

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | WEDNESDAY | 9 DECEMBER 2020



**NATION | 4**

**Modi's public engagements up 25% in Sept-Nov**



**WORLD | 5**

**UK, EU head for make or break Brexit meet**

**SPORTS | 8**

**Breakdance is now an Olympics event**



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Vol. 25 No. 222 Established 1940 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

WEATHER

Max: 32.0°C  
Min: 17.0°C  
RH: 73%  
Rainfall: NIL

Forecast: Mostly Clear.  
Max/Min temp.  
32/17 °C

COVID-19  
COUNT

CASES  
(+38,059)  
97,35,902

DEATHS  
(+472)  
1,41,397

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+682)  
TS: 2,74,540  
(+551)  
AP: 8,72,839

(+3)  
1,477  
(+4)  
7042

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

6,76,64,377

DEATHS  
15,45,949

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES  
218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana  
Tithi: Kartika Bahula  
Navami till 3.13 pm  
Star: Uttara till 12.28 pm  
Varjyam: 8.17 pm to 9.47 pm  
Durmuhurtam: 11.46 am to 12.30 pm  
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm  
HIJRI CALENDAR  
Rabbi-ul Akhri 23, 1442 AH  
PRAYERS  
(ROYAL MOSQUE)  
Fajar: 5.30 am  
Zohar: 1.30 pm  
Asar: 4.15 pm  
Maghrib: 5.38 pm  
Isha: 8.30 pm  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.21 AM  
SUNSET TODAY 5.29 PM  
MOONRISE TODAY 00.42 AM  
MOONSET TOMORROW 1.58 PM

COUNTER POINT

Hike prices as much as you want... people are busy with farmers!

SHORT BRIEF

HC REFUSES TO STAY SEC ORDER ON PR POLLS

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 8

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Tuesday refused to issue an interim order directing the State Election Commission to stay the execution of its proceedings to conduct gram panchayat polls in February 2021, and directed the poll body to file a counter-affidavit and posted the next hearing on December 14.

A division bench heard a petition filed by the government challenging the election proceedings issued by the SEC on November 11 to conduct gram panchayat polls in February 2021. The state government contended that the prevailing atmosphere in the state was not conducive to conduct polls.

■ Full report on page 2

Mt Everest now taller by 86 cm

Kathmandu/Beijing: The world's highest peak is now taller by 86 centimetres, Nepal and China jointly announced on Tuesday after they remeasured Mt. Everest at 8,848.86 metres, over six decades after India conducted the previous measurement in 1954. The revised height puts an end to the decades-long dispute.

## Farm chemicals cause of mystery illness in Eluru

**SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN/VADREVI SRINIVAS | DC VIJAYAWADA/KAKINADA, DEC. 8**

Residues of pesticides and preservatives that farmers use to keep vegetables fresh and fish feed containing heavy metals like lead and nickel were reported to have caused mystery illness, affecting nearly 536 people in Eluru in West Godavari.

State health authorities said farmers use pesticides, preservatives and heavy metals extensively for vegetables and fish and these chemicals might have entered the body of the consumers, affecting their health.

In its preliminary report, New Delhi-based All India Institute of Medical Sciences confirmed the high presence of heavy metals like lead and nickel in the blood samples of 10 affected patients, substantiating the suspicion of the state health authorities that these metals could be one of the prime reasons for causing mystery illness.

● **STATE HEALTH** authorities said farmers use pesticides, preservatives and heavy metals extensively for vegetables and fish and these chemicals might have entered the body of the consumers, affecting their health.

The state health authorities of blood and urine of the affected persons to AIIMS for investigation and their reports are expected to be out by Wednesday afternoon.

Eluru government hospital medical superintendent Dr A.V.R. Mohan said, "Though the root cause of the mystery illness is yet to be found out, based on preliminary assessment, we understand that consumption of vegetables, fruits and fish — having deposits of residues of pesticides and heavy metals — without cleaning them properly might be one of the reasons for triggering such an illness."

■ **Page 2: Only 64 patients are being treated now**

## State asserts its right to decide capital location

**K.M. PATNAIK | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 8**

The State Legislature has the right to make laws to create three capitals, said Dushyant Dave, a well known Supreme Court lawyer, arguing on behalf of the state government in the High Court. The court began hearing the arguments on the three-capitals issue on Tuesday.

Dave said the decision to set up the capital city would come under the purview of the elected state government and hence the court should not prevent the government from taking such a step.

"The Legislative Assembly works for the welfare of people and is well aware of what is good or bad for them. Hence, ill-intentions should not be attributed to the Assembly," Dave argued in the court.

He said people elect the leaders with a hope that

they would do good for them, and the courts should not interfere in the legislative affairs of the state. He also said that the government has the right to inquire and take action after a review if the previous government had taken anti-people decisions.

The senior lawyer also brought to the notice of the court that the capital city at Amaravati would cost over Rs 1 lakh crore and asked if such a huge amount was spent on one place what would be the fate of the other regions.

"It is like a waste of public money if huge amounts were spent on one place," Dave told the court.

He said some people with vested interest approached the High Court presuming that their lands would lose value if the capital were shifted out.

■ **Page 2: State needs to develop Seema, N Andhra**

## Shah's bid to break deadlock fails, today's talks ruled out

**Parts of Bharat shut, bandh peaceful; emergency services function normally**

**SANJAY KAW | DC with agency inputs NEW DELHI, DEC. 8**

Union home minister Amit Shah's meeting with representatives of farmers' unions on Tuesday remained inconclusive as the government categorically stated that the new farm laws will not be repealed. The proposed meeting of the farmer unions with the government on Wednesday at Vigyan Bhawan has also been deferred.

The meeting with 13 farmers' unions was convened by Shah to break the deadlock over the three farm laws on a day when the growers had called for a nationwide strike supported by political parties.

Farmers' leaders remained adamant on their stand and made it clear that they will call off their agitation only after their demands are fully met. This was the first time that Shah met farmers' leaders to discuss their concerns and demands. The meeting lasted for over two-and-a-half hours. At the meeting, Shah proposed written assurances on amendments on minimum support price and APMC. The new proposals will be given to farm unions on Wednesday.

"The sixth round of talks between farmer leaders and the government scheduled for Wednesday has been cancelled," All India Kisan Sabha general secretary Hannan Mollah said after the meeting. Mollah said the government will instead send a proposal for the consideration of the farmers. The meeting, however, appeared to have created a discord among the organisations spearheading the protests for the past 12 days with the head of the BKU (Ugrahan), the largest outfit in the bloc, questioning the rationale of the talks a day before the scheduled consultations.



The Vijayawada to Chennai National Highway near Tadepalli on Tuesday wears a deserted look near Tadepalli on Tuesday due to Bharat Bandh call given by Opposition parties in support of agitating farmers in New Delhi. — DC

## Farmers' bandh evokes mixed response in state

**DC CORRESPONDENTS NELLORE, DEC. 8**

The 'Bharat Bandh' call given by opposition parties in support of agitating farmers in New Delhi over the three agriculture bills evoked mixed response in the state on Tuesday.

Apart from farmers and trade union associations, leaders and cadres of Left parties and the Congress took an active part in organising the bandh.

Educational institutes and government offices remained closed, RTC buses were off the roads

but commercial establishments opened and buses were operated after 1 pm in most of the districts. In fact, it was business as usual after 3 pm across the state.

APSRTC authorities informed that out of 6,810 buses to be operated, they managed to operate only 4,095 up to 5.00 pm and this resulted in revenue loss to the tune of ₹5 crore.

In Krishna district, especially in Vijayawada, several protesters staged a rasta roko on the national highway connecting Vijayawada and

Hyderabad affecting the vehicular traffic for some time.

CPI state secretary K. Ramakrishna and CPM state secretary P. Madhu and several others took part in the stir. With RTC buses remaining off the road till Tuesday afternoon, long-distance travellers faced hardships waiting at RTC bus stations for a long time.

In Guntur district, the protestors staged protests at the RTC Bus Complex.

■ **Page 3: Bandh gets wider support in Kurnool**

Hours ahead of a meeting with Shah, farmers have reiterated their stance of not compromising on their demand that the three contentious farm laws be repealed. "There is no mid-way, we will demand just 'yes' or 'no' from Home Minister Amit Shah at

today's meeting," farmer leader Rudru Singh Mansa said.

The participating leaders included Hannan Mollah of the All India Kisan Sabha, Rakesh Tikait of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), Gurnam Singh, Shiv Kumar Kakka.

Meanwhile, life was disrupted in several parts of the country on Tuesday as shops and commercial establishments stayed closed, transport was affected and protesters squatted on key roads and rail tracks in response to a nationwide bandh called

by farmers' unions in protest against the Centre's three farm laws. The farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, blocked key roads during their four-hour "chakka jam" protest from 11 am. Protesters also blocked railway tracks at several places in West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha.

Emergency services and banks, however, functioned as usual during the pan-India shutdown, backed by about 15 Opposition parties and several trade unions. The major impact of the protests, which were peaceful, was felt not only in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi, but also in Odisha, Maharashtra, Bihar and Jharkhand. In Rajasthan, where "mandis" were closed but shops remained opened.

In the national capital, where most main markets were open but app-based cabs were off the roads, tension spiralled when the ruling AAP alleged that the Delhi Police had put Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal under house arrest. However police denied the same.

## Survey may turn tricky in border villages

**NAGABHUSHANAM HOSKOTE | DC ANANATAPUR, DEC. 8**

The state government's decision to re-survey land is going to be a difficult task for survey teams at interstate border mandals in the state even though it planned to take assistance

from the Survey of India. The government is planning to conduct a full-fledged resurvey and digitisation of all lands in urban and rural areas across the state from January 1, 2021, to streamline the land records management system in the state.

An unscientific division of areas between AP and Karnataka has led to many AP villages becoming enclaves surrounded by Karnataka. Though the re-survey aims to solve these issues, a senior surveyor said the new resurvey could raise new issues between AP and

Karnataka, which already have many interstate disputes over borders.

There are many villages which have no direct access from the state and officials need to travel from Karnataka. Five mandals in the Madakasira Assembly constituency have no direct access

from the state and one has to pass through Karnataka to reach them. According to old survey records, the Madakasira segment could be reached only through Honnampalli in Parigi mandal.

■ **Page 2: State may use drones for re-survey**

**RAY | OF LIGHT**

**US drug regulator to clear vaccine after a panel of scientists certify its safety and efficacy**

## US FDA finds Covid vaccine 'strongly protective'

**Washington, Dec. 8:** Documents released by US regulators on Tuesday confirmed that Pfizer and BioNTech's Covid-19 vaccine was strongly protective against Covid-19 — offering the world's first detailed look at the evidence behind the shots.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) posted its analysis online even as across the Atlantic, Britain on Tuesday began vaccinating its oldest citizens with the Pfizer-BioNTech shots. But the US judges experimental vaccines in a unique way: On Thursday, the FDA will convene what's essentially a science court that will debate — in public and live-streamed — just how strong the data backing the shots really is.

A panel of independent

scientists will pick apart the FDA's first-pass review before recommending whether the vaccine appears safe and effective enough for millions of Americans. The FDA, which typically follows the panel's advice, is expected to issue a decision in the days following the review. If given the green light, the first recipients would be health care workers and nursing home residents according to plans laid out by each state.

Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech previously reported the shots appear 95 per cent effective at preventing mild to severe Covid-19 disease in a large, ongoing study. That's based on the first 170 infections detected. Only eight of the infections were among volunteers given the real vaccine

while the rest had received a dummy shot.

That was measured soon after study participants got their second dose. Still unknown is how long that protection lasts. "We're looking at the best possible data," Dr Paul Offit of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and an FDA adviser recently cautioned.

People worry, reasonably, how about six months later? The other critical issue: Safety.

Pfizer has reported no serious side effects. Some recipients experience flu-like reactions — including fever, fatigue or muscle aches — especially after the required second dose. It's a sign the immune system is revving up, able to recognise and fight back if the real virus comes along. — AP



Margaret Keenan, 90, is applauded by staff as she returns to her ward after becoming the first patient in the UK to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine at University Hospital, Coventry, England, on Tuesday. — AP

■ **Report, another photo on Page 5**

## 90-YEAR-OLD GRANDMOM MAGGIE BECOMES 1ST PERSON TO COVID JAB

**London, Dec. 8:** A 90-year-old British grandmother, Margaret "Maggie" Keenan, on Tuesday became the first person in the world to receive the Pfizer jab against Covid-19 as the UK kicked off its biggest-ever vaccine campaign in history.

At 6.31 am GMT (12.01 pm IST) early riser Margaret, known to family and friends as Maggie, was given the life-saving jab by nurse May Parsons at her local hospital in Coventry to mark what the National Health Service (NHS) has dubbed a "landmark moment" on Vaccine Day in the fight against the deadly virus.

Maggie is among the first set of people contacted in advance by the NHS for the jab based on a pre-determined health risk criteria.

The second person vaccinated was 81-year-old William Shakespeare from Warwickshire, who said he was "pleased" to be given the jab. They're joined by an 87-year-old British Indian grandfather of nine Dr Hari Shukla and his 83-year-old wife who became the first Indian-origin couple in the world to get a vaccine against deadly Covid-19 disease.

■ **Full report on Page 5**



## SHORT TAKES

STATE MAY  
USE DRONES FOR  
RE-SURVEY

From Page 1

Former revenue minister N. Raghuvendra Reddy's native village Neelakantapuram in Madakasira mandal had no clear access from the state and people needed to cross Karnataka borders twice.

Mydugolam village, a gram panchayat in Lepakshi mandal, has no direct access into the state. The people have to cross Karnataka's villages to reach their mandal or divisional headquarters.

According to senior government officials, the digitisation of land records will eliminate any scope of manipulation which has become a significant menace after the bifurcation of the state.

The government is likely to use modern technologies such as drones, aerial photography and mobile workstations to conduct the resurvey. "The CM as also asked them to chalk out a programme to complete the entire resurvey of all lands in the state by the end of August 2023," sources said, adding that border areas need additional concentration to solve decades-old issues.

LVPEI BAGS  
GREENBERG  
AWARDDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 8

The Greenberg Prize — End Blindness 2020 was awarded to L.V. Prasad Eye Institute on the initiatives taken by them to eliminate blindness. Dr Gullapalli N. Rao, founder-chair of LVPEI is being presented the award in the 'Outstanding Achievement Prize category'.

"I feel humbled and honoured to accept this prestigious award on behalf of over the 3,000 strong family of L.V. Prasad Eye Institute and its numerous supporters all over the globe. Eliminating avoidable blindness by the year 2020 has been an aspiration of the global eye care community for over two decades. I want to place on record our gratitude to Sanford and Susan Greenberg End Blindness Foundation for recognising our contribution to this global effort. My heartiest congratulations to all the other winners," said a thrilled Dr Rao.

NO DISCUSSIONS  
HELD IN ASSEMBLY  
SESSIONS: TDDC CORRESPONDENT  
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM, DEC. 8

The Rajamahendravaram Rural MLA Gorantla Buchaiah Chowdary criticised the YSRC government in Assembly sessions. He told the reporters here on Tuesday that the government tried to suppress the voice of opposition by not giving opportunities to raise their voices. He said that the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had no courage to ask the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for sanctioning of funds for the development of the state and also Polavaram Project. He said that there were no discussions on public issues in the Assembly session and the Assembly passed several Bills to burden the people. He said that the minimum ethics were also not maintained in the Assembly and the government had no confidence to go for local body elections. He said that the YSRC leaders were paying interest on corruption, irregularities in sand, liquor, mafia, rowdism and other activities and in the process they were neglecting the development of the state.

BJP FOR NAMING  
POLAVARAM PROJECT  
AFTER VAJPAYEEDC CORRESPONDENT  
BHIMAVARAM, DEC. 8

Bharatiya Janata Party brought the name of the former Prime Minister late A.B. Vajpayee's name to the scene for Polavaram Project. The BJP Bhimavaram Unit President Ratnala Satyanarayana demanded the state government should name the Polavaram Project to late A.B. Vajpayee and also install the statue of Vajpayee at the project. He sent letters to the central and state governments and also the Polavaram Project Authority. He said that when Vajpayee was Prime Minister, he had made hectic efforts on linking rivers in the country and thus, the BJP demanded for construction of Polavaram Project for decades together.



Health minister A. Kali Krishna Srinivas inspects drinking water supply unit in Eluru on Tuesday.

— DC

Aarogyasri scheme to cover  
3 more types of diseases

Govt increases financial support to patients affected with convulsions

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, DEC. 8

Deputy Chief Minister and minister for health Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas announced that the state government issued an order extending Aarogyasri scheme to cover three types of diseases and also enhancement of financial support to the patients affected with convulsions.

The Deputy CM during his visit to the government hospital at Eluru on Tuesday said that the patients affected with convulsions would get ₹15,688 against ₹10,000 per head for getting medical aid. Similarly, eight types of blood tests are to be done free of cost under the scheme. In case of children affected with convulsions, they too get ₹12,732 per head against ₹10,262.

He also said that the patients affected with convulsions to get healthcare under the scheme for five

ONLY 64 PATIENTS ARE BEING  
TREATED NOW, REST DISCHARGED

From Page 1

The mystery illness affected at least 536 persons since Saturday. Out of them, only 64 are taking treatment as in-patients while the rest of them were discharged after recovery.

Twenty patients were referred to government hospitals in Vijayawada and Guntur also.

The health authorities maintain that the presence of pesticide residues and heavy metals like lead in the body will lead to convulsions among people as was the case in Eluru. No patient complained of fever and other symptoms and their recovery was

also fast — sometimes even without any medical support.

Experts from National Institute of Nutrition, National Institute of Virology, National Centre for Disease Control, AIIMS and World Health Organisation are involved in taking up a series of investigations to find out the reason for the mystery illness.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy enquired about the results of a series of tests conducted on the people affected by the mystery illness and directed the officials to find out how heavy metals entered people's bodies.

days unlike earlier practice of only three days. Each patient to be paid

₹900 per day in general ward and ₹2,000 per day in case treatment in ICU.

New Bhoomi Rakshana  
scheme launch on Dec. 21DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 8

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy announced that 'YSR Jagananna Saswata Bhoomi Hakku-Bhoomi Rakshana' scheme will be launched in the state on December 21.

The CM held a review meeting on implementation of the scheme with Deputy CM Dharmana Krishnadas and senior government officials here on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that a comprehensive land survey would be taken up and asked the officials to inform the people about how the survey would benefit them. He felt the need to provide high security features to the land records after completion of the survey to avoid any possible tampering and directed the officials to issue hard copy to the land owners.

The CM directed the officials to set up a new college at Tirupati to provide training for taking up the

● THE SURVEY of  
India is providing  
training on conduct  
of comprehensive  
survey of land

comprehensive land survey and told them to provide at least 50 acres site for the college. He also instructed the officials to construct the college building.

Meanwhile, the officials informed the CM about the conduct of comprehensive land survey. The survey would be taken up in about 1.26 lakh square kilometres covering villages, towns and cities with an exception for forest land. Out of 17,460 villages to be covered under the survey, 5,000 villages will be covered in the first phase, 6,500 villages in second phase and 5,500 villages in the third phase.

In towns and cities, survey would be held in 3,345.93 sq km area covering 10 lakh open plots, 40 lakh assessments and also in 2.26 crore acres where

108 AMBULANCES  
SHIFT 269 PATIENTS  
TO HOSPITALSDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 8

The 108 ambulance services shifted 269 persons affected with the mysterious illness to the government hospitals at Eluru, Vijayawada and Guntur so far.

The ambulance service authorities maintain that as soon as they received a call from the kin of the patients, they reached them and shifted them to the government hospitals quickly to help them get medical care. They say that they have noticed the family members becoming panic after witnessing how their loved ones are suddenly developing convulsions and helped them get some relief by shifting the affected people to the hospitals quickly.

90 lakh people are having land titles. The officials said that after completion of the survey, a land title card to be issued where the card would be having a unique identification number, measurements of the land, total area, name of the land owner with a photo and QR code.

They said that the Survey of India was providing training on conduct of comprehensive survey of land and added that the teams of officials allotted to each mandal would take up data processing and resurvey of the land. So far, 9,400 surveyors were trained by the Survey of India authorities.

The CM directed the officials to ensure availability of land registration services in the village secretariat soon after completion of the survey and instructed them to set up mobile tribunals to resolve any land disputes and felt the need to carry out any changes in the land records at the village secretariats only.

Venkaiah stresses need for  
student-entrepreneurshipDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 8

Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu on Tuesday emphasised that fostering student-entrepreneurship through innovation programmes was extremely critical and universities need to establish close linkage with industries to mentor and handhold students with novel business ideas.

Addressing the TIE Global Summit-2020 through video conferencing from Visakhapatnam, the Vice-President asked the universities to set up incubation centres to tap and nurture entrepreneurial talent among youngsters. He also appealed to the corporate sector to come forward to fund and promote an entrepreneurial ecosystem on university campuses.

The Ind-US Entrepreneurs (TiE) is a Silicon Valley-based non-profit organisation supporting start-ups through networking, and its Summit, 2020, will be showcasing opportunities to get mega investments into India.

Mentioning that the youth comprise about 65 per cent of India's population, the Vice-President stressed that the vast energies of the talented youth should be tapped fully and their mindset should be changed from being job-seekers to job creators. He also wanted a special drive to be launched for promoting entrepreneurship among women. There is a huge potential for promoting women entrepreneurs in the country, he said and expressed happiness over the fact that TiE has impacted 50,000 aspiring women entrepreneurs through mentoring.

Describing India as home to world's third-largest start-up ecosystem, Venkaiah Naidu quoted a recent NASSCOM that about 50 per cent of the Tech start-ups were confident of reaching revenues of pre-Covid-19 level.

Highlighting that entrepreneurship that it was not only about profits, Venkaiah Naidu said that it was also about making people's lives better through education, healthcare and basic human rights. "It is about valuing both competition and compassion," he added.

Talking about the challenges thrown up by the Covid-19 pandemic, the

V-P to rescue of  
woman patientDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, DEC. 8

In a humanitarian gesture, Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu came to the rescue of a young woman in Nellore suffering from a rare genetic disease fanconi anaemia and in need of an expensive peripheral blood stem cell transplant (PB SCT).

The Vice President initiative led to the pooling of ₹18 lakh for the treatment through various sources, including the wife and family members of the VP apart from his friends.

The victim identified as Divya Sree is a postgraduate in computer applications and her father Chechukumar is a conductor in RTC at Sullurpet depot.

Doctors of CMC Hospital at Vellore in Tamil Nadu underlined the need to perform allogeneic peripheral blood stem cell transplant (PB SCT) or haploidentical stem cell transplant on war-footing citing total infection to her lungs.

As the treatment cost of over ₹25 lakh is beyond his capacity, the hapless father wrote a letter to the Vice President seeking his help while explaining

about his weak financial status which is no match to the expenditure for the treatment.

Moved by the plight of the victim and her family, Mr Venkaiah Naidu spoke to Chenchukumar over phone reviving his hopes to save the only daughter.

The intervention of the VP paved the way for contributions from various quarters.

They include ₹3 lakh from Prime Minister Relief Fund, ₹75,000 from VP's own office, ₹1 lakh from his wife Ushamma, ₹1 lakh each from his son and daughter Harshavardhan and Deepa Venkat and ₹1 lakh from Swarna Bharat Trust.

In addition to this, Vice President friends B. Subba Reddy (Vamsiram Builders) gave ₹5 lakh, Ravindra Sannareddy of Sri City offered ₹2.25 lakh, C. Venkateswar Reddy (Aparna Constructions) gave ₹2 lakh while C. Subba Reddy of (Ceebros constructions) gave ₹1 lakh.

Divya Sree and her father Chenchukumar profoundly thanked the Vice President and his family members for their humanitarian gesture.

Vice-President said that this was the time to turn adversities into opportunities. Calling upon the youngsters to come out with innovative ideas to meet the emerging challenges, he wanted the creation of an ecosystem that can enable many innovative ideas to be translated into promising start-ups.

Stating that with more and more young people joining the labour market, the world will need about a half a billion new jobs by 2030, the Vice-

President called upon the established entrepreneurs and chambers of commerce, associations like TiE to mentor the next generation.

The Vice-President noted that good entrepreneurial ideas backed by talent would beckon investors, who will be willing to invest in early-stage entrepreneurs — not only in Silicon Valley — but in Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam or any other place where there was talent.

State needs to develop  
Seema, N Andhra: Dave

From Page 1

"The government is not doing any injustice to genuine farmers. Rather it is protecting them and bringing out new laws to improve their lot. Those who bought the lands at a low cost and expecting high returns are opposing the laws of the new government," he told the court.

"There was no development in Gandhinagar, though crores of rupees have been invested after declaring it as the new capital of Gujarat. People are still vouching for Ahmedabad," the lawyer told the court and added that a mere declaration of

● THE previous gov-  
ernment hurried  
through in selecting  
the capital city

capital would not hasten any development.

He also told the court that the government has the responsibility to develop Rayalaseema and North Andhra regions, and hence it enacted the law to distribute functions of the city to three cities.

Dave said it was not a wise decision on the part of the previous government to acquire huge tracts of lands in Guntur and Krishna district for the development of the

capital city. "They were the most fertile lands in the country, and the government had to spend lakhs of crores for acquiring them. There was no need for acquiring fertile land as plenty of barren land in other parts of the state and would have cost less for the government to acquire such land," the lawyer told the court.

Concluding his remarks, he said "the previous government hurried through in selecting the capital city and ignored the recommendation of the Sivaramakrishnan panel. But the new government decided on three capitals after consulting the experts."

## GRAM | PANCHAYAT POLLS

The court directed the SEC to submit all the details by filing a counter-affidavit

## HC refuses to give interim order to stay GP polls

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 8

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Tuesday refused to issue an interim order directing the State Election Commission to stay the execution of its proceedings to conduct gram panchayat polls in February 2021, and directed the poll body to file a counter-affidavit and posted the next hearing on December 14.

A High Court Division Bench headed by Justice D.V.S.S. Somayajulu heard a petition filed by the state

government challenging the election proceedings issued by the SEC on November 11 to conduct gram panchayat polls in February 2021.

The state government contended that the prevailing atmosphere in the state was not conducive to conduct elections in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

The state government also argued that the allotment of officials and police personnel for the conduct of the election was not possible as they were preoccupied with

● THE COURT wanted to examine whether  
the election process had already commenced  
and there was the only postponement of it  
and that it also wanted to examine whether  
it could stay elections in case the poll  
process had already commenced.● THE STATE government contended that  
the prevailing atmosphere in the state was  
not conducive to conduct elections in the  
wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

Covid-19 related work.

The court observed that there was a need to consider several issues at depth before issuing any direction on the issue and asked

whether this court could interdict the impugned order and if it was the case, whether it would amount to an interference with the order issued ear-

lier by the Division Bench to be examined.

The court wanted to examine whether the election process had already commenced and there was the only postponement of it and that it also wanted to examine whether it could stay elections in case the poll process had already commenced. The court also wanted to find out whether circumstances in the state were conducive for the conduct of elections due to Covid-19.

Advocate-General S. Sriram pointed out that the SEC's issue of election

proceedings for conduct of gram panchayat polls in February 2021 was not based on rational consideration of the facts, while SEC's counsel N. Ashwini Kumar maintained that the election body issued such proceedings only after consulting the state government.

Finally, the court directed the state election commissioner to submit all the details by filing a counter-affidavit as there was a need for a deeper investigation and study before the issue of a final order in the case.







SHORT TAKES

MODI'S PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS UP 25% IN SEPT-NOV

New Delhi, Dec. 8: Amplifying his public engagements considerably during the Covid-19 pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended 101 events using technology between September and November this year, averaging more than one programme every day, official sources said on Tuesday.

This is more than 25 per cent higher as compared to the same period of the previous year when the Prime Minister had 78 domestic engagements, they noted. In these three months of 2020, Modi has extensively used technology to interact with all sections of society, from rural India to investors and from youth to CEOs.

He has inaugurated and launched various schemes in rural India, while also participating in virtual summits with international leaders, the sources added. The Prime Minister participated in 26 programmes of launch or inauguration of some project or initiative between September and November this year.

With the government focussing on helping the deprived sections of the society, the poor's welfare was the main theme in his interactions, sources said, noting that Modi interacted with street vendors and also beneficiaries the 'PM Awas Yojana', a housing scheme for the poor.

FIVE ALLEGED TERRORISTS SENT TO 4-DAY CUSTODY

New Delhi, Dec. 8: Five persons suspected to have terrorists links and arrested after an encounter here were remanded for custodial interrogation of four days by a Delhi Court on Tuesday. According to the police, Shabir Ahmad, Md Ayub Pathan and Riyaz Rather were allegedly affiliated with terrorist organisation Hizbul Mujahideen while Gurjit Singh and Sukhdeep Singh were accused of being involved in the killing of Shaurya Chakra winner Balwinder Singh in Punjab. All the five were arrested on Monday after an encounter from Shakarpur locality in east Delhi.

They were produced before Metropolitan Magistrate Sahil Khumri, who allowed their police custody till December 11. The police had sought their remand for eight days saying it was required for further investigation in the case.

According to the police, Ahmad, Pathan and Riyaz were from Kashmir and they were allegedly supplying money to the other two from Punjab to carry out targeted killings. The five have allegedly revealed Pakistan spy agency ISI's attempt to link Khalistani operatives with terror outfits in Kashmir, police said. Advocate Qausar Khan, appearing for the accused, said two of the accused have been charged under the NDPS Act and three have been booked under relevant sections of the Arms Act.

HC DISMAYED OVER NAVLAKHA'S SPECTACLES ROW

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, DEC. 8

Observing that humanity is most important, the Bombay High Court on Tuesday referred to alleged theft of activist Gautam Navlakha's spectacles inside Talaja prison and called for the need to conduct a workshop for jail officials to sensitise them on the needs of prisoners.

Navlakha is an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case and the issue of theft of his spectacles was also heard on Tuesday when it was hearing two petitions filed by activists, Ramesh Gaichor and Sagar Gorkhe, challenging their arrest by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case.

Navlakha's family members on Monday claimed that his spectacles were stolen on November 27 inside the Talaja prison, where he is lodged. They claimed that Navlakha is "almost blind" without the spectacles and yet, when they sent a pair of new spectacles to him by post earlier this month, the prison authorities refused to accept it and sent it back.

"Presently Gautam Navlakha is in acute distress, is unable to see things around him and consequently his blood pressure has shot up," read a statement circulated on Monday evening by Navlakha's lawyers that was signed by the activist's wife Sabha Husain.

Snowtime again



People walk on a snow covered road at Gulmarg in Baramulla district of north Kashmir on Tuesday after the fresh snowfall. Snowfall continued in many areas in the higher reaches of the valley with Gulmarg recording about seven inches of fresh snowfall. They said other areas like Gurez, Mughal Road and Zojilla axis on Srinagar-Leh road also received fresh snowfall.

— PTI

Ministry: 3 vaccine candidates under active consideration

Covid crisis has stabilised with active cases showing a clear-cut declining trend

New Delhi, Dec. 8: Three Covid-19 vaccines candidates, developed by Bharat Biotech, Serum Institute of India and Pfizer, are under active consideration of India's drug regulator and there is hope that early licensure is possible for all or any of them, the Union health ministry said on Tuesday.

Over the last four days, the Indian arm of US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, Pune-based Serum Institute of India and Hyderabad-based pharmaceutical firm Bharat Biotech have applied to the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) seeking emergency use authorisation for their potential Covid-19 vaccines.

At a press briefing, NITI Aayog member (Health) V.K. Paul said the Covid-19 situation in India has stabilised with active cases showing a "clear-cut declining trend" even though the pandemic situation in many other countries is becoming quite serious. The concern and anxiety that arose following an increase in daily cases of infection in Delhi has also settled now, he said.

Mobile tech to be used for vaccination drive: PM

New Delhi, Dec. 8: With the chances of a Covid-19 vaccine being available soon increasing, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that mobile technology will be used for mass inoculation against the pandemic.

Speaking at the India Mobile Congress, he said mobile technology has enabled benefits worth billions of dollars to reach the deserving and also helped the poor and vulnerable during the pandemic.

"It is also with the help of mobile technology that we will embark on one of the world's largest Covid-19 vaccination drive," he said. He did not provide details.

At the IMC, Modi said, "We need to work together to ensure a timely roll-out of 5G to leapfrog into the future and empower millions of Indians."

He also pitched for making India a global hub for telecom equipment, design, development and manufacturing.

Speaking on mobile technology, he said it was because of this that the government was able to provide benefits worth billions of dollars to millions of Indians.

"It is because of mobile technology that we are seeing billions of cashless transactions which boost formalisation and transparency. It is because of mobile technology that we will enable smooth contactless interface on toll booths," he said.

— PTI

Asked what steps would be followed by the DCGI in the absence of a water-tight emergency use authorisation law for granting licence to vaccine makers, Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said not all countries' regulatory framework or rules and acts mention emergency use authorisation.

"So, the fact that this phrase is not used in the national regulatory framework of any country does not mean that specific country does not have an enabling provision to accord an approval which is early and which is distinct from a regular market approval. India's regulatory framework has a specific provision for

grant of emergency use authorisation. Although this phrase is not used," he said.

The New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019, clearly specifies that under specific special situations, relaxation, abbreviation, omission, or deferment of data including local clinical trial data may be considered for

approval.

"This is our law. Similarly other countries also have their legislations," Bhushan said. Giving a bird's-eye view of the Indian landscape of Covid-19 vaccines, Bhushan mentioned that eight vaccines are at different stages of development.

One is Covishield, which is being manufactured by Serum Institute of India in collaboration with AstraZeneca. Phase two and three clinical trials of this vaccine is underway and the firm has applied form emergency use authorisation.

Another is Covaxin, which is being indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and is presently in phase three of clinical trials. It has also applied to the DCGI seeking emergency use authorisation.

The third one is ZyCoV-D, being developed by Cadila Healthcare Ltd in Ahmedabad in collaboration with central government's Department of Biotechnology and is in phase two of the trials.

— PTI

19 Bangladeshi fishermen rescued

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 8

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has rescued 19 Bangladeshi fishermen from a boat which suffered a machine breakdown in the Bay of Bengal away from the West Bengal coast.

On Monday night an ICG aircraft, on an operational task in the sea, noticed the Bangladeshi fishing boat: Rana with 19 crew members aboard, drifting in the Indian exclusive economic zone after its machine broke down.

● AN ICG aircraft noticed the Bangladeshi fishing boat: Rana with 19 crew members aboard, drifting in the Indian exclusive economic zone after its machine broke down.

● THE 19 fishermen, found exhausted with no ration onboard, were provided with first aid, food and water by ICGS Varad.

The boat had left Coxbazar (Bangladesh) on November 15 for fishing and remained adrift for long.

"The boat was contacted on VHF radio to which no response was received. The aircraft passed the information to Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS)

Varad that was deployed in Bay of Bengal on another operational mission. The ship immediately approached towards the boat factoring wind and sea conditions and located the boat in early hours of Tuesday," the ICG stated.

The 19 fishermen, found exhausted with no ration

onboard, were provided with first aid, food and water by ICGS Varad.

The Bangladesh Coast Guard has been requested under the existing memorandum of understanding with the ICG to make necessary arrangements to take over of the stranded fishing boat along with the crew at the pre-designated location in vicinity of International Maritime Boundary Line.

The stranded boat is being towed by the ICGS to hand it over to the Bangladesh authorities.

BJP men killed worker with shotgun: Police

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 8

The West Bengal Police has put the blame of BJP worker Ulen Roy's death on "shotgun fire" by "armed persons", who it alleged, were brought by the saffron party to its rally to Uttar Kanya, the North Bengal state secretariat in Siliguri, on Monday with a "malafide intention to create violence."

In a veiled reference to the incident, West Bengal and Trinamul Congress supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee told a meeting in Burdwan West, "BJP holds it's rallies but kills own workers to peddle lies...They just killed someone firing pellets so easily!"

Calling the incident "unprecedented" and "unheard" the police has entrusted the criminal investigation department (CID) for a probe though the BJP, which observed a 12-hour North Bengal bandh on Tuesday in protest of its worker's death, rejected it's allegations.

The police, which earlier rejected the BJP's claims of lathicharge as the cause of Roy's death, stated, "As per the post mortem report 'death was due to the effects of shotgun injuries.' Police do not use shotguns. It's

obvious that during yesterday's protest in Siliguri, armed persons were brought and they fired from firearms. The deceased received pellet injuries from a shotgun fired from close range by a person standing near the deceased in the protest program."

It added, "This is unprecedented. Bringing armed persons in protest programs and inciting them to fire is unheard off. There was a malafide intention to create violence by the use of firearms. CID West Bengal has been asked to investigate. Truth will come out and strong action will be taken against all those who planned and executed the heinous crime."

Countering the police version, state bjp president Dilip Ghosh said, "I found at least ten more workers, who were on the front of the rally, suffered similar gunshots like Roy's. The police provoked them to come towards them. When they moved ahead, the firing began suddenly. Roy alone had around 10 wounds from gunshots. Who, if not the police, opened the fire then? Who were with the police there? Were they Trinamul Congress workers in the police uniform? We find them with the cops everywhere to attack us."

High voter turnout in Kerala civic polls

DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC. 8

Moderate to heavy polling was witnessed in the first phase of local body polls held in five districts of Kerala on Tuesday.

The total poll percentage recorded in the first phase till 6.05 pm was 72 per cent. Thiruvananthapuram - 68.59, Kollam 72.35, Pathanamthitta - 69, Alappuzha 76 and Idukki 73.57 per cent. The percentage is likely to go up further in the final count.

The ruling CPM led LDF, opposition Congress led UDF and BJP led NDA are keeping their fingers crossed over the high voter turnout.

Long queues were seen outside polling stations in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Idukki districts since morning for the polls which are considered semi finals before the crucial Assembly elections next year.

Despite strict Covid-19 safety protocol in place, voters came out in large numbers especially in the

forenoon to exercise their franchise. The voter turnout hinted at a tight contest with the ruling LDF making every effort to retain its hold in the local bodies and opposition UDF and BJP giving a tough challenge.

In most places the voters complied with social distancing norms while standing in the queues, wore masks and used sanitisers while entering the polling booth. The officials had kept sanitisers, buckets of water and soap outside each polling booth.

In some booths, the officials had to intervene to prevent the voters and workers of political parties from crowding around.

Elections were held to 6,910 wards across 395 local bodies in the five districts which had 88.26 lakh registered voters and 11,225 polling booths.

Barring reports of minor skirmishes, the polling was peaceful in all five districts. Polling was affected in the initial phase in some districts following minor defects in the functioning of EVMs in 50 odd EVMs.



Residents stand in a queue to cast their votes in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday.

— PTI

GREEN | SIGNAL

SC: Centre does not require prior clearances at the time of acquiring lands for NHs

SC nod for 8-lane Chennai-Salem highway

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 8

The Supreme Court on Tuesday gave its nod for 277 km long eight lane Chennai-Salem greenfield express highway holding that there was no legal infirmity in the Central government declaring it as part of Bharatmala highway project.

Holding that the Central government can under the National Highways Act, 1956 notify any road not forming a part of existing

highway or even a proposed green field road as a national highway, Justice A.M. Khanwilkar heading a bench also comprising Justice B.R. Gavai and Justice Krishna Murari said, "This power is not constricted or circumscribed by any other inhibition, such as to declare only an existing road or highway within the State as a national highway."

Speaking for the bench, Justice Khanwilkar said that the requirement of a

national highway within the country as a whole and state-wise, in particular, is to alleviate evolving socio-economic dynamics, and there is nothing in the Constitution of India or for that matter, the National Highway Act, 1956 to limit that power of the central government only in respect of existing roads/highways within the state. To say so would be counter-productive and would entail in a piquant situation that the central

government cannot effectively discharge its obligations under Part IV of the Constitution. Part IV of the constitution spell out the directive principles of state policy."

The court also made it clear that the central government does not require to take prior environment and other clearances including forest, at the time of acquiring lands for the expansion of existing road as national highway or constructing a new

road to be a part of the national highway.

The court said that the question of taking environment and forest clearance will arise only at the stage when National Highway Authority of India would arrive at the stage of executing a highway project.

The Court said this while partly allowing Centre and the National Highway Authority of India appeal against April 8, 2019, Madras High Court order quashing the acquisition

of lands for the construction of eight lane Chennai-Salem highway project which Centre had contended was a part of Bharatmala highway project.

The Madras High Court by its April 8, 2019, order had quashed the land acquisition proceedings holding that the environment clearance for the project was necessary as construction of express highway would adversely impact the environment.



## SHORT TAKES

BLASTS DAMAGE  
TWO POLISH  
SUPERMARKETS

**Aalsmeer, Dec. 8:** Two Polish supermarkets in the Netherlands were badly damaged by explosions early Tuesday, police said. Nobody was injured in the blasts in Aalsmeer, near Amsterdam, and in a small town in the North Brabant province.

It was not immediately clear if the explosions were linked. Both stores were called Biedronka, but are not part of a large network of budget stores of the same name in Poland. Amsterdam police appealed for witnesses to the blast in Aalsmeer, which happened around 3 am (0200 GMT) and caused major damage to the store and nearby buildings as well as setting a parked car ablaze.

IRAN UPHOLDS  
DEATH SENTENCE  
AGAINSTS SCRIBE

**Tehran, Dec. 8:** Iran's Supreme Court upheld the death penalty of a once-exiled journalist over his online work that helped inspire nationwide economic protests three years ago, Iranian media reported on Tuesday.

The semiofficial Tasnim news agency quoted judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili as saying that the country's Supreme Court confirmed Ruhollah Zam's death sentence. It was not clear precisely when the court made its ruling. It is also not clear when Zam's sentence will be carried out.

Under Iranian law, Zam has another chance to appeal and the judiciary chief has the power to cancel the ruling and order a retrial if he finds it in violation of Shariah law. In June, a court sentenced Zam to death, saying he had been convicted of "corruption on Earth," a charge often used in cases involving espionage or attempts to overthrow Iran's government.

POPE MAKES  
SURPRISE VISIT  
IN RAINY ROME

**Rome, Dec. 8:** Pope Francis on Tuesday made a surprise early morning visit to the Spanish Steps in Rome to pray for people worldwide struggling in the pandemic.

The Vatican last week said that due to social distancing concerns Francis was cancelling the traditional December 8 afternoon visit to the square that draws big crowds.

Instead, with rain falling and dawn breaking, Francis popped up in the square at the foot of the Spanish Steps at 7 am (0600 GMT), two hours after the end of Italy's overnight curfew.

Francis left a bouquet of white roses at the base of a towering column which is topped by a statue of the Virgin Mary, prayed, and less than 15 minutes later, left. Except possibly for some dog-walkers and other early risers, few people were out and about in downtown Rome at the hour, since December 8, a feast day devoted to Mary, is an official holiday in Italy, as well as at the Vatican.

LANKA PRISON  
RIOT: INMATES TO  
FACE QUESTIONS

**Colombo, Dec. 8:** Sri Lankan probe panel, which has been set up to investigate the prison riot that left 11 inmates dead last month, will interrogate the inmates to figure out what led to the incident.

The riot broke out on November 29 over rising coronavirus infections in the Mahara prison on the outskirts of Sri Lanka's capital Colombo when some inmates tried to escape, prompting the authorities to use force.

The incident happened as pandemic-related unrest has been growing in Sri Lanka's overcrowded prisons. Police spokesman Ajith Rohana said they would seek medical consultant's opinion on the alleged use of drugs prescribed for mental illness, thus making them violent.

R. de Silva, one of the panelists who also is an advisor to the ministry of justice, said the inmates would be interrogated on Tuesday. De Silva said the panel's interim report was handed over to the minister of justice on Monday.

The panel headed by a judge was appointed as the opposition demanded that full information on the cause of the riot needs to be made public.

90-year-old Maggie world's  
first to get anti-Covid jab

‘Landmark moment’ as the UK kicks off biggest-ever vaccine campaign

**London, Dec. 8:** A 90-year-old British grandmother, Margaret "Maggie" Keenan, on Tuesday became the first person in the world to receive the Pfizer/BioNTech jab against Covid-19 as the UK kicked off its biggest-ever vaccine campaign in history. At 6:31 am GMT early riser Margaret, known to family and friends as Maggie, was given the life-saving jab by nurse May Parsons at her local hospital in Coventry to mark what the National Health Service (NHS) has dubbed a "landmark moment" on V-Day or Vaccine Day in the fight against the deadly virus. Maggie is among the first set of people contacted in advance by the NHS for the jab based on a predetermined health risk criteria.

The second person vaccinated was 81-year-old William Shakespeare from Warwickshire, who said he was "pleased" to be given the jab.

"I feel so privileged to be the first person vaccinated against Covid-19, it's the best early birthday present I could wish for because it means I can finally look forward to spending time with my family and friends in the New Year after being on my own for most of the year," said Maggie, who turns 91 next week.

The former jewellery shop assistant who retired four years ago has a daughter, a son and four grandchildren and is looking forward to being able to go out again once she receives the top-up booster dose 21 days later. "I can't thank May and the NHS staff enough who have looked after me tremendously, and my advice to anyone offered the vaccine is to take it - if I can have it at 90 then you can have it too," she said.

"It's a huge honour to be the first person in the country to deliver a Covid-



Senior nurse Dilhani Somaweera (R) administers the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine to Josephine Faleye (C), 80, at the Royal Free hospital in London on Tuesday at the start of the UK's biggest ever vaccination programme. — APF

19 jab to a patient, I'm just glad that I'm able to play a part in this historic day," said nurse Parsons.

"Today marks a huge step forward in the UK's fight against coronavirus, as we begin delivering the vaccine to the first patients across the whole country. I am immensely proud of the scientists who developed the vaccine, members of the public who took part in trials, and the NHS who have worked tirelessly to prepare for rollout," said British Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

However, he struck a note of caution to say that mass vaccination will take time, and therefore there was a need to remain "clear-eyed" about the challenges that remain. Since the Pfizer vaccine got the

green light from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) last week, the NHS said.

Its workers have been working around the clock to manage the huge scale logistical challenge of deploying the vaccine. Over the weekend, hospitals have begun inviting over 80s in for a jab and work with care home providers to book their staff into vaccination clinics. "We will look back on today, V-day, as a key moment in our fight back against this terrible disease, and I am proud our health services across the United Kingdom are about to embark on our largest ever vaccination programme," said UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock. — PTI

Shukla, wife 1st PIO  
vaccine recipients

**London, Dec. 8:** An 87-year-old man and his 83-year-old wife from the north east of England on Tuesday became the first Indian-origin couple in the world to get a vaccine against Covid-19, after they got injected with their first of two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech jab at a hospital in Newcastle.

Dr Hari Shukla, a race relations campaigner based in Tyne and Wear, had been contacted by the National Health Service (NHS) based on the criteria set for the world's first vaccine to receive regular approvals in the UK last week.

His wife, Ranjan, then volunteered for the jab as she also falls within the first phase of people aged 80 and over, care home workers as well as NHS workers at high risk eligible to receive the "life-saving jab". "Hari Shukla and his wife Ranjan have become the first two patients at Newcastle Hospitals - and two of the first people in the world - to receive the Covid-19 vaccine," Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust said. — PTI

Saudi royal divorce: Judge  
against appointing receiver

**Dover (US), Dec. 8:** A Delaware judge has refused to appoint a receiver to manage and oversee the sale of a multimillion-dollar mansion in Beverly Hills, California, that is at the heart of a bitter divorce feud between a Saudi prince and his ex-wife. The judge ruled on Monday that the request for a receiver was improper because it was not authorised by a manager of the Delaware limited liability company set up to buy the property in 2011.

The motion was filed by a lawyer for Princess Fahdah Husain Abdulrahman Al-Athel on behalf of New Generation Ideas LLC, but Vice Chancellor Paul Fioravanti noted that the princess has denied that she is a manager of that entity.

The judge also noted that her former husband, Prince Faisal Bin Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, did not authorise the request for receivership as a manager of the LLC. The couple married in 2001. Their divorce was finalised in Saudi Arabia in 2016. The princess asked for a receiver after a ruling by a judge in the

Cayman Islands, where she has filed a petition to dissolve a corporation that is controlled by her and her ex-husband and is the sole member of the Delaware LLC.

The Cayman Islands judge told the warring spouses earlier this year that the Delaware court needs to rule first on the prince's claim that he is owed about \$42 million from the LLC for loans he provided to buy and renovate the property.

The Cayman Islands judge has set the value of the property within the range of \$31 million to \$40.5 million, according to court records. Jason Jowers, an attorney for the prince, noted that if the liabilities of the LLC, including the purported loans from the prince, exceed the value of the California property, the Cayman Islands court has no authority to act.

"If the plaintiff really is owed 40-plus million dollars on the liability issue, then Ms Al-Athel will most likely be out of money, and if she is out of the money, she has no right to seek liquidation under Cayman law," Jowers

said. After the princess filed the Cayman Islands petition in 2017, the prince responded with a Delaware lawsuit seeking to prevent his ex-wife from selling the property without his consent.

He also claims she has mismanaged the estate and failed to pay employees, resulting in several lawsuits. "This has been a very nasty separation and divorce," Steven Caponi, an attorney for the princess, told Fioravanti. Caponi argued that the prince, whom he described as one of the wealthiest men in the world, has allowed the Beverly Hills property to fall into disrepair, resulting in utility shutoffs along with fines, and the threat of foreclosure, by a homeowners association.

The homeowners association represents the "creme de la creme of American corporate society," and its clients are "particularly unhappy" with the Saudi royals for buying "a plaything" in their neighbourhood and letting it go to "hell in a hand basket," he added. According to court records, the estate was purchased for about \$17 million. — AP

Give fresh impetus  
to SAARC: Oli

**Kathmandu, Dec. 8:** Nepalese Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli on Tuesday urged the SAARC member states to give fresh impetus to the stalled regional body, saying that time has come to move forward with "concrete action" on the ground with needed political will and commitment.

In his message on the occasion of the 36th Charter Day of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Oli also said that the special day will "inspire all of us to foster mutual trust, understanding and cooperation as well as to deepen regional integration for peace and prosperity."

"Time has come to move forward with concrete action in the ground with needed political will and commitment," said Oli, whose country has been holding the Chairmanship of the SAARC grouping since 2014.

"Giving fresh impetus to

the stalled SAARC process including through the early convening of the Summit can rekindle hope among our people and provide ground to move forward," he added.

SAARC has not been very effective since 2016 as its biennial summits have not taken place since the last one in Kathmandu in 2014. The 2016 SAARC summit was to be held in Islamabad. But after the terrorist attack on an Indian Army camp in Uri in Jammu and Kashmir on September 18 that year, India expressed its inability to participate in the summit due to "prevailing circumstances".

The summit was called off after Bangladesh, Bhutan and Afghanistan also declined to participate in the Islamabad meet. SAARC summits are usually held biennially and hosted by member states in alphabetical order.

— PTI

Lawmakers, Sikhs  
back Indian farmers

**Washington, Dec. 8:** Several US lawmakers and eminent members of the Sikh community in America have voiced their support for farmers agitating in India against the new farm laws and urged that they be allowed to protest peacefully. Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana and several other states have been protesting on various borders of Delhi since November 26, seeking repealing of three farm laws enacted in September.

Dubbing these laws as "anti-farmer", these farmers claim that the newly enacted legislations would pave the way for the dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporations. However, the government has maintained that the new laws will bring farmers better opportunities and usher in new technologies in agriculture. "I stand in solidarity with the Punjabi farmers in India protesting for their livelihoods

and protection from misguided, manipulative government regulations," Congressman Doug LaMalfa said on Monday.

"Punjabi farmers must be allowed to protest peacefully against their government without fear of violence," said the Republican lawmaker who represents Californian's first Congressional district. India has called the remarks by foreign leaders and politicians on protests by farmers as "ill-informed" and "unwarranted" as the matter pertained to the internal affairs of a democratic country. "India is the world's largest Democracy — they owe it to their citizens to allow peaceful protest. I encourage these folks and PM (Narendra) Modi to have peaceful, productive discussions," Democratic Congressman Josh Harder said.

Congressman T J Cox said India must uphold the right to peaceful demonstration and ensure their citizens' safety.

— PTI

NZ mosque shooter  
had been to India

**Melbourne, Dec. 8:** Brenton Tarrant, the Australian-born attacker who killed 51 Muslim worshippers at two mosques in Christchurch, travelled extensively around the world, including India where he spent nearly three months, before moving to New Zealand to carry out the country's worst massacre in 2019, according to a detailed report into the shootings released on Tuesday.

Five Indians were among those killed in the terror attack on March 15 last year that also left dozens of others wounded and had shaken New Zealand, regarded as one of the most peaceful countries in the world.

The 792-page Royal Commission of Inquiry report notes that after leaving school, the 30-year-old attacker worked as a personal trainer at a local gym until 2012 when he suffered an injury. "He never again worked in

paid employment. Instead, he lived off the money that he had received from his father and income from investments made with it... With the money from his father, the individual travelled extensively. First, in 2013, he explored New Zealand and Australia and then between 2014 and 2017 he travelled extensively around the world," it said.

Between April 15, 2014, and August 17, 2017, the individual travelled extensively and always alone, except for his travel to North Korea as part of a tour group. "The longest visit the individual made to any one country was to India where he stayed between November 21, 2015, and February 18, 2016. The countries that he visited for periods of about a month or more included China, Japan, Russia, South Korea among others," said the report that took about 18 months to compile. — PTI

CRIMES AGAINST  
NON-SERBS: 7  
HELD IN BOSNIA

**Sarajevo, Dec. 8:** Bosnian police on Tuesday arrested seven former Bosnian Serb police and army fighters on suspicion of committing atrocities against non-Serbs during the country's devastating 1992-95 war.

The prosecutor's office said the group is suspected of crimes against humanity over the imprisonment and torture of some 150 Bosniak and Croat civilians around the central Bosnian town of Donji Vakuf in the spring and summer of 1992. — AP

## CYBER | THREAT

There is no evidence of any intrusions that made use of these vulnerabilities

## Millions of smart devices vulnerable to hacking

**Boston, Dec. 8:** Researchers at a cybersecurity firm say they have identified vulnerabilities in software widely used by millions of connected devices — flaws that could be exploited by hackers to penetrate business and home computer networks and disrupt them.

There is no evidence of any intrusions that made use of these vulnerabilities. But their existence in data-communications software central to internet-connected devices prompted the U.S. Cybersecurity

and Infrastructure Security Agency to flag the issue in a bulletin.

Potentially affected devices from an estimated 150 manufacturers range from networked thermometers to "smart" plugs and printers to office routers and healthcare appliances to components of industrial control systems, the cybersecurity firm Forescout Technologies said in a report released on Tuesday.

Most affected are consumer devices including

remote-controlled temperature sensors and cameras, it said.

In the worst case, control systems that drive "critical services to society" such as water, power and automated building management could be crippled, said Awsais Rashid, a computer scientist at Bristol University in Britain who reviewed the Forescout findings.

In its advisory, CISA recommended that users take defensive measures to minimize the risk of hacking. In particular, it sug-

gested cutting off industrial control systems from the internet and isolated from corporate networks.

The discovery highlights the dangers that cybersecurity experts often find in internet-linked appliances designed without much attention to security. Sloppy programming by developers is the main issue in this case, Rashid said.

Fixing the problems, which could afflict millions of impacted devices, is particularly complicated because they reside in so-called open-source soft-

ware, code freely distributed for use and further modification. In this case, the issue involves fundamental internet software that manages communication between internet devices via a technology called TCP/IP.

Fixing the vulnerabilities in impacted devices is particularly complicated because open-source software isn't owned by anyone, said Elisa Costante, Forescout's vice president of research. Such code is often maintained by volunteers. Some of the vul-

nerable TCP/IP code is two decades old; some of it is no longer supported, Costante added.

It is up to the device manufacturers themselves to patch the flaws and some may not bother given the time and expense required, she said. Some of the compromised code is embedded in a component from a supplier — and if no one documented that, no one may even know it's there. "The biggest challenge comes in finding out what you've got," Rashid said. — AP



## DECCAN Chronicle

9 DECEMBER 2020

### Court rap over Central Vista: Rethink in order

The Supreme Court's rap on the knuckles of the Narendra Modi government for its unseemly hurry to forge ahead with its plan to disfigure the most iconic vista of New Delhi, built between 1921 and 1927 by architects Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker, and leave the exchequer poorer by at least ₹20,000 crores — though this is likely to escalate — is well-received. Worryingly, the Modi government had taken advantage of the lockdowns it had ordered to push ahead with what is being dubbed as the PM's vanity project despite the matter being sub judice. The bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar, Dinesh Maheswari and Sanjeev Khanna has rightly put a lid on it, as of now.

The 64,500 square metre Central Vista redevelopment plan was hatched on the frivolous basis of putative cost-benefits of integrated offices, as the government sought to play up the walking distance between various departments in terms of traffic jams and blame on architecture delays due to politics, red

**There are well-founded suspicions that the project is indeed a gravy train for the regime's favourite babus and builders**

tape and work culture. The requirement of carrying out occasional repairs in the Parliament building was seen as an insurmountable problem, but the structure is only 100 years old and by no means worn out as it is being claimed to be. It needs care, of course, given its Grade I heritage status. The plan also goes against the Delhi Master Plan, which states that no new offices should be built and every effort made to decongest it.

Besides the very real threats to heritage and the environment, as hundreds of trees must now be translocated leading to the loss of biodiversity, not to mention the city's most popular space for public recreation, almost every other aspect of the redevelopment plan — its clearances, public consultations and aesthetics — is problematic. For one, no heritage assessment analysis was done. The environment impact assessment report as well as the Central Vista committee report was rushed. The DDA changed the land use after a perfunctory hearing on 1,300 public objections. The tender to build the new Parliament building, that went to a Gujarat-based architecture firm, was hastily awarded. There are well-founded suspicions that the project is indeed a gravy train for the ruling party's favourites. All this forms the substance of the bunch of 10 petitions the Supreme Court is currently hearing.

It is also learnt that the plan entails the demolition of four bhavans built in the 1960s — the iconic National Museum, Vigyan Bhavan, the fairly recent IGNCA, and the very new and expensive external affairs ministry buildings. That flies in the face of the basic tenets of sustainability.

But what shows the Centre's move in the most terrible light is that it's being done as lakhs of Indians lack food security and the nation's medical infrastructure needs strengthening on an urgent basis.

Government sources claim that a belief that the current Parliament House was "unlucky" and anticipation of delimitation — the new building can house 1,224 instead of 790 members — are among the real reasons for the exercise. The Supreme Court has, meanwhile, in its order Monday, given the green light to hold the foundation stone laying ceremony for the project, albeit conditionally, on Thursday, December 10. This will be accompanied by a religiously coloured bhoomi puja, which should have had no place in an institution that serves a secular republic. Doubts may well be created in the minds of our citizens about the future outcome of the lawsuit.

### Anju's inspiring secret

It may take just a microsecond to post a composed tweet but in that instant our estimation of the long jump athlete Anju Bobby George went up a billion fold. While her revelation in a Twitter bombshell that she has had only one kidney since birth is remarkable enough, what lends her narration an incredible dimension is her reticence to say this during her career. In choosing to let out the secret at a difficult time for humanity during the coronavirus pandemic, she has timed well the telling of her inspirational tale of success against seemingly insurmountable odds.

It is at the drop of a hat that professional athletes are known to complain about the state of their body and mind during competition, the conditions in which they compete and the problems they face in their sporting career and life.

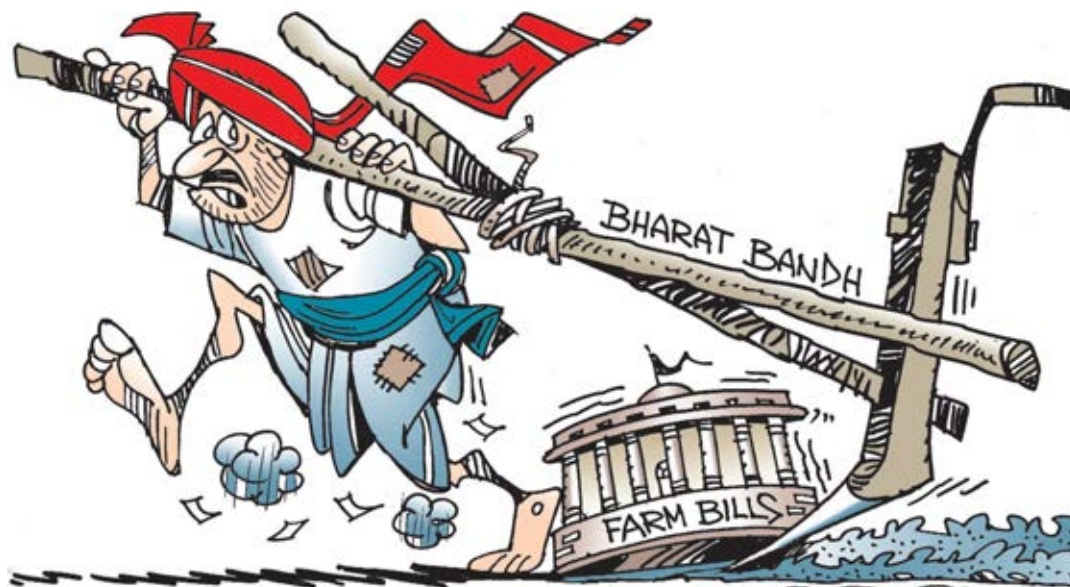
Anju may have come face to face with her true condition only in 2001 when she consulted doctors because of excessive fatigue. Remarkably, her best years in athletics came soon after with medals in Asian, Commonwealth and World competitions. Her battle against her body was made worse by her allergy to painkillers but she never trotted out an excuse in public.

Women in sport are an inspiration because they face additional difficulties in their physiology and hormonal balance.

Their spirit shines through as they compete, with mothers seen going on to win medals and even tennis grand slams. Besides stereotypical sporting challenges, women also have had to battle racial discrimination like the Williams sisters and male domination and chauvinism like Billie Jean King.

While a batsman might let on that he is colour blind or an athlete talk freely about his heart condition, women stars are known for their patient and silent determination to achieve. Given such a background, Anju's achievements gain a lustre, as does her husband, coach and sportsman Robert George's contribution to her career.

Subhani



## At the Singhu border: An agitation like none other

Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

The farmers' movement rocking the Delhi region, with its ripple effects spreading, appears unique due to its patterns of participation and mobilisation, which lend it spectacular social energy articulated in wholly peaceful fashion. Whether it has the potential for wider political impact will depend on its staying power.

The Narendra Modi government's efforts to discredit it as a "Khalistani" plot — as Sikh farmers are its most visible element — or the devious result of the Congress' machinations have cut no ice, but the government continues to play a perception game through the media.

Mr Modi's reputation is for not going back. Thus, mind games are being played to tire out the protesters. But if these tactics don't succeed quickly, an unlikely prospect since Prime Minister Modi is stuck in a rigid pro-big industry position which farmers read as being anti-farmer, the government could be headed for a very chilly winter.

Large-scale protest movements and mobilisations, by their very nature, have about them a degree of latent militancy. This doesn't always mean violence, although it can degenerate into that, causing irreversible injury to the cause itself, as in the Assam, Punjab and Kashmir agitations in the 1983-93 decade.

The protests that rocked the country during the JP agitation in the 1970s, culminating in the Emergency, did not involve people's violence but the active willingness to give battle to the State appeared ever present and the air was seldom free of tension, although the movement had the participation of Gandhians.

The Anna Hazare movement, which led to the undoing of the

Manmohan Singh government, appeared to have been brought together for that very purpose by its BJP-RSS core. It wore the clothing of an anti-corruption campaign as Dr Singh was perceived as a man of unshakeable integrity. It attracted idealists, had extensive urban middle class and media backing, and proved a greatly successful affair, even giving birth to a political party which bends to sectarian Hindu sentiments when in trouble rather than to any known principle.

In sharp contrast, while the entirely peaceful anti-CAA movement of last year, mostly involving Muslim women — usually seen as homebound — in urban settings across the country, did gain international attention, it failed to receive wide national endorsement, although it campaigned with rare courage on a very important national issue — the communal changes made by the Modi government in citizenship laws.

The present government, with its religion-based orientation, and near monopolistic influence on the media and social media, demonised this movement and harassed and punished many of those involved, with the judicial system remaining quiescent and lackadaisical.

Based on a broad appreciation of these historical events, in which this writer was a keen professional observer, it's not hard to see that the truly massive mobilisation of farmers at Delhi's Singhu border with Haryana at the national capital's northern end, from where the road leads to Punjab, has characteristics that separate it from anything in recent decades.

Perhaps its most noteworthy feature is its participation and mobilisation quotient. The movement eschews political links and is about the farmers' demands alone.

It challenges laws that were first brought through the ordinance route and then passed with unseemly haste in Parliament without discussion and rushed through the Upper House bypassing established voting procedures. But it's not just Punjab's farmers who are at the Singhu border, every section of Punjab society and many from Haryana are out there laying siege to the nation's capital.

While every state in India is primarily agrity, it has attracted idealists, had extensive urban middle class and media backing, and proved a greatly successful affair, even giving birth to a political party which bends to sectarian Hindu sentiments when in trouble rather than to any known principle.

Farm holdings are small, and this part of the country was among India's poorest in 1947 for want of irrigation. But irrigation and power availability through the Bhakra-Nangal, and vastly improved yields through green revolution technologies, made Punjab and Haryana relatively prosperous. On this edifice has rested education, sports, physical and health infrastructure, industry and the arts. This is why writers, poets, artists and sportspersons are returning their national awards in solidarity with the farmers, who are also likely to be relatives. But it's useful to note that good yields turn to a reasonable income only due to the assured minimum price or minimum support price (MSP), a subsidy in economic terms which distorts the market. Is it necessary for the government to fight that subsidy if it has made entire regions economically viable and socially

stable?

A day's visit to the Singhu border is a fascinating experience. There are miles of tractor trolleys. During the day protesters mill about and listen to speeches or run the countless "langars", or community kitchens, where free food is respectfully served to all — including the hordes of Delhi's poor who show up — according to the precepts of "sewa", or service, in Sikhism. At night they sleep in their tractors or under them. There are no shops of any kind. Camaraderie flows. There is much talk about "Modi conspiring with big industry to finish the farmer".

It is said that the riders in Chenghiz Khan's amazingly mobile 13th century army slept on horseback, covering distance even when asleep. The diesel-run steel tractor is the Punjabi farmer's steed racing to take on the Modi government. Social solidarity is his weapon. Women and the elderly are also zealous participants. Delhi's Muslims too run free food stalls. The protesters say they are stocked for a few months and can replenish. Backing them are Punjab and Haryana traders, teachers, journalists, social workers, industrial workers — well, nearly everyone except the BJP and RSS outfits.

The farmers are on the Haryana side in Sonapat district. On the Delhi side, facing them, are thousands of Delhi police, CRPF and Rapid Action Force personnel, all under home minister Amit Shah. There is unspoken political tension. The tens of thousands of protesters radiate energy. The BJP government in Haryana is a likely first casualty if its MLAs come under public pressure. This is one movement that can't be reviled as "anti-national", or "anti-Hindu". Its protagonists can't be asked to go to Pakistan or Rome.

Also, new labels have to be found. Is it a farmers' "sit-in" when the protest stretches over many invisible miles, or is it the whole society marching on the command headquarters?

**Is it a farmers' 'sit-in' when the protest stretches over many invisible miles, or is it the whole society marching on the command headquarters?**

LETTERS

### FLOOD VICTIMS

It's good to hear that vaccination for Covid has started in the UK. It is going to be started in India within a few weeks according to the official statements. Two candidate vaccines, Pfizer and Oxford among many other brands have applied for emergency authorisation for marketing here. The Drug Control General of India should not compromise on applying safety standards in its haste to introduce vaccination in India. The safety and efficacy of vaccine are non-negotiable.

**Dr D.V.G. Sankararao**  
Vizianagaram

### LISTEN TO FARMERS

Blaming Opposition parties for farmers' strike is unreasonable (*Oppn support irresponsible: BJP, DC, Dec. 8*). If reforms are so beneficial to the small and marginal farmers, who form 86 per cent of the total farming community, why does the BJP fail to make them understand? Why are certain sections of intellectuals challenging the reforms? Why don't they talk about the failure of the Bihar experiment of reforms? Why are Bihar farmers getting lesser prices for their agricultural products? Simply blaming the Opposition won't solve the problem at all. It seems that this ongoing protest by farmers may damage BJP's reputation and also may lead to its downfall. It is very clear that the BJP is in a critical situation and it is not that much easy to come out from the crisis.

**Panchakarla Govardhana Rao**  
Kankipadu

### Tenancy Bill passed as Opposition walks out

By a staff reporter

HYDERABAD, Dec. 8. The state Assembly today adopted the Andhra Pradesh (Andhra area) Tenancy (Amendment) Bill, by voice vote. During the second reading of the Bill, members belonging to TUF, Cong-O, Swatantra, CPM, CPI, Jana Congress and indepen-

dents staged a walk-out expressing their "displeasure" at the Bill, which, they said would serve no purpose. Jana Sangh members also walked out later.

The Bill seeks to reduce the maximum rent payable by the tenants and ensure security of tenure. The original Bill sought to reduce the rent from 28-1/3-45 per cent to 20-25 per cent, but the committee, recommended enhancing it to 25-30 per cent.

#### DECCAN CHRONICLE

**KAUSHIK MITTER**  
Editor

**K. SUBHAKAR**  
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

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Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. HSD-348/2006-08

Dilip Cherian  
Dilli Ka Babu



## Babus angered by Haryana IAS cadre post appointments

As noted in an earlier column, there is a degree of discontent among Haryana babus over what many consider is a consistent attempt by the Manohar Khattar government in the state to allow the "usurping" of IAS cadre posts by other services. The Haryana government has appointed several IPS, IFS and IRS officers to the cadre posts of the IAS.

Now Haryana IAS officer and well-known whistle-blower Ashok Khemka has entered the fray with his take on the issue. Not known to mince words, a habit that has often landed him in trouble, Mr Khemka has reportedly written to chief secretary Vijai Vardhan and demanded that such cases should be referred to the Centre for consideration.

Those in the know say that in his letter the IAS officer pointed out

that the IAS cadre rules stipulated that a non-cadre officer may be appointed temporarily (maximum three months) to a cadre post if no suitable cadre officer is available. Continuing an officer for a longer period requires prior approval of the Centre. He urged Mr Vardhan to refer the cases of IPS, IRS and IFS officers appointed on the cadre posts of IAS officers to the central government.

And Mr Khemka is not a solitary voice, it turns out that he has now been joined by the Haryana Civil Service Association whose president Dr Vandana Disodia, too, has highlighted the issue. It is not going to die down.

#### EMPANELMENT BLUES

The trend of reduced representation at the joint secretary level has got the "heaven born" worried. But none are more worried than

the 2003 batch of IAS officers, whose wait for empanelment is getting inordinately prolonged even by the standards of the Modi sarkar.

Sources say that since August 2019 only one fresh round of 37 officers of the 2002 batch and 25 officers from previous batches have been empaneled as joint secretaries. But the 2003 batch officers continue to await their turn. Meanwhile, four fresh batches of IAS (from the early 1990s) have been empaneled as additional secretaries and two batches (1987 and 1988) have been empanelled as secretaries.

Further, only 17 per cent of the empaneled officers are from the IAS, with the lion's share going to non-IAS officers. This trend is likely to stay in the back of the minds of senior IAS officers even as the 2003 batch continues to hope that

their empanelment happens sooner than later.

#### CLEARING THE AIR ON COVID VACCINE

In October, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said the government was preparing to reach every single citizen with the Covid vaccine. In the run-up to the Bihar Assembly elections, the BJP even promised free vaccine to the state's voters in lieu of their support.

The election done and dusted; the government has now changed its stance. Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan has "clarified" that the government never spoke about vaccinating the entire country! He said that it is important that the discussion be based "only on factual information". Mr Bhushan said that the average daily positivity rate in India is 3.72

per cent and India has the lowest number of cases per million count among all major countries, with 211 cases per million.

According to him, the government's aim now is to vaccinate a critical mass of people and break the transmission of the virus, this not having to vaccinate the entire population, which by itself would be a challenging exercise. This ties in with the view of the World Health Organisation (WHO) experts who say that 65 to 70 per cent vaccine coverage rate is sufficient to reach herd immunity.

But the question is whether the voters of Bihar will get the vaccine first as promised in the BJP's poll manifesto or was it just another jumla?

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian@Twitter.com](#). Let's multiply the effect.



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	45,608.51	0.40
Nifty 50	13,392.95	0.28
S&P 500*	3,695.19	0.09
Dollar (₹)	73.52	0.53
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.17	-0.13
Euro (₹)	89.20	0.17
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,430▲816	1.65
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	48.87	0.08
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.939	-0.001
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.903	-0.025

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Post-sale, BPCL's LPG business to be in new SBU

Privatisation-bound BPCL's new owner will after three years of takeover get a right to decide on retaining the business of selling subsidised LPG, which in the intervening period will be transferred into a new unit to continue the flow of government subsidy, a top official said. Government subsidy will continue to be given to BPCL customers if the new owner chooses to retain the business after three years, the official said.

Bengal has 6,000 acres in land bank for industry



The West Bengal government has put 6,000 acres of land meant for the industry in the WBIDC land bank for greenfield investment or expansion of existing operations, officials said. The 6,000 acres of developed and underdeveloped industrial land is readily available in the land bank of West Bengal Industrial Development Corp. Paschim Medinipur and Paschim Bardhaman have the highest developed land parcels.

Godrej Properties acquires 18 acres in Bengaluru

Godrej Properties said it has bought an 18-acre land parcel in Bengaluru to develop a housing project. Property consultant Anarock facilitated the deal. In a regulatory filing, Godrej said "it has entered into an outright transaction to purchase a well-located land parcel in Whitefield, Bangalore." Sources said the per acre cost in the Whitefield area would be around Rs 13-15 crore, pegging the deal value at about Rs 250 crore.

Indoco Remedies wins ₹140-crore German tenders

Indoco Remedies said it has won tenders worth Rs 140 crore in Germany for supply of allopathic tablets, used to treat gout and kidney stones. In a regulatory filing, the firm said the revenue expected from this business is Rs 70 crore per annum. "The supplies to Germany will begin from January 2021 and continue till end of 2022," it said. Aditi Kare Panandikar, MD, said: "This is Indoco's first own label product in Europe."



Firm to use locally developed network and hardware Jio's 5G rollout in second half of '21

New Delhi, Dec. 8: Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani has urged the government to accelerate the rollout of fifth-generation (5G) telecom services and scrap outdated 2G technology, run mainly by rivals Bharti Airtel Ltd and Vodafone Idea Ltd. "As many as 300 million mobile subscribers in India are still trapped in the 2G era," Ambani said in a speech on Tuesday at the India Mobile Congress. "I assure you that Jio will pioneer the 5G revolution in India in the second half of 2021."

Ambani's push for these policy measures will give an unparalleled edge to Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd, Ambani's telecom unit which disrupted the sector in 2016 with an intense tariff war and is now the country's top wireless operator.

Being a new network built for data-heavy services, Jio doesn't have 2G wireless phone users, unlike Bharti and Vodafone Idea. Ambani has often said that Jio is ready for 5G while its competitors-indebted and loss-making- will find it harder to keep up with such investments.

Ambani also wants deeper penetration and easier availability of smartphones. "Urgent policy steps are needed to ensure that these underprivileged people have an affordable smartphone," he said on Tuesday.

Reliance Industries had



INDIA-SPECIFIC 5G STANDARD AN EXISTENTIAL THREAT: AIRTEL CEO

New Delhi, Dec. 8: The idea to develop India-specific 5G standard is an existential threat and will lock the country out of the global ecosystem, Bharti Airtel CEO Gopal Vittal said on Tuesday.

He also said the development of a separate 5G standard will impact innovation. "There are sometimes talks that India must have its own 5G standard. This is an existential threat which

asked local suppliers to ramp up production capacity in India to as many as 200 million smartphones over the next two years, Bloomberg reported in September. The group was then in talks with domestic assemblers to make a version of its Jio phone that would run on Google's Android and cost about Rs 4,000.

Ambani also pitched for developing hardware manufacturing in India, saying the nation cannot rely on

could lock India out of the global ecosystem and slow down the pace of innovation. We could have let our citizens down if you allow that to happen," he said, speaking after Mukesh Ambani at the virtual India Mobile Congress 2020. Ambani mentioned that Jio's 5G network will be powered by indigenously developed network, hardware and tech components. —PTI

imports in a critical area. 5G enables connecting virtually everyone and everything together, including machines, objects, and devices. India, he said, is today among the best digitally connected nations in the world. "In order to maintain this lead, policy steps are needed to accelerate the early rollout of 5G, and to make it affordable and available everywhere," he said. Jio's 5G will be powered

by the indigenously developed network, hardware and technology components. "Jio's 5G service will be a testimony to your inspiring vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat." Jio and other service providers such as Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea offer 4G services. The country however also has a 2G network that supports only voice calling and text messaging.

"I can say with utmost confidence that 5G will enable India to not only participate in the Fourth Industrial Revolution but also to lead it," he said.

As the digitalisation of the Indian economy and Indian society picks up speed, the demand for digital hardware will grow enormously.

Stating that many leading global companies are coming to India to set up manufacturing facilities, he said the country has developed world-class strengths in chip design.

"I clearly foresee India becoming a major hub for the state-of-the-art semiconductor industry," he said. Jio Platforms, with its family of over 20 start-up partners, has built world-class capabilities in artificial intelligence, cloud computing, big data, machine learning, the internet of things and blockchain. "We are creating compelling home-grown solutions in education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, financial services and new commerce," he said. —Agencies



FM: WON'T HOLD BACK SPENDING OVER FISCAL DEFICIT WORRIES

VRISHTI BENIWAL CHENNAI, DEC. 8

The country will not worry about missing its budget deficit target as it seeks to step up spending to support the economy, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.

The government will ensure that state-owned enterprises continue with capital expenditure, she said in an interview to Bloomberg TV.

"For the present, I'm not going to allow the fiscal deficit number to worry me because there is a need, and a clear need, for me to spend the money," Sitharaman said.

India last month expanded stimulus measures to 15 per cent of the economy to rescue companies and save jobs in an economy clobbered by a sudden lockdown in March to stem the coronavirus pandemic. That could widen the budget gap to 8 per cent of gross domestic product in the year to March, more the double the budgeted 3.5 per cent.

—Bloomberg

Hiring up from lockdown lows

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 8

Online job postings have seen significant recovery from their lows during the lockdown and are now getting closer to pre-Covid levels. Employers also anticipate their hiring to return to pre-Covid levels in the next few months.

After posting a growth in the March quarter, job postings had fallen considerably during the lockdown period of April-July, finds a study by Monster.com. Among the different sectors, BPO/ITES saw a decline of 48 per cent, banking/financial services and insurance, 48 per cent, production and manufacturing, 46 per cent, travel and tourism, 76 per cent and garments/textiles/leather as well as gems & jewellery were down by 49 per cent compared to the March quarter.

However, telecom, advertising, market research, public relations, media & entertainment, printing/packaging and agro-based industries were impacted relatively less.

By August-November, job postings across industries such as import/export, logistics, courier/freight/transportation, retail, BPO/ITES, garments/textiles/leather, gems & jewellery improved by 8-15 per cent from the lockdown period.

Some of the sectors have got closer to the pre-Covid levels. Telecom is down by only 8 per cent, advertising, market research & public relations by 11 per cent, media & entertainment 5 per cent and logistics, courier/freight/transportation by 9 per cent from the March quarter levels. Agro-based industries are almost back to pre-Covid-19 levels.

"We are definitely seeing improvements in the job market, with promising recovery in industries such as logistics, transportation, BPOs, ITES, among others...The recovery in the post-lockdown period has been promising, almost at par with pre-Covid-19 levels. We could hope to end this year with job levels at par with what we started the year with, if not better," said Sekhar Garisa, CEO, Monster.com.

Meanwhile, the ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey found that hiring plans of employers have gradually improved. The survey of 1,518 employers across India found that nearly 65 per cent may return to pre-Covid hiring within the next nine months compared to 44 per cent in the last quarter. Only 10 per cent are now unsure about returning back to normalcy and this was 42 per cent last quarter.



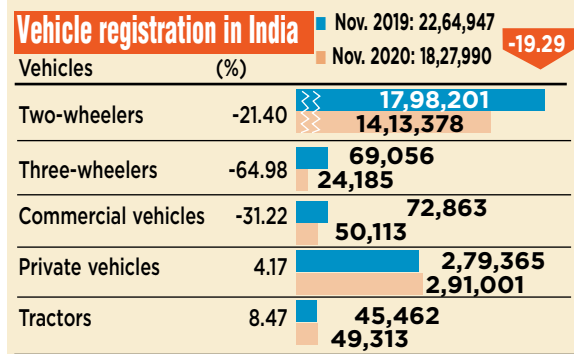
Car sales up 4% in Nov. on festival demand

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, DEC. 8

Passenger vehicle (PV) retail sales in November reported a year-on-year rise of 4.17 per cent to 2,91,001 units, as the Diwali-Dhanteras period led to a spike in vehicle registrations in Asia's third biggest economy, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations, or FADA, said on Tuesday.

Fada, which collected vehicle registration data from 1,265 out of the 1,472 regional transport offices (RTOs), said PV sales stood at 2,79,365 units in November 2019.

However, two-wheeler sales dropped 21.4 per cent to 14,13,378 units last



Figures do not include data for AP, MP, Telangana and Lakshadweep as they are not in centralised Vahan 4. Data gathered from 1,265 out of 1,472 RTOs Source: Federation of Automobile Dealers Association/KBK Infographics

month compared to 17,98,201 units in Nov 2019. "While registrations during Navratri were tepid, people came out in good numbers to purchase their dream vehicles during the Dhanteras-Diwali period,"

Fada president Vinkesh Gulati said.

New launches, especially compact SUVs, continued to show good demand in the PV segment, he pointed out.

The two-wheeler segment continued to witness a shift from 100cc to 125cc and above category due to good harvesting coupled with Dhanteras-Diwali and marriage season, Gulati said.

Commenting on small goods commercial vehicles, he said the segment continued to see good demand with increased level of transportation and last-mile connectivity needs.

With schools and colleges continuing to remain

closed, demand for buses remained weak.

Similarly, the medium and heavy commercial vehicle (M&HCV) segment continued to play spoilsport with excessive capacity, high prices of BS-VI models, finance issues and high fuel price, Gulati noted.

"Fada once again urges the government to increase infrastructure spending, including timely payment to vendors and introduce attractive incentive based scrappage policy to revive the M&HCV segment," he said.

On sales outlook, Gulati said with the festive season coming to a close, demand revival now solely depends on year-end schemes.

Redemptions from equity, hybrid MF schemes soar

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 8

Equity mutual funds saw huge redemption in November, with Rs 12,917.36 crore outflow from equity-oriented schemes and Rs 5,249.18 crore from hybrid schemes, monthly data released by industry body Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi)

showed.

However, a huge rally in the equity market as well as inflows of around Rs 45,000 crore in debt mutual fund schemes helped net industry assets under management (AUM) to hit the Rs 30-lakh crore mark for the first time.

Kaustubh Belapurkar, director, manager research, Morningstar India said,

"Equity-oriented mutual funds witnessed net outflows for the fifth month in a row, and the pace of net outflow shot up significantly from the previous month." He said November saw a net outflow of Rs 13,140 crore against Rs 2,725 crore in October.

"While gross purchases (new investments) remained steady, the pace of

redemptions picked up as markets made new highs, suggesting investors looked to book some profits given the higher market valuations," he said.

Investors are booking profit in equity mutual funds and investing in the debt mutual fund schemes, according to N. S. Venkatesh, chief executive, Amfi.

Swiss bank UBS opens in Hyderabad

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 8

Swiss multinational investment bank and financial services company UBS on Tuesday opened its fifth office in the country in Hyderabad. The new facility will provide UBS businesses with additional capabilities in finance, operations and research.

UBS currently operates from offices in Pune (Yerwada and Kharadi), Navi Mumbai (Airoli) and in the Bandra Kurla Complex in Mumbai. The new facility will come up at Gachibowli in its initial phase.

"UBS is in India for the long-term and has grown rapidly in the last five years with headcount increasing by 130 per cent between 2018 and 2020. At the end of this year, we will have almost 6,800 employees in the country," said Harald Egger, group head corporate services and chairman of UBS India.

In the last nine months, the company said around 1,000 people were hired in Hyderabad for the new office. They complement the finance and operations teams in Pune and Mumbai that already support several run-the-bank processes for the entire UBS Group.

UNDERHAND DEALS Vitol admitted that it was paying bribes via a network of shell companies

How MBAs in corruption corner major tenders

ANDY HOFFMAN & JACK FARCHY DEC. 8

For years, the world's largest oil trading firm has maintained that it has "zero tolerance" for corruption. Now Vitol Inc has admitted that it was paying bribes through a network of shell companies and sham contracts.

As recently as July 2020, while publicly repeating those assurances, Vitol was bribing government officials in Ecuador and Mexico.

In Brazil, a Vitol executive delivered cash to traders at Petroleo Brasileiro SA and in exchange for the "gold number"—the price at which Vitol should bid to win tenders from the Brazilian state oil firm.

The revelations, from a deferred prosecution agreement between Vitol Group's US unit and the Department of Justice, are part of Brazil's so-called Carwash bribery scandal, that's described by the Petrobras chief as "an MBA in corruption."

They are a setback for all commodity traders, undermining efforts to cast off a reputation for malfeasance that's dogged the industry since the days of Marc Rich, the pioneer who spent two decades as a fugitive from American justice.

Agreeing to pay just over \$160 million to regulators in the US and Brazil, Vitol admitted to having bribed government officials for more than a decade, between 2005 and 2020,



DOJ documents show.

On one occasion, in early 2013, an executive at Vitol in Brazil emailed his colleague in Houston the exact price that one of the trading house's competitors was bidding for a cargo of high-sulfur diesel. "This is the gold number," he said. "Okay great...we'll take it," replied the trader. The mechanisms Vitol

used for paying bribes were hardly revolutionary. Vitol SA, the Swiss unit that handles a large portion of the company's trading, sent money to intermediary companies via bank accounts in the US, Curacao, the Cayman Islands, the Bahamas, Portugal and Brazil.

On some occasions, the money was then converted into Brazilian currency by

a "doleiro," a professional money launderer, before being delivered in cash to a Petrobras trader, according to the DOJ documents.

Vitol and the individuals involved in the scheme created fake invoices showing the payments were for consulting services and "market intelligence."

The traders communicated using codenames, including "Batman," "Tiger," "Phil Collins," "Dolphin," "Popeye," and "Beb."

"Shell/offshore companies, fake consulting contracts, fake invoices, sham email accounts—nothing is new under the sun," said George Voloshin, director for corporate intelligence and investigations at Aperio Intelligence. "The tricks of the trade have

changed little from the previous century."

Authorities in the U.S. and Brazil are also investigating Vitol's rivals, Glencore Plc and Trafigura Group Ltd, on similar allegations.

Brazilian prosecutors last week filed a civil lawsuit against Trafigura and several of its top executives, alleging it also paid bribes to Petrobras executives.

Non-governmental organisations and watchdogs say the investigations and Vitol's settlement give credence to their calls for greater regulatory oversight of commodities traders in Switzerland, where Glencore is headquartered and Vitol and Trafigura have major operations. —Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

## England cleared to leave S. Africa

**Cape Town:** Two people in the England cricket tour party who gave unconfirmed positive Coronavirus tests in South Africa were cleared on Tuesday and freed from self-isolating. The two positive tests, along with an outbreak in the South Africa camp and among workers at their shared bio-secure hotel in Cape Town prompted the rest of the tour to be abandoned on Monday.

England officials still wanted independent ratification of the positive results in its camp. "Following further testing and analysis, in the opinion of the independent virologists based in Cape Town and London, the two individuals are not infected, and do not pose any risk of passing on the infection to the rest of the party," the England and Wales Cricket Board said. "The advice is they are now free to join the rest of the group and are no longer self-isolating. The England party will head home on Thursday. The teams played out a three-match Twenty20 series but the first one-day international scheduled for last Friday was postponed to Sunday because of another infection in the South Africa team. — AP

## Pak side released from isolation

**Wellington:** The Pakistan cricket squad has been allowed to leave managed isolation to begin its preparation for Twenty20 and test series against New Zealand. All members of the squad tested negative on the 12th day of their 14-day stay in isolation and will be allowed to travel to the South Island resort of Queenstown, where they can now train as a group.

The team's exemption to train in smaller groups after the third day in isolation was revoked by New Zealand health authorities when players breached protocols by mingling in corridors and sharing food. Six members of the 53-strong squad tested positive for Covid-19 on arrival and two more subsequently returned positive tests and were moved to the quarantine wing of their hotel.

New Zealand's Ministry of Health reported 52 members of the Pakistan squad will be released from the quarantine facilities in Christchurch on Tuesday. One case will remain in the Christchurch quarantine facility until fully recovered, the ministry said. — AP

## Team Hero gear up for Dakar rally

**Delhi:** Close on the heels of an exciting win at the BAJA Portalegre, Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of Hero MotoCorp, on Tuesday unveiled their plans for the Dakar Rally 2021.

Participating with a full strength three rider team, Hero MotoSports will take on the Dakar 2021 with the 2020 FIM Cross-Country BAJAs World Cup winner Sebastian Buhler, 2019 Pan Africa Rally winner Joaquim Rodrigues and ace Indian rider C. S. Santosh. This will be the second official appearance for Sebastian in Hero colors at the Dakar, while it will be the fifth appearance for both JRod and Santosh.

The riders will take on the Dakar challenge on a new Hero 450 Rally bike, which now features a new 450cc engine and evolved Chassis. The engine, developed especially for rally sport, offers improved top speed and acceleration. With an optimum weight balance, better rider ergonomics, more voluminous fuel-tank, improved suspension and cooling system, the new bike is built for juggling the dual roles of covering long strides at a heightened pace.

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**Lanka Premier League:** Kandy vs Jaffna from 3 pm on Sony Six; Galle vs Dambulla from 7.30 pm on Sony Ten 2

## FOOTBALL

**Indian Super League:** Mumbai City vs Chennaiyin from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

**Champions League:** Midtjylland vs Liverpool from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Ajax vs Atalanta from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 1; Real Madrid vs Monchengladbach from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1; Salzburg vs Atletico Madrid from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Six; Manchester City vs Marseille from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2; Inter Milan vs Shakhtar Donetsk from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 3

## WWE

**NXT:** Bouts from 6.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, HD



Members of the Indian team pose with the winner's trophy after the third T20 against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Tuesday. Also seen in the pic are team manager Girish Dongre (front row, left) and fielding coach R. Sridhar (front row, third from right) of Hyderabad. — AP

## AUSSIES SAVE FACE

**Sydney, Dec. 8:** Australian bowlers held their nerves to come up trumps against the genius of Virat Kohli, stalling an Indian clean-sweep with a 12-run victory in the third and final T20 International here on Tuesday.

While India won the shortest format 2-1, it was overall an even result for the two teams which won three white-ball games each. Tuesday's loss ended the visitors' 10-match winning streak in the format.

Kohli got as many as four reprieves and cashed in well enough to smash his way to 85 off 61 balls but India could only reach as far as 174/7 in their pursuit of 187 in 20 overs.

It was a slash drive off Andrew Tye in the penultimate over which was plucked inches off the ground by Daniel Sams, who compensated for a forgettable day with the ball.

An over before that Hardik Pandya's swagger was checked by Adam

Zampa (1/21 in 3 overs). Zampa's leg-break turned enough to force the 'Baroda Bomber' to hit one against the turn and be caught at short third-man.

Once Pandya was gone, there was too much pressure on Kohli, who failed to take the team home.

While he hit four fours and three sixes, Kohli did lead a charmed life as Steve Smith missed a dolly at deep mid-wicket fence when he gave Maxwell the charge.

Then Sean Abbott failed to get his hands on a tough return catch while Anyer's palms. During the fag end, Matthew Wade missed an easy stumping.

The Indian captain scored his third half-century of the tour and an effortless six off Abbott after the completion of the milestone gave much-needed relief to the Indian dug-out. This was after Mitchell Swepson's (3/23) innocuous leg-breaks reduced them to 100 for 4.

— PTI

## SAHA SCORES HALF TON IN DRAWN GAME

**Sydney, Dec. 8:** In the form of a sedate half-century, Wriddhiman Saha got himself some invaluable batting practice ahead of the first Test against Australia, but his other famed Indian colleagues failed to bat long as their warm-up game against Australia 'A' concluded in a draw here on Tuesday.

Medium pacer Mark Steketee, who returned impressive figures of 5/37, came in the way of what could have been a few sessions of good batting practice on the third and final day for the touring Indians.

Making up for his first-innings nought, Saha top-scored for the visitors with 54 after facing 100 balls at the Drummoyne Oval on the third and final day of the tune-up.

Beginning with a deficit of 59 runs, the Indians declared their second innings at 189 for 9. In reply, the hosts, needing 130 in 15 overs for an outright victory, reached 52 for 1 when the stumps were drawn.

**PTI**  
**Brief scores:** Australia 'A' 306/9 declared & 52/1 drew with India XI 247/9 declared & 189/9 declared (Saha 54\*, Steketee 5-37).

## Kohli may sit out of third warm-up

**Sydney, Dec. 8:** India captain Virat Kohli on Tuesday hinted that he might skip the three-day pink-ball warm-up game ahead of the eagerly-awaited Test series against Australia after an intense limited-overs leg of the tour ended with his team winning the T20 series 2-1 here on Tuesday.

The tour game against Australia 'A' is due to begin in three days' time and will be India's final tune-up before the opening day-night Test in Adelaide from December 17.

"I will wake up tomorrow and see if I can play the tour match. Playing it on and off is not my thing and I like to play the full game. I will talk to my physio and then decide on my participation," Kohli said after the third and final T20 International here, which India lost by 12 runs.

## PANDYA SAYS HE'S HEADING BACK HOME

Swashbuckling India all-rounder Hardik Pandya on Tuesday said he is "heading back home", two days after raising hopes of extending his stay in Australia for the upcoming Test series following

**I will wake up tomorrow and see if I can play the tour match. Playing it on and off is not my thing and I like to play the full game. I will talk to my physio and then decide on my participation.**

— VIRAT KOHLI  
India captain

his incredible outing in the limited-overs leg.

Coming off a back surgery and yet to start bowling on a regular basis, Pandya's showing in the just-concluded limited overs leg of the tour gave rise to hopes that he might be considered for Test selection.

And those beliefs were strengthened when the all-rounder, after his match-winning effort on Sunday, said he wouldn't mind staying back if the team management wants.

However, two days later, he confirmed that he is going back to India.

"I think I should head back home and spend some quality time with my family. I haven't seen my child for four months, so I'd like to spend some time with family right now," Pandya said. — PTI

## Dance breaks into Olympics

**Geneva, Dec. 8:** Breakdancing became an official Olympic sport.

The International Olympic Committee's pursuit of urban events to lure a younger audience saw street dance battles officially added to the medal events program at the 2024 Paris Games.

Also confirmed for Paris by the IOC executive board were skateboarding, sport climbing, and surfing.

Those three sports will make their Olympic debuts at the Tokyo Games which were postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic by one year to open on July 23, 2021.

Alongside the additions, the IOC made subtractions: The slate of 329 medal events in Paris is 10 fewer than in Tokyo, including four lost from weightlifting, and the athlete quota in 2024 of 10,500 is around 600 less than next year.

Two sports with troubled governing bodies boxing and weightlifting saw the biggest cuts to the number of athletes they can have in Paris.

Weightlifting should have 120 athletes in Paris, which is less than half of its total at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. The sport could be dropped entirely due to its historic doping problems and IOC concerns over the pace and depth of reform at the International Weightlifting Federation.

The IOC stressed its future priorities for Paris, and beyond to the 2028 Los Angeles Games, by claiming it will hit a long-term target of equal participation by men and women athletes, and more urbanised events.

● **The IOC's pursuit of urban events to lure a younger audience saw breakdancing officially added to the medal events program at the 2024 Paris Games.**

● **The street dance battles will be called breaking at the Olympics, as it was in the 1970s by hip-hop pioneers in the United States.**

With Paris organisers needing time to prepare their project, the IOC kept to its pre-pandemic schedule to confirm the 2024 sports lineup this month even before some are tested in Tokyo.

Breakdancing will be called breaking at the Olympics, as it was in the 1970s by hip-hop pioneers in the United States. It was proposed by Paris organisers almost two years ago after positive trials at the 2018 Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires. Breaking passed further stages of approval in 2019 from separate decisions by the IOC board and full membership.

In Paris, breaking has been given a prestige downtown venue, joining sport climbing and 3-on-3 basketball at Place de la Concorde. — AP

## MACHADO'S BRACE RESCUES NORTHEAST

**Goa, Dec. 8:** Bengaluru FC and NorthEast United split the points after playing out a thrilling 2-2 draw at the Fatorada Stadium, here on Tuesday.

Gerard Nus' men took an early lead through a fortuitous strike from Luis Machado (4') but Bengaluru hit back through Juanan (13') and substitute Udanta Singh (70'). Just as the Blues looked set for a win, Machado (78') struck again to ensure his team got a share of the points.

NEUFC got off to the best possible start when they scored in just the fourth minute. Rochharzela cut into the box and unleashed a shot at goal. His strike struck his teammate Machado and Bengaluru goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu could only look on in despair as the ball looped in.

But rather than be pegged down by the early goal, Bengaluru responded with a flurry of attacks and eventually found their equaliser, NEUFC's lead lasting just over ten minutes. A Rahul Bheke throw caused all sorts of chaos in the NEUFC box and it fell to Juanan, whose first-time shot found the net.

Bengaluru had a number of chances to take the lead in the first half and their coach Carles Cuadrat would have been rather displeased that they did not do so.

## FIFA WORLD CUP 2020

## Italy have tough qualifying path

**Zurich, Dec. 8:** After missing out on the 2018 World Cup, Italy have been handed a challenging path to the 2022 tournament in Qatar.

The four-time world champions were drawn in a qualifying group on Monday with Switzerland, who have made it to the last three World Cups and were the highest-ranked team outside of the top seeds.

Italy's failure in the 2018 playoffs cost FIFA around \$100 million in lost television revenue.

"Only the first-placed teams qualify automatically. I think it will be a fight between us and Switzerland," Italy coach Roberto Mancini said.

Italy will contest the Nations League finals next year, meaning they have only four opponents in Group 'C' — Northern Ireland, Bulgaria and Lithuania.

World Cup-holders France, Belgium and Spain are also vying for UEFA's newest title next year.

France are in Group 'D' with Ukraine, Finland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kazakhstan.

"I'm not going to jump for

joy, one always needs to be humble and show respect to all these teams," France coach Didier Deschamps said.

"Obviously, as a seeded team France will be favourites, but we still need to make sure we do deliver," Deschamps added.

Germany face five opponents in Group 'J', but only North Macedonia qualified for the European Championship next year, unlike Romania, Iceland, Armenia and Liechtenstein. "We are going into the race as the big favourites," said Joachim Loew, who is remaining Germany coach despite recent poor results.

The Netherlands, another powerhouse to miss out on the 2018 World Cup, are in Group 'G' with Turkey, Norway, Montenegro, Latvia and Gibraltar.

Group 'B' produced yet more matches between Spain and Sweden, who met in Euro 2020 qualifying and are in the same group at the delayed tournament. "We are tired of playing against each other," Spain coach Luis Enrique said. — AP



Medallists at the 7th Telangana State District & State Table Tennis Championship pose with their certificates and trophies along with officials at the Anandnagar Welfare and Sports Association at Khairatabad in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

## Varun, Bhavitha are champions

## DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, DEC. 8

B. Varun Shanker and N. Bhavitha emerged winners in the Junior boys and girls sections respectively at the 7th Telangana State District & State Table Tennis Championship held at Anandnagar Welfare and Sports Association in Khairatabad, Hyderabad, on Tuesday.

Both players put on dominating shows in the Superleague to capture trophies.

Varun reeled off a series of wins, beating Raghuram (NLG) 11-1, 11-7, 11-4; vanquishing Vishal 11-03, 11-05, 11-9; pinning down Pranav Nallari 11-4, 11-3, 11-9; rapping Raju (AWA) 11-3, 11-2, 11-6; jolting Jatin Dev (SPHS) 11-4, 16-14, 11-7; defeating Kesavan Kannan 11-2, 11-13, 11-6, 9-11, 11-2 and annihilating Arush Reddy 11-9, 11-6, 11-7.

Bhavitha dumped Devi Sree (MLR) 11-6, 11-6, 11-9; beat

Ananya Donekal (GSM) 11-7, 9-11, 11-5, 11-8; powered past Palak G (GSM) 11-5, 11-5, 15-13; defeated K. Ikshitha (AWA) 9-11, 11-2, 11-8, 11-4 and nailed H. S. Nikhitha (VPG) 12-10, 11-10, 11-9.

Kesavan Kannan, Arush Reddy and Jatin Dev finished second, third and fourth among boys while K. Ikshitha (AWA), H. S. Nikhitha (VPG) and Mercy P (HVS) took the second, third and fourth spots in the girls section.

Meanwhile, the Telangana State Table Tennis Association has announced that the Youth Boys and Girls and Men and Women events slated to be held from December 9 to 12 at Mahaveer Institute of Science and Technology in Bandlaguda, Hyderabad, have been cancelled due to unavoidable circumstances. The same will be conducted from December 13 to 16 at Anand Nagar Welfare and Sports Association in Khairatabad, the TSTTA stated in a press release.

## THE RESULTS

## Junior Boys Superleague

■ B. Varun Shanker bt Raghuram (NLG) 11-1, 7, 11-4; bt Vishal 11-03, 11-05, 11-9; bt Pranav Nallari 11-4, 11-3, 11-9; bt Raju (AWA) 11-3, 11-2, 11-6; bt Jatin Dev (SPHS) 11-4, 16-14, 11-7; bt Kesavan Kannan 11-2, 11-13, 11-6, 9-11, 11-2; ■ Kesavan Kannan bt Pranav Nallari 11-8, 5-11, 10-12, 11-5, 12-10; bt Varun Shanker 11-1, 11-13, 6-11, 11-9, 2-11; bt Vishal 11-9, 6-11, 11-6, 11-9; bt Jatin Dev 11-4, 11-7, 11-8; bt Raghuram 9-11, 11-9, 11-9, 11-13, 11-4; bt Raju (AWA) 11-7, 11-5, 11-3; bt Arush Reddy (13-11, 9-11, 11-2, 9-11, 11-2).

■ Arush Reddy bt Kesavan Kannan 11-13, 11-9, 2-11, 11-9, 2-11; bt Raghuram 11-5, 11-6, 10-12, 9-11, 11-8; bt Vishal 11-9, 11-5, 5-11, 11-8; bt Pranav Nallari 8-11, 11-5, 18-11, 11-8; bt Raju 11-3, 11-9, 10-12, 10-12, 11-4; bt Jatin Dev 5-11, 7-11, 11-7, 11-8, 11-8; bt Varun Shanker 9-11, 6-11, 9-11.

■ Jatin Dev bt Vishal 8-11, 9-11, 11-7, 10-12; bt Pranav Nallari 11-9, 11-9, 11-9; bt Raju 11-3, 9-11, 11-5, 7-11, 11-8; bt Kesavan Kannan 4-11, 7-11, 8-11; bt Arush Reddy 11-5, 11-4, 7-11, 8-11, 8-11; bt Varu Shanker 4-11, 14-16, 7-11; bt Raghuram 10-12, 11-8, 11-3, 11-2.

■ Vishal bt Jatin Dev 11-8, 11-9, 11-7, 12-10; bt Varun Shanker 7-11, 5-11, 9-11; bt Arush Reddy 9-11, 5-11, 11-5, 8-11; bt Raghuram 16-14, 2-11, 7-11, 11-8, 11-9; bt Kesavan Kannan 9-11, 11-6, 6-11, 9-11; bt Pranav Nallari 11-5, 11-8, 5-11, 10-12, 9-11; bt Raju 11-8, 11-5, 11-7.

■ Pranav Nallari bt Raju 12-10, 11-8, 14-12; bt Jatin Dev 11-9, 11-9, 11-9; bt Arush Reddy 11-8, 5-11, 11-13, 8-11; bt Raghu Ram 11-6, 11-8, 11-2; bt Vishal 5-11, 8-11, 11-5, 12-16, 11-9; bt Kesavan

Kannan 8-11, 11-5, 12-10, 5-11, 11-12.

■ Raju bt Pranav Nallari 10-12, 11-8, 12-14; bt Kesavan Kannan 7-11, 5-11, 3-11; bt Jatin Dev 3-11, 11-9, 5-11, 11-7, 8-11; bt Varun Shanker 3-11, 2-11, 8-11; bt Arush Reddy 3-11, 9-11, 12-10, 12-10, 4-11; bt Raghuram 11-9, 13-15, 13-11, 8-11, 11-8; bt Vishal 8-11, 5-11, 7-11.

■ Raghuram bt Varun Shanker 1-11, 7-11, 14-11; bt Arush Reddy 5-11, 6-11, 12-10, 11-9, 8-11; bt Kesavan Kannan 11-9, 9-11, 13-11, 4-11; bt Vishal 14-16, 11-2, 11-7, 8-11, 9-11; bt Pranav Nallari 6-11, 8-11, 2-11; bt Raju 9-11, 15-13, 11-13, 11-8, 8-11; bt Jatin Dev 12-10, 8-11, 7-11, 2-11.

■ Junior Girls Superleague

■ N. Bhavitha (GSM) bt Devi Sree (MLR) 11-6, 11-6, 11-9; bt Ananya Donekal (GSM) 11-7, 9-11, 11-5, 11-8; bt Palak G (GSM) 11-5, 11-5, 15-13; bt K. Ikshitha (AWA) 9-11, 11-2, 11-8, 11-4; bt H. S. Nikhitha (VPG) 12-10, 11-10, 11-9.

■ K. Ikshitha (AWA) bt Mercy P (HVS) 11-7, 4-11, 11-8, 11-4; bt Pooja Khajander (AWA) 11-6, 11-8, 11-6; bt Ananya Donekal (GSM) 11-6, 12-10, 11-11, 02-11, 11-5.

■ H. S. Nikhitha (VPG) Ananya Donekal (GSM) 11-3, 12-10, 8-11, 10-12, 11-7; bt Mercy P (HVS) 14-12, 11-9, 06-11, 11-3; bt Devi Sree (MLR) 12-10, 05-11, 8-11, 11-9, 11-4.

■ Mercy P (HVS) bt Devi Sree (MLR) 11-9, 11-9, 11-6; bt Pooja Khajander (AWA) 11-4, 11-6, 11-4.

■ Ananya Donekal (GSM) bt Mercy P (HVS) 14-12, 8-11, 06-11, 11-8, 11-9; bt Devi Sree (MLR) 11-6, 8-11, 11-2, 12-10.

■ Palak G (GSM) bt H. S. Nikhitha (VPG) 11-9, 14-12, 12-10; Devi Sree (MLR) bt Palak G (GSM) 11-8, 15-13, 11-9; Pooja Khajander (AWA) bt H. S. Nikhitha (VPG) 6-11, 11-7, 11-6, 11-4.