

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | TUESDAY 22 | DECEMBER 2020

## WEATHER



**Max:** 27°C  
**Min:** 21°C  
**Rainfall:** Nil

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Margazhi 7  
**Tithi:** Ashtami  
**Star:** Uthirattathi  
**Rahukalam:**  
3 pm to 4.30 pm  
**Yamagandam:**  
9 am to 10.30 am

### PRAYERS

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

**SUNSET TODAY 5.49 PM**

**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.27 AM**

**MOONRISE TODAY 12.31 PM**

**MOONSET TOMORROW 12.47 AM**

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+18,755)	(+289)
1,00,75,036	1,46,134

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,071)  
TN: 8,07,962 11,995

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

7,74,28,883

### DEATHS

17,03,698

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES  
218

worldometers.info

## Congress veteran Motilal Vora passes away at 92

**New Delhi:** Veteran Congress leader Motilal Vora, a staunch Gandhi family loyalist who was a chief minister, union minister and Governor in a political career spanning almost five decades, died at a hospital here on Monday following post-COVID-19 complications, his family said. A long time confidante of Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Vora completed 92 years on Sunday, they said.

## 64 members of 4 militant groups surrender before Assam CM

**Guwahati:** Sixty-four members of four militant outfits surrendered with arms and ammunition before Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal here on Monday, officials said.

## COUNTER

## POINT



**Everything is ready for our minister's surprise and unexpected visit!**

# Five killed as trailer runs loose, 19 injured inside Melagiri forest range

**SANJEEVI ANANDAN | DC KRISHNAGIRI, DEC 21**

Five women died on the spot and 19 others were injured on Monday afternoon, as a trailer connected to a tractor got detached from the tractor and toppled. The incident occurred around 2:30 pm inside the Melagiri forest range, six-kilometers from uphill Manjukondapalli village in Denkanikottai taluk, Krishnagiri district.

All victims including the injured belonged to Kuralaluchandara village in Kanakapura taluk of Karnataka. They had visited Dabbaguli, a

place from where river Cauvery entered Tamil Nadu. The victims came here to have darshan of lord Siva installed in a temple on the banks of the Cauvery located inside Melagiri forest range, at the meeting point of both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu forests.

Sources said the victims were returning home after the temple rituals, and were just one kilometer away from the temple. The trailer accidentally detached from the tractor when the vehicle was moving on a steep uphill road. With no control, the trailer dashed

back in the reverse, and toppled after hitting a tree.

M Mangalamma (25), K Gowramma (60), K Putta Lingamma (60), D Osamma (80) and M Mullamma (80), all relatives and native of Kuralaluchandara, died on the spot. Nineteen others sustained grievous injuries and were forced to wait for help as the mishap took place in a very remote place inside the forest, with no road or communication facility, including mobile phone network.

The people of Manjukondapalli village helped in rescue operations.

## STATE | 3

**MNM releases 7-point agenda**



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle, google.com/+deccanchronicle

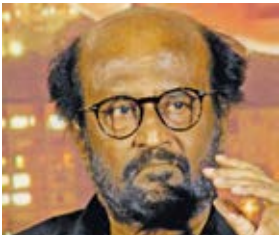
### 13 DEATHS IN THOOTHUKUDI

# Rajini told to appear at Sterlite firing probe

**ARULOLI M | DC THOOTHUKUDI, DEC 21**

Justice Aruna Jegadeesan commission probing the police firing on anti-sterlite protesters here in 2018, has summoned Rajinikanth to appear before it and testify on January 19, 2021.

The one-man panel probing the tragedy that claimed 13 lives and injured more than hundreds on May 22, 2018, scheduled its 24th enquiry session at its camp office at the beach road here, for five days from January 18 to 22, 2021, and Rajinikanth has been summoned to appear before the commission in person on the second day of the ses-



sion by 10 am on January 19.

Commission sources said, the summons had been dispatched around 11:30 am on Monday.

It is to be noted that Rajinikanth was given exemption from appearing in person citing law and order issue, if he visited Thoothukudi. Hence, on

February 25, Rajinikanth's counsel appeared on his behalf before the panel. A source said that this time, Rajini would not be given exemption from appearing for the enquiry in person.

The reason for summoning the actor-politician is that after visiting Thoothukudi on May 30, 2018 he had said that "intrusion of anti-social elements" was the reason for the mob turning violent. Feelings were running so high among thousands of protesters that Rajini's comment was seen as detracting from the genuineness of the protests and the over reaction of the police in opening fire on protesters.

# AIADMK wants polls to be held before May

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC 21:**

Most political parties that attended the meeting with a team of officials from the Election Commission of India (ECI) expressed concern over money distribution to voters during the elections and had complaints on the updating of electoral rolls for the 2021 Assembly polls.

Some parties like the CPM, represented by its Central Committee member T K Rangarajan, were peeved over the government announcing a Pongal bonanza of ₹2.5-00 cash to ration card holders. 'It is government money,' was the main complaint. AIADMK's Pollachi Jayaraman and BJP's M N Raja pointed out the need to ensure Covid-19 protocols during the polling. Jayaraman said a booth for every 500 voters and holding of elections a little ahead of

May since the climate may turn extremely hot and students might have examinations would help.

A single phase of polling was suggested by R S Bharathi of DMK, who recommended an early vigil by the authorities to curb money distribution to voters by political parties. He also spoke against extending postal ballot facilities for people above 80 years. BJP's V P Duraisamy cautioned against power cuts during the counting of votes and said that his party was prepared to face the elections on any date fixed by the ECI.

Representatives of many other parties, too, attended the meeting, which followed a tete-tete the ECI team had with the election officials in the State. The visit of the team was to review the preparatory work undertaken by the government with regard to the elections that had been held by May 2021.

## Great conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn



The great conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn appears in the sky over New Delhi, on Monday. The two planets have never been so close since 1623. The event is visible to the naked eye as well, though those with a telescope would have enjoyed a better view. That Great Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn took place more than a decade after the telescope was invented. Before 1623, the Great Conjunction took place in 1226.

— PTI

## WORLD | 5

**Biden to receive coronavirus shot**

**Jadeja likely to replace Vihari in playing XI for second Test**



# India bans UK flights in wake of mutating coronavirus threat

**VINEETA PANDEY | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 21**

India on Monday announced it would suspend all flights to and from the United Kingdom in view of the new, fast-spreading mutated strain of the Sars-CoV-2 (novel coronavirus) in that country. The suspension of flights will be effective from midnight December 22 (Wednesday, 23.59 hours) till December 31 (23.59 hours), the civil aviation ministry said, following a high-level meeting in the government Monday.

"Considering the prevailing situation in the UK, the Govt of India has decided that all flights originating from the UK to India will be suspended till 31st December 2020 (23.59 hours). This suspension to start w.e.f. 23.59 hours, 22nd December 2020. Consequently, flights from India to the UK shall stand temporarily suspended during the

● **"Considering the prevailing situation in the UK Govt. of India has decided that all flights originating from UK to India to be suspended till 31st December 2020 (23.59 hours). This suspension to start w.e.f. 23.59 hours, 22nd December 2020," civil aviation officials said**



above said period," civil aviation officials said. After the order, Air India announced that it was suspending all its flights to the UK.

Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said as a measure of abundant caution, all passengers coming from the UK on all international flights (including flights in transit) should be subjected to mandatory RT-PCR tests at airports upon their arrival. Those found positive will be sent to institutional quarantine centres set up by states and

Union territories, while those testing negative have to be under home isolation for seven days, when they will be monitored by government health agencies. States have been asked to create separate desks at airports to facilitate the entire process.

As per present norms, international passengers had to only carry a Covid-negative certificate from a test done 72 hours prior to the journey.

India's ban comes in line with several countries like Germany, the Netherlands,

# New Covid variation spooks markets, Sensex falls 1,407 pts

**RAVI RANJAN PRASAD | DC MUMBAI, DEC. 21**

Mirroring the global markets, the Sensex on Monday plunged 1,400 points, wiping out ₹6.7 lakh crore investor wealth, following a global scare from a new strain of coronavirus found in the United Kingdom.

Soon after the UK made an announcement about a new strain of coronavirus in the UK which is far more infectious than one that the world is already fighting, global markets began to fall. European markets opened in the red following travel to the UK by several mainland European countries.

The fall in the Indian mar-

● **BSE's market capitalisation fell over ₹6.70 lakh crore from all time high of over ₹185.38 lakh crore on Friday to over ₹178.67 lakh crore**

ket commenced around 12 noon and peaked around 2.30 pm with the Sensex and the Nifty hitting the day's low followed by partial recovery. The Sensex finally closed 1,406.73 points or three per cent down at 45,533.9 with all Sensex and Nifty-50 stocks in the red. The Nifty-50 closed 432 points or 3.14 per cent down at 13,328.40. Broader market fall was steeper with BSE

Mid-cap index down 4.14 and BSE Small-cap index fell 4.57 per cent.

BSE's market capitalisation fell over ₹6.70 lakh crore from all time high of over ₹185.38 lakh crore on Friday to over ₹178.67 lakh crore. "India's equity benchmark indices fell the hardest in seven months as resurgent fears over a new strain of Covid-19 virus found in the UK spread panic across the globe. Basket selling by FPIs likely triggered the sharp fall in Indian markets," said Deepak Jasani, head of retail research, HDFC Securities.

On the BSE against 564 stocks, advancing 2,472 stocks declined.

# Troops put on high alert on India-Pak border, LoC

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 21**

The security forces along the India-Pakistan border and the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir have been put on high alert after a "massive buildup" by the Pakistan Army in the region. New Delhi's security establishment is baffled over this sudden mobilisation by the Pakistanis while additional Indian reinforcements have been rushed to the border.

Top security sources said the major movement of Pakistani troops was seen close to the border over the past two weeks. Specific intelligence gathered by the security forces deployed

along the LoC revealed that the Pakistan Army had substantially increased its presence, having deployed more men and heavy artillery close to the Indian border

. It was clear, the senior security officials claimed, that the Pakistanis had pulled out their troops from some other sectors to specifically position them close to the border and the LoC.

While the Indian security agencies have taken immediate corrective steps, having rushed in additional reinforcements, what has baffled New Delhi's security establishment is the timing for this sudden buildup by Pakistan.

# BJP MP Khan to divorce wife who joined TMC

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 21**

The ongoing race between the ruling Trinamul Congress and the BJP in breaking each other's "home" through the politics of defection ahead of next year's Assembly Election escalated to marital discord on Monday as chief minister Mamata Banerjee's party virtually struck Bishnupur BJP MP Saumitra Khan's heart and roped his wife Sujata Mondal Khan into its fold to avenge the switchover of Shubendu Adhikari to the saffron party two days ago.

Heartbroken to see his



Saumitra Khan

Sujata

wife in the rival party, Mr Khan, who was earlier in the TMC, served her a divorce notice. In the afternoon Ms Khan, who was found working actively for the BJP to ensure her husband's victory in the last Lok Sabha polls, walked into the TMC office off EM Bypass. On her induction into the TMC to counter Mr Adhikari's desertion, she said: "I do not see him as a leader. He took all advan-

tages from the party for the last 10 years but backstabbed his party. He is an opportunist."

Senior TMC MP Sougata Roy handed over the party flag to her. Hailing Ms Banerjee and his MP nephew Abhishek Banerjee, Ms Khan said: "I want honour. I wish to work in my favourite party and its leader. I worked tirelessly for my husband's victory. But the BJP did not value my contribution. It gives place to some incompetent by poaching them from other parties. When good sense will prevail upon Mr Khan, he will return to TMC also."

# Mamata calls BJP 'party of cheats,' slams Amit Shah

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 21**

Calling the BJP a "party of cheats", West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee Monday squarely accused union home minister Amit Shah of spreading 'lies' about her government's performance in its last two-day state visit. Asking Mr Shah to "cross check" his statement the Trinamul Congress supremo also cautioned him against lying as a home min-

ister for his political mileage and sought him to tell the 'truth' about the state.

Inaugurating the Kolkata Christmas Festival in Allen Park at Park Street, Ms Banerjee, in an oblique reference to Mr Shah, said, "Bengal is No. 1 in so many sectors. Some people, I am sorry to say, are coming here from Delhi. If I do anything wrong, I will apologise to them. But please tell me why are you telling a garbage of lies to the people. Tell the truth."



## SHORT TAKES

## Central team to visit TN to assess damage caused by Cyclone Burevi

**New Delhi, Dec 21:** The Centre on Monday said an Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) will visit Tamil Nadu to assess the damage caused by the recent Cyclone Burevi. Cyclone Burevi hit Tamil Nadu coast on December 4. At least seven people were killed, and houses and agricultural produce damaged due to the heavy rains and winds accompanying the cyclone. "MHA deputes an Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) led by a Joint Secretary to assess damages caused by Cyclone 'Burevi' in Tamil Nadu. IMCT will shortly visit the cyclone affected districts of the State," the Home Minister's Office tweeted. After assessing the damage, the team will submit a report to the central government. On the basis of the report, funds will be released to the state government, an official said. —PTI

## VIT students get 7,403 job offers

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VELLORE, DEC. 21

Even during the pandemic, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) students have attracted as many as 7,403 job offers from 382 companies in campus recruitments.

The recruitments were conducted virtually and 4,503 students have taken up multiple offers. Students from all 4 campuses of VIT (Vellore, Chennai, Amaravati and Bhopal) participated in the selection process and the results were announced by Dr. G. Viswanathan, Chancellor of Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT).

Leading IT companies made nearly half the job offers with Cognizant making offers to 1,418 students, TCS (1,321) and Infosys (778). Other IT services companies like Virtusa, Hexaware, CapGemini and Mindtree have also recruited from VIT. Microsoft recruited 7 students with a highest CTC of ₹44 lakhs per annum.

## Canara Bank's exposure to Transtroy is ₹678 cr

**Chennai, Dec. 21:** Canara Bank has clarified that it has an exposure of ₹678.28 crore in the account of M/s Transstroy India Ltd. The loans to the firm by a consortium of banks were reported as a fraud to RBI on Feb. 10 and Canara Bank states it has made 100% provision in the account.

M/s Transstroy India Ltd. (TIL) is in the line of business of contractors, engineers, promoters and developers of roads, bridges, tunnels and highways. The company was enjoying limits from various banks from 2001. A consortium with Canara Bank as leader and 13 other banks was formed in 2013 and the total limit sanctioned was ₹4,765.70 crore and the share of Canara Bank is only ₹678.28 crore.

Of 7,926.01 crore fraud amount, the amount of lending by the 14 consortium members is ₹4,765.70 Crore and the remaining amount was lent under multiple banking arrangements. Out of this, exposure of Canara Bank is ₹678.28 Crore only.

The case was referred to NCLT and was admitted by NCLT, Hyderabad on 10.10.2018. The company is under the process of liquidation. The company has already been declared as willful defaulter on Dec 26, 2018 by Canara Bank.

# 'River flow rate data' to check future floods

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, DEC. 21

The state government will use the data collected by researchers and students of the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IITM), during cyclone 'Nivar' and subsequent heavy rains to operationalise the real time flood forecasting (RTFF) and spatial decision support system (SDSS), with the aim of averting future flooding in the city.

Commissioner, revenue administration, Tamil Nadu state disaster management and mitigation (TNSDMA), K Phanindra Reddy, said that the data

collected during this field campaign by IIT Madras in close coordination with TNSDMA, would be very useful to operationalise both RTFF and SDSS, being coordinated by TNUIFLS under the World Bank-assisted Tamil Nadu sustainable urban development project (TNSUDP).

This data collection project was initially undertaken after mega floods hit Chennai during December 2015 along with IIT Bombay, Anna University and the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR). With this, the government had developed a pilot flood forecasting system with the fund-

ing support from the Principal Scientific Advisor, Government of India.

Prof Balaji Narasimhan, who led the data collection team, said that rating curves at critical sections of the rivers are important to understand the volumetric flow rate in different depths for effective flood management. Once a rating curve is developed, an integrated network of water level sensors could be used to remotely monitor water discharges in rivers and automatically. This is an important exercise in calibrating and validating the developed flood forecasting models.

The data collected during 'Nivar' showed that certain parts of Adyar river contributed to almost 70 percent of water flow in the Adyar river at Anakaputhur, with the rest contributed by the Chembarambakkam water release.

Although Chennai did not encounter large-scale flooding during 'Nivar', certain localities in the city experienced flooding and water logging. Data collected during the field campaign that ended on December 11, could give insights into the hydrological behaviour of this catchment and find remedies to mitigate future floods, he added.



**HOPING BIZ WILL BLOOM**

Koyambedu flower market opened to the public on Monday. It was closed eight months ago due to outbreak of Covid and subsequent lockdowns. —DC

# Fix accountability of employees by implementing GO: HC

**J.STALIN I DC**  
CHENNAI, DEC. 21

Pointing out that a government order based on the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Committee headed by Justice A.K.Rajan, a retired judge of the Madras high court, which included fixing accountability on every government servant at every stage, has been passed in the year 2010, none of the departments has taken any effective steps to implement the GO, the Madras high court has expressed its expectation that the government would respond positively on the possibility of amending the existing relevant government service rules, for effective implementation of the GO and to report before the court by December 22,

2020.

A division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and B.Pugalendhi passed the interim order on a Public Interest Litigation filed by advocate A.P.Suryaprakasam, which sought a direction to the authorities to consider his representation dated October 10, 2020.

The bench said the government constituted an Administrative Reforms Committee under the chairmanship of Justice A.K.Rajan, a retired judge of the Madras high court, to ensure the corruption free and transparent administration and certain recommendations of the said committee were also accepted by the government by a GO dated February 17, 2010, wherein one of the recommendations is for fixing accountability on every

government servant, at every stage at every level. The government, while accepting these recommendations, has requested all the heads of departments to issue necessary orders to this effect while delegating the powers. Even though the said GO has been passed in the year 2010, none of the departments has taken any effective steps to implement the said GO, the bench added.

The bench said every government servant was expected to act in accordance with the Acts, rules and the government orders issued by the government then and there. If the Secretary level officers have not complied with the orders of the government, how we can expect a common citizen to comply with the orders of the government. If the

government servant was not complying with the orders of the government, the same can be treated as a misconduct or as unbefitting of the government servant, warranting initiation of appropriate departmental proceedings against them. When the secretary level officers have not even adhered to GO dated February 17, 2010, nearly for a decade, then, how the same can be viewed, the bench asked.

The bench said only after the directions of the court, only few departments responded with certain circulars but in a vague manner. Despite, chief secretary's instructions only a few departments alone have responded to send the action taken report on the implementation of the said GO. "Even a common man cannot

plead that he was ignorant of law of the government. When that was the position for a common man, what would be the responsibility of the secretary level officers? If the GOs were utterly disobeyed by the secretary level officers in such a manner, then who can be expected to obey the government orders. The mode of implementation of the October 2010 GO itself was an example to show as to how the GOs were regarded. Unless the government come out with an Act or Rule, on these recommendations as accepted by the government as on February 17, 2010, or even any circulars and instruction were issued, it will be on paper alone without effective implementation, the bench added and gave the above directive.

# 'Parties must vow to fight corruption in poll manifesto'

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, DEC. 21

A Chennai-based NGO fighting corruption has sought political parties to include assurance to weed out corruption in their poll manifesto.

Speaking to reporters here on Monday, convener of 'Arappor Iyakkam' Jayaram Venkatesan, said that corruption is a menace that is affecting everyone, and eliminating corruption requires a strong political will. 'Arappor Iyakkam' will meet all political parties and request them to exhibit their political will to fight corruption, and include the promise in their election manifesto for the general assembly poll 2021. "We will also conduct campaigns to create awareness among people on these

measures, and pressurize political parties to vow their allegiance to eliminate corruption," he said.

Jayaram Venkatesan said India ranks 80 among 179 countries in the 'corruption index', and corruption is one of the most important cause for many of the social, economic and political evils including unequal distribution of income, exploitation of people and resources, non-availability of basic amenities to specific sectors of the society, poor infrastructure and civic issues plaguing the society.

"On the one side, people are forced to pay bribes for government services and on the other, large-scale corruption results in generation of huge amounts of black money that helps fund elections, threatening

the very fabric of democracy," he said.

All political parties will be requested to adopt the 'Anti-Corruption declaration' in their manifesto for 2021 assembly elections, thus committing themselves to the people to implement their manifesto effectively within a fixed time frame.

Worldwide experience has shown that there are fundamentally three important ways to curb corruption. They are transparency, accountability in governance and providing independence to institutions probing corruption charges, and ensuring people's participation in governance. "We have recommended various measures in the manifesto under these three principles," he added.

# HC directive on trademark row

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, DEC. 21

The Madras high court has declined to vacate its interim order, which restrained M/s Hema Foods, Chennai, from infringing M/s Kaleesuwari Refinery Private Limited's reputed and well-known registered trademark 'Dheepam' by using the offending trademark "Nandhi Dheepam Oil" or any mark or word deceptively similar to the trademark of Kaleesuwari for lamp oil marketed by the Hema Foods.

Justice C.V.Karthikeyan passed the order on the applications arising out of a suit filed by M/s Kaleesuwari Refinery Private Limited by its manager (legal

Vijayan Subramanian, appearing for the applicant, Justice C. V.Karthikeyan refused to vacate the interim order passed on September 30, 2020, while allowing the application filed by Kaleesuwari Refinery Private Limited, seeking interim injunction.

Vijayan Subramanian submitted that in April 2009, the applicant launched unique lamp oil with the blend of 5 oils namely refined castor oil, sesame oil, coconut oil, refined mahua oil and refined rice brand oil. The applicant has been marketing the said lamp oil with its reputed brand 'Dheepam' since 2009 which has now become one of the well known brands of the applicant. The applicant has also devised unique bottle/con-

tainer with a different design, shape and configuration for marketing the lamp oil with a striking resemblance to a gopuram of Hindu temple to capture the mind of consumers so as to associate the use of the aforesaid oil with spirituality and divinity. The applicant was the registered proprietor of the well-known trademark 'Dheepam' for lamp oil and illuminating oil, he added.

Vijayan Subramanian said the present dispute arose on account of unfair adoption of offending trademark 'Nandhi Dheepam Oil' and offending label by Hema Foods by imitating of Kaleesuwari Refinery's getup, colour scheme and trade dress for marketing lamp oil with the aforesaid offending words as trade

mark/label in violation of applicant's trade mark and in violation of the applicant's trademark 'Dheepam' and the artistic work in 'Dheepam' label. M/s Hema Foods was guilty of violating the applicant's registered trademark, copyright and registered design. Hema Foods was also guilty of violating the applicant's copyright in the artistic work. It was also guilty of passing-off their product as that of the applicant, he added.

Denying all the allegations, Hema Foods filed a counter affidavit and prayed the court to vacate the interim injunction and dismiss the applications suit. Declining to vacate the interim order, the judge on Monday allowed the application filed by Kaleesuwari.

# DVAC nabs TNEB asst engineer

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, DEC. 21

Sluths of Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption, Alandur on Monday conducted a raid at TNEB office in Medavakkam and caught an assistant engineer red-handed receiving bribe.

According to the DVAC sources, assistant engineer Ramesh had allegedly demanded Rs 10,000 from Subramani who had approached the Medavakkam TNEB office to apply for domestic service connection for his new house in the neighbourhood, when the assistant engineer demanded bribe from the victim.

Despite the victim has initially refused to give the bribe citing lack of money, the officer had allegedly insisted on the bribe. As the victim did not want to pay a bribe, he had approached Alandur

DVAC, DSP Lavakumar and complained to the officer, Ramesh.

On receiving the complaint, the DVAC sluths laid a trap and directed him to give chemically treated currencies to the corrupt officer. Subramani on Monday, on the advice of the DVAC officials, handed over the chemically treated current notes, while the sluths were waiting for the officer to accept the money.

When he reportedly accepted the bribe, the sluths pounced on him and caught him red-handed. A team of ten DVAC officers headed by DSP, begun a search. The raid that commenced around 10 am on Monday went on till evening and it led to the seizure of several important documents, Sources alleged.

DVAC sources said, assistant engineer Ramesh and his assistant Srinivasan were arrested. Probe is underway.

# Over 7K year old 'Naviramalai' tablets, tools found

**K.SENTHIL NATHAN I DC**  
TIRUPATUR, DEC. 21

Researchers have recently unearthed stone tablets and stone weapons used about 7,000 years ago, in Jawadhu hills, Tirupatur district.

A research team consisted of Tamil Prof Dr K Mohan Gandhi, Sacred Heart College, Tirupatur, Kaani Nilam Munisami, Superintendent of Police Dr P Vijayakumar and journalist Priyamvatha Vijayakumar. Explaining

their findings, Dr Mohan Gandhi said, the ancient name of Jawadhu hills according to the inscriptions is 'Naviramalai'.

There are four tablets and their inscriptions record details of the Chola and Vijayanagara kings. The first inscription is a record of 16th century Vijayanagara king 'Kampannana'.

He was called 'Mahamandaleswaran' and 'Kampanna Udayar'. Naviramalai (Jawadhu

hills) was situated in the erstwhile Adaiyur country.

The second inscription is a government about the order of tax collection, instituted by the Cholas.

The third inscription is by Chola king 'Kulothungan', referred to as the Nikarili Chola Zone. Rajaraja Chola captured these areas from the Ganga.

Nikarili is the name given to this region, covering areas including Dharmapuri, Bangalore,

Kolar and Tumkur in Karnataka. Some inscriptions also mention that Javvadu Malai (Jawadhu Hills) was in the conquered Chola region.

The fourth inscription says that wages of Rs 5 per person should be paid for cultivation in Naviramalai country.

There is no indication as to whether it is cash or a measure of paddy. The stone weapons can be stone tools or axes. They are wide and sharp at the base, like an axe.



Navarimalai stone inscriptions and stone tools over 7,000 years old were found in Jawadhu hills in Tirupathur district on Monday. — DC

# Coonoor girl bags Asian Women award

**B. RAVICHANDRAN I DC**  
COONOOR, DEC. 21

Serena Kern-Libera, a native of Coonoor in the Nilgiris, has won the prestigious 'Asian Women of Achievement Award 2020'.

The award was founded by Pinky Lilani CBE DL (Commander of the Order of the British Empire, deputy lieutenant) in 1999, to celebrate multi-cultural Britain and the contribution of diverse cultures and talents to UK society. It puts on a platform the phenomenal Asian women across the UK and across industries who



are making a valuable and important contribution to

British life. The awards play a key role in redefining the contribution of Asian women and informing a new, positive, pro-diversity public debate.

Serena, settled in the UK, is a multi-talented personality who did her schooling at St Joseph's Girls convent at Coonoor, and pursued law at the London School of Economics, London. She now works as Deputy Head, Global Trade Strategy, at the Bank of England, London. Serena is also director, The Small Countries Financial Management Centre, a charity which is dedicated to con-

tributing to the growth and prosperity of small countries.

Now holidaying at Coonoor, Serena speaking to Deccan Chronicle, said she is passionate about education and diversity of thought, which makes her reach out to young girls to motivate and guide them to pursue their dreams with passion, and also guide them to take up good careers. Serena is also co-founder, Discover2Dream, an initiative aimed at connecting students with young female role models in a variety of sectors and industries.

Passionate about speaking to students, she regularly mentors students in the UK and has also delivered speeches to students in India, both in her hometown Coonoor and in Chennai. She is a school governor at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School in Islington, London.

She has built a successful career in the music industry with her music being a regular feature on BBC Radio and Music. Serena is the niece of Jayanthi, first woman collector of the Nilgiris who served here in the early 1980s.



## SHORT TAKES

## Lankan detained for illegal entry at Pamban refugee camp

DC CORRESPONDENT  
RAMANATHAPURAM, DEC. 21

A Sri Lankan national illegally staying at Mandapam camp in Ramanathapuram district was arrested by the Q branch police on Monday.

The detainee, Mujibur Rahman (34) son of Abdul Ajees of Talaimannar came to India along with his mother, Isthul Beevi and brother Umar Ali, when he was five years old in 1990 and got registered at the camp. Two years ago Mujibur Rahman got married with Sivapriya, a Sri Lankan Tamil refugee at the Mandapam camp and had a girl child.

In this backdrop, Mujipur Rahman in December last year went to Sri Lanka, where he was arrested for illegal entry. Later released on bail Mujibur was staying at Talaimannar in Sri Lanka, from where he escaped to India two days ago and landed at Rameswaram on December 20.

Having lost his refugee status in India as Mujipur Rahman had gone to Sri Lanka, he was arrested by the Q branch police on Monday.



CM Edappadi K. Palaniswami distributes Pongal kits to the public at the secretariat. The distribution of the cash and kit will commence on January 4. —DC

## Pongal gifts to be given from Jan. 4

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, DEC. 21

Pongal gift comprising ₹2,500 cash and a package of select groceries will be distributed to 'rice' ration card holders and Sri Lankan Tamil refugees

residing in the camps from January 4.

A government order was issued on Monday to give sanction to the announcement made by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on December 19. The gift package would

have one kg of raw rice, 1 kg sugar, a full length sugarcane, 20 grams of raisins, 20 cashew nuts, 5 grams of cardamom and a cloth bag, the GO said, adding that an allocation of ₹5,604.84 crore had been made for the purpose.

## MNM releases 7-point agenda

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, DEC. 21

Ahead of the 2021 Assembly elections and as a precursor to a regular manifesto, Actor Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) came out with a 7-point agenda for governance and economic agenda, which included an unique 'prosperity line' on Monday.

"The MNM Government would be the first Government in the world to talk about and take people 'below poverty line' to the Prosperity line. The idea is to unleash the potential in every citizen and family," said the agenda under the headline 'prosperity line.'

Among the other things that the MNM aspires to achieve once it was voted to power is to provide a computer with high speed internet (100 mbps and above) through optical fibre cable to each and every home as a common property resource.

Another plan is titled 'Providing Urban Opportunities in Rural Areas (PUORA), which aimed at unleashing the potential of rural areas and create world class livelihood opportunities in the villages and town panchayats, bridging the urban-rural divide and preventing

migration to the cities.

Under 'Women enrichment,' the MNM, inspired by poet Subramania Bharathi's 'Pudumai Penn,' will help women break glass ceilings through education, employment and entrepreneurship. Home makers will get due compensation for their toil at home, thus raising the dignity of women, it said.

It would ensure a 'Green Channel Government' to cut red tape and usher in a world class governance. From the Chief Minister's office to the panchayat office everything would be made paperless and run on a 'single ERP', thus banning the use of physical files.

Another vision of the MNM is to initiate the 'Green+ revolution' to transform farmers into agro-entrepreneurs. World-class infrastructural and logistics facilities from the village panchayat level would be set up to maintain the cold chain at static locations and during transport to ensure freshness of food stocks throughout the supply chain.

By promoting green industries and green technologies to combat climate change, MNM would give top priority to environmental management and ensure environmental hygiene.

## People waiting to defeat AIADMK, says Kanimozhi

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THOOTHUKUDI, DEC. 21

Tamil Nadu electorates are awaiting to defeat the ruling party in the assembly election, said Thoothukudi MP and DMK women's wing secretary Kanimozhi.

Leading a DMK demonstration against the LPG cylinder price hike in Thoothukudi on Monday evening, Kanimozhi said throughout her "Vidyalai Nokki Stalinin Kural" cam-

paign from Edappadi constituency in Salem, she noticed mass upsurge in support of the DMK.

Stating that people all through her campaign route complained her against the misgovernance of the Edappadi Palaniswami led party in the state, the DMK women's wing secretary said that she could see anti-AIADMK wave and people have been waiting for the assembly election to trounce the AIADMK.



Tiruppur District Collector K.Vijayakartheeyan along with other officials inspects the vote counting centre in Palladam LRG government women's college. —DC

## Immolation bid by family foiled

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, DEC 21

Tension prevailed here for a while as a BE graduate along with his family, a supporter of the AIADMK, attempted to commit self immolation at the collectorate here, on Monday, demanding action against his neighbour and DMK village panchayat president, who he alleged had been issuing life threats to them.

Police said, the AIADMK man, Palaniswami of Unniyur village near Thottiyam in the district, has 6.5 acres of land. He had also constructed a house near his agricultural land. There was a land dispute with

his neighbour, and a court case was pending.

On Sunday, a group of DMK men led by Periyapallipalayam village president, Kanakaraj (DMK), blocked the entry of his house and farm land. When Palaniswami objected, they abused him and his family and threatened them with life.

Protesting against this and demanding action against Kanakaraj and seeking protection for themselves, Periyaswami and his wife Priya, a postgraduate, and their infant, attempted self immolation, but police prevented them. They were produced before Collector S Sivarasu, who assured suitable action on their demand.

## Advocates can't resort to strike at any circumstances: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, DEC. 21

Reiterating that the advocates cannot resort to strike at any circumstances, when the aggrieved public are approaching the court for the relief as the court being the last resort, the Madras high court has said, "Bar leaders are neither labour leaders nor political leaders to call for a strike and they are advocates belonging to a noble profession".

A division bench comprising Justices

N.Kirubakaran and B.Pugalendhi made the observations while staying an order of the Nagercoil Bar Association, suspending an advocate from the association for allegedly defying the boycott call given by the association with regard to the farmers issue and attending the court on December 8, 2020.

Passing interim orders on a petition filed by G.Sivakumar, the bench while ordering police protection to the petitioner to attend the court said the

Bar Council of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry is to take appropriate action against the Bar Association, which called for the strike under section 14-A of the Tamil Nadu Advocates' Welfare Fund Act, 1987. The bench posted to January 18, 2021, further hearing of the case.

The bench said the Supreme Court of India in umpteen number of judgments has deprecated the practice of abstaining from work by the Bar. However, contrary to the same and forgetting their

responsibilities and duties as advocates to their clients, who entrust their cases with fond hope that advocates would conduct their case before Courts with sincerity, many advocates were often abstaining from court work. As a result, the justice delivery system was being affected. Justice delivery system was one of the limbs of the State, apart from Legislative and Executive, the bench pointed out.

The bench said the legal profession was a noble profession, where advocates were supposed to dis-

charge their duties not only towards their clients and also duties to the society. However, now-a-days, quite often, advocates are indulging in strikes and disturbing the functioning of courts. Even for political reasons, some of the Associations are indulging in boycotts, according to the political affinity or communal affiliations and various other reasons. This results in affecting not only the rights of the litigants, but also the advocates, who are ready to discharge

their statutory duty as per the Advocates Act and the Bar Council Rules, the bench added.

"This court is not convinced with the call for strike, which is illegal as per the judgments of the Supreme Court, and the petitioner has only done his professional duty to his client and attended the court and has taken part in the justice delivery system by conducting cases. For that, the petitioner cannot be put to unnecessary hardship", the bench added.

## COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



**Aries:** If you are religious or ethical, this can be a time of self-questioning about the things that have been important to you. Work is slow and smooth.



**Taurus:** Responsibilities increase and you plan to communicate your issues with others at work. Success is ahead! A religious event at home keeps you on your toes this evening.



**Gemini:** Bringing on changes by soul-searching will help. Those awaiting good offers for property matters are in choosing mode, clinching a lucrative deal are indicated!



**Cancer:** You tend to be over assertive and misunderstandings are likely today. Infuse space and give others the time to understand you better. Work wise you strike gold!



**Leo:** Focus on what works make your day. Money becomes a big issue. Shortcuts will not work. Be confident whilst making the changes. Get off what does not work for you.



**Virgo:** Finances improve and you splurge on loved ones, a shopping spree turns out more expensive than you bargained for. A busy day as certain delays are inevitable. Enjoy a family outing this evening.

## You share your b'day with

**Kenneth Branagh** Northern Irish actor. He is known for his roles in the films *Hamlet*, *As You Like It*, *Harry Potter* and *The Chamber of Secrets*.



**Libra:** Building a good rapport with colleagues will bring in quick and efficient results. If employed, an early start is indicated as sudden travel plans for pleasure happen.



**Scorpio:** Your energies could be scattered in many directions, getting grounded will help you consolidate your position. You need to take a stand when it comes to choices.



**Sagittarius:** Celebrate with loved ones. You feel stagnant and a little confused about the career choices you have made, and desire to alter them. Money owed to you returns in bits.



**Capricorn:** Recurring health problems for some should be taken seriously and a second medical opinion is advised. Relax. An auspicious day to invest in items that would grow in value.

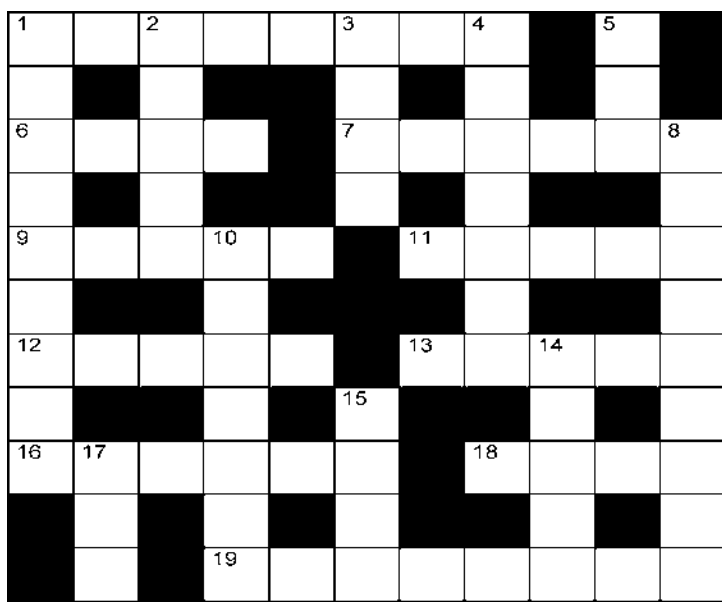


**Aquarius:** Competition is tough and your nerves will be under stress, take it easy, relax, catch up on rest, and tune in. Independent business people ponder on expansion plans. Spend time with family.



**Pisces:** You work towards being professional and confident in your chosen field today. Your state of mind needs to be calm and plays an important role in determining your path. Finances are low, pay off your liabilities and notice the difference.

## QUICK CROSSWORD



## Across

1. Diplomatic etiquette (8)
6. Gemstone (4)
7. Speech-make front (6)
9. Armada (5)
11. Pronounce sentence (5)
12. Privileged class (5)
13. Scent (5)
16. Meal (6)
18. Flightless bird (4)
19. Lucky charm (8)

## Down

1. Check through for errors (5,4)
2. Speech-make (5)
3. Simple restaurant (4)
4. Glossy coating (7)
5. Tack on (3)
8. Leave it on (anag) (9)
10. Died out (7)
14. Narcotic drug (5)
15. Spoken (4)
17. Kind (3)

## YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 6. Sacrosanct, 8. Asked, 10. Agape, 13. Abbreviated, 14. Lifer, 17. Resin, 19. Silhouette.

Down: 1. Mask, 2. Arid, 3. Asia, 4. Inca, 5. Attending, 7. Catatylism, 9. Eyrie, 11. Glaze, 12. Eve, 15. File, 16. Rook, 17. Reef, 18. Site.

## Word Mine

F  
R  
Y  
T  
O  
O  
F  
E  
R

TODAY'S RATINGS: 11 AVERAGE; 13 GOOD; 15 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

ANSWERS: 11. FRY, 12. FRY, 13. FRY, 14. FRY, 15. FRY, 16. FRY, 17. FRY, 18. FRY, 19. FRY.

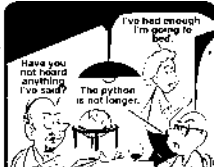
## Jumble

NOOHR  
TECIH  
LNEETG  
LMAYCL

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Print your answer here: \_\_\_\_\_

Yesterday's Jumble: SHYLY. Answer: They distributed the hospital attendants' new uniforms in an — ORDERLY FASHION.

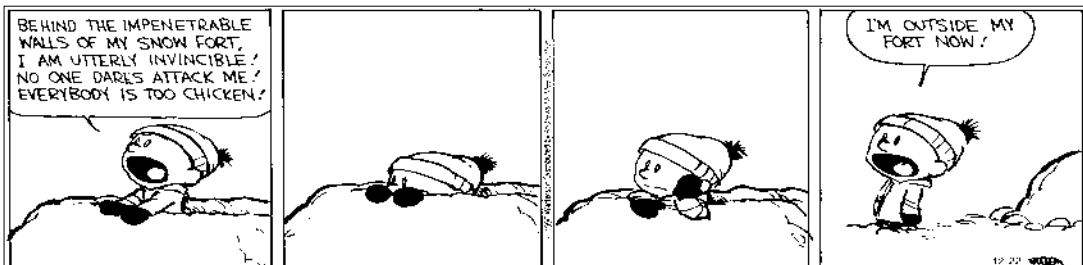


THEY DISCUSSED RETICULATED PYTHONS AND ANACONDAS.

Now arrange the jumbled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

## CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



## THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



## ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli &amp; craig boldman



## BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



## ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



## TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



bridge

PHILLIP ALDER

ONLINE BRILLIANCES ARE STILL AVAILABLE

Ellen Hopkins, whose novels are particularly popular with teenagers and young adults, said, "For short-term relaxation, I take a hot tub. It's my best way to unblock writers' block, too. For a bit longer relaxation, I enjoy camping. Just being in the wilderness, with no phones or computers or anything I have to do really refreshes my spirit."

Which word in that quote is appropriate for today's deal? South is in three no-

trump. West leads the spade king, immediately wishing he could have an "undo" and change to the spade two! The Baltic states have done well keeping coronavirus under control, permitting live events. This deal arose during one of the weekly training sessions in Latvia.

South took a shot at three no-trump, hoping that he would not lose the first five tricks.

Karlis Rubins (West) knew

that he had to get his partner on lead for a spade return through declarer's 10 — but how?

South, with only six top tricks, needed to establish diamond winners. But he should also have known that he could not afford to let in Jelena Alfejeva (East). So, when declarer played a low diamond toward his hand at trick two, he should have covered East's card with his nine (or seven). When he actually won with his ace,

West immediately unblocked his king. Declarer played a diamond to the queen and continued with a low heart, East carefully putting up her 10 (I would have played the jack). So, when South took the trick with his ace, West unblocked again, dropping the queen. Now East had to get on lead to push a spade through.

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## SHORT TAKES

ARJUN RAMPAL  
APPEARS BEFORE  
NCB FOR 2nd TIMESAURABH JOSHI | DC  
MUMBAI, DEC. 21

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) questioned actor Arjun Rampal second time in connection with the ongoing drugs probe involving Bollywood, which began following the suicide of actor Sushant Singh Rajput. Rampal (47) was grilled earlier in November along with his girlfriend Gabriella, a South African national, whose brother Agisilaos has been arrested by NCB over his links with international drug cartels.

The officials said that Rampal arrived at the NCB office before noon after having sought time to appear till December 22. He was issued summons last week. The agency grilled Rampal in the backdrop of the data retrieved from the electronics that were seized from his residence following a raid in November.

The NCB officials had seized 11 gadgets, including laptop, mobile phones and pen drives from Rampals following which he was grilled by the officials days later.

"The questioning went all through the day and if needed he or his partner may be summoned for questioning again," said an officer.

CRPF CONSTABLE  
RENEGES ON  
RAPE CLAIM

**New Delhi, Dec. 21:** The 30-year-old CRPF constable, who had accused the paramilitary's Chief Sports Officer and Arjuna Awardee Khajan Singh and coach Surjit Singh of sexual harassment, rape and intimidation, has retracted her allegations, official sources said on Monday.

Police said Khajan Singh was questioned and his statement has also been recorded by the investigation team but refused to divulge further details, saying the investigation is still underway.

Earlier this week, the victim recorded her statement before the magistrate under CrPC section 164 where she retracted her allegations mentioned in her complaint filed before the Delhi Police earlier this month, they said.

"She retracted her allegations levelled against both the accused and is reluctant to pursue the case further," sources said. Khajan Singh has also recorded his statement before the investigation team and refuted all allegations levelled against him.

This came after the victim registered her statement before the magistrate, a police officer said.

A senior police officer said after the FIR was registered, the case was transferred from a sub-inspector level officer to an inspector attached with the Crime Against Women Cell of Dwarka district, which is investigating the case presently.

J&K'S DDC POLLS  
VOTE COUNTING  
BEGINS TODAYYUSUF JAMEEL | DC  
SRINAGAR, DEC. 21

The counting of votes across all 280 District Development Council (DDC) constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir will begin at 9 am on Tuesday. The ballots will decide the fate of nearly 4,200 candidates who joined the fray in the first-ever such elections in the Union Territory.

State election commissioner (SEC), K.K. Sharma, said, "We've made elaborate arrangements for counting of ballots polled for DDC elections and Panchayat by-polls. Necessary Covid-19 protocols have been put in place and directions have already been issued to concerned deputy commissioners to adhere to coronavirus standard operating procedures (SOPs) during the counting process".

He said that the entire counting exercise will be monitored and recorded "to achieve full transparency." Elaborating on the counting guidelines, the SEC said that the counting of ballot papers will be taken on a round-wise basis after proper mixing of the ballot papers of different polling stations as per prescribed procedure and counting guidelines.

He said that his office has issued detailed guidelines under the Panchayati Raj Rules 1996 and prescribed elaborate procedure on the counting of ballot papers. "The handbook of returning officers also contains the relevant instructions on counting of votes," he added.

## MODI-PHUC VIRTUAL MEETING

China's aggression  
crops up in talkSRIDHAR  
KUMARASWAMI  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 21

Aggressive Chinese military behaviour in Asia from the maritime region of the South China Sea to the Ladakh sector on India's land border was one of the issues discussed during an hour-long Virtual Summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc on Monday evening, with PM Modi "stressing that the Code of Conduct negotiations on the South China Sea should not prejudice the interest of other countries in the region" who are not part of this. It may be recalled that these negotiations are being carried out between China and the south-east Asian nations but India too has key interests in the region such as energy exploration with Vietnam in Vietnamese waters.

Not surprisingly therefore, both leaders "affirmed that a peaceful, stable, secure, free, open, inclusive and rules-based region is in the common interest of all countries" and also "spoke of the importance of promoting a rules-based order in the region including by upholding international law, especially the UNCLOS", which is being seen as a strong signal to China with whom Vietnam has a



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses during a virtual bilateral summit with his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc, in New Delhi, Monday

maritime territorial dispute. When asked if the Chinese military behaviour in the region was discussed, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said "both leaders exchanged views on wide-ranging bilateral, regional and global issues".

With defence cooperation being "one of the key pillars of our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership", the Summit "provided an opportunity to handover one High Speed Guard Boat to Vietnam, launch of two other vessels manufactured in India, and keel-laying seven vessels being manufactured in Vietnam, under the US\$ 100 million Defence Line of Credit extended by Government of India for High Speed Guard Boats Manufacturing Project with Vietnam". The two leaders also identified defence industry cooperation as a priority.

The two Prime Ministers adopted a "Joint Vision for Peace, Prosperity and People" to "guide the future development of India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership". To implement this Vision, a Plan of Action for the period 2021-2023 was also signed between the two Foreign Ministers, which identify concrete follow up actions. The CSP has "diversified across wide-ranging areas - from political engagement to economic and development partnership, defence and security, energy partnership, cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts".

In all, seven pacts were inked between the two countries including an Implementing Arrangement on Defence Industry Cooperation, an agreement for US\$ 5 million Indian Grant Assistance for an Army Software Park at National

Telecommunications University, Nha Trang besides other pacts in the fields of nuclear safety, cancer treatment, clean energy and petroleum. With the bilateral development partnership set to intensify, three announcements were also made including "enhancing the number of Quick Impact Projects from currently 5 per year to 10 per year commencing FY 2021-2022 and New Development Partnership projects in heritage conservation in Vietnam (F-block of Temple at My Son; Dong Duong Buddhist Monastery in Quang Nam and Nhan Cham Tower in Phu Yen)". It may be recalled that an Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) team is already working on restoration of Cham temples in Central Vietnam where recently a 9th century AD monolithic Shiva Linga was discovered.

## All for a glimpse



People gather to watch the shooting of upcoming film *Atrangi Re* starring actors Akshay Kumar and Sara Ali Khan, at the historic Taj Mahal in Agra on Monday. — PTI

Russia will not take sides  
in India, China tiff: EnvoySRIDHAR  
KUMARASWAMI | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 21

Russia will "not take sides" in the Sino-Indian border dispute but wants an atmosphere of cooperation and enhanced dialogue between the two Asian giants, top Russian diplomats said on Monday, adding that "non-inclusive" Indo-Pacific concepts like the four-nation Quad can be "detrimental" to regional stability and inclusive cooperation in the region.

However, in what is being seen as a balancing act, Russia said it supports both the "growing Indian profile" globally as well as "Indian sentiments" and that it also "supports the Indian vision for the Indo-Pacific". Moscow also said the sale of the S-400 missile systems to India is "advancing well".

At an annual year-end media briefing in the national capital on Monday in the Virtual format, Russian Ambassador to India Nikolay R. Kudashev — while commenting on the recent Sino-Indian military tensions in the Ladakh sector, said, "It is vital to ensure an atmosphere of cooperation between the two Asian giants. As a friend to both India and China, we would encourage enhanced dialogue between both the governments. Between New Delhi and Beijing, we believe this is the key for the future progress in ties and to the regional security and stability." Pointing out that the sale of the S-400 missile systems to India is "advancing well", the Russian Ambassador also said that if the K-226

Boeing pitches its  
jet for Indian NavyPAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 21

American aerospace giant Boeing said Monday its fighter aircraft F/A-18 Super Hornet has shown compatibility with India's aircraft carriers, pitching its jet for the Indian Navy. Takeoff and landing on an aircraft carrier is a complex process as ships have limited space. The system which Indian aircraft carriers use for aircraft operation is "Short Takeoff but Arrested Recovery" (STOVAR), which is different from the system used by the US Navy.

Boeing said the company and the US Navy recently concluded "ski jump" trials for F/A-18 Super Hornets, even though it was designed for catapult launched systems used by the US.

"The first successful and safe launch of the F/A-18 Super Hornet from a ski jump begins the validation process to operate effectively from Indian Navy aircraft carriers," said Ankur Kanaglekar, Head India Fighters Sales of Boeing Defence, Space and Security.

The Indian Navy, which is now operating MiG-

● **BOEING SAYS** its fighter aircraft F/A-18 Super Hornet has shown compatibility with India's aircraft carriers.

● **IT RECENTLY** concluded 'ski jump' trials for F/A-18 Super Hornets.

29Ks, is seeking jets for its aircraft carrier Vikramaditya and for the coming Vikrant. France's Rafale, that was purchased by the Indian Air Force, will offer tough competition for any order given by Indian Navy.

"The Super Hornet can act as a lynchpin of naval aviation collaboration between the the US Navy and Indian Navy. This will improve inter-operability and commonality between the two navies and boost opportunities for collaboration in variety of areas related to naval aviation," said Mr Kanaglekar.

Boeing said the F/A-18 Super Hornet can interface with P-8I aircraft and other assets of US origin to act as a force multiplier for the Indian Navy.

It said the Super Hornet will offer the Indian Navy value in the form of advanced technologies at low acquisition cost.

helicopter and AK-47 203 rifle deal processes are expedited, "we will see good progress".

On the Sino-Indian border dispute, Russian deputy chief of mission (DCM) Roman N.

Babushkin said, "Russia is not taking sides. It maintains close ties with both nations."

But it was on the Indo-Pacific issue, that Russia clearly expressed its discomfort once again.

Farmers to take a  
call on talks with  
Centre todaySANJAY KAW | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 21

The farmers protesting at Delhi's borders are expected to decide upon their future course of action on Tuesday over the Centre's latest letter to them seeking a date for the next round of talks to end their 26-day-long agitation. The leaders of the farmers' unions claimed they were always ready for a dialogue with the Centre if they were offered a concrete solution to end the stalemate over the three new agriculture laws.

In a letter to 39 union leaders, agriculture ministry joint secretary Vivek Aggarwal on Sunday asked them to specify their concerns over the Centre's earlier offer of amendments in the laws and pick a convenient date for the next round of talks so that the agitation could end soon.

Krantikari Kisan Union leader Gurmeet Singh said, "We have already sent them our proposals. They need to respond to what we have already told them. Tomorrow, there will be a Sanyukt Morcha meeting to decide how and when to respond to the government. We will evaluate the government's letter and then

decide."

Five round of talks between the union leaders and the government have remained inconclusive. The sixth round of talks due on December 9 had to be cancelled as the farmers said they would call off their agitation only after the three laws were repealed.

The farmers intensified their protest with a day-long relay hungerstrike on Monday at all protest sites against the new laws. They plan to halt all toll collections on the highways in Haryana for three days from Friday. The union leaders have urged people to skip a meal on "Kisan Diwas" on Wednesday.

They have also urged people to beat "thalis" during the relay of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Mann ki Baat" on Sunday.

Meanwhile, a farmer from Tarn Taran district of Punjab allegedly tried to kill himself at the Singhu border on Monday.

The 65-year-old farmer was first admitted to Sonipat's civil hospital but was later referred to Rohtak's Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences. He also wrote a note in support of the protesting farmers.

NIGHT CURFEW  
IN MUMBAI TILL  
JANUARY 5BHAGWAN PARAB | DC  
MUMBAI, DEC. 21

Amidst the reports of new Coronavirus variant spreading rapidly in Britain, the Maharashtra government, as a precautionary measure, announced a night curfew in metropolitan areas of the state from December 22 to January 5. We need to remain more alert during the fortnight, said Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

According to the measures announced by the state government, a night curfew will be imposed in municipal corporation areas between 11 and 6 am from December 22 to January 5 as a precautionary measure. In addition to this, all passengers arriving at the state airports from European and Middle-East Asian countries will be put under institutional quarantine. Those coming from other countries will be home quarantined.

The decision to impose night curfew was taken in a meeting held by Thackeray on the backdrop of alarming situation in the UK. "The new Coronavirus variant is spreading rapidly in Britain and its lethality will be known in coming days. Hence, we need to exercise restraint," the Chief Minister said.

## SPECIAL | SESSION

## Cabinet to recommend Governor Khan convene session on December 23

## Kerala to pass resolution against farm laws

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
DEC. 21

Kerala Cabinet on Monday decided to convene a special session of Assembly on December 23 to discuss Centre's farm bills in detail.

The Cabinet meeting here decided to recommend to Governor Arif Mohammad Khan to convene the special session of the Assembly on December 23. Various political parties both from the ruling LDF and the opposition UDF will express their views on the

farm bills against which farmers across the country are currently agitating.

Barring BJP which has a lone member in the 140 member Assembly, the remaining parties are expected to register their strong opposition to the farm laws which the CPM and Congress led coalitions in the state have dubbed as "anti" farmers.

The Assembly is likely to pass a resolution against the bills. Barring BJP, all principal opposition parties in the state have expressed solidarity with the agitating farmers in Delhi.



Farmers block a road at Ghazipur border during their ongoing agitation in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

Earlier the Kerala government had shot off a letter to the Union agriculture minister Narendra

Singh Tomar pointing out that it would not implement the new farm laws in the state.

The government told the Union minister that it was opposed to the Central government's position on the farm laws. The Centre was trying to coerce the states to be part of a system that would pave the way for exploitation of farmers by corporate and multinational corporations.

The government had described some of the provisions in the new law impractical hence there was no question of accepting such diktats.

The opposition UDF has also slammed the Centre for bringing the farm laws

in haste. The Prime Minister and Union ministers have been repeatedly saying that the new farm laws are in the interest of farmers. In that case why have they failed to convince the farmers who are agitating in Delhi under freezing temperatures for the past many days, said a section of UDF leaders.

The UDF leaders said that the Centre was unnecessarily provoking the farmers by resorting to provocative actions. Instead of adopting such a stand, the Centre should be ready for a climb down, they said.



## SHORT TAKES

## ARMY TO RUN MAYA TRAIN: MEXICAN PREZ

Mexico City, Dec. 21: Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said Sunday the army will run the Maya train project and several airports, and use any profits to finance military pensions.

The army is already overseeing construction on some parts of the controversial project, while private firms build the rest. Obrador said Sunday that "so there won't be the temptation to privatize" the \$6.8 billion project, the army will operate it once built.

The proceeds from that — and several airports, some of which the army is constructing — will be used to provide pensions for soldiers and sailors. López Obrador has already given the army more tasks than any other recent Mexican president.

## RARE SALES OF CHRISTMAS ITEMS IN SAUDI ARABIA

Riyadh, Dec. 20: Christmas trees and glittery ornaments are for sale at a Saudi gift shop, a once unthinkable sight in the cradle of Islam where all public non-Muslim worship is banned.

In recent years, festive sales have gradually crept into the capital Riyadh, a sign of loosening social restrictions after Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman pledged to steer the conservative Gulf kingdom towards an "open, moderate Islam". "I didn't ever imagine I'd see this" in Saudi Arabia, a Riyadh resident said at the shop selling trees, Santa Claus outfits as well as tinsel, baubles and other ornaments.

## ISRAELI PARL TO VOTE ON BILL TO DELAY POLL CALL

Jerusalem, Dec. 21: Israel's parliament was set to vote Monday on a proposal from its frayed coalition that would temporarily put off the call for a fourth election in less than two years in the country.

Israel's coalition government — a broken marriage between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his political rival, Defence Minister Benny Gantz — has been inching towards collapse for weeks.

Under the current arrangement between Netanyahu's right-wing Likud and Gantz's centre-left Blue and White, the coalition has until one minute past midnight on Wednesday to agree a budget for the current year.

## RWANDAN TROOPS DEPLOYED IN C. AFRICAN REP.

Kigali, Dec. 21: Rwanda has deployed troops to the Central African Republic, where its soldiers serving in the UN peacekeeping force have been targeted by rebels, the defence ministry in Kigali said.

"The Government of Rwanda has deployed force protection troops to the Central African Republic, under an existing bilateral agreement on defence," said a statement issued late Sunday.

"The deployment is in response to the targeting of the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) contingent under the UN Peacekeeping force by rebels supported by (former president) Francois Bozize." On Saturday, the Central African Republic's government accused Bozize of leading an attempted coup as tensions mount ahead of key presidential and legislative elections on Sunday.

## Countries begin to seal off UK

Growing concerns of an 'out of control' new Coronavirus variant force nations to suspend flights

London, Dec. 21: France became the latest European country to close all its borders with the UK after Germany, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Bulgaria, the Irish Republic, Turkey and Canada suspended flights amid growing concerns of an "out of control" new variant of Coronavirus spreading at a much faster pace in parts of England. India, so far, remains in the travel bubble with the UK, with strict testing and self-isolation rules in place. But with most of Britain now in the strictest Tier 4 lockdown, all non-essential travel remains banned for the majority.

Other countries and territories to announce restrictions on UK travel include Hong Kong, Israel, Iran, Croatia, Argentina, Chile, Morocco and Kuwait. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson will chair a meeting of the government's emergency committee on Monday to take stock of the situation as a huge backlog build up on the border with France after even trucks and ferries were blocked entry at the ports.

European Union (EU) member states are also due for a meeting in Brussels to discuss a more coordinated response as the number of Coronavirus infections in the UK jumped to 35,928 on Sunday, down to the much faster spreading new mutation of the novel Coronavirus, with the country's death toll rising by 326 to hit 67,401. "Everybody, particularly people in Tier 4 areas, needs to behave as if they might well have the virus — that is the only way we are going to get it under control," UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock said, adding that the situation is "deadly serious" as the government tries to contain the rapid strain of an "out of control" virus.

"This is a deadly disease, we need to keep it under control, and it has been made more difficult by this new variant," he said. The new variant is said to be 70 per cent more transmissible, though health experts say there is no evidence that it is more deadly or would react differently to vaccines. "It is really too early to tell... but from what we see so far it is growing very quickly, it is growing faster than [a previous variant] ever grew, but it is important to keep an eye on this," said Dr Erik Volz from Imperial College London.

Two travellers from the United Kingdom to Australia's New South Wales state were found carrying the mutated variant of the virus that Britain has said could be up to 70% more infectious. Both are in hotel quarantine, and the recent spike in infections in Sydney is not linked to this, authorities said.

The new strain has prompted Britain's European neighbours and several others including Canada and Iran to close their doors to travellers from the country. Much is unknown about how many other people one person will infect on average and an epidemic is in effect if it rises above one. Fears of the new variant meant that over 21 million people in England and Wales who entered new restrictions at midnight are being told to stay at home, while non-essential shops



A sign on the M56 motorway informs drivers that all routes into France are closed at the junction with the M6 at Lower Stretton near Warrington, northwest England, on Monday. Crucial transit country France moved to block people and goods crossing the Channel, while the Netherlands said passengers arriving by ferry would be denied entry.

## EU regulator approves vaccine

Amsterdam, Dec. 21: The European Medicines Agency recommended conditional approval for a Coronavirus vaccine developed by BioNTech and Pfizer to be used across the European Union, weeks after the shot was first granted permission under emergency provisions in Britain and the United States.

Following a closed-doors expert meeting Monday, the EU drug regulator said it was recommending the

shot be licensed for use in people over 16 years of age, with some exceptions.

shot be licensed for use in people over 16 years of age, with some exceptions. The pharmaceutical companies will need to submit follow-up data on their

vaccine for the next year. "This is really a historic scientific achievement," said Emer Cooke, the head of the agency. "It is a significant step forward in our fight against the pandemic." The approval needs to be rubber-stamped by the EU's executive branch on Monday evening, a move its chief said is likely to happen Monday evening. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen tweeted that the EMA's approval was "a

decisive moment in our efforts to deliver safe & effective vaccines to Europeans!" "Now we will act fast. I expect a @EU Commission decision by this evening," she said.

The EU's executive arm had been expected to require two or three days to approve the EMA's decision. Authorities in Germany and several other European countries have said they hope to begin vaccinating people on Dec. 27.

## Oz detects new UK strain; HK cancels Britain flights

Singapore, Dec. 21: Australia said on Monday it had detected cases of the new fast-spreading coronavirus strain identified in the United Kingdom, while Hong Kong and India said they would suspend flights from Britain.

Hong Kong banned flights from Britain in a bid to curb already rising case numbers in the dense financial hub. The Chinese special administrative region said on Monday that people arriving from Britain before Dec. 22 would have to quarantine for three weeks instead of two.

India announced a suspension of all flights from the UK until the end of the year and said all passengers arriving from the UK before then will be tested on arrival at airports.

Taiwan, which also has a 14-day quarantine, said on

Monday there were no plans at present to stop flights from Britain.

Britain is one of 23 countries that India shares an "air bubble" with. India's health minister said the country was prepared to deal with the new strain and that there was no need to panic.

Japan, where entry from Britain is already banned in principle, said it would keep in close touch with other countries as well as the World Health Organisation to see how the new type of virus was spreading. The new strain in Britain comes as cases have surged recently in several Asian countries that successfully contained the pandemic earlier. The spikes have prompted localised lockdowns in some countries.

— Reuters

used Prime Minister Johnson of "gross negligence" and said he should apologise for his handling of the pandemic. He said the British people were paying the price for Johnson's "incompetence", "indecision" and "weak leadership" that was "costing lives and costing jobs".

— PTI

## PUBLIC MEETINGS BEING CURBED IN S. KOREAN CAPITAL

Seoul, Dec. 21: Gatherings of more than five people will be banned in South Korea's capital region as an elevated step to suppress what authorities call an "explosive" surge in Coronavirus infections.

The Seoul region is home to half of South Korea's 51 million people and has been at the centre of a recent viral resurgence. The country averaged about 960 new virus cases each day in the past week, more than 70 per cent of them in the Seoul metropolitan area. Acting Seoul mayor Seo Jung-hyup said Monday the ban will apply to any type of meetings.

— AP

## TRUMP ADVISER TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

Gainesville, Dec. 21: The leader of a north Georgia megachurch who has been a spiritual adviser to President Donald Trump has tested positive for Covid-19.

Jentezen Franklin, the senior pastor of Free Chapel in Gainesville was absent from Sunday services, news outlets reported. Pastor Javon Ruff announced the diagnosis during Free Chapels Sunday service, held both in-person and streamed live. "We want to make you aware that Pastor Franklin has come in contact with Covid, but he is doing perfectly fine. He actually is doing great," Ruff said.

"He went and got tested and his test came back positive so he is doing the right thing to do and staying quarantined and continuing to be distanced." The diagnosis came within days of Franklin attending a Christmas party at the White House. — AP

## Biden to receive Coronavirus shot

Washington, Dec. 21: President-elect Joe Biden will receive his first dose of the Coronavirus vaccine on live television as part of a growing effort to convince the American public the inoculations are safe. Monday's event will come the same day that a second vaccine, produced by Moderna, will start arriving in states, joining Pfizer's in the nation's arsenal against the Covid-19 pandemic, which has now killed more than 317,000 people in the United States and upended life around the globe. "I don't want to get ahead of the line, but I want to make sure we demonstrate to the American people that it is safe to take," Biden has said of his decision.

Biden and his wife, Jill, will also thank health care workers at the facility where they receive the shots, his incoming press secretary has said. Top government officials last week joined the first Americans to be inoculated against Covid-19 as part of the largest largest vaccination campaign in the nation's history. Vice President Mike Pence, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and other lawmakers were given doses Friday. They chose to publicise their injections as part of a campaign to convince Americans that the vaccines are safe and effective amid skepticism, especially among Republicans. — AP

## Congress deal on Covid-19 reprieve

Washington, Dec. 21: Top Capitol Hill negotiators sealed a deal Sunday on an almost \$1 trillion Covid-19 economic relief package, finally delivering long-overdue help to businesses and individuals and providing money to deliver vaccines to a nation eager for them. The agreement, announced by

Senate leaders, would establish a temporary \$300 per week supplemental jobless benefits and \$600 direct stimulus payments to most Americans, along with a new round of subsidies for hard-hit businesses and money for schools, health care providers and renters facing eviction. — AP

## MAJOR OUTBREAK

More than 1,100 prisoners were infected while seven have died

## Virus spikes after jail inmate transfers

Detroit, Dec. 21: Families of men incarcerated at Michigan's Kinross Correctional Facility believed its remote location would spare it from a deadly Covid-19 outbreak. For a while, they seemed to be right.

Kinross, built on the grounds of a former Air Force base in the Upper Peninsula, is closer to Canada than it is to Detroit. Unlike most prisons in Michigan, Kinross had remained almost unscathed by the novel coronavirus with only one case between March and October. But on Oct. 28, corrections officials transferred nine prisoners to Kinross from Marquette Branch Prison, several hours

west, where Covid-19 was running rampant. There were 837 confirmed cases by late October, 350 of which were still active when the men were transferred. Roughly three weeks later, Kinross had its first major outbreak, corrections department data showed.

Though agency officials say

it's not because of the transfers, more than 1,100 prisoners have now been infected, at least seven have died and more than 100 guards have fallen ill. The prisoners who came to Kinross had been transferred twice, sent first to Marquette after a riot where they were held, and then had tested positive for Covid-19

there before leaving for Kinross, officials said. In prisons around the country, Covid-19 outbreaks have followed transfers of prisoners or prison workers.

Nearly all of the 25 state prison systems and the federal Bureau of Prisons that responded to a survey conducted by The Marshall Project and *The Associated Press* said they had reduced or limited the number of prisoners they moved due to the pandemic. Eight states halted the practice except in special circumstances.

The reductions were keeping in line with medical guidelines. But most of those states lifted their restrictions by

September and few prison systems heeded the earlier lessons as the pandemic worsened this winter, worrying families of prisoners and correctional officers who work in the prisons.

Meanwhile, Interpol chief Juergen Stock predicted Monday a sharp rise in crimes with robbers seeking to get their hands on precious vaccines aimed at stopping the Coronavirus pandemic. "With vaccines rolling out, crime will increase dramatically," Stock told business weekly *WirtschaftsWoche*. "We will see thefts and warehouse break-ins and attacks on vaccine shipments."

— AFP

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU / COONOR MUNICIPALITY (NOTICE INVITING TENDER)				
Roc. No. 20557/E4/2020		Dated: 21.12.2020		
1. Bids are invited from the eligible bidders for the following works in Coonoor Municipality area Nilgiris District, Tamil Nadu Name of Work : Special Road Projects - 2020-2021 Improvements to BT Surface at Crimya hill road, Geotech road, Joy's hotel road, Main Alwarpet road and Brooklands road in Coonoor Municipality. Estimate Amount (Rs. in lakhs) : 100.00 EMD (Rs. in lakhs) : 1.00 Tender document cost : Rs. 1500/- Execution Period : 6 Months Contractor Class : I <sup>st</sup> class				
2. The Bid documents can be downloaded from the website <a href="http://tenders.gov.in">http://tenders.gov.in</a> at free of cost				
3. Any additional / further details and conditions related to these works can be had from the Engineering Section in the office of the Commissioner, Coonoor Municipality.				
4. Important dates:				
Sl. No.	Date and time of Pre bid meeting	28.12.2020 AT 03.00 PM		
2	Date and time for purchasing / downloading bid document	28.12.2020 - 4.00 PM		
3	Last Date and time for submission of bid document, including online submission	12.01.2021 - 3.00 PM		
4	Date and time of opening of the Technical Bid	12.01.2021 - 3.30 PM		
5. In the event of specified date for submission of bids is declared as a holiday/bids will be received and opened on the next working day at the same time and venue. DIPR/4797/Tender/2020 Commissioner (I/c) Coonoor Municipality				

Government of Tamil Nadu PALLAVAPURAM MUNICIPALITY E-Tendering Notice					
Roc.No.4458/2020/E1		Date:21.12.2020			
Government of Tamil Nadu Sanctioned for Road works in Pallavapuram Municipality under Special Road Programme 2020-21 in Chengalpattu District. Under this scheme the Municipal Commissioner, Pallavapuram invites sealed bids from the eligible and qualified contractors for the following works as detailed in the table given below.					
Sl. No.	Packages	Estimate Amount (in Lakhs)	Tender Document available from	Tender Opening	Period of completion
1	I to IV	700.00	22.12.2020 (10.00 AM) to 11.01.2021 (4.00 PM)	12.01.2021 (3.30 PM)	3 Months
Pre-Bid Conference:31.12.2020 at 11.00 AM in the office of Palavapuram Municipality.					
Tender document and schedule available in <a href="http://tenders.gov.in">http://tenders.gov.in</a> , it can be downloaded at free of cost from 22.12.2020. The Bidding document will be received by the Commissioner, Pallavapuram by way of off-line and e-submission also in 2 cover system upto 12.01.2021, 3.30 PM. Earnest Money Deposit 1% of the value of work should be submitted along with the tender. If E-Tender, the EMD should be dropped in the tender box before closure time, it is at 3.00 PM on 12.01.2021. Evaluation of bid will be done as per tender Transparency Act 1998 of Government of Tamil Nadu and rules thereon. If the said tender date happens to be a holiday, the tenders will be opened on the next working day. The Municipal Commissioner reserves the rights to accept or reject any bidding document at any time without assigning any reason there of. Eligibility criteria and other details can be had from the Bidding document.					
For the details contact E-Mail Address: <a href="mailto:commr.pallavapuram@tn.gov.in">commr.pallavapuram@tn.gov.in</a>					
DIPR/4810/TENDER/2020 Commissioner, Pallavapuram Municipality					

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU - PANRUTI MUNICIPALITY NOTICE INVITING TENDER					
Roc.No.1937/2020/E1		Dated: 18.12.2020			
Tender Notice Form of Contract - Item rate (Two Cover system)					
Sl. No.	Name of work	Bid Amount (Rs. in Lakhs)	EMD Value (Rs. in Lakhs)	Contractor Class	Period of completion
1	SNP-2020-21 Providing BT Road at ward No.21, 17 & 20 in Panruti Municipality (Package-I)	200.00	2.00	First Class	180 Days
2	Providing BT Road at ward No.18, 01, 27, 26, 03, 04, 05, 19, 25, 33 & 36 in Panruti Municipality (Package-II)	200.00	2.00	First Class	180 Days
3	Providing BT road at ward no.28 in Panruti Municipality (Package-III)	50.00	0.50	Second Class	45 Days
1) The bid documents can be downloaded from the website <a href="https://tenders.gov.in">https://tenders.gov.in</a> , <a href="https://tenders.municipality.in">https://tenders.municipality.in</a> to <a href="http://tenders.gov.in">http://tenders.gov.in</a>					
2) Bid documents can be downloaded upto 3.00 pm on 11.01.2021. Online submission of tender also will be allowed within the stipulated time on the same day. 3) EMD in the form of DD favour of The Commissioner of Panruti Municipality payable at Panruti.					
4) Any additional / further details and conditions related to this tender can be had from the Engineering section in the office of the Commissioner, Panruti Municipality on all working days during office hours. 5) Important dates:					
1	Date and time of Pre bid meeting	30.12.2020 at 11.00 a.m			
2	Tender document can be downloaded from	23.12.2020 at 10.00 am			
3	Last Date and time for submission of bid document online submission	11.01.2021 upto 3.00 p.m.			
4	Last Date and time for submission of bid document Off line submission	12.01.2021 upto 3.30 p.m.			
5	Date and time of opening of the Technical Bid	12.01.2021 at 3.30 p.m.			
6) In the event of specified date for submission of bids is declared a holiday, bids will be received and opened on the next working day at the same time and venue. 7) Other details can be seen in the bid documents.					
DIPR/4795/TENDER/2020 Commissioner (I/c), Panruti Municipality					



DECCAN Chronicle

22 DECEMBER 2020

Battleground Bengal: Didi faces a huge test

Mamata Banerjee and her Trinamul Congress are facing an epic battle for political survival as Union home minister Amit Shah virtually launched the BJP's campaign for the April-May elections during his two-day visit that ended Sunday. While it can't be denied that the departure of Suwendu Adhikari, a key aide and onetime Nandigram pointperson, who joined the saffron party along with several MLAs on Saturday, is a major blow to the TMC supremo, if she takes it as a wake-up call and tries rectification measures, changing the way her government and party function, all may still not be lost.

The BJP as a challenger has many advantages — the virtually limitless funds it has access to, which neither the TMC nor any other party in India can match. Add to this is the dominance due to its control of the Central government and of several states, most of which made possible by the election machine Mr Shah and his boss Narendra Modi have devised since 2014.

However, West Bengal isn't quite the fertile ground the Modi-Shah duo are familiar with in northern India. Mr Shah had to acknowledge, during his just-completed visit, that here the Bengali identity transcends all the different ways the BJP slices and splices Hindutva-related issues elsewhere to produce electoral victories with remarkable regularity. The cries of "Jai Shri Ram" at Mr Shah's impressive roadshow at Bolpur did elicit roars of approval, but it later transpired the crowd was brought in from a neighbouring Hindi-speaking state. If the BJP is wise, it won't repeat that exercise in a hurry.

The BJP's posters in Bolpur and Santiniketan, home to Rabindranath Tagore's Visvabharati, in which the home minister's photo was placed above Gurudev's, which set off widespread protests, was yet another ill-advised move by a party whose local leadership seems singularly clueless about how it would hurt Bengali sentiments. Likewise, to speak of the homogenisation and standardisation of Indian culture, there couldn't be a more inappropriate spot than Gurudev's campus celebrating diversity, where "narrow domestic walls" have no place.

The "outsider" tag Ms Banerjee sought to paint Mr Shah with seems to have rankled, with the minister declaring no one could be an "outsider" as everyone was an Indian, with references to Indira Gandhi and others, but contradicted himself by virtually anointing Mr Adhikari as a "bhoomi putra" and possible CM face. It remains to be seen, though, if Bengalis are ready to accept the somewhat rustic and rough-spoken Mr Adhikari in that role, once filled by the likes of Bidhan Chandra Roy, Jyoti Basu and Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee. Even Ms Banerjee, before becoming CM, had served multiple terms as a Union minister. It is undeniable that there is widespread disenchantment with Mamata Banerjee and her government on several counts. Her mismanagement on several fronts, the rising corruption and extortion that her partymen are accused of and the minority appeasement that has cost her significant support. Bringing in Prashant Kishor to firefight isn't enough — in fact he is blamed for some of the recent exodus from the party. But what does the BJP promise? How will it end corruption by inducting TMC leaders accused of multiple offences into its fold? Given the Centre's mismanagement of the nation's economy, how will it end Bengal's mess? And with what magic wand will Mr Shah create the "Sonar Bangla" that he has promised?

Is China behind Oli's move?

Nepalese President Bidya Devi Bhandari's consent to Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's recommendation, after a Cabinet meeting, to dissolve Parliament on Sunday and call elections in April, two years ahead of time, came after 91 ruling party MPs in a House of 275 moved a no-confidence motion against the PM. This has raised a Constitutional question in Kathmandu, and the matter is before the Supreme Court.

Whatever the court's verdict, it is evident the Himalayan nation is in the throes of a political crisis. The dissonance within the ruling establishment had been brewing for eight months. Mr Oli was PM and co-chairman of the Nepal Communist Party along with Pushpa Kumar Dahal Prachanda, a former PM.

He was not willing to let go of either post. The tussle at the top has riven the ruling NCP down the middle. Seven Cabinet ministers resigned when the PM recommended dissolution prior to fresh polls. It's not clear if the turbulence will spill over on to the streets. There can be no guarantee of orderly elections in April-May next.

This is a situation that is tailor-made for sub-rosa intervention by Beijing, which had invested considerable political capital in Mr Oli, shoring up his government with financial support and political guidance at a time when India-China relations have plummeted with the Chinese Army pushing inside India's frontier region in Ladakh. New Delhi needs to be watchful.

Nepal is of strategic value to India. From New Delhi's perspective, it is important that Kathmandu at least remain neutral even as Beijing has been on a heavy wooing spree, with Chinese President Xi Jinping paying a high-profile visit to Kathmandu not long ago. The Oli government had even begun the "study" of Xi Jinping "thought" in Nepal. The best that India can do is to attempt to play a stabilising role. This had been started with the recent visit to Kathmandu of the foreign secretary and the Army Chief. The process can be sought to be bolstered.

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Subhani



Congress drifts as real issues are left ignored



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

The faction-ridden, intrigues-infested Congress Party, even in its decrepit state, remains more interesting for political observer than the regimented Bharatiya Janata Party, with the monotonous hectoring of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the few chosen leaders who are licensed to speak. There are more voices inside the Congress despite the dominance of the Nehru-Gandhis, with its camp followers in tow. The meeting convened by party president Sonia Gandhi, which included Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and the 23 "dissidents" who dared to raise doubts about the party's leadership held on Saturday seems to have been a cloak and dagger affair.

The Gandhis seem to have said that the party was "like a family" and that they should all work together, and the family loyalists intoned that Rahul Gandhi was the right man to become party president once again because he enjoys enormous support in the organisation.

The dissidents wanted a decision on the issue of who will lead the party and how, and Rahul Gandhi deflected the question, saying that the meeting was not convened to discuss who will be president but to strengthen the party. He had also clarified that he had nothing against the seniors in the party as it was made out. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said there was a real need to take to the streets and that just submitting memorandums would not suffice. There was an assurance from the Gandhis that the process of organisational elections was on.

The dissidents said that there would be another

meeting soon like the one on Saturday — for brainstorming on the lines of the meetings at Pachmarhi (held in 1998) and Shimla (2003) in the first decade of Sonia Gandhi as president. But there was no official announcement that there would be such a meeting. At the end of the day, there was no clarity on whether peace was made with the dissidents who wrote the letter or whether they have been left high and dry with vague assurances that the Gandhis recognise their importance.

This has always been the way of the Congress, in the party as well as in the days when it was in power, not to face up to problems or to solve them. The issues are left unaddressed. At the most, consultations without outcomes are held. It looks like procrastination is the chosen path of the Congress even now. It might have been the secret of the party's success in the past, but it does not look like it is effective any longer. An aggressive BJP is not marginalising the Congress as much as the Congress is busy making itself irrelevant.

Interestingly, neither the Gandhis' camp nor the dissidents have any clear idea of how to oppose the BJP, either on the issue of Hindu communalism or that of managing the economy, Rahul Gandhi has instinctively

embraced old-fashioned and discredited secularism, and socialism, which was what was abandoned by Rajiv Gandhi in the 1988 Congress session at the Kamaraj Nagar venue in Chennai. Rahul Gandhi may have his own logic behind his socialist stance. He might say that it was necessary in 1988 to abandon Nehru's socialism of the 1950s, but it is necessary to go back to some kind of socialism in 2020, with globalisation at the end of its tether. And in a certain sense, Rahul Gandhi might be right — that the only way to fight the BJP's Hindu majoritarianism is to stick to one's secularism stance with conviction. But the critics of Congress, including religious minorities, are not convinced that the Congress is standing up for secularism with enough conviction.

The challenge before the Congress is to sense the political winds as well, which is what it tries to do half-heartedly, and becomes an easy target of both the majority communalists as well as the minority communalists. There is no one in the Congress and in the liberal intelligentsia outside to forge a plank which will win over ordinary Hindus who are religious, and tell them that Hindutva is anti-Hindu, which it is.

The new rationale of secularism should be formulated as defending the rights of religious minorities along with the majority's religious rights. The party is indeed moving in this direction, but there is no one really of any standing to articulate this calibrated stance.

The real crisis in the

Interestingly, neither the Gandhis' camp nor the dissidents have any clear idea of how to oppose the BJP, either on the issue of Hindu communalism or that of managing the economy.

Congress is that of the party's second- and third-rung leaders depending on the Gandhis to win elections for them in the way they used to, and to sing praises of the Gandhis as their saviours.

The Gandhis are now unable to deliver electoral victories, and this is no fault of Rahul Gandhi. The country has changed, and people are not looking up to charismatic leaders.

Of course, the BJP leaders are acting like the Congress when they praise Narendra Modi as the talisman of their party, and that Mr Modi is winning the elections for them. It is of course an illusion, not much different from the Congress' that the Gandhis are the mascots.

The dissidents are critical of the monopoly of the Gandhis' followers in the party, who are blocking everyone's way. But the dissidents also do not have any bright ideas to fashion a political vision for the party and the country. But there is something common that unites the Congress establishment (the Gandhis' camp holding party positions) and the dissidents. They are not perturbed by electoral defeats. They have played the game of power much longer than anyone else, and they believe that electoral setbacks are seasonal and that it is not necessary to lose sleep over it.

The many people who do not like Congress and its wily ways but who feel that it is a necessary evil to fight the BJP, which is more dangerous because of its authoritarian and totalitarian regime, are agonising over the present dilapidated state of the grand old party.

They are forever suggesting solutions to the Congress' problems, which are given short shrift by the party itself. The Congress isn't going its mend its ways anytime soon, and its leaders also feel that they do not have to do so.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

LETTERS

DMK TARGETS 200 SEATS

DMK has set a target of winning 200 seats, which shows it will be niggardly in allocating the remaining 34 seats to its allies (DMK sets target of winning 200 seats, Dec. 21). Hence there is little likelihood that the MNM or AIMIM would join the DMK. But with the entry of Rajinikanth into the political picture, the bargaining power of DMK allies like the Congress or the IUML could go up resulting in fissures in the alliance. While the options for Communists are limited, a disgruntled Congress or VCK could join the MNM in order to split the votes of the two Dravidian majors. The question looming largest in people's minds is: Does Rajini enjoy the same popularity as he did some 20 years ago? Will he ally with the BJP or just poach leaders and their followers from the two Dravidian parties? Time alone will tell whether Rajini's optimism is justified!

Kangayam R. Narasimhan, Chennai

EXODUS OF TMC MLAS

POLITICS IS a game of musical chairs and we come across lots of political development in Bengal. The cut-throat political scene saw many TMC MLAs who just poach leaders and their followers from the two Dravidian parties? Time alone will tell whether Rajini's optimism is justified!

Ramnath Krishnan, via e-mail

MGR LEGACY

DESPITE OVER three decades having passed since MGR died, his legacy still has great relevance in the political realm of Tamil Nadu. MGR was a cultural and political icon among the Tamil population. A majority of rural Tamil Nadu still want a politician to be like MGR, who championed the cause of the poor. He still lives in the minds of the people, replaying his clean, politically charged characters and those countless songs that revolutionised the thinking of the marginalised. Though both Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan are firm in their approach towards creating and establishing an entirely different political culture in Tamil Nadu—sans Dravidian politics—they still stake claim to the legacy of MGR.

R. Sivakumar, Chennai

Aakar Patel



'Time bombs' ticking in the Constitution are a worry

There are some time bombs ticking in our Constitution that worry me. These are in Part 4 of the document, about which we are assured by the Constitution's writers that "the provisions contained in this Part shall not be enforceable by any court, but the principles therein laid down are nevertheless fundamental in the governance of the country and it shall be the duty of the State to apply these principles in making laws".

So, these are only principles then. But our experience has been that these are akin to gospel. How many literate Indians will assume that the government is obliged to constitutionally bring about the prohibition of cow slaughter (Part 4's Article 48)? I would say the vast majority would think that.

The insistence with which the ban is pushed might lead one to forget that there is a distinction between a principle not meant to be enforceable and an obligation which must be legislated forthwith ("it's in the Constitution!").

Fewer Indians are likely know about Article 47, which nudges the

State towards making its citizens teetotalers ("the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health").

The insistence, seen most recently in Bihar, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, on creating better, more moral Indians through sobriety is also underpinned by what is seen as the same constitutional obligation on legislators.

The time bombs that worry me are a little further down, in Article 51A, which specifies fundamental duties. It is instructive to read them in full because, and I fear this is already happening, we are moving in the direction of turning these things into laws. The list reads:

"Fundamental duties. It shall be the duty of every citizen of India:

(a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;

(b) to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;

(c) to uphold and protect the sovereign-

ty, unity and integrity of India;

(d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;

(e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India, transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;

(f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;

(g) to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures;

(h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;

(i) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence;

(j) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement."

Almost everything here fills me with a sense of dread. Example: the bit in (c) saying it is our duty to uphold and protect India's sovereign-

ty, unity and integrity. Are those who raise their voice against, say, the use of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in Kashmir and the Northeast violating this duty? If so, should they be punished? One might say, no, it is only a general principle offset by other rights. But then, so is a ban on cow slaughter and a ban on alcohol.

What about (a), which requires us to respect the national flag and anthem? Violation of this has already been criminalised, and it happened long before Narendra Modi. We are, however, living in times when the flag and nationalism have been conflated. Are you worried something coercive is around the corner that might equate even inaction with insult? I am. There is talk of a ₹100 crore fine for mistakes in maps.

The inability of our courts to often weed out majoritarian sentiment (as witnessed in the matter of cow slaughter) leads me to think that there is no proper safeguard available there either. The Constitution is a terrific document, but it is also one that has suppressed the Hindu majoritarian sentiment. We are living through times when this suppres-

sion is being popularly rejected. The path to getting everyone to fall in line is open and it lies through such provisions as we have seen. It is no good to say these are only directive principles or whatever else because our experience shows that this is no defence. If something is "in the Constitution", that is the end of it.

Going through the list, some of the clauses are quite chilling, such as 38(1): "The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life."

Chilling, I accept, given the current mood more than anything else, but chilling nonetheless.

There are several (equal pay for women — Article 39d) that I suspect will not be taken up with any degree of seriousness. It is the ones that touch our current high-intensity nationalism that worry me, and these are the ones I call time bombs.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist



quick  
BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	45,553.96	-3.00
Nifty 50	13,328.40	-3.14
S&P 500*	3,669.42	-1.08
Dollar (₹)	73.79	-0.29
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.54	1.75
Euro (₹)	89.84	0.30
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,421▲117	0.23
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	50.11	-2.15
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.957	-0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.930	-0.018

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

FinMin releases  
₹6K cr to states  
for GST shortfall

The finance ministry on Monday released the eighth weekly instalment of ₹6,000 crore to the states to meet the GST compensation shortfall, taking the total amount released so far under this window to ₹48,000 crore. The Centre had set up a special borrowing window in October, 2020 to meet the estimated shortfall of ₹1.10 lakh crore in revenue arising on account of implementation of GST.

Booking for new  
Audi A4 sedan  
begins in India



German luxury carmaker Audi on Monday announced opening of bookings for its upcoming new version of A4 sedan in India. The fifth-generation Audi A4 powered by a 2.0-litre four-cylinder petrol engine can be booked with a booking amount of ₹2 lakh, either through online mode or at the company's dealerships. "This will be our first product launch for 2021," Audi India head Balbir Singh Dhillon said.

AstraZeneca gets  
nod to market  
asthma drug

Drug firm AstraZeneca Pharma on Monday said that it has received marketing authorisation from Drug Controller General of India (DGI) for Benralizumab solution, indicated as an add-on maintenance treatment for severe asthma. Benralizumab (Fasenra) is indicated as an add-on maintenance treatment for severe asthma with an eosinophilic phenotype in adult patients, the company said.

Vineet Agarwal  
takes over as  
Assocham chief

Logistics major Transport Corporation of India Limited managing director Vineet Agarwal has taken over as the new president of The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham). He replaces Niranjan Hiranandani, Co-Founder and Managing Director, Hiranandani Group of Companies. Sumant Sinha, CMD of ReNew Power, is the new senior vice-president of Assocham.



Corporate profits hit  
an all-time high in Q2

Margins widen on lower input costs, better utilisation

**Mumbai, Dec. 21:** Corporate profits rose 15 per cent to touch an all-time high in the September quarter as margins widened on softer input costs and better utilisation levels, the research arm of leading rating agency Crisil said on Monday. From an absolute perspective, the earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (Ebitda) touched an all-time high ₹1.60 lakh crore in the September quarter, as against ₹1.02 lakh crore in the preceding June quarter, it said.

It can be noted that the trend of companies' profits growing even as the economy contracts as a result of the pandemic has led some watchers to express concern claiming this is illustrative of widening inequalities. Crisil, which analysed a sample of 800 listed entities comprising 85 per cent of NSE's market cap

FPI inflows touch  
12-yr high in Nov.

**Mumbai, Dec. 21:** Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), which own more than 24 per cent of the domestic market, pumped in a record \$8.1 billion last month, highest in 12 years, and at \$5 billion to date, December also looks to get record inflows, says a foreign brokerage report.

At \$8.1 billion, India has received the highest FPI inflows among the emerging markets in November, as Brazil got only \$6.2 billion, South Korea (\$5.2 billion), Taiwan (\$4.5 billion) and Thailand at \$1.1 billion. This inflow had the valuation premium of India to other emerging markets in the MSCI Index shooting up by 5 percentage point to 46 per cent and is five per cent above the long-term average, says Bank of America Securities in a report.

From an employee costs perspective, which is leading to the concerns, it said 370 manufacturing firms in its sample showed a contraction of four per cent while the same for the service sector reported a moderate growth. The growth in profits came even as the revenues did not go up, the report said, pointing out that the topline was "stable" in Q2 as compared to the year-ago period after falling 29 per cent in the April-June quarter. The small enterprises have taken a brunt of the hit in revenue impact as compared to the large ones, it said. "Large players saw muted revenue growth. However, small players, which are typically low on bargaining power and cash crunched remained in the red. The smaller the company, the more excruciating the pain," it said.

companies contributed to the handsome profit growth. Aggregate operating profit margins improved by over one per cent despite a rise in raw material cost by large

rial cost during the quarter, it said. From an employee costs perspective, which is leading to the concerns, it said 370 manufacturing firms in its sample showed a contraction of four per cent while the same for the service sector reported a moderate growth. The growth in profits came even as the revenues did not go up, the report said, pointing out that the topline was "stable" in Q2 as compared to the year-ago period after falling 29 per cent in the April-June quarter. The small enterprises have taken a brunt of the hit in revenue impact as compared to the large ones, it said. "Large players saw muted revenue growth. However, small players, which are typically low on bargaining power and cash crunched remained in the red. The smaller the company, the more excruciating the pain," it said.

Delhi High Court refuses to restrain Amazon

**SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, DEC. 21**

In a relief to Amazon Inc, the Delhi High Court on Monday declined to grant an interim injunction to Future Group which had sought an order to restrain the global e-commerce company from interfering in the \$3.4-billion deal between Future

Group and RIL. However, the court found that the board resolution approving the Future-RIL deal was not prima facie void. "...the present application is disposed off, declining the grant of interim injunction as prayed for by Future Retail, however, the statutory authorities/regulators are directed to take the decision on

the applications/objections in accordance with the law," the court said. After Future Group announced the sale of its retail and wholesale business to Reliance Retail in August, Amazon had filed an arbitration petition with Emergency Arbitrator at Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) in October, claim-

ing that Future breached the contract which was entered while taking an indirect stake in their retail business by buying shares in Future Coupons. The High Court also observed that the parties have expressly chosen the SIAC rules as the curial law governing the conduct of arbitration proceedings.

SUCSEED VC FUND  
INKS DEALS WITH  
3 STARTUP FIRMS

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 21**

Hyderabad-based SucSEED Indovation, a Sebi registered Alternative Investment Fund (AIF-1) venture capital fund, on Monday said that it has raised ₹40 crore for its maiden fund. Through this fund, the venture fund plans to support over 50 startups till they become large enterprises. Making the announcement, Vikrant Varshney, co-founder and managing partner of the venture capital fund, said, "We are excited to state an overwhelming response and oversubscription to our first closing of the maiden ₹100 crore fund. Angel Investors, CXOs in large Domestic and global enterprises, family offices, and few family trusts have participated in the first successful closing of ₹40 crore." Announcing the details of new early-stage investments, Vikrant said "Indovation Fund has identified three startups — Stargate, Auris, and Freestand — for investment and has signed term sheets."

GMR gets nod for  
demerger plan

**New Delhi, Dec. 21:** GMR Infrastructure on Monday said that it has received consent from stock exchanges, with no adverse observations, on its proposed restructuring involving demerger of its non-airport vertical business. The company said it will file the scheme with the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) within six months. The company said it had filed an application to "the BSE and National Stock Exchange of India towards the composite scheme of amalgamation and arrangement amongst GMR Power Infra (GPIL), GMR Infrastructure, GMR Power and Urban Infra and their respective shareholders (scheme)". In August this year, GMR Infrastructure unveiled a strategic group restructuring plan involving demerger of non-airport vertical business as part of efforts to simplify the corporate holding structure. The restructuring is a

step in the right direction towards creating pure plays in different businesses of the group thereby attracting sector-specific global investors and unlocking value for the current shareholders of GMR Infrastructure, the company had then said in a statement. Separate listing of both the airport and non-airport businesses will also help in simplifying the corporate holding structure, the statement said. The vertical split demerger will go a long way in facilitating deeper understanding of the airport business independently as compared to other business verticals within the group, the statement added. Currently, GMR group operates the country's busiest aerodrome, Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi, and Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport. Also, it operates Cebu airport in the Philippines. — PTI

Global pharma may  
look at India for APIs

**SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, DEC. 21**

Global pharma companies are actively looking at de-risking their supply chain from China by adding new suppliers of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and India, which is increasing its production, is in a sweet spot. Global companies, especially those based in the US and Europe, are actively looking at de-risking their supply chain from China. "They have three options: They can either produce APIs in-house or outsource manufacturing to other US or Europe-based companies. The third option is to choose a supplier from a developing country ex-China. However, the first two options are not viable for their entire portfolio, leaving the third option," finds Emkay Global Financial Services. Indian companies have an edge, given their long history of supplying formulations and APIs globally, better quality and regulatory compliance and better supply reliability. However, the financial

89% people keen to  
resume travel: Survey

**New Delhi, Dec. 21:** Travel services firm Thomas Cook India and its Group Firm SOTC Travel on Monday said that 89 per cent of respondents in a survey conducted by them across tier-1 and 2 cities in India displayed keen interest to resume travel, revealing resurgence of consumer confidence.

Thomas Cook India and its group company surveyed over 2,700 customers to identify emerging consumer behaviours and trends that will drive travel preferences during the COVID-19 era, a joint survey report, enclosed with a regulatory filing, said. "A combination of lockdown fatigue and strong pent-up demand, coupled with positive sentiment due to announcements on

With health and safety topping the priority list in travel decisions, the Thomas Cook survey revealed that 73 per cent respondents are willing to increase spends to ensure higher levels of health and safety on their holiday.

the vaccine saw 89 per cent respondents displaying keen interest to resume travel," it added. About 67 per cent respondents are willing to travel in the next 6 months while 33 per cent indicated that they would wait for the launch of the vaccine, according to the survey. "Respondents continue to display an increasing focus on hygiene and safety — with 93 per cent

respondents highlighting this as the most important factor while deciding a holiday," Thomas Cook India said. Out of the 2,700 respondents across the tier I and tier II cities, 52 per cent stated that they are likely to take a domestic holiday, while 48 per cent of respondents likely to take an international holiday, it added. With health and safety topping the priority list in travel decisions, 73 per cent respondents said that they are willing to increase spends to ensure higher levels of health and safety on their holiday, the filing said. In the absence of their annual summer vacation and short breaks this year, Indians are also opting for a longer duration of stay, it added. — PTI

Most Indians seek to buy  
5G ready smartphones

**New Delhi, Dec. 21:** Around 83 per cent people in a survey in India shared that 5G is one of the factors that they consider while buying a new phone and nearly three in every five existing premium smartphone users are looking to upgrade their device to the next generation technology, according to a report released by Cybermedia Research. According to the survey, 81 per cent respondents prefer Oppo for 5G smartphone and 79 per cent opted for Samsung.

The global survey conducted in India, China and West Europe found that 5G users, where the service is available, have experienced better video calls, faster downloads and ability to stream ultra high definition videos and satisfaction level from 5G is around 80 per cent. The technology is pushing growth of video content creation in markets where it is available and the same is expected to follow in India as well, according to the report. "In global markets, 5G

smartphones are fuelling video content creation and consumption, video calling, as well as use cases such as mobile gaming, among others," CMR industry intelligence group head Prabhu Ram said. "I believe that when 5G becomes available in India within the next two years, it will give a considerable thrust to the increasing trend of short-form video creation and sharing, amongst millennials," the industry intelligence group head said

US CONGRESS SEALS  
NEARLY \$1-TRILLION  
AGREEMENT ON  
COVID-19 RELIEF

**Washington, Dec. 22:** Top Capitol Hill negotiators sealed a deal on Sunday on an almost \$1 trillion Covid-19 economic relief package, finally delivering long-overdue help to businesses and individuals and providing money to deliver vaccines to a nation eager for them. The agreement, announced by Senate leaders, would establish a temporary \$300 per week supplemental jobless benefits and \$600 direct stimulus payments to most Americans, along with a new round of subsidies for hard-hit businesses and money for schools, health care providers and renters facing eviction. The House was expected to vote on the legislation on very late Sunday or Monday and Senate action would follow. Lawmakers are eager to leave Washington and close out a tumultuous year. A breakthrough came on late Saturday in a fight over Federal Reserve emergency powers that was resolved by the Senate's top Democrat, Chuck Schumer of New York, and conservative Republican Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania. That led to a final round of negotiations. The final agreement is the largest spending measure yet. It combines COVID-19 relief with a \$1.4 trillion government-wide funding plan and lots of other unrelated measures on taxes, health, infrastructure and education. Passage is nearing as coronavirus cases and deaths spike and evidence piles up that the economy is struggling. Late-breaking decisions would limit the \$300 per week bonus jobless benefits — one half the supplemental federal unemployment benefit provided under the CARES Act in March — to 10 weeks instead of 16 weeks as before. The direct \$600 stimulus payment to most people is also half the March payment, subject to the same income limits in which an individual's payment begins to phase out after \$75,000. — AP



impact of the decision of global companies will take time as adding an API supplier will take 6-18 months, depending on regulatory pathway. Production-linked incentive schemes and bulk drug parks will increase production of APIs, especially the 53 APIs included in the PLI scheme. They will also lower the cost differential between India and China to close to zero. According to Ravi Uday Bhaskar, director general of the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil), the schemes will help increase India's production of chemicals and intermediates. "We are trying to consolidate our position in generic formulations as well as APIs.

Currently, China is the largest supplier of APIs. We need to work on improving our cost efficiency as well," he said. The PLI scheme and bulk drug parks will address most of the key elements needed to improve cost efficiency. Higher volumes, lower cost of utilities such as electricity, steam, warehousing, lower effluent treatment costs, cost of labour and technology are the key drivers of efficiency. Bulk drug park scheme will address utilities costs and effluent treatment costs, while PLI scheme's 20 per cent incentive on fermentation based APIs and 10 per cent for chemical-based API will further bridge the cost gap.

FOCUS | PROFIT

Government is keen on increasing profitability to realise more value during stake sale

Centre plans tough annual targets for PSUs

**New Delhi, Dec. 21:** India plans to set tough financial targets for state-run firms to try to improve their valuations ahead of a push by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to privatise some companies, according to a draft government document and sources. The government, which is trying to rein in its fiscal deficit, wants state-run firms to focus on improving market capitalisation and dividend payouts from the 2021-22 fiscal year, starting April, as well as ramping up the sale of non-core assets, the sources said. State-run companies have traditionally largely targeted raising output

and increasing revenues, rather than improving efficiency and valuations, contributing to years of share price underperformance versus the broader market. "The companies need to raise their valuation and profitability in a changing business environment. Then only we will be able to get a better price (from stake sales). Shareholders and investors should be rewarded," said a government source with knowledge of the plan. After regaining power in 2019, Modi's government prepared a plan to raise as much as ₹3.25 lakh crore over five years by selling down its stakes

- The government wants state-run firms to focus on improving market capitalisation and dividend payouts from the 2021-22 fiscal year, starting April, as well as ramping up the sale of non-core assets, the sources said.
- For unlisted companies an improvement in earnings per share will be a key parameter instead of market capitalisation, the document showed.

in companies including Oil and Natural Gas Corp, Indian Oil Corp, NMDC Ltd, Coal India, Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd and BEMIL Ltd. It announced moves to privatise companies in non-strategic parts of the economy and reduce the number of firms in key sectors. The government

has already initiated steps to privatise Bharat Petroleum, Container Corp and Shipping Corp. However, weak investor sentiment and limited demand have led to delays. So far this fiscal year to end-March 2021, the government has raised only a tenth of its targeted ₹1.2 lakh crore

sale. The planned changes in annual targets could be announced in next year's federal budget, due in February, a second government source said. "The state run companies will need to deploy funds raised through asset monetisation for issues like debt repayment. They should have return on capital employed and return on equity quite high on the margin," the source said. For the first time, India will include annual targets for state-run companies on metrics such as earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA), according to the sources

and a document on the draft guidelines, which is currently before a government committee. Other targets will include increasing market capitalisation or share price, as well as measures such as return on net worth and capital employed, they said. For unlisted companies an improvement in earnings per share will be a key parameter instead of market capitalisation, the document showed. Managers at state-run companies will have their bonuses and incentives linked to meeting the annual targets. The finance ministry did not respond to emails seeking comments. — Reuters



## SHORT TAKES

## Man Utd revel in 6-2 win vs Leeds

**Manchester:** Manchester United waited 16 years to play old rivals Leeds in the English Premier League, and then made it look distinctly second-class. United charged to a 6-2 victory on Sunday, though both teams could easily have scored more, as they roared back into the EPL title race in third. The easy win put United ahead of Tottenham, which swept United aside 6-1 in October. Scott McTominay looked like one of the Premier League's top scorers as Man United swept into an early lead over Leeds.

Defensive midfielder McTominay who hadn't scored in the EPL since March netted in the second and third minutes after he was left plenty of space to run through the Leeds defense. Bruno Fernandes and Victor Lindelof extended United's lead amid more static defending from Leeds, with more goals from Daniel James and Fernandes in the second half. — AP

## Mariners give BFC the blues

**Goa:** David Williams' 33rd-minute strike proved the difference as ATK Mohun Bagan got the better of Bengaluru FC in the Indian Super League at the Fatorda Stadium on Monday. The Australian scored his first goal of the campaign with a stunner which was enough to inflict on Bengaluru, their first defeat of the season. The win took the Kolkata side level to 16 points from seven matches, the same as Mumbai City FC. Bengaluru stayed third with 12 points.

ATKMB looked threatening from the start and had good opportunities to convert their dominance into goals. But Manvir Singh saw both his efforts easily saved by the keeper during the first quarter. ATKMB deservedly took the lead at the half-hour mark.

## Benzema leads Madrid to win

**Barcelona:** Karim Benzema scored one goal and set up another to lead Real Madrid to a 3-1 win at Elbar, keeping the defending champions level on points with Atletico Madrid at the top of the Spanish league. Zinedine Zidane's side is behind Atletico on goal difference. The city rivals are three points ahead of Real Sociedad and eight points ahead of Barcelona, who are in fifth place behind Villarreal. Benzema opened the scoring in the sixth minute on Sunday when he controlled an expert pass from Rodrygo before knocking the ball past goalkeeper Marko Dmitrovic. The French striker assisted Luka Modric in the 12th after he found the Croatia midfielder arriving unmarked at the edge of the area. Modric fired a right-footed strike into the net to score what proved to be the winning goal. — AP

## AC Milan's Leao scores in 6 secs!

**Milan:** AC Milan forward Rafael Leao scored the fastest-ever goal in Serie A history on Sunday, netting after just six seconds in a 2-1 win at Sassuolo which kept his side top of the table ahead of city rivals Inter Milan. Milan, chasing a first Serie A title since 2011, launched straight into attack from kick-off.

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**Big Bash League:** Sydney Thunder vs Perth Scorchers from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

## FOOTBALL

**Italian League:** Crotone vs Parma from 11 pm, Juventus vs Fiorentina from 1.45 pm (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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

## WWE

**WWE Raw:** Bouts from 6.30 am on Sony Ten 1, HD

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## All eyes on Jadeja

## Ravindra likely to replace Vihari in playing XI for second Test

**Adelaide, Dec. 21:** The Indian team management will be keenly monitoring Ravindra Jadeja's progress leading up to the Boxing Day Test against Australia this weekend as, if fit, the all-rounder could walk into the playing XI in place of Hanuma Vihari.

Jadeja, who suffered a concussion during the first T20 international, also sustained a hamstring injury which ruled him out of the first Test.

However, over the past few days when India were playing the Test match, Jadeja has slowly returned to the nets.

It has been learnt that the senior all-rounder is recovering well but it can't be said with certainty that he will be 100 per cent fit for the second Test in Melbourne starting on December 26.

But if fit, the axe will fall on Andhra Pradesh batsman Vihari, not because of his low scores in the Adelaide Test but purely based on the best combination that Ajinkya Rahane and Ravi Shastri can put on the field.

"If Jadeja gets fit to bowl long spells, then there is no debate at all. Jadeja replaces Vihari on the basis of his all-round skills. Also it gives us an option to play five bowlers at the MCG," a senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

With Mohammed Shami already ruled out of the series because of a wrist fracture, India might just be tempted to go in with five specialist bowlers instead of the usual four, which has been their template for years.

## INDIA'S PRACTICE CANCELLED

The Indian team had a scheduled practice session at the Adelaide Oval on Monday but due to steady rain, it had to be cancelled.

With skipper Virat



India's Ravindra Jadeja stretches during a practice session in Adelaide on December 16, ahead of the first Test against Australia. — AFP

Kohli set to leave for India on Tuesday and the squad travelling to Melbourne, the skipper apparently had a chat with his team on the way forward after the 36 all-out debacle here.

## ROHIT QUARANTINING IN SYDNEY

Senior batsman Rohit Sharma can start training from January 3 ahead of the Sydney Test. He is currently locked in a hard quarantine in a two-room apartment in Sydney.

The BCCI, at the moment, can't shift Rohit in the middle of quarantine.

— PTI

## BOXING DAY TEST IS CRUCIAL, SAYS BURNS

**Adelaide, Dec. 21:** If opener Joe Burns' views are any indication, another onerous task awaits an embattled Indian team, as Australia are entering the second Test believing that a favourable result for them in Melbourne could "decide the fate" of the four-match series.

"We have got some scars as well, we just have to prepare well, start well and carry on the momentum from the last game," Burns said during a virtual press conference on Monday.

"We know that Indians are going to bounce back in

**We know that Indians are going to bounce back in the next Test, which is going to play a crucial role in (deciding the) fate of the series.**

— **JOE BURNS**  
Australia opener

the next Test, which is going to play a crucial role in (deciding the) fate of the series."

The absence of Kohli and Mohammed Shami will be "big losses" but Burns is expecting a strong comeback by the visitors.

"I think Shami and Virat

are obviously big losses for India. In saying that the Indian team does have very good depth as well. So, they are still going to be very challenging," Burns said.

"It is always hard to replace world class players like that, but when we look (at the guys) that they got to come in, we are going to prepare well for the next game. We know that Indians are going to bounce back strongly."

Shami was ruled out of the remainder of the Test series after a nasty blow on his hand led to a wrist fracture. — PTI

## KALLIS NAMED ENG BATTING CONSULTANT

**London, Dec. 21:** South African legend Jacques Kallis was on Monday appointed as the batting consultant of the England team for next month's two-match Test tour of Sri Lanka.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement that the team will depart for Sri Lanka on January 2.

"Seven coaches will join the squad for the two-Test tour," the ECB said.

"Former South Africa all-rounder Jacques Kallis joins the England setup for the first time as batting coaching consultant," it added.

The 45-year-old Kallis worked in a similar role with the Proteas last year in the Test series against England. — PTI

## Haddin feels India can't recover

**Melbourne, Dec. 21:** Former Australia wicket-keeper Brad Haddin reckons the opening day/night Test was India's best shot at winning in the ongoing series as it will be very difficult for the visitors to script a turnaround after demoralizing eight-wicket loss in Adelaide.

India were bundled out for their lowest-ever Test score of 36 in their second innings as Australia claimed an eight-wicket win in the pink-ball Test to take a 1-0 lead in the Border-Gavaskar trophy.

"I don't think they will (recover from the loss)," Haddin told *SEN Radio*.

The 43-year-old, who featured in 66 Tests for Australia, feels the conditions at the Adelaide Oval were conducive to the Indian bowling attack.

"I thought their only



Brad Haddin

opportunity to win a Test match was the first Test at Adelaide.

"I thought the conditions suited their bowling and I thought they'd get enough runs. But I don't think they'll be able to

turn it around.

"You've got one Test up at Brisbane where no one beats Australia. These next two wickets will be suited to Indian cricket, but I don't think they'll be able to turn it around,"

Haddin added.

India created history by registering their maiden series win Down Under in 2018-19 on the back of a lethal pace-bowling attack.

However, the visitor's are without the experienced Ishant Sharma and Mohammed Shami.

"They had a great bowling attack the last time they came out here, and now with Shami out with a broken arm they don't have enough depth to cover that," Haddin said.

Reflecting on the Indian batting collapse Haddin said "I think it's really concerning".

"Yes India were driving the game and we were talking at the start of day three about how Australia would get back into it, but the collapse they had has to leave some marks." — PTI

## Chappell bats for on-field safety rules

**Adelaide, Dec. 21:** Former Australia captain Ian Chappell has advocated a review of on-field safety measures in cricket, saying it would be a good idea to "strengthen any law" that can protect tailenders when they face short-pitched bowling.

The run-up to the Test series between India and Australia was marked by a series of blows to head and concussion-related substitutes, reviving the debate around the use of bouncers by fast bowlers. Chappell rejected the idea of banning the delivery altogether.

"Any talk of completely banning the bouncer should be dismissed as quickly as bowlers removed New Zealand batting bunny Chris Martin,"

Chappell wrote in *ESPNcricinfo*.

Instead, the batting great added, "The time is ripe for a worldwide review into on-field safety, including batsmen, bowlers and umpires, with batting technique a top priority."

"In conducting this review it would be appropriate to strengthen any law regarding the protection of tailenders in facing short-pitched bowling."

Being one of the finest experts of the game, Chappell is very much mindful of the fact that it is meant for the protection of players, especially the tailenders.

He said complaining about a player not being a like-for-like replacement



"seems pointless".

A concussion Ravindra Jadeja being replaced by leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal in the T20 series is a case in point.

"The heat rose in this argument when Chahal claimed three wickets and the player-of-the-match award in India's narrow victory. Complaining about a player not being a like-for-like replacement

**The time is ripe for a worldwide review into on-field safety, including batsmen, bowlers and umpires, with batting technique a top priority.**

— **IAN CHAPPELL**  
Former Australia captain

seems pointless; it's always going to be difficult to please all parties."

Chappell also stressed on improving the batsmen's technique to face the bouncer.

"... Just addressing the concussion-sub issue doesn't get to the heart of the matter — it's the rising number of batsmen hit on the head that then leads to the need for a

replacement player.

"Following the tragic death of Phil Hughes, Cricket Australia conducted a safety review. Incredibly, this process didn't include a look at technique, which is the most important aspect in ensuring fewer batsmen receive blows to the head," Chappell said.

"Often batsmen duck into a short ball and get hit. Many times a ball only bounces between waist and chest height but still hits a batsman in the head because he has taken his eye off the ball and ducked. Will Pucovski's latest concussion is a case in point."

He said "replacing a concussed player is not such a perplexing problem" during the pandemic. — PTI

## Sindhu, Saina ready for action

**New Delhi, Dec. 21:** India's top shuttlers P.V. Sindhu and Saina Nehwal will be seen in action for the first time since the coronavirus-forced break when they compete in three upcoming tournaments in Bangkok, including the prestigious BWF World Tour Finals.

With Olympic qualifications in mind, the Badminton Association of India (BAI) on Monday announced a strong eight-member squad to participate in the three upcoming tournaments, scheduled in January.

The team, consisting of Olympic-bound shuttlers Sindhu, Saina, B. Sai Praneeth, Kidambi Srikanth, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, Chirag Shetty, Ashwini Ponappa and N. Sikki Reddy, will begin their campaign with Yonex Thailand Open from January 12-17.

That will be followed by Toyota Thailand Open (January 19-24) and the prestigious HSBC BWF World Tour Finals which is rescheduled for January 27-31.

After the coronavirus outbreak in March disrupted the sporting world resulting in cancellation or postponement of a number of tournaments, this will be the first time that top Indian players, apart from Srikanth, will feature in any international tournament.

The former World No. 1, Srikanth had made a comeback when he played the Denmark Open in October. "We are very happy to see badminton finally getting back on the court. It gives us hope that tournaments can eventually make a steady comeback in near future. Most of our players haven't played tournaments in the last 7-8 months," BAI general secretary Ajay Singhania said.

"However, they have been training to the best of their abilities at the camp. The purpose of sending a full-strength team in these tournaments so that players can get the much-needed tournament practice ahead of the Olympic qualifiers," he added.

The team will also be accompanied by singles foreign coaches Agus Dwi Santoso and Park Tae Sang and doubles coach Dwi Kristiawan alongside support staff consisting of Kiran Challagundla, Johnson, Evangelina Baddam and M. Srikanth. — PTI

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## KY AHAMED DECLARED CHAMP IN 301-400cc

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, DEC. 21

TVS Racing's KY Ahamed from Chennai was declared rider champion in the premier Pro-Stock 301-400cc category of the MRF MMSC fmscl Indian National Motorcycle Racing Championship 2020 which concluded at the MMRT, on Sunday.

The result was withheld last evening due to a protest questioning the legality of a part (radiator) used in Ahamed's motorcycle. The Race Direction, following a scrutiny of the vehicle, turned down the protest, declaring the part (radiator) legal and that the modification was in line with the prescribed technical regulations.

Chennai-based Ahamed, 23, who had two wins, finished with a tally of 121 points in the championship, just five ahead of Bengaluru's Anish Damodar Shetty (Race Concepts).

Shetty, 26, had four wins in eight starts, but drew blank in two races in the

final round which cost him dear.

**National champions Pro-Stock 301-400cc - Rider:** KY Ahamed (Chennai, TVS Racing). **Team:** TVS Racing. **Manufacturer:** TVS. **Pro-Stock 165cc Open - Rider:** Jagan Kumar (Chennai, TVS Racing). **Team:** TVS Racing. **Manufacturer:** TVS.

**Novice (Stock 165cc) - Rider:** Mohan Babu (Chennai, Privateer). **Team:** Sparks Racing. **Manufacturer:** Yamaha. **Girls (Stock 165cc) - Rider:** Anne Jennifer (Chennai, Sparks Racing). **Team:** Gusto Racing. **Manufacturer:** Yamaha.

**O n e - M a k e Championship:** TVS **Open:** Abhishek Vasudev (Bengaluru). **Novice:** Navaneeth Kumar (Puducherry). **Girls:** Jagruti Kiran Penkar (Kalyan). **Idemitsu Honda India Talent Cup - Open (NSF 250R):** Sarthak Chavan (Pune). **Novice (CBR 150R):** Shyam Sundar (Chennai).



## Westwood voted golfer of the year

**Virginia Water (UK), Dec. 21:** Lee Westwood was voted as the European Tour's golfer of the year for 2020 on Monday, winning the award for the fourth time in his career after ending the season as the Race to Dubai champion at the age of 47.

Westwood started the 27th year of his professional career by winning the Abu Dhabi Championship to become the first active golfer to win a title across four separate decades.

He ended 2020 by being crowned the tour's No. 1 player for the third time and 20 years after he first won what was formerly known as the Order of Merit title.

"I am very honoured and extremely flattered to have been named European Tour's golfer of the year as

I know the competition for the award this year would have been extremely high," said Westwood, who also won the accolade in 1998, 2000 and 2009.

Westwood praised the European Tour for putting on a full schedule this year in difficult times during the coronavirus pandemic. An elder statesman of the tour, the former top-ranked player played his part by hosting the British Masters in July, a tournament that marked the full resumption of the golf tour's 2020 season following a three-month stoppage.

"His performances and his professionalism are matched by his longevity and his commitment to European golf," the tour's CEO, Keith Pelley, said about Westwood. — AP