana border who died Thursday morning, allegedly because of the bitter cold. The 38-year-old man, a father of three, was found dead at a site where thousands of farmers have been protesting for 22 days.

India in touch with Sri Lanka  
over fate of 36 fishermenDC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

Stating that it had "seen reports about apprehension of 36 Indian fishermen and five of their fishing vessels on December 14 and 15 by the Sri Lankan Navy", India said it "attaches high priority to this issue" and is "in close touch with the Government of Sri Lanka through our High Commission in Colombo and the Consulate in Jaffna to verify the information and to ensure consular access and facilitate the early release of the fishermen and their boats".

New Delhi said "there exists a common understanding to handle the matter in a humanitarian manner", adding that "it

has now been mutually agreed to hold a meeting of the bilateral Joint Working Group (JWG) on Fisheries through the virtual format on December 30, 2020."

The MEA said, "We have seen reports about apprehension of 36 Indian fishermen and 5 of their fishing vessels on 14 and 15 December 2020 by Sri Lankan Navy. Similar information has also been received from the Government of Tamil Nadu. Government attaches high priority to this issue. We are in close touch with the Government of Sri Lanka through our High Commission in Colombo and the Consulate in Jaffna to verify the information and to ensure consular access and facilitate

the early release of the fishermen and their boats."

It added, "The fishermen issue and the matter of fishing boats have been on the agenda of bilateral discussion between India and Sri Lanka for many years. The two Governments have been seized of this essentially humanitarian matter at high levels. There exists a common understanding to handle the matter in a humanitarian manner."

The MEA further said, "There are well established bilateral mechanisms between India and Sri Lanka for discussions and cooperation on the issue of fishermen. Since these could not be convened due to ongoing Covid-19 related restric-

tions, it has now been mutually agreed to hold a meeting of the bilateral Joint Working Group (JWG) on Fisheries through the virtual format on December 30, 2020."

It added, "The JWG, which is led on our side by Secretary, Department of Fisheries, is expected to address all the issues relating to the subject of fisheries between India and Sri Lanka including release of apprehended fishermen and fishing boats, modalities of communication between relevant authorities on the two sides, cooperation in dealing with issues related to livelihood of the fishing communities on both sides and such other matters as are mutually agreed upon."

## 39 India sailors stuck in ships in China waters

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

India on Thursday said it was in touch with Chinese authorities regarding the presence of a total of 39 Indian nationals for the past few months on two merchant ships in Chinese waters awaiting unloading of cargo.

The MEA said, "The bulk cargo vessel MV

Jag Anand is on anchorage near Jingtang port in Hebei province of China since June 13, 2020 with 23 Indian nationals as crew on board.

Another vessel, MV Anastasia, which has 16 Indian nationals as its crew, is on anchorage near Caofeidian port in China since September 20, 2020, waiting for discharge of its cargo. Our

Embassy is in touch with the Chinese authorities."

The MEA added, "The Chinese authorities have conveyed that on account of various COVID-19 related restrictions imposed by the local authorities, crew change is not being permitted from these ports. The owners of these shipping companies as well as the

receivers of the cargo have been made aware of the reasons for delay in unloading of the cargo.

The Government continues to be in regular touch with the Chinese authorities to seek a resolution of these issues at the earliest and also to ensure that the humanitarian needs of the crew are taken care of."

## Communication channels to China open: India

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC 17

New Delhi on Thursday said both India and China "continue to maintain communication through diplomatic and military channels" to resolve the situation in the Ladakh sector, adding that "these discussions have helped both sides to enhance understanding of

each other's positions". India said it was its "expectation that the further discussions will help both sides to achieve an agreement on a mutually acceptable solution for ensuring complete disengagement in all friction points along the LAC in the Western sector and full restoration of peace and tranquility as early as possible".



## SHORT TAKES

## '21 BERLIN FILM FEST MAY GO VIRTUAL

Los Angeles, Dec. 17: The Berlin International Film Festival might be held virtually for its upcoming 2021 edition.

Sources told *Variety* that the festival organisers are expected to delay the festival due to resurgence in Coronavirus cases in Germany. They will be announcing their plans later this week. As of now, the 71st edition of the film gala is scheduled to run as a physical event from February 11-21, but the organisers are now rethinking their strategy.

The festival is now looking to stage a competition section in a virtual format in early March, with the European Film Market running as a digital event at the same time. The organisers are also thinking of holding a mini-festival with a series of onsite world premieres for early June.

## US JOINT CHIEFS CHAIRMAN MEETS TALIBAN

Kabul, Dec. 17: The top US general held unannounced talks with Taliban peace negotiators in the Persian Gulf to urge a reduction in violence across Afghanistan, even as senior American officials in Kabul warned that stepped-up Taliban attacks endanger the militant group's nascent peace negotiations with the Afghan government. Army Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met for about two hours with Taliban negotiators in Doha, Qatar, on Tuesday and flew Wednesday to Kabul to discuss the peace process with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

Milley's meetings came amid a new drawdown of US troops, although under current US policy a complete pullout hinges on the Taliban reducing attacks nationwide. "The most important part of the discussions that I had with both the Taliban and the government of Afghanistan was the need for an immediate reduction in violence," Milley said.

## CYCLONE YASA: FIJI IMPOSES EMERGENCY

Suva, Dec. 17: Fiji imposed a nationwide curfew Thursday after urging people near the coast to move to higher ground as the island nation prepared for a major cyclone to hit.

Cyclone Yasa was expected to hit the two main islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu later Thursday or early Friday. Authorities imposed an overnight curfew and declared a state of natural disaster. The National Disaster Management Office warned the cyclone could bring waves as high as 16 metres (52 feet) in some places and sustained winds of up to 250 kilometres per hour (155 mph), with gusts hitting 350 kph (217 mph).

In the capital Suva, many residents were experiencing power cuts.

Michael Cheer, who owns the Samabula Cake Shop, was moving cakes into his car so he could take them home and put them into a cooler, rather than driving them across the island to deliver them to another town.

Fiji's prime minister, Frank Bainimarama, has urged all Fijians to prepare evacuation plans. "We should all prepare now for heavy rain, damaging winds, coastal inundation and flooding across the country," he said in a national address.

## Record cases, deaths in Calif.

## Most of state's 40 mn residents under stay-at-home orders

Los Angeles, Dec. 17: California has reported more than 53,000 new Coronavirus cases and 293 deaths, setting new records as hospitals struggled to keep up with the surge.

State health officials said Wednesday a change in data processing added 15,337 previous cases to the count, but the new virus cases remained a daily record. The state has been grappling with soaring cases and hospitalisations. Most of California's 40 million residents are under stay-at-home orders because of dwindling intensive care unit capacity.

Hospitals are filling up so fast that officials are rolling out mobile field facilities and scrambling to hire more doctors and nurses. — AP

## 2 health staff develop allergic reactions to Pfizer's Covid vaccine

New York, Dec. 17: Two healthcare workers, who received Pfizer's Coronavirus vaccine, developed "concerning reactions", even as the US rolled out the vaccine to frontline healthcare workers and high-risk individuals amid increasing Covid-19 infections across the country. A report in *The New York Times* said the two health care workers at Bartlett Regional Hospital in Alaska developed concerning reactions just minutes after receiving Pfizer's Coronavirus vaccine this week.

One staff member was hospitalised for a few days. One of the healthcare workers, a middle-aged woman, had no history of allergies but had an anaphylactic reaction 10 minutes after receiving the vaccine. She experienced a rash over her face and torso, shortness of breath and an elevated heart rate, the *NYT* report said adding that anaphylaxis can be life-threatening, with impaired breathing and drops in blood pressure. The second worker received his shot on Wednesday and developed eye puffiness, lightheadedness and a scratchy throat 10 minutes after the injection, the hospital said. — PTI

## RO KHANNA IS DEM VICE CHAIR OF INDIA CAUCUS

Washington, Dec. 17: Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna, who represents the Silicon Valley in the US House of Representatives, has been named as the Democratic Vice Chair of the Congressional India Caucus. The seat has been created for the first time since its formation in 1994.

Khanna, 44, who was recently elected for a third consecutive term from the congressional district representing Silicon Valley, is being considered as a potential contender to fill the US Senate seat from California that will fall vacant in January after Kamala Harris is sworn in as the country's vice president.

"I believe Ro Khanna would be an outstanding Democratic Vice Chair," Congressman Brad Sherman, Democratic Co-Chair of the Caucus, said in an email. — PTI



A police car drives at the empty pedestrian zone at early morning in Dortmund, western Germany, on Thursday, at a partial lockdown to curb the spread of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

## Macron latest to test +ve for Covid

Paris, Dec. 17: French President Emmanuel Macron is the latest world leader to test positive for Covid-19, joining a growing list of others just as inoculation drives against the illness are beginning in a number of countries.

Macron, 42, has repeatedly said he is sticking to strict sanitary protocols during the pandemic, including not shaking hands, wearing a mask and keeping distance from other people. The Elysee Palace announced on Thursday that Macron would be isolating for seven days.

Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro announced his

illness in July and used it to publicly extol hydroxy-chloroquine, the unproven malaria drug that he'd been promoting as a treatment for Covid-19 and was taking himself.

Honduras president Juan Orlando Hernandez announced in June that he had tested positive, along with two other people who worked closely with him.

Hernandez said he had started what he called the "MAIZ treatment," an experimental and unproven combination of microdactin, azithromycin, ivermectin and zinc. He was briefly hospitalised and released.

The president of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, who dismissed concerns about the virus as "psychosis" and recommended drinking vodka to stay healthy, said in July he had contracted it himself but was asymptomatic.

Others who were infected include Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, Prince Albert II of Monaco, Guatemalan president Alejandro Giammetti, Bolivian interim president Jeannine Anez, president of the Dominican Republic Luis Abinader. — AP

## Despite US sanctions, Turkey not to step back on Russian S-400s

Ankara, Dec. 17: Turkey won't step back from its decision to deploy Russian air defence systems despite US sanctions imposed on the country over the purchase, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Thursday.

In an interview with Turkey's 24 TV television, Cavusoglu also said Turkey was mulling steps it would take to reciprocate against the US sanctions, but did not say what the steps could entail. The US announced sanctions earlier this week over Turkey's procurement of Russia's advanced S-400 system, under a US law known as CAATSA, aimed at pushing back on Russian influence. The sanctions target Turkey's Presidency of Defence Industries, the head of the presidency and three other senior officials. The penalties block any assets the four officials

## GREECE TO PAY \$2.8 BN FOR FRENCH RAFALE JETS AMID TURKEY TENSION

Athens, Dec. 17: Greece's government said on Thursday that it will pay 2.32 billion euros (\$2.8 billion) for the purchase of French-made Rafale fighter jets and an upgrade of compatible missiles, under a major military overhaul amid tensions with neighbouring Turkey.

Delivery of the 18 jets will begin in mid-2021 and be completed over two years, government spokesman Stelios Petsas said.

als may have in US jurisdictions and bar their entry into the US. They also include a ban on most export licences, loans and credits to the agency.

It is the first time that CAATSA has been used to

penalise a US ally. "If we were to step back we would have done so before now," Cavusoglu said in response to a question on whether Turkey would cancel the S-400 deal with Russia. Cavusoglu added:

"Now we are assessing the impact of these sanctions in great detail...and will take steps accordingly."

The minister also described the sanctions as "wrong both legally and politically," arguing that Turkey's purchase of the Russian system in 2017 predated the CAATSA law. Cavusoglu said that an improvement of relations between Turkey and the United States would be conditional on President-elect Joe Biden's ability to address Ankara's grievances.

Ties between the two have been plagued by numerous disputes, including the jailing of American citizens and local consular staff, US support for Syrian Kurdish fighters considered to be terrorists by Turkey and the continued US residence of a Muslim cleric accused of masterminding the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey. — AP

## VACCINATION IN ASIA-PACIFIC BY MID/LATE '21: WHO

Jakarta, Dec. 17: The World Health Organisation said Thursday that countries in the Asia-Pacific region are not guaranteed to have early access to Covid-19 shots and urged them to adopt a long-term approach to the pandemic. "The development of safe and effective vaccines is one thing. Producing them in adequate quantities and reaching everyone who needs them is another," WHO Regional Director Dr. Takeshi Kasai told reporters in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. — AP

## Navalny poisoning: No role, says Putin

Moscow, Dec. 17: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday rejected allegations that the poisoning of his top political foe, opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and accused US intelligence agencies of fomenting the claims. Speaking via video call during an annual marathon news conference, the Russian leader countered the accusations by saying that if the Kremlin wanted to poison Navalny it would have pressed the attack home.

"If there was such a desire, it would have been done," Putin said with a chuckle. Navalny fell sick on Aug 20 during a domestic flight in Russia, and was flown while he was in a coma to Germany for treatment two days later. Labs in Germany, France and Sweden, and tests by the

## CHARLIE HEBDO HIT: 30 YRS' JAIL FOR I.S. WIDOW

Paris, Dec 17: The fugitive widow of an Islamic State gunman and a man described as his logistician on Wednesday were convicted of terrorism charges and sentenced to 30 years in prison in the trial of 14 people linked to the January 2015 attacks in Paris against the satirical Charlie Hebdo newspaper and a kosher supermarket.

The verdict ends the three-month trial linked to the three days of killings across Paris claimed jointly by the Islamic State group and al-Qaida. During the proceedings, France was struck by new attacks, a wave of Coronavirus infections among the defendants, and devastating testimony bearing witness to bloodshed that continues to shake France.

All three attackers died in police raids. The widow, Hayat Boumedienne, fled to Syria and is believed to still be alive. The two men who helped her out of France were tried in absentia, may be dead, though one received a sentence of life in prison. — AP

## '88 LOCKERBIE BOMBING: NEW CHARGES BY U.S.

Washington, Dec. 17: The Justice Department plans to unseal new charges in the coming days in connection with the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jet that exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270 people, according to a person familiar with the case.

The bombing of Flight 103, whose victims included dozens of American college students, spurred global probe and produced sanctions against Libya, which surrendered two intelligence officials for prosecution before a Scottish court sitting in the Netherlands. The New York-bound flight exploded over Lockerbie less than an hour after takeoff from London on Dec. 21, 1988. — AP

## UN | PRIZE

## Vidyut Mohan helps farmers earn extra by converting waste farm residues into value-added chemicals

## Indian among 'Young Champions of the Earth' winners

United Nations, Dec. 17: A 29-year-old Indian entrepreneur is among the seven winners of the prestigious "Young Champions of the Earth" 2020 prize given by the UN environment agency to global change-makers using innovative ideas and ambitious action to help solve some of the world's most pressing environmental challenges.

Vidyut Mohan, an engineer, is the co-founder of "Takachar", a social enterprise enabling farmers to prevent open burning of their waste farm residues and earn extra income by converting them into value-added chemicals like activated carbon on-site, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) said in a statement on Tuesday.

"I've always been passion-

ate about energy access and creating income opportunities for poor communities," Mohan was quoted as saying in the statement. "(The at) is at the heart of finding answers to the difficult question of balancing economic growth and climate change mitigation in developing countries," he said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a message that in the middle of a global pandemic, with societies struggling, economies stretched to their limits and an escalating biodiversity and climate crisis, "we need to act boldly and urgently to repair our relationship with nature and take the path of sustainable development".

He said that the Young Champions of the Earth "inspire and mobilise".

UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen said globally, young people are leading the way in calling for meaningful and immediate solutions to the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

"We must listen. As we enter this decisive decade where we work to cut emissions and protect and restore ecosystems, UNEP Young Champions demonstrate that all of us can contribute, starting where we are with what we have. Every single act for nature counts, and we need the entire spectrum of humanity to share this global responsibility and this profound opportunity," Andersen said.

Takachar buys rice husks, straw and coconut shells

from farmers and turns ● **UN SECRETARY-GENERAL Antonio Guterres said in a message that in the middle of a global pandemic, "we need to act boldly and urgently to repair our relationship with nature and take the path of sustainable development".**

them into charcoal, saving the debris from the fires, which are also a driver of climate change. Since Takachar was launched in 2018, Mohan and its co-founder Kevin Kung have worked with about 4,500 farmers and processed 3,000 tonnes of crops, UNEP said. Mark Radka, chief of the energy and climate branch at UNEP's Economy Division, said the open burning of agricultural residues is a

big source of air pollution in many parts of the world and "Takachar's innovative technology can help farmers turn what is currently thought of as waste into a valuable resource while helping clean up our environment."

"Slowly and gradually all funding streams available and support services are turning towards sustainability. Companies are going to lose if they don't become sustainable in the long run," Mohan, a 2019 Echoing Green Fellow and a 2020 Forbes 30 Under 30 awardee, said.

The other awardees are 29-year-old Nzambi Matee from Kenya, a materials engineer and head of Genge Makers, which produces sustainable low-cost construction materials made of

recycled plastic waste and sand; 29-year-old Xiaoyuan Ren from China who leads MyH2O, a data platform that tests and records the quality of groundwater across a thousand villages in rural China into an app so residents know where to find clean water. Leftaris Arapakis, 26, from Greece founded the start-up Enaleia, through which the team trains, empowers and incentivises the local fishing community to collect plastic from the sea, allowing both fish stocks and the ecosystem to recover; 30-year-old Max Hidalgo Quinto from Peru founded Yawa, building portable wind turbines that harvest up to 300 litres of water per day from atmospheric humidity and mist. — PTI

<p align="center"><b>Government of Kerala</b> <b>TENDER</b> <b>FOREST &amp; WILD LIFE DEPARTMENT</b></p> <p>Window No:iprd 20/e 196 • Tender No.A2-2103/2020 • Divisional Forest Officer, Timber Sales Division, Perumbavoor, Mudikkal P.O-683547, Phone-0484-2522219 • E-auction of timber on 06.14.22/01/2021 from Chalakudy, veetoor, Mudikkal, Chettikulam &amp; Varapuzha depots of Timber sales division, Perumbavoor • PAC : 1 Crore.</p> <p>Window No:iprd 20/e 197 • Tender No.E-3831/2020a Divisional Forest Officer, Sandal Division, Marayoor P.O, Edukki-685620, Phone-04865-252988 • E-auction sale of sandalwood on 20.21/01/2020 from Govt.Sandal depot, Marayoor.EMD:50,000/- • PAC:50 Crore</p> <p><small>Full details on Tender Advertisement appeared above are exhibited before the Office from which the tender originates.For Details on all Tenders above please visit www.kerala.gov/tender/index.htm&gt;Please put in search the Window No for getting the advertisement of your choice. R.O.No.109/G1/2020/PRD.</small></p>	<p align="center"><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>My client M/s.LIC Housing Finance Ltd. having office at Tristar Tower,Avinashi Road, Coimbatore-18, have proposed to extend housing loan to Mr.N.Mahendran S/o. Nagaraj. He has offered the house site measuring 1973 Sq.ft in S.F.No.68/4, Krishna Residency, Arasur Village, Sulur SRO, purchased by him from Gunasundarai and Subbathal vide sale deed D.No.6913/2017.He alleged that original parent document,Sale deed Doc no.2660/2009 Dated 26.03.2009 executed by S.Palanisamy for himself and poweragent of 8 Others in favour of K.Vijayalakshmi,W/o.Kaliappan has been misplaced /lost &amp; untraceable any body in possession of document or having objection in M/s.LIC Housing Fiancé Ltd extending loan to them,may inform me within 15 days from today. Any objection after that period would not bind my client in any manner.</p> <p align="center"><b>S.SIVADAS,MBA.,ML.,Advocate,</b> <b>No.204, Law Chambers,District Court Campus,</b> <b>Coimbatore-641018,Ph:98422 34869</b></p>
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# DECCAN Chronicle

18 DECEMBER 2020

## Covid not a good reason to scrap Winter Session

While the Opposition parties have cried foul, and complained of not being consulted by the government on the decision to not hold the Winter Session of Parliament this year, the Constitution is clear that they cannot demand discussion or consultation as a matter of right. That right belongs to the government alone, and the President summons Parliament to meet when advised to do so by the government. The Narendra Modi government is absolutely in the clear on this score.

There is only one constraint under which the government labours, constitutionally speaking. It must ask the President to summon Parliament at least once every six months. While recently announcing that there would no Winter Session in 2020, the government has hinted that the Budget Session would be commenced in January. There is nothing out of the ordinary about that.

The minister for parliamentary affairs, Pralhad Joshi, has claimed that he has consulted leaders of the leading Opposition parties on the scuttling of the Winter Session, and there was general agreement that the session be given the go-by in view of the Covid pandemic. Apparently, MPs were chary of travelling to Delhi. Jairam Ramesh of the Congress claims no consultation was held with his party. None of this matters, however, since the decision rests with the government alone.

Nevertheless, giving Covid as the reason for skipping the traditionally three-week long Winter Session is hardly a persuasive argument. The government and the BJP had seemed eager to hold the Bihar election when it was due recently, rather than respect the sentiment of the Opposition parties to defer it by a few months. The election to the Hyderabad Municipal Corporation was also held recently. Covid-related considerations did not come in the way. The pandemic is raging in America but the US stuck to the schedule for its recently concluded election for President. The US Congress and the British Parliament have met as scheduled. The British Parliament did not skip meetings even during the Second World War. In November 1962, our Parliament was in session when the Chinese invaded in NEFA.

It is the widest impression today that the government has run away from the Winter Session because questions will be raised about the three-week old farmers' protest on Delhi's borders. Moreover, the Modi government has set a precedent in this regard. Future governments may also act similarly — skip a session whenever expedient. And this is hardly good for our democracy where important questions crop up all the time, often unexpectedly. A bloody-minded government may hold a session of Parliament only when it wishes to pass laws, not otherwise. This is the best way to avoid noisiness in Parliament and be an "orderly" country.

Even if the pandemic was seemed a matter of serious concern, the Winter Session could have been held online. This was done in Britain recently. MPs who could not be physically present attended on-line. India is technologically capable and this could have been organised if the government had the mind to make it happen.

While the Winter Session stands scuttled, the government can still attest to its bonafides by holding a brief session of two or three days to go over proposals for "reform" of the farm sector with which all may be invited to engage. Whatever the outcome, it is not unlikely that the farmers' protest may be defused through such a denouement.

## Post-pandemic bonding

The choice of Boris Johnson to be the chief guest at India's Republic Day celebrations is interesting, not the least because he will be the first British Prime Minister to be bestowed the honour since John Major in 1993. Much water has flowed down the Ganga and the Thames since the time India was just emerging as a fledgling player in the free markets after pathbreaking economic reforms. It might appear the UK needs its old friends as trading partners much more now as it seeks to exit the EU as soon as possible, deal no deal. The time to strike a trade deal with the UK in the form of a FTA is ripe enough.

The world has changed post-pandemic and the shared experiences of grief and economic woes should form a sombre backdrop to what should be more sober festivities in the coming R-Day. Johnson is not the dominant figure he was projected to be when he had just staged a notable coup in the Tory Party and emerged as the champion in British eyes who would steer the island on an independent course. Just as the shadow of Covid-19 on Christmas celebrations as the UK struggles to tamp down a second coronavirus surge, the Indian Prime Minister is challenged by striking farmers who expect a "fair deal" at home.

It would be presumptuous to believe mighty geopolitics is guiding the choice of guest at this time back to Britannia and the land of colonial masters. But, in a new world order shaped by the blows of the pandemic, of which BoJo has experience since he was personally pushed to the very brink, it would be realistic to examine ways of promoting ties, particularly as India might have much to contribute in IT and ITes. Britain as well as India's ardour for Chinese goods and 5G technology has also dampened considerably and so even this crisis-ridden time smells of opportunity to get ties right.

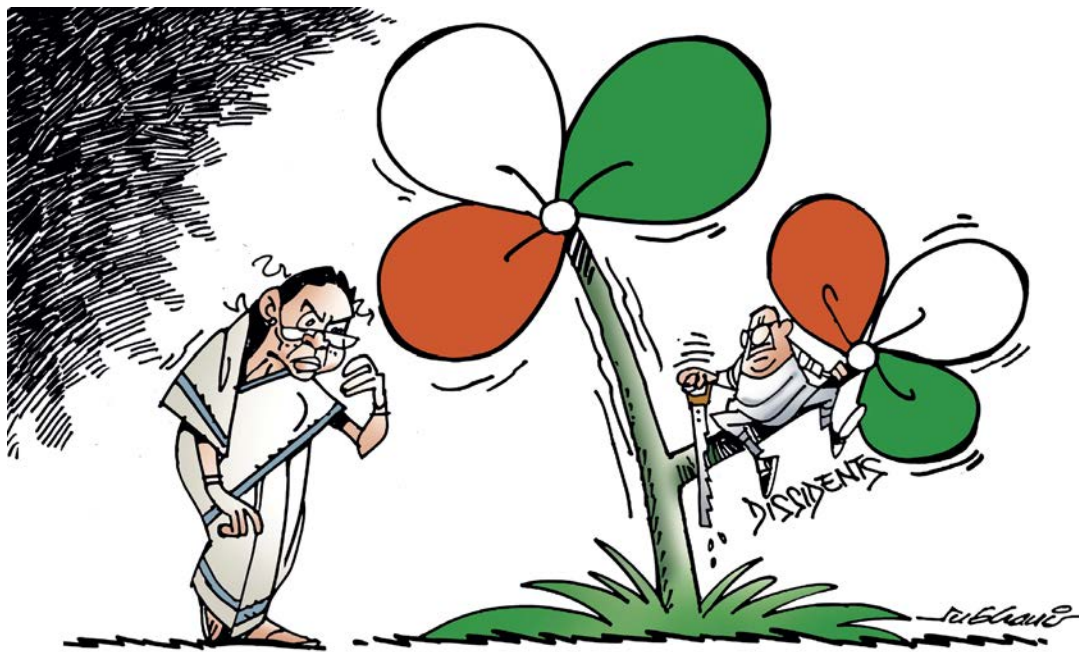
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## How rise in inequality distorts Indian society



Mohan Guruswamy

In 2013 the French economist Thomas Piketty released *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, a magnum opus on income inequality. It was an event book very much like Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*. Hawking's book sold as many as 10 million copies, by comparison Piketty's tome had 2.4 million buyers so far. Such event books are more often than not read by only a fraction of the buyers. Speaking for myself, I still have somewhere a slightly read copy of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, still considered by the cognoscenti as the foremost work of modern literature. It is said that an analysis of Kindle readers of the Piketty book revealed that a typical reader got through 26 of its 700 pages. But have no fear, those first 26 pages have all you need to know. They encapsulate the rationale and results of Piketty's monumental work.

I once asked a well-known economist who had reviewed Piketty's *Capital* about what the main proposition of the book was. He encapsulated it quite brilliantly. He just said that Piketty had set out to prove that R was greater than G, where R is the return on capital and G is the growth of the economy. There is much empirical evidence to back this up. In the eight years between 2006 and 2014, the US benchmark index S&P 500 gained 45 per cent, an average simple growth rate of 5.6 per cent, four times higher than the average GDP growth rate of around 1.5 per cent. The consequence of this, of course, is the explosion in income inequality, which is the hallmark of the post-World War II era, and particularly after the

advent of globalisation. Oxfam has informed us that in the past two decades 73 per cent of the growth has been cornered by just one per cent of the population. Oxfam has a known tendency to exaggerate a bit to prove its point, but this proposition, that few people benefited the most during this period of huge economic expansion, is undisputable.

Paul Krugman wrote: "What excited them was Piketty's novel hypothesis about the growing importance of disparities in wealth, especially inherited wealth, as opposed to earnings. We are, Piketty suggested, returning to the kind of dynastic, 'patrimonial' capitalism that prevailed in the late 19th century." We only need to look around us to see that most of the wealthy today are inheritors, and without doubt many of them are building on those inheritances to further accentuate the income inequality. What is really troubling about this growing concentration of wealth is the concentration of political power in the hands of very few who are able to influence politics and policies.

According to Marx an individual's position within a class hierarchy is determined by their role in the production process and argues that political and ideological consciousness is determined by class position. He saw a class as those who share common economic interests and are conscious of those interests. Classes, according to Marx, were inherently antagonistic and in a state of constant struggle.

In his new book *Capital and Ideology*, Thomas Piketty argues, with far greater validity, that inequality is driven by human institutions, which in turn reflect the

**The nature of the institutions determines outcomes, not the means of production or processes**

dominant ideology. Piketty defines his thesis very succinctly thus: "Inequality is neither economic nor technological: it is ideological and political. In other words, the market and competition, capital and debt, skilled and unskilled workers, natives and aliens, tax havens and competitiveness - none of these things exist as such. All are social and historical constructs, which depend entirely on the legal, fiscal, educational, and political systems that people choose to adopt and the conceptual definitions they choose to work with. These choices are shaped by society's conception of social justice and economic fairness and by the relative political and ideological power of contending groups and discourses."

Does this mean Marx was wrong? The times in which Marx and Piketty lived are very different. Marx saw the distortions and inequity in society and wondered why? He came up with explanations. His prescriptions were limited by the knowledge and evidence available to him then. The world has moved on and moved very far since then. When Karl Marx began writing his first three volumes of *Das Kapital* (1867-1883), it was the early days of electricity. Marx couldn't contemplate the massive leaps of productivity made possible in the 1900s, when the world witnessed a monumental expansion of knowledge and, with it, capital. Piketty's study relates to how both capital and knowledge came to be inequitably allocated because of the institutional arrangements within societies.

To understand how institutional arrangements determine outcomes, just think of

India's educational system. We now have two or possibly three parallel educational streams. The two urban upper classes largely benefit from a higher standard and quality of education imparted in English in schools with high quality teaching and facilities. This is the stream that produces India's managerial classes (both government and industrial). The working class stream flows out of our government schools, with its emphasis on vernacular education and inferior standards. There is a third stream of rural education from which escape even into the next higher class becomes even more difficult, if not impossible. The flow into the upper reaches of Indian society from these three streams is vastly unequal. What Piketty is saying is just this. The nature of the institutions determines outcomes, not the means of production or processes.

*Capital and Ideology* is rich in references to India and draws inferences about the institution of castes (*varnas*) and the rising role of brahmins, after the advent of Muslim rule, leading to the diminution of the role of Kshatriyas. The role of the brahmins expanded to an even more dominant status under the British. Piketty lauds the determined "affirmative action" policies after Independence that vastly increased the upward mobility of the lower castes, like most of us do. He also notes that the benefits could not be fully realised due to the low standards of education and its unevenness in towns and the hinterland and between regions. So, what's new? Most Indians with even an elementary understanding of post-independence India know this. The question is — what is to be done now?

*The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.*

### LETTERS

#### NAKED POWER GRAB

In the "upper house" of the so called elders of Karnataka legislature, members have smeared themselves with ignominy with rowdysim, hooliganism and vulgarity with brutal muscle and vocal power (*Naked power grab*, Dec.17). The special one-day session for cow protection law lasted for 40 minutes and the rule book was thrown out of majestic Vidhan Soudha window and became a Jallikattu competition. The elders lost respect and have no right to lecture youngsters about, etiquette, social behaviour and culture. Costs must be recovered from these shameless members for wasting people's money for a free-for-all wrestling match. Some of them may now land in 5-star hospitals with coronavirus contracted in the melee and create scenes there also.

Parthasarathy Mandadi, Tirupati

#### KERALA'S CIVIC POLLS

THE EMPHATIC win of ruling LDF (Left Democratic Front) in the Kerala's local body polls, perceived as a curtain raiser to the next year's assembly polls, has come as a shot in arm for both the state Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his party, CPI (M). The fact that the ruling left front had not only managed to retain its existing numbers but also improved its tally in the local body polls suggest the campaign of the Opposition by focusing on corruption and the alleged role of Chief Minister office and some cabinet ministers in the gold smuggling scandal had failed to cut ice with the voters. By reaching out to the voters by highlighting his government's slew of welfare schemes and several grass roots level interventions including housing for the poor, Mr Pinarayi Vijayan had treaded a different path and struck a chord with the voters.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

#### DROP IN HDI

THAT INDIA dropped two ranks in Human Development Index (HDI) this year based on 2019 data should serve as an eye opener for the people as well as the government. After all, it's the collective responsibility of the people, firms, producers (including farmers) and the governments that can guarantee healthy ambience and living which is a component of HDI. As far as the system of education in the country is concerned, a lot needs to be done. It is imperative that we have an education system that will not only enhance the skills of students but also instil in them values such as honesty, sincerity, patience and perseverance for sustained growth.

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai



Mahir Ali

## On 250th birth anniversary, Beethoven still holds his own

IF music be the food of love, play on; Give me excess of it..." The opening lines of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night might have entered the thoughts of the uniquely privileged Viennese audience that witnessed Ludwig van Beethoven premiering his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies in the Austrian capital on Dec 22, 1808.

For good measure, the artistic showcase also featured the first performances of his Piano Concerto No 4 and Choral Fantasy. A 20th-century equivalent would have entailed The Beatles, say, unveiling 'Sgt Pepper' and 'Abbey Road' simultaneously in a live performance. Incidentally, the latter album's Because is based on reversing the chords of the Moonlight Sonata. It wasn't the only time turned up in the pop pantheon.

By 1808, Beethoven was already viewed as the most fascinating composer of his age. He was born in Bonn, probably precisely 250 years ago today. He first visited Vienna as a teenage prodigy, and may have been tutored by Mozart. He was obliged to return to Bonn

to attend to his dying mother, but went back to Vienna at Haydn's invitation five years later and remained there for the rest of his life.

I cannot claim to be an aficionado of Western classical music — the temporal investment it requires has always been a hard slog. Yet there are compositions that insinuate themselves into the subconscious, from Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik to Strauss's Blue Danube, Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake, Ravel's Bolero and Chopin's etudes.

I would make a particular exception, though, for Beethoven. It dates back, perhaps, to a presentation on the weekly Disney show featured on PTV in the early 1970s, where a dramatised biography of Beethoven showed the opening chords of the Fifth Symphony being inspired by a debtor banging on the door of the composer's rented accommodation. Those dramatic notes are more often described as the knocking of Fate.

The show was possibly more accurate in its depiction of a deaf Beethoven being swung around by

a soloist after inaugurating his Ninth Symphony to witness the rapturous response. The Ninth came almost a decade after the Eighth, which had been unveiled before an audience of international leaders at the Congress of Vienna in 1814.

That particular segment, now the official anthem of the European Union, has stood the test of time in more ways than one. Beethoven's death centenary in 1927 was widely commemorated across Europe, from Britain to the Soviet Union. As a German, though, he was also appropriated by the Nazi regime, which continued to honour him despite determining that he was 'mixed race'. Based on Beethoven's looks, the suspicion of African ancestry has persisted, albeit without any firm foundation.

His politics have also served as the basis of much conjecture. Beethoven famously rescinded the dedication of his Third Symphony, Eroica, to Napoleon after the latter emerged as a potential tyrant. And there is a tale, possibly apocryphal, about how he, while out for a walk

in a park with Goethe, encountered a royal party and strolled right through it, even as Goethe stepped aside to bow and scrape.

For all his antipathy towards authority, Beethoven relied for much of his life on the sponsorship of European nobles, and many of his compositions were dedicated to princes, counts and barons. But he regularly fell out with patrons, and occasionally detested royals. Yet his Symphony No 8 was unveiled before the crowned heads of Europe at the Congress of Vienna in 1814.

He never compromised his art, though, confessing at the turn of the century that his devotion to music had prevented him from suicide. His personal life was a shambles, littered with unrequited love or romances doomed by the social rules of the era. Yet, despite a handful of detractors, few who heard his compositions could fail to be moved by them.

And the legend only grew after his demise in 1827, just three years after he had inaugurated his magnificent Symphony No 9, whose glorious final movement, a setting for Schiller's Ode to Joy, has been

appropriated for political purposes throughout the past two centuries, and serves today as the European Union's official hymn.

Not surprisingly, the German Nazi regime picked Beethoven as an avatar (despite concluding that he was mixed race). However, a century earlier Friedrich Engels had waxed eloquent about the Fifth Symphony, and some decades later Vladimir Lenin declared he could listen to the Appassionata sonata every day. "What astonishing, superhuman music," he is quoted by Maxim Gorky as saying. "It always makes me proud ... to think that people can work such miracles."

But perhaps the pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim summed up Beethoven best a few years ago by pointing out that "he freed music from hitherto prevailing conventions of harmony and structure", and that much of his work could be paraphrased "by saying that suffering is inevitable, but the courage to fight it renders life worth living".

By arrangement with Dawn







## SHORT TAKES

## Australian Open moved to February

**Melbourne:** The Australian Open was pushed back to February 8 on Thursday after weeks of negotiations as coronavirus disruption hits a second Grand Slam tennis season. Men's qualifiers will be held in Doha but Australia will host a series of build-up events including the flagship ATP Cup, the men's ATP Tour said, announcing its early 2021 schedule. The three-week delay to the season's opening Grand Slam comes after this year's Wimbledon was cancelled — for the first time since World War II — the French Open was postponed and the US Open was played behind closed doors. Fans are expected to be allowed at Melbourne Park, the tournament's venue, as the coronavirus is under control in Australia, but players will need to undergo 14 days of quarantine. — *AFP*

## Silva, Chhetri propel Bengaluru

**Goa:** Bengaluru FC piled on further misery on Odisha FC with a 2-1 win in the Indian Super League at GMC Stadium, Bambolim, on Thursday. Cleiton Silva (79') scored the match-winner for Bengaluru after Steven Taylor (71') had cancelled out Sunil Chhetri (38') first-half lead for the Blues, who remained unbeaten in their six matches this season. Bengaluru were dominant from the start but were lucky not to fall behind early in the game. Diego Mauricio played a delightful through ball for Manuel Onwu, who managed to get the ball past Gurpreet, but his celebrations were curtailed, as the assistant referee signaled it offside.

Odisha had their moments in the game with Onwu and Jerry Mawihmingthanga creating problems for the Bengaluru defense but failed to test their keeper.

## Cavani charged by FA over racist post

**London:** Edinson Cavani has been charged with misconduct by the Football Association for a now-deleted social media post containing a Spanish phrase that is offensive in some contexts and for which the Manchester United star apologised.

The 33-year-old Uruguayan striker's Instagram post thanked a friend for his congratulations after scoring twice as United came from 2-0 down to beat Southampton 3-2 last month and included the Spanish word "*negrito*" (small black person). He later deleted the post and apologised when it was pointed out the meaning that could be attached to it.

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**Australia vs India:** First Test — Day Two from 9.30 am on Sony Ten 1, 3, Sony Six, HD

**Big Bash League:** Sydney Sixers vs Adelaide Strikers from 5.40 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

## FOOTBALL

**Indian Super League:** North East United vs Jamshedpur from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

## WWE

**Smackdown:** Bouts from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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Australia's Mitchell Starc (third from right) celebrates with teammates after bowling out India's Prithvi Shaw on the opening day of their first Test at the Adelaide Oval in Adelaide on Thursday. — *AP*

# AUSSIES GET A GRIP

## India end Day One at 233/6 after Kohli runout

Adelaide, Dec. 17: Virat Kohli's enduring love affair with Adelaide Oval resulted in a classy 74 but his untimely run-out triggered a batting collapse as India ended the opening day at 233/6 against Australia in the first Day/Night Test here on Thursday.

Kohli, who looked in complete command, was run out when his deputy Ajinkya Rahane backed out after calling for a single and it happened just before the second new ball was taken.

From a comfortable 188/3, India slumped to 206/6 as Rahane and Hanuma Vihari (16) found the pace and swing generated by the pink ball under lights too hot to handle. Ravichandran Ashwin (15 batting) and Wriddhiman Saha (9 batting) saw off the final few

## SCORECARD

**India 1st Innings:** Prithvi Shaw b Starc 0, Mayank Agarwal b Cummins 17, Cheteshwar Pujara c Labuschagne b Lyon 43, Virat Kohli run out 74, Ajinkya Rahane lbw Starc 42, Hanuma Vihari lbw Hazlewood 16, Wriddhiman Saha (not out) 9, Ravichandran Ashwin (not out) 15. Extras (b-2, lb-7 nb-7, wd-1) 17. **Total (For 6 wks, in 89 overs) 233.**

**FoW:** 1-0, 2-3, 3-100, 4-188, 5-196, 6-206.

**Bowling:** Mitchell Starc 19-4-49-2, Josh Hazlewood 20-6-47-1, Pat Cummins 19-7-42-1, Cameron Green 9-2-15-0, Nathan Lyon 21-2-68-1, Marnus Labuschagne 1-0-3-0.

overs and also got a few runs.

In conditions, which can't exactly be called batting friendly, Kohli blended the right amount of caution and aggression in his 180-ball innings, showing one and all that he is a few lightyears ahead of his peers when it comes to quality batsmanship.

If Cheteshwar Pujara (43 off 160 balls) let bowlers dictate terms with an ultra-defensive approach,

his skipper gave opposition the respect it deserved but also from time to time, played those shots to drive home a point. His 88-run partnership with Rahane (42 off 91 balls) during the final session nearly put India on even keel but fortunes tilted once Kohli was back in the pavilion.

Rahane was soon snapped with the second new ball by Mitchell Starc (2/49).

Earlier, Pujara's ultra-defensive approach became his own undoing as India literally crawled during the first two sessions.

So intent was Pujara on blocking anything and leaving everything for the better part of his innings, that a 68-run stand for the third wicket with Kohli couldn't release pressure going into the second break of the evening.

In the morning, Prithvi Shaw's (0) poor technique was once again exposed by Starc while Mayank Agarwal (17) got a beauty from Pat Cummins.

The Australian pace trio of Starc (2/49 in 19 overs), Josh Hazlewood (1/47 in 20 overs) and Pat Cummins (1/42 in 19 overs) bowled a very steady line comprising mostly of fuller deliveries.

— *PTI*

## NUMBERS GAME

## KOHLI'S SECOND RUN OUT IN TESTS

● On the opening day of the first Test against Australia at Adelaide, India skipper Virat Kohli was run out for the second time in 146 innings of 87 Test match. He was dismissed run out for the first time against the same opponent at the same ground in January 2012.

● It was also Kohli's maiden run out in 91 innings of 56 Test matches as skipper.

● Kohli became the eighth Indian batsman to make 12 or more fifty plus scores against Australia in Tests. His 74 was his 12th fifty plus innings in 35 innings of 20 Test matches against Australia.

— *S. PERVEZ QAISER*

## Red-balls pathetic for Tests: Warne

Adelaide, Dec. 17: Australia spin legend Shane Warne on Thursday made a strong pitch for the pink ball to be used in all Test matches in place of the "pathetic" red cherry that offers "nothing" to the bowler. The pink ball, as of now, is only used for Day/Night matches that became a part of the cricket in 2015.

"I've been saying this for the last few years. I believe the pink ball should be used in all Test matches. Day games, not just day-night games," Warne said on 'Fox Cricket'.

"The pink ball, you can actually see the ball easier; crowd can see the ball easier. It generally does more than the red ball and it looks fantastic on TV. So why not use a pink ball the whole time?"

"Maybe change it at 60 overs because it goes soft, but I'd be using the pink ball for every Test match so more of it I would say," the Australian great said.

The Australian said the red ball doesn't swing much for the bowlers with the exception of the Dukes ball in England and gets soft very soon.

"No more red ball, it doesn't swing, it doesn't do anything, goes soft after 25 overs. It has been pathetic for so long now. Except for the Dukes ball in England, it has been rubbish."

"So let's try the pink ball in Test cricket," he added.

## WARNER EYES BOXING DAY RETURN

Star Australian batsman David Warner on Thursday said he was aiming to play the Boxing Day Test against India in Melbourne, calling his

injury-enforced absence from the opening clash in Adelaide "devastating".

Warner limped out of second ODI last month after straining his groin.

"I am (hopeful), that's one that I never want to miss out on," Warner told Australian sports radio network *SEN* about the Melbourne Test.

"(Adelaide's) my first missed Test through injury so I'm obviously very disappointed with that. With the big series that it is, it's devastating to miss a Test but I know that the guys who are walking out there are going to put their best foot forward."

## NO REGRETS ABOUT STRATEGY: PUJARA

It took Cheteshwar Pujara 148 balls to get his first boundary but not for once did the senior India batsman feel that he batted too slowly during the opening day's play.

Pujara, who scored a sedate 43 off 160 balls in India's 233 for 6 at stumps on day one, feels that a first innings total of 350 would be very handy for the visitors. Asked if he felt that he could have paced his innings better, the Saurashtra man had an emphatic no for an answer.

"Not at all. We were in a very good position in the first two sessions," said Pujara, defending the 41 scored by the team in the first session and 66 runs that were scored in the second. "We needed to make sure that we don't lose wickets when the ball is swinging. It was a great day of Test cricket and there are no regrets at all about the strategy."

— *Agencies*

## Another mega racing weekend at MMRT

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, DEC. 17

The iconic MMRT circuit is all geared up to host another mega two-wheeler racing gala with the second and concluding round of the MRF MMSC fmcsi Indian National Motorcycle Racing Championship 2020 commencing on Friday.

As in the previous weekend, 29 races across 10 categories have been scheduled and will be held behind closed doors with limited entry due to the prevailing pandemic.

The 2020 National Championship, hit hard by lockdown and restrictions due to Covid-19 virus spread, was compressed into two weekends instead of five, as also the number of races



in each of the four categories — Pro-Stock 301-400cc, Pro-Stock 165cc, Novice and Girls — though the entries again topped 200.

That apart, Idemitsu Honda India Talent Cup, with two categories (NSF 250R and Novice) is also part of the weekend card besides TVS One-Make Championship organised by MMSC which has four classes — Open, Novice, Girls and Media.

Chairman of the Meet Manoj Dalal said: "In

view of the pandemic and its consequences, we had no option but to reduce the number of races for each category so that the Championship could be fitted into two weekends. Having said that, the MMSC is grateful to title sponsors MRF Tyres, all the teams, the competitors, the bike manufacturers and the Media, for their positive response to our efforts to keep the sport going in the current challenging scenario."

## Russia to miss next two Olympics

Geneva, Dec. 17: Russia was banned on Thursday from using its name, flag and anthem at the next two Olympics or at any world championships for the next two years.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport's ruling also blocked Russia from bidding to host major sporting events for two years.

Russian athletes and teams will still be allowed to compete at next year's Tokyo Olympics and the 2022 Winter Games in Beijing, as well as world championships including the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, if they are not impli-

cated in doping or covering up positive tests.

The punishments are less than the four-year ban the World Anti-Doping Agency had proposed.

One small win for Russia is the proposed team name at major events. The name "Russia" can be retained on uniforms if the words "Neutral Athlete" or "Neutral Team" have equal prominence, the court said.

Still, the court's three judges imposed the most severe penalties on Russia since allegations of state-backed doping and cover-ups emerged after the 2014 Sochi Olympics.

The case centered on accusations that Russian state authorities tampered with a database from the Moscow testing laboratory before handing it over to Wada investigators last year. It contained likely evidence to prosecute long-standing doping violations.

The CAS process was formally between Wada and the Russian anti-doping agency. The Russian agency, known as Rusada, was ruled non-compliant last year — a decision upheld Thursday by the three judges.

Rusada was also ordered to pay \$1.27 million to

Wada.

When a four-day hearing was held in Lausanne last month, Russian athletes and their lawyers took part as third parties arguing they should not be punished for misconduct by state officials not working in sports. Giving Wada the lab database by a December 2018 deadline was a key condition for Rusada being reinstated three months earlier when a previous expulsion from the anti-doping community was lifted. Wada investigators in Moscow eventually got the data one month late.

— *AP*

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