

NELLORE | THURSDAY | 10 DECEMBER 2020

Max: 30.0°C
Min: 24.4°C
RH: 75%
Rainfall: 8.3 mm
Forecast: clear.
Max/Min
temp. 30/24 °C

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CMYK

OTHER STORIES

Naga Bhushan is additional A-G

Vijayawada: State government appointed the advocate Jasti Naga Bhushan as the additional advocate general for the state of Andhra Pradesh. The state government issued GO RT No. 329 here on Wednesday appointing him as the AAG. He is the son of Supreme Court former judge Jasti Chelameswar.

MINISTERS ASSURES DEVELOPMENT OF TWO DARGAHS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

Minister for endowment Velampalli Srinivas Rao assured development of Syed Shah Quadri and Ali Hussein Shah Quadri Dargahs into a spiritual pilgrimage centre. The minister announced that *Chadar* would be offered in the Durgah on behalf of the state government during Urs.

Dargah Muzawar Syed Khaja Mohideen and others presented to the minister an invitation of Urs of Ali Hussein Shah Quadri scheduled to be held on December 11 in the Dargah situated near Prakasam Barrage at Vijayawada. They said that the Dargah committee made flawless arrangements for Urs following the Covid-19 guidelines. The minister praising the arrangement appealed to the devotees to attend the Urs programme. He said that their government adhered to develop the Dargah hence started development works which were under progress.

He assured that YSR Congress government will turn the Dargahs into a spiritual pilgrimage centre in the coming days.

ORGANISERS TOLD TO KEEP POLLUTION TESTING VEHICLES FIT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

The Transport Department directed mobile pollution testing vehicles to complete checks of their equipment by December 31 and warned of stern action if they issue pollution certificates without proper testing to the vehicles.

Deputy Transport Commissioner (DTC) M. Purenndra said that a programme to create awareness among the mobile testing organisers about vehicle pollution tests was conducted. He said that as per the instructions of the State Transport Commissioner inspection was held on the pollution control testing vehicles across the district. He said that vehicle pollution inspection records made last month are required to be shown at the RTA offices by the 5th of every month. He warned surveillance will be intensified across the district from the first week of January. Mr Purenndra said that there are 60 pollution checking vehicles in the Krishna district out of which 50 are mobile and rest of 10 are stationary.

ACQUIRE SKILLS TO SUPPLY QUALITY MILK, FARMERS TOLD

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 9

Milk Producers associations and secretaries of Milk Procurement Centres have been told to increase the milk supply to Amul Project and provide tips to the farmers to improve the butter percentage and solid non-fat in the milk to secure enhanced price for their milk.

During a review with secretaries and assistant secretaries of Milk Procurement Centres at Ongole on Wednesday, Prakasam district collector Pola Bhaskar said that milk producers should be told not to compromise on milk quality while pointing to the standards of Amul.

“Create awareness among milk producers on the management of cattle and offer tips to provide high quality balanced feed along with nutrients to increase the milk output,” the collector told them. He said village taskforce and secretaries should provide technical skills necessary to handle the cattle and improve the milk production.

Mr Bhaskar called for collective efforts from everyone concerned to overcome the initial hurdles in the supply of quality milk to Amul since the toll is certain to boost the village economy unlike never before.

JC T.S. Chetan and Deputy Director of Animal Husbandry, D.L.D.A. Hanumantha Rao were present among others.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy watches a Map of Anantapur before laying the foundation stone for three reservoirs from the camp office on Wednesday. Minister P. Anil Kumar Yadav and others are also seen. —DC

CM sets foundation stone for three new reservoirs

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy virtually laid a foundation stone to Dr YSR Upper Penna project, where three reservoirs Muttala, Thopudurthi, and Devarakonda in Anantapur district are to be constructed at a cost of ₹803 crore under Handri Neva Sujala Sravanthi (HNSS) scheme on Wednesday in the CM camp office at Tadepalli.

Mr Reddy said that their government added two extra reservoirs to HNSS scheme with extra storage capacity of 3.3 tmc of water and this would be carried without increase in cost of ₹803 crore.

Speaking on this occasion, the Chief Minister said that the project was taken up with utmost sincerity and added two more reservoirs to store an additional 3.3 tmc. He stated, “The project is

● **THE PROJECT** will also fill up 7.216 tmc of water in five reservoirs in 90 days and irrigate about 75,000 acres in Beluguppa, Kuderu, Atmakuru, Kambadur, Kanaganapalli, Chennethothapalli, Raptadu and Ramagiri mandals.

being constructed at the same price quoted by the previous Telugu Desam government with an addition of two more reservoirs thereby increasing the capacity. This shows how much corruption the previous TD government was steeped in. During the previous government, a GO was issued on January 24, 2018, to carry out works at a cost of ₹803.96 crore, but the works was not done. However, our government is establishing two additional reservoirs with the same cost and increasing the storage capacity which clearly explains the contrast.”

He said that through this project, the government

aims to irrigate about 6,025 lakh acres in Rayalaseema and provide drinking water to about 33 lakh people. He explained that as part of Handri Neva, lifting water from Jeedipalli reservoir through main canals of Muttala, Thopudurthi, Devarakonda and Somaravandlapalli reservoirs of the upper Penna reservoir which have a capacity of 5.40 tmc will be irrigating 75,000 acres.

He further explained that in addition to this, the project will fill up 7.216 tmc of water in five reservoirs in 90 days and irrigate about 75,000 acres in Beluguppa, Kuderu, Atmakuru, Kambadur, Kanaganapalli, Chennethotha-

palli, Raptadu and Ramagiri mandals.

The Chief Minister said that four more lift irrigation projects are going to be constructed in Kottapalli, Atmakuru, Bala Venkatapuram, Maddalacheruvu. He said that the lives of people and their economic conditions will be changed forever bringing a better facelift to the rural area.

He said by the grace of God all reservoirs across the state are filled with water and the government has been implementing all the welfare schemes as promised and mentioned in the manifesto.

Meanwhile, ministers Botsa Satyanarayana, M. Sankara Narayana and S. Appalaraju, MP Madhav, MLAs T. Prakash Reddy, MLC Iqbal and other officials were present at the event held at Venkatapalli of Kothapalli mandal in Anantapur district near the pylon.

Pushkar ghats: Coliform bacteria exceed standards

From page 1

In the test it was found that “It may be noted from the data, the pH and dissolved oxygen are meeting the standards, whereas the other two parameters, viz., Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) and Total coliform bacteria are exceeding the standards.”

A PCB official said that Environment ministry constituted a committee in 1999 which recommended desirable limit of fecal coliform at 1,000 MPN/100ml and a maximum permissible limit at 10,000 MPN/100ml for discharge of treated sewage into a water body or reuse for agriculture, aquaculture or forestry application. And when it comes to drinking water, it should not be more than 500/MPN/ 100 ml, he said.

Pushkar Ghats near Mantralayam at Vinayaka Ghat, Santa Market, Kurnool Pump House, Rambotla and Sankalbagh

ghats showed abnormal fecal contamination as reflected in coliform samples, said a PCB Engineer.

Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) is a measure of the quantity of oxygen used by microorganisms (aerobic bacteria) in the oxidation process. In a study conducted sometime back by independent researchers, the BOD values of water samples during the monitoring periods at the industrial effluent disposal point was found to be between 78ppm to 119 ppm, which indicates that the effluent run-off carries chemical wastes during poly-fibre synthesis. This is due to the discharge of untreated or partially treated industrial effluent directly in to the river.

There is makeable variation in the BOD content along the downstream from the discharge point during the study period which varied from 20.1 ppm to 36 ppm. The

upstream water showed low BOD values 3.1 ppm to 6.4 ppm.

The decrease in BOD and increase in DO from effluent discharge point was due to natural self-purification.

The rivers in Kurnool are polluted by chemical effluents, medical waste in addition to sewage by KMC, said K.N. Reddy, an environmental activist.

KMC Commissioner D.K. Balaji said it requires ₹300 crore to construct sewerage treatment plant but the civic body does not have that much of money. A proposal has been sent to the Union government to sanction the amount under Swach Bharat scheme, he said.

Balaji further said AP Urban Infrastructure Asset Management Ltd also assessed the sewerage treatment desirability and contemplated to take up construction of the treatment plant for sewerage in a phased manner.

Declare SVVU as national varsity: TTD

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 9

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam Trust Board chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy on Wednesday appealed to the Union education minister Ramesh

Pokhriyal to recognise the TTD-run Sri Venkateswara Vedic University (SVVU) as a national university and requested to hike the TTD quota in the Delhi based S.V. College.

The TTD chairman has given a representation let-

ter to the Union minister at her office in New Delhi on Wednesday.

In the representation, the chairman said that the SVVU, which was set up in 2006, was recognised by UGC as a State University under 2F category.

LEGAL | OPINION

BJYM SEEKS IMPLEMENTATION OF EWS QUOTA

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 9

Bharatiya Janata Party Yuva Morcha threatened to launch a statewide agitation to bring pressure on the government to implement EWS Bill (Reservation for Economically Weaker Sections) while accusing the CM for ignoring the Bill even after extending support in the Assembly and Parliament.

Senior Supreme Court advocate Dushyant Dave has appealed to the High Court not to issue any interim order to stop the state government's move to set up three capitals in the state during the hearing held here on Wednesday.

He informed the court that the state government had decided to set up three capitals, including legisla-

tive, executive and judiciary, keeping in mind the interests of the people. He said that the High Court's interference on the capitals issue was unwarranted.

Dave said that though the state government had taken the decision to set up three capitals based on the reports submitted by experts' committees, the previous government's decision to develop Amaravati as capital city, was based on the opinion of political leaders and

AKN university to study mystery illness at Eluru

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

Adikavi Nannaya University will take up a study to find out the reason for the mystery illness at Eluru in West Godavari.

The university vice-chancellor held a meeting with the heads of several departments in Rajamahendravaram on Wednesday and discussed with them about the mystery illness affecting several people. He said that based on the suggestion from the state government, the university would take up a study to find out the possible reason affecting the health of several people at Eluru.

The VC said that a committee under the leadership of professor Dr A. Matta Reddy from university science and technology college, would take up the study and submit its report.

He called upon the managements of university affiliated colleges and NSS volunteers to move to Eluru and extend all necessary help to the affected people and their families and also to the general public to instil confidence among them as they were panic stricken following the mystery illness affecting several people in the town.

He also said that it was their social responsibility to do so.

BOILED MILK OF INFECTED CATTLE NOT SAFE

From page 1

Humans, who consume such milk even after boiling, have a chance of getting infected with pesticide residues.

NCDC is also collecting samples of crops like paddy and others to test them for any presence of pesticide remnants in them. This is because those who consume food cooked with such crops may get infected. It is also searching for warehouses, where huge quantities of pesticides are stored to check any chance of their leakage or spillage that may find their way into drains, canals and other water bodies, especially owing to recent spell of heavy rains and floods. Soil may have got contaminated with residues of pesticides in the process.

Health authorities say that all these grounds will be subject to a scientific scrutiny. Truth can be established once test reports from several central agencies are out.

Health director Dr. T. Geeta Prasadini said, “We will be able to know the exact reason for the cause of mystery illness very shortly. Several central agencies have collected samples of blood, urine, water, milk and crops, among others. These are being testing at present and their reports are awaited.”

CM should disclose results of tests: Naidu

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday demanded

that the Jagan Mohan Reddy government disclose the results of tests held so far in order to find out the actual reasons for the Eluru mass sickness in West Godavari district.

He wrote a letter to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, saying that

Sarma: Lead coated PVC pipes could be poisoning water

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 9

Former civil servant and social activist EAS Sarma told the chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy that use of lead coated PVC pipes for supplying domestic water could be the reason for the massive sickness of the people in Eluru.

In a letter to the Chief Minister on Wednesday, Mr Sarma said an analysis carried out by the officially recognised Quality Council of India, 33 per cent of the water samples taken in 26 cities in India have indicated high levels of lead.

Lead coated PVC pipes used extensively in urban drinking water systems seem to be the major contributor to lead poisoning of water. The water samples thus analysed indicated lead levels to be in excess of the Indian norm of 50 parts per billion, which is in itself a questionable one compared to the WHO norm of 10 parts per billion.

The former civil servant suggested urgent measures on the part of the municipal bodies to maintain cleanliness at all fresh water sources that cater to water supplies, minimise the use of PVC pipes and carry out frequent, statistically well designed sample analysis of the municipal tap water points at the consumer end.

WHO officials take details

from Page 1

He told authorities to focus on whether the illness was due to water contamination or due to some other cause and asked to conduct a detailed investigation.

Officials informed that the presence of lead and nickel in the patient bodies might have caused the illness, which could have happened due to excessive use of pesticides. Officials said that the number of cases have been declining and the patients are recovering within 3-4 hours.

Meanwhile, experts from the WHO said they are surveying the areas where people fell sick and are taking health details including the food they consumed. On the other hand, experts suspect that bleaching and chlorine used in sanitation programmes as part of Covid-19 prevention measures may also be the cause.

Doctors and experts from AIIMS, Delhi said that comprehensive tests are yet to be done, but the primary investigations revealed that lead and nickel appear to be high in the blood of those who were ill.

As Indians do have nickel in their bodies, the presence of lead might have caused the illness. Also, it was found that there is a significant drop in the level of lead in the patients after 24 hours of becoming sick.

“The process of recy-

cling batteries or due to the dumping of broken batteries, or when fired may also have led to the current situation. We will test drinking water and milk samples and come to a definite conclusion on the reasons as soon as possible,” they said.

Experts from AIIMS, Mangalagiri said that pesticides might have contaminated the organic chlorides, which is just a primary finding, where accurate conclusions on this are yet to come.

Expert team from NIN, Hyderabad said that they have examined the food, water, milk, urine and blood samples from the families of the sick and also taken samples of vegetables and essentials from the market. “We are conducting comprehensive tests, so far, there are no signs of danger. We shall submit a report on water, food, milk, urine and blood samples.”

Similarly, experts from IICT and CCMB are also investigating the cause of illness and are conducting various tests for accurate diagnosis.

Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney, Principal Secretary Anil Kumar Singhal, Andhra Pradesh Medical and Infrastructure Development Corporation chairman Dr K Chandrasekar Reddy and expert teams of AIIMS, NIN, IICT, WHO, CCMB and other officials were present.

There were rising fears over the presence of heavy metals like lead and nickel in the drinking water. He demanded that the government immediately address these concerns and ensure proper drinking water supply through mobile mineral water plants and such measures.

Stating that the general public were under grip of constant fears, Naidu said that the presence of heavy metals would have a seri-

ous impact on the health of pregnant women, children and the aged people hence every resident in the town should be given electronic health cards. Every patient should be monitored on a long-term basis. He demanded that the best medical care should be provided with medical experts and a scientific study of the Eluru illness should be made in order to find out the root cause.

HC urged not to issue interim order on 3 capitals

SHORT TAKES

THIRUPPAVAI TO REPLACE SUPRABATHAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 9

As the auspicious month of Dhanurmasam is commencing from December 16 at 6.04 am onwards, Andal Sri Godai Thiruppavai will be recited in the place of Suprabatham – the awakening seva of Lord inside Tirumala temple till January 14, 2021.

All the Sri Vaishnavaites temples will the recitation of Thiruppavai hymns during the entire month and it is also an important month for all spiritual seekers as it is believed as the most sacred period to worship Lord Vishnu.

According to Hindu scriptures, a day of God is equal to six months (Uttarayana) and a night equal to the remaining months (Dakshinayana) in a human year. Dhanurmasam falls at the end of Dakshinayana. In fact, this month is considered to be auspicious for worship during early hours.

APSSDC-IBM TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

The AP State Skill Development Corporation and IBM offering training in front end web development innovation camp and inviting applications from unemployed youth.

APSSDC Krishna district skill development officer E. Tammaji Rao here on Wednesday said that the training would be held for 22 weeks and computer science and electronics graduates and PGs are eligible to get the training.

He said that training would be offered in coding, front end web development and design making. He said that besides this, front end skills, HTML, GIT, JavaScript, CSS-preprocessors and CSS programming would be offered through online free of cost.

He said that interested unemployed youth can register their names with complete details on www.apssdc.in by December 14 and said that interested persons can contact APSSDC helpline 18004252422 number for more details.

82 TONNES OF GANJA DESTROYED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 9

After a long wait, the officials of Vizag Rural Police got a legal nod to destroy tonnes of seized dry ganja in Vizag region. The police destroyed over 82,400 kgs (82 tonnes) of dry ganja seized by the police in the presence of Drug Disposal committee at Balighattam dumping yard in Narsipatnam of Vizag district on Wednesday.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (Visakhha Range) L.K.V. Ranga Rao said that the ganja was seized in over 657 cases under 41 police stations limits in the district. It was the first time that such a huge quantity of dry ganja was destroyed by a single day in the district.

He said that over 1.26,350 kgs of seized ganja was destroyed in the past three years from 2018 in Vizag rural limits.

The police have been on the job to identify the repeated ganja smugglers, including the inter-state smugglers to invoke PD Act against them to curb the ganja trade in the region.

130 TONNES OF PDS RICE, 6 TRUCKS SEIZED

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 9

Chittoor police have seized 130 tonnes of rice, meant for the public distribution system, at Tada mandal of SPSR Nellore district late on Tuesday night.

They have also seized six trucks transporting the rice bags illegally. A team of police led by Satyavedu Sub Inspector Nagarjuna Reddy jumped into action and found the rice at an unauthorised stock point at Tada following a tip-off.

Police officials said their men are keeping a tab on the movements of paddy brokers of the region after they came to know that some of them have been purchasing PDS rice in Chittoor district and shifting to Chennai and other parts of Tamil Nadu.

Vaccination to spur infra

AP has 1,142 PHCs, 7,548 sub-centres which would be used for vaccination

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 9

The massive exercise of Covid-19 vaccination could lead to strengthening of the rural health infrastructure, according to experts.

Over the years, Andhra Pradesh has 1,142 PHCs and 7,548 sub-centres through which the vaccine would be administered to the vulnerable sections of the society.

Incidentally, the State has begun improving the infrastructure at the PHC and sub-centre level under Effective Vaccine Management (EVM) programme in February itself and a third party

agency suggested a 9-point parametre to make the rural health points flawless in administering the vaccine.

“We have covered 85 per cent of the PHCs and sub-centres under the EVM and complete all the points before the first shot was administered which is likely to happen after polio vaccination being taken up in mid-week of January,” said director of health Dr T. Geetha Prasadini.

Talking to DC she said the PHCs have been refurbished under Nadu-Nedu programme and the sub-centres were being converted into health and wellness centres under

● The PHCs have been refurbished under Nadu-Nedu programme and the sub-centres were being converted into health and wellness centres

Ayushman Bharat programme. Installation of generators and uninterrupted power supply are in place to maintain the cold-chain, she added.

She said AP was ahead in building infrastructure in the rural sector got ready to launch the vaccine all over the State. “Our PHCs have been administering vaccine

since years but Covid-19 will definitely improve the basic infrastructure facilities. In this regard we are conducting gap analysis to find out the needs of the PHCs,” said OSD for Covid-19 for north Andhra and principal of Andhra Medical College Dr P.V. Sudhakar.

In rural area, PHCs are grassroot-level government-run health centres that are responsible for providing last-mile health services. Once a vaccine is manufactured, it is transported from the manufacturer/supplier to the state or regional vaccine store. From there, the vaccine is distributed to districts,

which in turn send them to community health centres, primary health centres and the last point sub-centres.

The state government has directed the district administrations to form mandal level task force committees and similar committees at PHC and sub-centre level for smooth functioning of the programme and ensuring involvement of all the line departments.

As per the available guidelines frontline health workers, frontline staff of other departments, 50 plus age group people and people below 50 with co-morbidities will be vaccinated.

WOMAN FARMER OBSTRUCTS SURVEY

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 9

A woman farmer attempted to end her life by consuming pesticide-laced water in front of the revenue officials who came to conduct a survey for the construction of Rythu bharosa kendra and wellness centre at Baipparedlapalle village of Ramakuppam mandal in Chittoor district on Wednesday.

According to Ramakuppam tahsildar Srinivasulu, the villagers from Baipparedlapalle had staged series of protests in front of the tahsildar office, demanding construction of Rythu bharosa kendra and wellness centre at a Banda Poramboke (government) land in the village.

Following this, the revenue officials visited the village on Wednesday morning and started a survey at the said government land – with Survey No. 144/11 (Extent - 1.95 acres). The survey was later obstructed by the woman farmer Harathi, who claimed that she owns the land. She later tried to end her life by consuming pesticide-laced water.

“As per records it is a ‘Banda Poramboke’ land, which belongs to the government. The woman has temporarily covered the rocks in the said land with some soil and has been raising groundnut crop which has also dried up. We have requested the woman not to obstruct our duties. But she didn’t paid heed to our words and tried to commit suicide by drinking pesticide-laced water,” said Mr Srinivasulu, tahsildar of Ramakuppam.

Bharat Biotech applied to DCGI for EUA on December 7 for Covaxin, developed indigenously by the firm in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research, while Pune-based Serum Institute sought a nod for its Oxford vaccine, Covishield, on December 6.

3 TV REPORTERS ARRESTED FOR EXTORTION

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 9

Buchireddypalem police have arrested three reporters working for Nellore based electronic channels for extortion and assault on a public servant on Wednesday.

According to Nellore rural CI, Srinivasulu Reddy, the accused trespassed into the village secretariat at Buchireddypalem on November 6 night when two village volunteers were working and questioned the reasons for remaining in the office during the late hours.

The reporters recorded their presence in the cameras even when they said they are engaged in YSR Bima work and threatened to expose them while hinting about illegal activities in the office.

In a complaint, the woman volunteer alleged that the media men collected ₹12,000 from them for not telecasting the video footage. CI said that they have arrested the reporters based on the complaint. He said there were no illegal activities in the office.



Project Director, Ship Building Centre Visakhapatnam, Vice Admiral K. Srinivas lays a wreath at the Submarine Cenotaph as part of Submarine Day celebrations at INS Virbahu inside Eastern Naval Command in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

Guard pond in RINL, Vizag steel, inaugurated

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 9

Chairman and managing director of RINL, the holding company of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, P.K. Rath inaugurated Guard pond in the plant premises on Wednesday.

Mr Rath congratulated the projects and works collective for completing the project within the stipulated time and said RINL was always at the forefront in implementing environment friendly measures.

Guard ponds are ‘Safe Guard’ mechanisms for preventing discharge of ‘untreated/abnormal’ effluents into marine environ-

ments. In line with the statutory directives, RINL constructed guard ponds at a cost of ₹10 crore. This guard pond has 4 ponds with each having a capacity of 9,600 cubic meters for storing two days of treated effluent from Coke Ovens. Once the water is stored, it shall be permitted to be discharged into the marine environment after its quality is cross-checked by APPCB. This ensures that 100 per cent of the effluent being discharged into the marine environment is done only after it meets the prescribed norms. This is one more environment friendly measure taken by RINL.

CYCLONE AFFECTED STAGE PROTEST DEMANDING ASSISTANCE IN NELLORE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 9

Demanding immediate financial assistance, victims of the recent cyclone staged a protest in front of the office of the Mandal Revenue Officer in Nellore city on Wednesday.

The victims, who are residents of the areas inundated during heavy rains a few days back, squatted in front of the MRO’s office and raised slogans against the government for ignoring them.

Speaking on the occasion

CPM Nellore city secretary M. Ramesh lamented over the plight of poor living in the colonies located in the outskirts colonies which were inundated due to flooding for more than three days. He said the deluge resulted in damage to essentials and electronic gadgets. Even power supply was not restored to many houses due to waterlogging.

Stressing that the affected people are still facing hardships, Ramesh demanded immediate financial assistance from the state government.

FORUM DOUBTS THE SAFETY OF KANDALERU DAM CITING SEEPAGE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 9

Telugu Ganga Water Rights Committee blamed the engineers of Kandaleru dam for their inability to arrest the seepage from the dam after storage level increased to 60 tmc.ft for the first time.

The forum alleged that agriculture lands and lemon gardens in the villages such as Pulikallu, Venkatapuram, Vavintiparthi, Parvathapuram and Kummaraagunta located adjacent to Kandaleru dam will be destroyed if water logging due to the seepage is

not stopped immediately. 1. Convener of the forum, M. Ramesh alleged that the discharge of seepage through Toe drain is very much higher than the stipulated norms.

The purpose of Toe drain, which is located along the downstream of embankment dams, is to capture the seepage from the embankment and safely discharge into the area downstream.

In a representation submitted to the executive engineer of Telugu Ganga project, Ramesh expressed concern over possible damage to the bunds.

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SHORT TAKES

TAMIL TELEVISION ACTRESS CHITRA COMMITS SUICIDE

Chennai, Dec. 9: Popular Tamil television actress Chitra was found dead at a hotel room here early on Wednesday and she is suspected to have died by suicide, police said.

The 29-year old actress, well known among television audience in Tamil Nadu was seen hanging from a fan at the hotel room — using her saree like a rope — in suburban Nazarethpet when they reached the spot, police said.

When examined, she was already dead, an official said adding her fiancé, who was with her before her death was being questioned.

After a shoot at a nearby location, K. Chitra arrived at the hotel on the Bengaluru bypass and had told the man that she would be back after a bath and requested him to wait outside, police said quoting him. “He says he knocked on the door since she did not come out for long. He says, he then informed the hotel personnel and police was informed at 3.30 am. He is being questioned. A probe is on,” the official said.

The 32-year old man was recently engaged to her and he was staying with her in the hotel room. Chitra became more popular among lovers of soap opera after she donned the role of ‘Mullai,’ in the ongoing television serial ‘Pandian Stores.’

The body has been sent to Kilpauk Government Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

THREE AL-BADR MILITANTS KILLED IN ENCOUNTER

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, DEC. 9

A gunfight that broke out in a remote village of Jammu and Kashmir’s southern Pulwama district overnight ended around noon on Wednesday after the security forced gunned down all the three militants who had been holed up in a private house. The house owner was injured in the clash, the officials said.

The Army and J&K police said that the slain men — all locals — belonged to Al-Badr, a pro-Pakistan militant outfit.

Inspector General of Police (Kashmir range), Vijay Kumar, said that the civilian who was caught in crossfire was immediately shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment and is said to be stable. Kumar said that the operation to flush out militants from Pulwama’s Tiken village had been launched jointly by J&K police’s counterinsurgency Special Operations Group, the Army’s 55 Rashtriya Rifles and Central Reserve Police Force’s 182 and 183 battalions.

The police claimed that the militants holed up in the area were given opportunity to surrender. “However, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which was retaliated leading to an encounter. Zamir Sadiq Lone in whose house the terrorists were hiding also received gunshot injuries.”

DRDO LABS ‘TALK’ IN SUCCESSFUL QUANTUM DEMO

New Delhi, Dec. 9: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Wednesday successfully demonstrated communication between its two labs using Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) technology, which is a “robust” way to share encryption keys, said an official statement.

In the QKD technology, encryption keys are sent as qubits in a fibre optic cable. Quantum computing uses qubits as basic resources, similar to how bits are used as basic resources in classical computing. The QKD is designed in a way that if an illegitimate entity tries to read the transmission, it will disturb the qubits — which are encoded on photons — and this will generate transmission errors, leading to legitimate end users being immediately informed.

“Secure communications are vital for defence and strategic agencies world over and distribution of encryption keys from time to time is an important requirement in this context... Quantum based communication offers a robust solution to sharing the keys securely,” said an official statement. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the DRDO for successful demonstration of QKD-based communication between its two labs in Hyderabad, said the statement.



Police keep vigil as Karnataka farmers participate in a protest rally in Bengaluru on Wednesday to press for repeal of the Centres agri-laws. — PTI

Save India’s annadatas, Opposition urges Prez

Anti-democratic farm laws threaten food security, says Oppn

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

Opposition parties, led by the Congress and NCP, met President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday and sought repeal of the three farm laws against which thousands of farmers have been protesting on various borders of the national capital.

The five-member delegation included former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPI’s D. Raja and DMK leader T.K.S. Elangovan.

The Opposition’s memorandum to the President said, “We urge upon you, as the custodian of the Indian Constitution, to persuade your government not to be obdurate and accept the demands raised by India’s annadatas.”

“The new agri-laws, passed in Parliament in an anti-democratic manner preventing a structured discussion and voting, threaten India’s food security, destroy Indian agriculture and our farmers, lay the basis for the abolishment of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and mortgage Indian agriculture and our markets to the caprices of multinational agri-business corporates and domestic corporates,” it said.

“We met the President and informed him of our view regarding the three farm laws. We have asked for their repeal. We informed the President that it is critical that they are taken back,” Gandhi told the media after the meeting.

He said the way the farm laws were passed in Parliament, “we feel it was an insult to farmers and that is why they are protesting in the cold weather against them”. He claimed that using the new laws, the government wants to hand over the farming sector to the “friends of the Prime Minister,” but the farmers are fearless and will not back off, and will continue with their peaceful agitation.

Mehbooba Mufti detained again

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, DEC. 9

Former chief minister and People’s Democratic Party (PDP) leader Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday said that she has again been placed under house arrest, the third time in less than a fortnight. Taking a jibe at Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, she said “too much democracy indeed.”

Kant had on Tuesday said, “Tough reforms are very difficult in the Indian context. We are too much of a democracy. For the first time, the government has had the courage and determination to carry out hard-headed reforms across sectors.” The PDP chief tweeted,

Kejriwal still under house arrest: AAP

New Delhi, Dec. 9: The AAP on Wednesday alleged that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal’s movement is still “restricted” and the main gate of his residence remains closed by the Delhi Police, which denied the charge.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which had on Tuesday alleged that the Delhi Police put Kejriwal under house arrest after he met farmers protesting against the Centre’s agriculture reform laws at the city’s Singhu border, again claimed that it was being done at the behest of Union minister Amit Shah.

Elders determined to keep up the fight

New Delhi, Dec. 9: “Come home only after we win this fight”. His son’s words to him as he left his village in Punjab for Delhi ring in Gurdev Singh’s ears and give the 71-year-old the strength to carry on with the protest against the new farm laws — so what if he is still recovering from a knee replacement surgery.

The doughty sardar from Narpur village in Punjab’s Jalandhar district is just one of the several elderly people camping for the last 13 days, determined to keep up the fight for a repeal of the Centre’s three new farm laws.

It is getting colder by the day and they are hundreds of miles from home but the band of old men, among the many thousands of protesting farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, are not giving up any time soon.

The Delhi Police had rejected AAP’s charge against it as “totally baseless”. Addressing a press conference on Wednesday, AAP spokesperson Raghav Chadha said there is an atmosphere of “undeclared emergency” around the Chief Minister’s residence. “I am telling you with full responsibility that the movement of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is still restricted at the behest of the (Union) home minister. The main gate of the Chief Minister’s residence is still closed,” Chadha alleged.

— PTI

BUSY FIGHTING FOR OUR RIGHTS, SAY FARMERS

New Delhi, Dec. 9: Caught between the Covid-19 pandemic and the agitation for their rights, farmers protesting against the Centre’s new farm laws said the fear of contracting the disease is “not enough” to detract them from their fight.

Thousands of farmers camping at the Tikri borders are largely seen without the basic preventive measure against Covid-19 — protective masks.

“The government has already tied a noose around our necks with these laws... we cannot afford to be afraid of Coronavirus,” Gagandeep Singh, a farmer from Bhatinda in Punjab, said. He has been protesting at the Delhi-Haryana border for the last 10 days. Demonstrating for 12 straight days, the farmers have been demanding that the three laws be revoked. Sporting a long white beard, Gurusaran Singh said he was not afraid of the disease that has already killed over 1.4 lakh people in the country.

“We are losing our rights. We do not have time to worry about Coronavirus,” he said. According to Sachin Kumar from Delhi’s Uttam Nagar, the government’s refusal to hear the farmers’ demands proved that it was creating the fear of the virus to shut down the protest.

Kumar, whose family has land in Uttar Pradesh mocked, “It seems that the virus will infect us exclusively. What is shown on camera and the reality on ground is different.”

Meanwhile, traffic was disrupted at border points with farmers agitating on the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders of Delhi.

— PTI

Rajasthan PR poll results mandate on farm bills: BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

Hailing the Rajasthan local body polls results as “phenomenal,” the BJP on Thursday claimed that the results are farmers’ mandate for Modi government’s farm reforms and also people’s support for the party across the country.

In Congress ruled Rajasthan, the BJP won 353 of 636 zila parishads, 21 zila panchayats and 1,990 of 4,371 panchayat samitis, primarily in rural areas.

The party also cited its performance in the recently held local bodies polls in Hyderabad, Arunachal Pradesh and the Bihar Assembly polls to assert that the party and the Narendra Modi led central government has support in every region of the country. BJP president J.P. Nadda

● THE BJP won 353 of 636 zila parishads, 21 zila panchayats and 1,990 of 4,371 panchayat samitis, primarily in rural areas.

said the saffron party’s win in Rajasthan symbolises the trust the poor, farmers and labourers have in Modi’s leadership, while senior party leader and Union minister Prakash Javadekar stressed that people, especially farmers, have given it a “decisive” victory.

He said all these polls were held after Parliament enacted three farm sector reform laws, which have drawn protest from a section of farmers, especially from Punjab.

Noting that the polls in Rajasthan were held primarily in rural areas, Javadekar said by opting for the BJP, voters reversed the trend of the state’s ruling party win-

ning most seats in the local polls in Rajasthan.

“This is a huge victory.. This is farmers’ mandate for farm reforms,” said the Union minister.

When asked about Congress leader Rahul Gandhi’s dig at the Union government alleging that “reform equals theft” for it, Javadekar took a jibe saying he does not want to respond to a “non-performing politician.”

He said the Central government is holding talks with the protesting farmer union leaders with an open mind and expressed confidence that a resolution will be reached.

The minister pointed out that these wins have come for the BJP amid the Covid-19 pandemic, economic troubles caused by it and “misinformation” campaign by the opposition against the BJP over the farm reforms.

Nadda attacks TMC as he begins poll campaign

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 9

BJP president J.P. Nadda on Wednesday attacked the ruling Trinamul Congress in West Bengal as a family-run party after embarking on a two-day visit to the state to set “dynasty politics” on the agenda in next year’s Assembly elections.

He also led a rally of *Aar Noy Onnyay* (no more injustice) campaign, a door-to-door outreach initiative of the BJP, on Girish Mukherjee Road in Bhowanipore, the home turf and Assembly constituency of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, to make the saffron party’s presence felt there.

On Thursday, the BJP chief is likely to visit Diamond Harbour, the base and Lok Sabha constituency of the CM’s nephew, Abhishek Banerjee, in South 24 Parganas.

Inaugurating the state BJP election office in Hastings and nine district party offices, Nadda, in an oblique reference to Banerjee’s residence at Harish Chatterjee Street in Kalighat, which is also the heart of the TMC, said, “*Karyalay* is the centre of culture and tradition. Interestingly, BJP is run from the *Karyalay*. But for other parties, home is their *Karyalay* from where they are run.”

He said, “To other parties, party means one particular *parivar* (family) and is restricted only within the *parivar*, which is spread like a net from top to bottom. And the TMC is no exception to it. It has also become a party of *parivar*. But the BJP is a party which itself is a *parivar*. We are part of a big *parivar*. This is evident for us because *Karyalay* is not run from any leader’s home.”

Contrasting the Trinamul Congress supremacy with Asahishnuta, Nadda argued: “On December 7, 1935, Jan Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee said in



BJP national president J.P. Nadda flashes the victory sign as the party begins campaigning for West Bengal Assembly elections. — PTI

Didi says refugees will not need CAA

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 9

Desperate to get back the votebank of the Matuas, a community of Hindu migrants in West Bengal, from the BJP, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday asserted that the refugees would not need the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) to stay as legal citizens here.

Accusing the BJP of cheating the refugees in the name of the CAA in the poll-bound state, the Trinamul Congress supreme once again ruled out of allowing the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and National Population Register (NPR) also here.

Her announcement came in wake of the BJP national general secretary

Kailash Vijayvargiya’s announcement that the CAA implementation for the migrants would get underway from either January or February. Banerjee told a TMC rally at the domain of the Matuas in Bongaon of

North 24 Parganas, “There are lot of refugees who live here after coming from Bangladesh. It is your home like ours. There is no need to get a fresh certificate because all of you are citizens. You are being cheated in the name of the CAA. If it gets underway, your grandparents’ age proof will be sought. Can you arrange it now?”

She informed that all the 94 refugee colonies, under the state government, were legalised already to give its residents citizenship “in exchange of nothing.”

“There were 250 more such colonies which existed privately on central government premises. We have legalised them also to give citizenship to its residents. Remember, the state government, not the central government, holds the main power. Work of the two governments is different. The state government decides who will live in the state. So there is no point in lying in the name of CAA. We will not allow the NRC and NPR to happen,” Banerjee claimed.

Tigress was translocated to Satkosia reserve in 2018

‘Sundari’ to relocate to MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, DEC. 9

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh on Wednesday gave his nod for relocation of tigress ‘Sundari’, translocated to Satkosia tiger reserve in Odisha in a re-introduction programme in 2018, in Kanha National Park in MP.

Chouhan’s decision to restore Sundari to her original home in Kanha tiger reserve has ended after almost a yearlong impasse over relocation of the wild animal with MP forest department hither-to unwilling to take back her contending that she was not fit to be released in the wild.

In a letter to his Odisha

counterpart Naveen Patnaik, Chouhan said MP would take back Sundari. He, however, indicated that it would take some time for relocation of Sundari in Kanha tiger reserve.

“It has been decided to relocate Sundari in the Ghorela re-wilding centre in Kanha tiger reserve to make her fit to be released in the wild. But, an orphan cub is currently being trained in the centre to restore its wild character. Sundari could be relocated to the centre only after the tiger cub was released in the wild”, the letter written in Hindi said.

Chouhan said an expert team from MP which visited Sundari in her enclosure in Satkosia tiger

reserve has found that the wild animal was not fit to live in the wild since she has become habituated to human presence due to her prolonged captivity in the enclosure.

“It is learnt from media reports that rehabilitation of Sundari in the enclosure in Satkosia tiger reserve was not done as per provisions of wildlife Act, leading her to lose her natural wild nature”, the letter said.

A male tiger, Mahavir, and a female big cat Sundari, were translocated within a gap of a couple of months to Satkosia tiger reserve in 2018 from Madhya Pradesh in a re-introduction programme.

This was the first experimental interstate translocation of tigers in the

country.

However, Mahavir was allegedly killed by locals a few months after his translocation.

Later, Sundari killed 2 humans in the tiger reserve, forcing the Odisha forest department to shift her to a small enclosure in the reserve forest.

Later, National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and Odisha government requested the MP government to take back Sundari.

A wildlife activist moved Madhya Pradesh high court seeking a directive to the MP government to take back Sundari.

The court last month ordered the MP government to relocate Sundari in Kanha.

your opponents. This is very much relevant to Bengal even today. If we look at Mamataji, intolerance thy name is Mamata. Intolerance is growing so fast here!”

RUSSIA UNHAPPY WITH CLOSE INDO-US TIES

From page 1

“The West is attempting to undermine our close partnership and privileged relations with India. This is the goal of the US’ very tough pressure on New Delhi,” Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov said.

Observers point out that the remarks highlight Russia’s unease with India’s growing proximity and strong strategic ties with the United States, with whom Russia has had a sharply deteriorating relationship.

It also highlights India’s challenge in continuing to maintain excellent ties with both Russia and the US.

SHORT TAKES

CHOPPER CRASH
IN FRENCH ALPS
KILLS 5, 1 HURT

Paris, Dec. 9: Five members of a mountain rescue team were killed and a sixth was seriously injured when their helicopter crashed in the French Alps, authorities said. The helicopter was carrying the team on a training mission in the Savoie region on Tuesday evening. The helicopter came down at an altitude of 1,800 meters (5,905 feet), the prefecture of Savoie said in a statement. The surviving crew member was able to give the alert.

He has been transported to a hospital in the city of Grenoble, the prefecture said. Weather conditions were particularly bad, local authorities said. French President Emmanuel Macron paid tribute in a tweet overnight to rescuers who “to save lives, are taking all the risks.”

GERMAN POLLS
TO BE HELD ON
SEPT. 26, 2021

Berlin, Dec. 9: Germany's next parliamentary election, which will determine the country's new leader after Chancellor Angela Merkel's long rule, will be held on September 26, 2021.

President Frank-Walter Steinmeier's office said Wednesday that the head of state set the date in line with a recommendation from the government. It will be post-World War II Germany's 20th parliamentary election. Germany holds elections every four years.

The lower house of parliament, or Bundestag, elects the chancellor. That may not happen until well after the election, because the process of putting together a governing coalition can be lengthy. After the 2017 election, it was nearly six months before Merkel was sworn in for her fourth term — a record.

ETHIOPIA DENIES
PROBES INTO
TIGRAY CONFLICT

Nairobi, Dec. 9: Ethiopia's government is rejecting calls for independent investigations into the deadly conflict in its Tigray region, saying it “doesn't need a baby-sitter.”

The declaration comes amid international calls for more transparency into the month-long fighting between Ethiopian forces and those of the fugitive Tigray regional government that is thought to have killed thousands, including civilians.

At least one large-scale massacre has been documented, and others are feared. Senior government official Redwan Hussein told reporters on Tuesday evening that Ethiopia will invite others for assistance only if it feels that “it failed to investigate.”

To assume the government can't carry out such probes “is belittling the government,” he said.

Frustration is growing as the northern Tigray region remains largely cut off from the outside world, with food and medicines desperately needed by the population of 6 million — some 1 million of them now thought to be displaced.

INDIA'S WEAPONS
PURCHASE FROM
US AT \$3.4 BILLION

Washington, Dec. 9: India's weapons procurement from the United States jumped from a meagre \$6.2 million to a whopping \$3.4 billion in the final year of the Donald Trump's administration, according to official data.

As per the data released by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), the jump in the sale of American weapons to India comes at a time when sale of weapons from the US to other countries has dipped to \$50.8 billion in 2020 from \$55.7 billion in 2019.

In 2019, the sale of US weapons to foreign countries was \$55.7 billion. In 2017, it was \$41.9 billion, it said. Major buyers of American weapons in 2020 were India (\$3.4 billion up from \$6.2 million in fiscal year 2019), Morocco (\$4.5 billion up from \$12.4 million), Poland (\$4.7 billion up from \$673 million), Singapore (\$1.3 billion up from \$137 million), Taiwan (\$11.8 billion up from \$876 million), and the United Arab Emirates (\$3.6 billion up from \$1.1 billion), the data showed.

Several countries reported a drop in purchase of weapons from the US.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attends a ceremony to mark the arrival of a plane of the international courier company DHL, carrying over 1,00,000 doses of the first batch of Pfizer vaccines which landed at Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv, on Wednesday.

— AFP

UK body issues allergy
warning for Pfizer jab

Caution was given after 2 NHS workers suffered allergic reactions

London, Dec. 9: Britain's medicines regulator on Wednesday issued a warning for people with “significant” history of allergic reactions to medicines, food or vaccines to not have the Pfizer/BioNTech jab, a day after the first set of patients were administered their first of two doses of the vaccine against Covid-19.

The warning comes after two National Health Service (NHS) workers experienced “anaphylactoid reaction” symptoms shortly after being injected, but are now said to be recovering well. NHS England said all its trusts involved with the mass vaccination programme have been informed and from Wednesday, all patients scheduled to receive the vaccine will be asked if they have a history of allergic reactions.

“As is common with new vaccines, the MHRA have advised on a precautionary basis that people with a significant history of allergic reactions do not receive this vaccination after two people with a history of significant allergic reactions responded adversely,” said Professor Stephen Powis, medical director for the NHS in England.

An anaphylactoid reaction tends to involve a skin rash, breathlessness and sometimes a drop in blood pressure and both the NHS workers who experienced this are said to have a history of serious allergies and carry adrenaline pens around with them.

“We have been advised by MHRA [Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency] of two yellow card reports that may be associated with allergic reaction due to administration of the Covid-19 BNT162b2 vaccine,” Pfizer UK said in a statement. “As a precautionary measure, the MHRA has issued temporary guidance to the NHS while it conducts an investigation in order to fully understand each case and its causes,” it said.

Dr June Raine, the head of the MHRA, told a joint select committee hearing on Tuesday that “real-time vigilance” will continue throughout the vaccine rollout process.

— PTI

Biden promises 100 mn
vaccine shots in 100 days

Washington, Dec. 9: US President-elect Joe Biden has said that in the first 100 days of his administration, he would mandate everyone to wear a mask, ensure 100 million Covid-19 vaccinations and reopen the majority of schools as he assured Americans that his “crisis-tested” team of experts will deliver better healthcare and revive the economy.

The US is in the midst of a deadly pandemic that has infected almost 15 million Americans and killed 2,86,000. Globally, there are 68.2 million Covid-19 cases and the pandemic

has claimed more than 1.5 million lives.

Announcing his national health team, Biden asked the Trump administration to act now to purchase the doses it has negotiated with Pfizer and Moderna and to work swiftly to scale manufacturing for the US population and the world.

“This can be fixed. If it does, my team will be able to get at least 100 million vaccinations done in my first 100 days. Third, it should be a national priority to get our kids back into school and keep them in school,” he said.

— PTI

MERKEL BACKS
TOUGHER VIRUS
RESTRICTIONS

Berlin, Dec. 9: German Chancellor Angela Merkel advocated tougher restrictions on public life and pleaded with her compatriots to cut down on socializing as the country reported its highest single-day death toll of the Coronavirus pandemic on Wednesday.

Germany is gradually moving toward a tighter lockdown, at least for a limited period after Christmas, as new virus cases remain stubbornly high — and are even beginning to creep higher — despite a partial shutdown that started on November 2.

— AP

U.S. SANCTIONS
HINDERING ACCESS
TO VACCINE: IRAN

Tehran, Dec. 9: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that US sanctions are making it difficult for Iran to purchase medicine and health supplies from abroad, including Covid-19 vaccines needed to contain the worst outbreak in the Middle East.

President Donald Trump's administration has imposed crippling sanctions on Iran's banking sector and its vital oil and gas industry since unilaterally withdrawing the US from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018. While the United States insists that medicines and humanitarian goods are exempt from sanctions, restrictions on trade have made many banks and companies across the world hesitant to do business with Iran, fearing punitive measures from Washington.

The country is also cut off from the international banking system, making it difficult to transfer payments.

— AP

Biden picks retired Army
general to lead PentagonTrump: Hopeful of
continuing as Prez

Washington, Dec. 9: US President-elect Joe Biden has announced retired Army general Lloyd J. Austin as his nomination for Defence Secretary. If confirmed by the Senate, 67-year-old Austin would be the first African-American to lead the Pentagon.

The nominee for the 28th Secretary of Defence comes with a distinguished record of military service spanning four decades. “General Austin shares my profound belief that our nation is at its strongest when we lead not only by the example of our power, but by the power of our example.”

Throughout his lifetime of dedicated service — and in the many hours we've spent together in the White House Situation Room and with our troops overseas — General Austin has demonstrated exemplary leadership, character and command,” Biden said while making the announcement on Tuesday.

“He is uniquely qualified to take on the challenges and crises we face in the current moment, and I look forward to once again working closely with him as a trusted partner to lead our military with dignity and resolve, revitalise our alliances in the face of global threats, and ensure the safety and security of the American people,” the Democratic leader said. An accomplished, respected and trailblazing figure in the US military history, Austin retired from the Army in 2016 after over 40 years of service.

The first African-American to serve as Commander of US Central Command, Austin is a trusted and crisis-tested leader who has overseen some of the most complex and impactful operations in the history of the armed services — including serving as the chief

have denied any such fraud. Election officials have declared Biden as the President-elect as he received more than the required 270 of the 538 electoral college votes. The elections are officially scheduled to be certified next week. However, Trump is continuing his legal efforts to upend Biden's victory. He has allowed the official start of Biden's transition to power but has not yet conceded defeat.

— PTI

U.S. TOP COURT REJECTS GOP BID TO
HALT BIDEN'S PENNSYLVANIA WIN

Washington, Dec. 9 (AP) The Supreme Court has rejected Republicans' last-gasp bid to reverse Pennsylvania's certification of President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the electoral battleground.

The court without comment on Tuesday refused to call into question the certification process in Pennsylvania.

Governor Tom Wolf already has certified Biden's victory and the state's 20 electors are to meet on December 14 to cast their votes for Biden. Biden won 306 electoral votes, so even if Pennsylvania's results had been in doubt, he still would have more than the 270 electoral votes needed to become president.

— AP

Pak lawmakers to resign to
paralyse govt: PDM chiefPAKISTAN TO BUY RAJ KAPOOR'S
ANCESTRAL HOUSES IN PESHAWAR

Islamabad, Dec. 9: The political crisis in Pakistan has deepened after an 11-party Opposition alliance announced that their lawmakers will resign en masse by the end of this month from parliament to paralyse the government and force Prime Minister Imran Khan to call early snap polls.

The decision was taken after the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), an alliance of 11 Opposition parties formed in September this year to overthrow Prime Minister Khan's government, held a marathon meeting in Islamabad. PDM chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman announced on Tuesday night that a consensus was reached on resigning from parliament.

“All lawmakers will submit their resignation letter to their party chiefs by 31st December,” he said, flanked by PML-N leader Maryam Nawaz and PPP chief Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

The exact timing of stamping out of assemblies would be decided later, said Rehman. Soon after the election in 2018, he had urged the Opposition leaders not to take oath to join parliament due to alleged rigging. But his idea was overruled by others, chiefly by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the The Pakistani Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). It is

believed that en masse resignation is the only way to bring the government on its knees and force it to call early elections.

The PPP government in the Sindh province was considered as a hurdle as it was not sure if that it would sacrifice its government to help the Opposition alliance. The leaders also agreed to go ahead with a rally in Lahore on December 13 as a show of power to the government. It will be the sixth rally after similar

Asghar, following a report of the Communication and Works Department, fixed the price of Dilip Kumar's four Marla house for ₹80,56,000 while that of Raj Kapoor's six Marla house for ₹1,50,00,000. Marla, a traditional unit of area used in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, is considered as equal to 272.25 square feet or 25.2929 square metres.

The archaeology department has sent a formal request to the provincial government for releasing over ₹2 crore for purchasing both the historic buildings, where the two greats of the Indian cinema were born and raised in their early days before the Partition.

— PTI

gatherings held in Gujranwala, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar and Multan.

The Opposition parties succeeded in attracting a huge number of people despite hurdles created by the government. Prime Minister Imran Khan rejected the demand to step down or call early elections and consistently advocated that Opposition was protesting to put pressure to stop probes in corruption cases against their leaders.

— PTI

MISSION | MARS

Automatic engine abort occurred with just 1.3 secs remaining in countdown, no word on next flight

SpaceX aborts test Starship flight in last second

Cape Canaveral (US), Dec. 9: The first high-altitude test flight of SpaceX's futuristic Starship was aborted at the last second in Texas on Tuesday.

SpaceX came close to launching a prototype of the rocketship that company chief Elon Musk is designing to carry people to Mars.

The goal was to shoot Starship to an altitude of

eight miles (12.5 kilometres) — the highest yet — and then bring it back to a vertical landing. But an automatic engine abort occurred with just 1.3 seconds remaining in the countdown.

SpaceX announced on its web broadcast it was done for the day, and there was no word on when it might try again. SpaceX already has conducted five Starship test

flights, but these earlier, simpler models have gone no higher than 490 feet (150 metres.) The stainless steel version on the launch pad on Tuesday was the first to feature a nose cone.

occurred with just 1.3 seconds remaining in the countdown.

● THE STAINLESS steel version on the launch pad on Tuesday was the first to feature a nose cone.

less steel version on the launch pad on Tuesday was the first to feature a nose cone, body flaps and

three Raptor engines.

SpaceX has taken over Boca Chica in the far southeastern corner of Texas, near the Mexican border, to build and test its Starships. The company intends to use Starships — the upper stage atop Super Heavy boosters — to deliver massive satellites into orbit around Earth, and send people and cargo to the moon and Mars.

— AP



This image shows SpaceX full-size Starship SN8 rocket prototype before its launch.

— AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

10 DECEMBER 2020

Democracy and reforms: How much is too much?

Is there a connection between democracy and Niti Aayog? Or, not to put too fine a point on it, between India's democracy and the government's think tank on economic affairs that was created as the National Institute for Transforming India (Niti) by dismantling the Planning Commission, which had planned to achieve balanced development of the various regions to remove poverty. Probably not, if putative observations of the Niti Ayog CEO, Amitabh Kant, made recently, are to be taken at face value.

The transformation of India in the conception of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is the chairman of the think tank he created in January 2015 through a mere cabinet decision and not the constitutional route, is to be achieved, fundamentally through de-regulation in all fields of economic activity. This means taking away any role for the government through "hard reforms" that Mr Kant spoke of while addressing an event virtually on Tuesday.

The country's major news platforms quoted the Niti Aayog operational chief as saying that "tough reforms" were very difficult in the Indian context because there was "too much democracy" in the country. He also noted that the Modi government had shown the "political will" to drive hard reforms. He reeled off examples such as mining, agriculture and labour.

The political meaning of this is obvious — that the rules, regulations and the culture of debate, dissent and protest in a democracy will not yield "tough reforms" needed to deliver economic prosperity. This is a discredited notion and Mr Kant evidently ran for cover when the implication of his remarks was revealed to him. He flatly denied saying the words attributed to him though it is highly unlikely that all reputed media outlets would misquote him. The videos of his only underscore that his clarification and denials are to be regarded with a stiff dose of skepticism.

Mr Kant went to the extent of saying that India can compete with China only through "hard reforms" and not through holding seminars. Seminars imply discussion and debate. This China reference would also suggest that in the Niti Aayog CEO's scheme, debates are not the way to push "tough reforms", implying a failure of the well-known basis of democracy. Presumably, then, hard reforms can only be achieved through bulldozing, the way it is done in China, a totalitarian state where a single leader is all knowing and all-powerful.

Examples of so-called "hard reform" (even when they undervalue public welfare by privileging the market principle on an exclusive basis), pushed through the methods of democracy, have evidently eluded Mr Modi's most powerful economic bureaucrat. He could have recalled, for instance, that former Britain PM Margaret Thatcher battled and debated in Parliament and the media to get her way in scuttling welfare measures of an earlier era to set her country on a new path.

In fact, to make economic reforms non-sliding, acceptance by the widest sections of the people is a necessity, not a luxury, and the political principle of democracy provides for the most thorough means to install a new idea or practice. The present regime has failed to do just that, the most recent egregious example being the contentious agri-laws against which a storm is brewing. These were rammed through Parliament virtually without discussion — in an example of the "political will" shown by the regime.

The rise of Everest

Measured in 2005 by a Beijing survey to be 8,844 m, Mt Chomolungma (meaning mother goddess) was a harder climb from the Chinese side, but also shorter by a good four metres. It prompted mountaineers to rush over to Nepal to summit Sagarmatha (literally, top of the world) whose height was generally acknowledged to be 8,848 metres. It cost the Communist country no small amount of Everest tourism.

Following the 2015 earthquake in Nepal which left 9,000 dead, including some climbers, the country's survey department experts, fearing that the mountain had become shorter, called for a fresh taking of measurement. So far, Nepal had been following the findings of the 1954 Survey of India, which had put out the second figure. An American survey in 1999, however, had calculated Everest to be higher, at 8,850 metres. It added grist to speculations as to whether the young-fold mountain was still growing.

The speculators were correct. The two newest satellite aided surveys — Nepal's in 2019 and the one completed by China earlier this year — finally agree — the height of Everest is 8,848.86 metres — the mountain having grown by three feet or 86 centimetres. It is 164 years after Radhanath Sikdar used trigonometry and machines called theodolites to first calculate it on behalf of Sir George Everest to be 8,839 metres, making it the highest peak of the world.

It wasn't easy measuring the earth's tallest mountain this time either. Surveyors had to climb the mountain with a GPS receiver. A Nepali surveyor who stayed at the summit for two hours lost a toe to frostbite.

Now comes the key question — can this increase be attributed to rock, or is it merely icecap, as China once claimed? Yes and no, says Sridevi Jade, plate tectonics expert. The Himalayas stand on the boundary between the Indian and Eurasian plates. Jade calculates that the Indian plate is slipping under the Eurasian plate by about five centimetres a year. After accounting for erosion on the top, Everest is gaining about one centimetre every 10 years. So while the quake may have taken off centimetres, replicating Hillary and Norgay's feat just got harder.

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Subhani



Boris' fumbling holds lessons for the world



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray
Reflections

An important lesson for the pandemic-stricken world to remember as challenge after challenge casts its shadow on Prime Minister Boris Johnson's beleaguered government in London is that no opinion — not even that of a suspected adversary — should be dismissed or derided at a time of grave international danger.

More of that later. Immediate attention focuses on another aspect of the coronavirus crisis which inspired Britain's Agra-born business minister, Alok Sharma, to exult grandiloquently: "In years to come, we will remember this moment as the day the United Kingdom led humanity's charge against this disease." He meant — as every British spokesman repeats ad nauseam — that the UK is the first country to agree to use the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19.

Not everyone is equally boastful. While the German ambassador reminded listeners that the vaccine represents collective European enterprise, the tiny oil-rich island kingdom of Bahrain quickly muscled into the limelight to share Britain's glory with its own agreement with Pfizer/BioNTech. Another critic with little stomach for bombast that might resound to applause in Mr Sharma's ancestral Uttar Pradesh sharply reminded him that this moment might also be remembered for "the UK having one of the worst death rates and the worst economic impact due to poor governance".

Going beyond the United Kingdom's 1.71 million Covid-19 cases and 61,014 deaths, he might have been speaking of the frantic last-minute parleys in Britain's pro-

tracted divorce negotiations with the European Union which suggest that the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, did not think things through when he played up to domestic separatists with his aggressive Brexit agenda. With time running out for the December 31 deadline, this week's last throw of the dice (as it's called) in the negotiations may be heading for a breakdown rather than a breakthrough. If so, it would be catastrophic for both parties who cannot escape their interdependence. While British waters are much richer in fish than the seas surrounding Europe, British trawlers make their money selling to the European nations.

As Mr Johnson continues to pander to the insular lobby by accusing the EU of riding roughshod over British sovereignty, Rachel Reeves, a senior member of the Labour Party's shadow cabinet, has warned that he "needs to deliver the deal he promised the British people". He can't ignore her for Brexit has exposed his reliance on Labour votes in the House of Commons. Neither can he ignore the new Cold War against China and Russia that US President Donald Trump had launched with vehement diatribes against the so-called "Wuhan virus" to woo American voters ahead of the presidential election.

With talk of Washington invoking the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act to blacklist the popular Chinese video app TikTok as "an unusual and extraordinary threat", Mr Johnson has taken up the cudgels for the United States like another British leader, Tony Blair, who kowtowed to George W. Bush and joined the American invasions of Iraq and

Afghanistan. That probably explains the sudden £16 billion increase in Britain's defence budget over the next four years, despite the pandemic's calamitous damage to the economy. Such gestures appease the Americans, as do accusations of the Kremlin trying to penetrate Britain's secret scientific research programmes and promises to reveal Russia's alleged covert interference in British politics.

Initially, Mr Johnson rejected pressure, American as well as from the rightists among his own Conservatives, to ban the Chinese technology company, Huawei, from any role in building the UK's 5G infrastructure. He has since done a volte face and now cites "sound technical reasons" for giving Huawei marching orders. But although Huawei is said to threaten British security and is excluded from the 5G network, Mr Johnson cannot be seriously concerned since the eviction will become effective only over seven years.

Neither this anomaly nor the ban itself seems to have attracted much public attention in Britain. The reason may be that people are genuinely horrified by China's oppression of the Uighurs, its tightening grip on Hong Kong, the military assertiveness in the South China Sea and muscle-flexing in Ladakh. But the Brexit controversy makes Britain vulnerable, and succumbing to American pressure at this juncture may compound London's depen-

Dr Hans Kluge, who heads the WHO's European operations, says that lockdowns are unnecessary if 95 per cent of the population wears masks. Sadly, many European and American leaders dismissed masks then as politically unacceptable.

dency on Washington. Instead of taking back control of his country's destiny — the publicly reiterated reason for leaving the EU in the first place — Mr Johnson might end up by moving closer to the old joke of Britain as the 51st state of the United States of America.

Obviously, the pandemic aggravates the impact of all other crises. Covid-19 might also have caused less suffering and spread less terror if a sane approach had been followed from the beginning. Dr Hans Kluge, who heads the World Health Organisation's European operations, says that lockdowns are unnecessary if 95 per cent of the population wears masks. This should have been far more widely and forcefully propagated when the pandemic was exploding across the world. Sadly, many European and American leaders dismissed masks then as politically unacceptable.

As Britain and the EU nations were going into lockdown, Dr George Fu Gao, director-general of the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, China's main public health body, corroborated Dr Kluge's view. Asked about the mistakes being made by other countries trying to control coronavirus, he replied that "the big mistake in the US and Europe, in my opinion, is that people aren't wearing masks".

That opinion should have been taken seriously even though China had already been cast as the adversary. According to independent observers, China's return to normality was largely the result of old-fashioned public health measures, with a heavy emphasis on test-and-trace and travel bans, vigorously enforced by mobilising the country's vast resources and, of course, invoking the state's coercive authority. There's a lesson there for the rest of the suffering world.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

CAPITAL LOCATION

The AP government is 100 per cent correct in asserting its right to decide on the location of new capital city. Its right should not be questioned even by a court of law. At the most the HC could ask for state's plans on how it will use the land acquired by the previous government at huge cost. Evidently all those who parted with their lands either voluntarily or under duress, had anticipated huge profit from cost escalation of land.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

COVID CASES

It is heartening that people are getting back on horse again after the Covid-19 cases are showing a consistent downfall. At the same time, Covid-19 protocols need to be adhered to strictly till not a single case is reported. The onus is on the people not to throw caution to the winds and pay a heavy price.

Dr K. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

LOPSIDE PRIORITIES

Even after 70 years of Independence, the suburbs are without potable water and motorable roads. Throughout the country it is the same scenario. We see multiple activities like washing of clothes, cattle and the picking up drinking water from another point along a stream passing through a village or a suburb. No wonder people often get afflicted with waterborne diseases and are prone to other ailments. This is due to negligence and lopsided priorities of rulers.

D.S.P. Rao
Sasikanthnagar

High Court upholds Mulki rules

From our legal staff reporter

HYDERABAD, Dec. 9.

The full bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court today held that the Mulki rules relating to appointment of public servants in so far as they are applicable to

Te l a n a r e g i o n r e v i v e a n d s u r v i v e t o c o n t i n u e a f t e r t h e j u d g m e n t o f t h e S u p r e m e C o u r t s t r i k i n g d o w n i n 1 9 6 9 S e c t i o n 3 o f t h e P u b l i c E m p l o y m e n t A c t 1 9 5 7 .

The full bench consisted of Chief Justice Kumarayya, Mr. Justice Gopal Rao Ekbote and Mr. Justice Sambasiva Rao.

■Children are more at risk from the effects of pollution since they have faster breathing rates, and their lungs are still developing.

■Children exposed to high pollution are more likely to have reduced lung function as adults.

■Long term exposure to air pollution may cause asthma and other health risks, including cancer, in children.

■Air pollution is one of the leading threats to child health, accounting for almost one in 10 deaths in children under five years of age.

■Pregnant women exposed to air pollution can hinder the development of the brain and lead to cognitive problems later in the children.

As per the World Health Organisation, in Delhi, poor air quality irreversibly damages the lungs of 2.2 million or 50 per cent of all children. My child and your child could be part of that number! There is no way of sugarcoating this; as a parent, I am afraid for my child.

If this is not a national emergency, then what is? Our children are the future, and the future is at stake here!

Leher Sethi is an entrepreneur and social activist

Leher Sethi



Is pollution a greater pandemic than Covid?

As a parent, I dread Delhi winters, not just because of the cold, but because of the terrible pollution in the air. We live in the city with the worst air quality in the world. Air quality index is generally Moderate (101-200) between January and September, and then it drastically deteriorates to Very Poor (301-400), Severe (401-500) or Hazardous (500+) between October and December.

It amazes me how year after year, as the winter approaches, there is a huge outcry over pollution in the city and then it dies down its own natural death as the summer returns. There is no urgency to tackle this pandemic!

Although some of us are still getting used to wearing masks, to many of us with little children, this is nothing new because our kids have been wearing masks for the past couple of winters. In my son's Montessori pre-school, it was made compulsory for the little babies to wear masks to school. Back then, it felt like I was entering a science fiction film set every time I would go to school. Little did I know that it would become the new normal soon!

As per the current data, as on

November 28, 2020, there have been 1,35,906 deaths due to the coronavirus in India. Globally, there have been 1.45 million deaths. Now, compare this to the deaths caused due to pollution. In 2019, exposures to outdoor high average levels of PM 2.5 caused 9,80,000 deaths in India — nearly 60 per cent of all air pollution — attributable deaths. Globally, there were 4.14 million such deaths in 2019. Even if we were to double the coronavirus-related deaths, they would still amount to just about 27 per cent of the deaths caused due to air pollution in India. Then, why is this pandemic being ignored?

What will it take for the authorities and the government to wake up to its reality? Is it that the awareness of this epidemic is only with the educated and urbane few, that it will only become important once the vote bank of the poor make it an issue?

As per the State of Global Air 2020 report (SoGA 2020) released on October 21, a report published by the US-based think-tank, Health Effects Institute, there were at least 1,16,000 infant deaths due to air pollution recorded in India last year.

For the youngest infants, most deaths were related to complications

from low birth weight and premature birth — direct outcomes of mothers' exposure to air pollution during pregnancy. More than half of the infant deaths were due to PM2.5 in outdoor air and the rest were linked to household air pollution due to use of solid fuels such as charcoal, wood and animal dung for cooking, as per the study that claims to be the first-ever comprehensive analysis of air pollution's global impact on newborns. There is a growing body of evidence about the link between infant death and air pollution and several Indian and international studies have tried to explain it.

In 2019, India's population-weighted annual average concentration of PM 2.5 was recorded at 83.2 micrograms per cubic metre — seven times higher than the WHO's safe standards of 10 µg/m3 - and remained highest in the world. (The "population-weighted annual average concentration" is the average level of air pollution to which a country's population is exposed.)

As per the American Lung Association, children face special risks from air pollution because their lungs are growing and because they are so active and breathe in a great deal of air. Children's exposure to air

pollution is a special concern because their immune system is not fully developed when exposure begins.

Just like the arms and legs, the largest portion of a child's lungs will grow long after he or she is born. Eighty percent of alveoli develop after birth. Children have more respiratory infections than adults, which also seems to increase their susceptibility to air pollution.

Furthermore, children don't behave like adults, and their behaviour also affects their vulnerability. They are outside for longer periods and are usually more active when outdoors. Consequently, they inhale more polluted outdoor air. They are also closer to the earth, where the pollutants are higher.

As per a study titled "State of Global Air 2019", the average life of a South Asian child growing up in the current high levels of air pollution will be shortened by two-and-a-half years. This means that a child born today will die 2.5 years sooner, on average. That is a really scary prospect, and one that makes me want to leave this city, and country, along with my child. Doing a little bit of research on my own, here's what I found:

SHORT TAKES

Ex Argentina coach Sabella no more

Buenos Aires: Former coach Alejandro Sabella, who led the 2014 World Cup runner-up Argentina team, died on Tuesday at a clinic in Buenos Aires suffering from heart disease.

He was 66 years old. The former boss of Estudiantes de La Plata died at the Cardiovascular Institute of Buenos Aires, where he had been admitted on November 25 - the day soccer legend Diego Maradona died — after suffering an arrhythmia.

The medical center said in a statement that Sabella was the victim of “secondary dilated heart disease and long-standing cardiotoxicity.”

— AP

Ben Stokes' father passes away at 65

Christchurch: England all-rounder Ben Stokes lost his father Ged, who died here on Tuesday after a year-long battle with brain cancer.

He was 65. Stokes is currently with the England team in South Africa for the limited over series. He had played all three T20Is and was rested for ODIs, which was cancelled on Monday after multiple cases of Covid-19 were detected in the bio-bubble. Ged, a former rugby player and coach, had been suffering from brain cancer for some time and Stokes was there in Christchurch for more than a month taking care of his ailing father.

Stokes' famous “bent middle finger” gesture during the 2019 South Africa series was a tribute to his father's amputated finger. Ged had to remove a part of his finger in order to continue playing.

— PTI

Former runner Earnest is dead

Hyderabad: Former middle distance runner and secretary of Ranga District Athletics Association B. Earnest Das passed away on Monday night.

He was 81. Das participated in the Indo-German Athletics Test held in Hyderabad in 1965. An international athletics official, he officiated in the 1982 Asian Games in New Delhi, 2002 Asian Grand Prix in Hyderabad and the 2003 Afro-Asian Games in Hyderabad. He also served as manager of the South Central Railway Athletics team for 30 years.

His son B. E. Stanley Jones is Athletics Federation of India's Technical Committee chairman. Telangana Athletics Association general secretary K. Sarangapani and Hyderabad District Athletics Association president Prof. Rajesh Kumar mourned the demise of Das and offered condolences to the family members.

Chess tourney at the weekend

Hyderabad: The Brilliant Chess Academy is conducting the 175th Brilliant Trophy Open chess tournament online on Saturday and Sunday. A total of ₹10,000 will be given to Top 20 places in the Open category. Special prizes will also be given to top two places in the Under 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 age groups for boys and girls separately. For further details contact J. Subrahmanyam on 9247399717.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Big Bash League: Hobart Hurricanes vs Sydney Sixers from 1.45 pm on Sony Six

Lanka Premier League: Jaffna vs Colombo from 3 pm; Galle vs Kandy from 7.30 pm on Sony Six

FOOTBALL

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

Europa League: CSKA Sofia vs Roma from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 3; Dundalk vs Arsenal from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Napoli vs Real Sociedad from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 1; Sparta Prague vs AC Milan from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 1; Tottenham Hotspur vs Antwerp from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2; Wolfsburg vs Feyenoord from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Six; Leicester City vs AEK Athens from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 3

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Ronaldo bests Messi

Cristiano nets brace as Juve crush Barcelona 3-0

Barcelona, Dec. 9: Cristiano Ronaldo struck twice from the penalty spot to win his battle with rival Lionel Messi and guide Juventus to a 3-0 win over Barcelona on Tuesday, earning the Italians top spot in Champions League Group G.

The former Real Madrid striker and his Argentina counterpart traded Ballon d'Or wins for a decade between 2008-2017 and were figureheads for the duelling Spanish giants, but there was only one winner at the Camp Nou as they met for the first time since Ronaldo's departure for Juve in 2018. Juventus lost 2-0 at home against Barcelona in October without Ronaldo, sidelined with Covid-19, but were greatly improved and earned the first Champions League away win against Barcelona since Bayern Munich triumphed in 2013.

Both sides, tied on 15 points, were assured of qualification before kick-off, but Juve's three-goal victory handed them a superior head-to-head record.

Ronald Koeman, reeling from Barcelona's 2-1 defeat by promoted minnows Cadiz on Saturday in La Liga, reacted by making four changes but the hosts started badly.

It only took 13 minutes for Ronaldo to break the deadlock, slotting home from the penalty spot after the referee deemed Ronald Araujo's challenge on him a foul. Juve's did not relent and their pressure led to a second goal, Weston McKennie volleying home Juan Cuadrado's sweetly clipped cross in the 20th minute.

— AFP

THE RESULTS

Juventus 3
(Ronaldo 13-pen, 52-pen, McKennie 20)
Barcelona 0

RB Leipzig 3
(Angelino 2, Haidara 13, Kluivert 69)
Manchester United 2
(Fernandes 80-pen, Pogba 82)

Chelsea 1
(Jorginho 28-pen)
Krasnodar 1
(Cabellera 24)

Borussia Dortmund 1
(Piszczek 68, Witsel 78)
Zenit Saint Petersburg 1
(Driussi 16)



Cristiano Ronaldo (right) of Juventus lines up a shot to score his team's third goal against Barcelona during their UEFA Champions League Group 'G' football match at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Tuesday.

— AFP

Racist slur halts PSG game

Paris, Dec. 9: Manchester United were knocked out of the Champions League after a 3-2 defeat by RB Leipzig on Tuesday, while Paris Saint-Germain's qualification for the last 16 was overshadowed by a racism row involving a match official that caused their game against Istanbul Basaksehir to be suspended for 24 hours.

Requiring just a point to advance, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side fell behind to an Angelino goal inside two minutes in Germany. Amadou Haidara soon added a second and United were trailing 3-0 heading into the final quarter after a Justin Kluivert strike.

Bruno Fernandes's penalty and a deflected Paul Pogba header gave United a lifeline but Leipzig, who reached the semifinals last term, held on to move top of Group 'H' on 12 points.

Leipzig must wait until Wednesday to find out whether they finish first or second in the section, after the contest between last season's runners-up PSG and Turkish champions Basaksehir was interrupted with the score 0-0 in the 14th minute.



Kylian Mbappe (third from right) of PSG looks on after the game was suspended amid allegations of racism by one of the match officials during the UEFA Champions League Group 'H' football match against Istanbul Basaksehir at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris on Tuesday.

— AFP

Players walked off in Paris amid allegations of racism by the fourth official, in an unprecedented incident in European football's elite club competition.

The row erupted after Basaksehir assistant coach Pierre Webo, the

former Cameroon international, was shown a red card during a fierce row on the touchline with staff from the Turkish club appearing to accuse the official of using a racist term.

Television microphones picked up a furious Webo

repeatedly asking why a racist term had been used to describe him.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he “strongly” condemned the incident, while UEFA announced it would open a “thorough investigation”.

— AFP

KASHMIR INTO SEMIFINALS

Kolkata, Dec. 9: Real Kashmir and United SC secured their second successive wins to seal semi final berths from their respective groups in the 123rd IFA Shield here on Wednesday.

Fresh from a 2-1 win over Peerless SC, the Snow Leopards were caught unawares by the aggressive brand of football by Aryan SC before they finally broke the deadlock with a Mason Robertson strike in the 72nd minute.

— PTI

Injured Warner out of first Test

Sydney, Dec. 9: Australia's star opening batsman David Warner has been ruled out of the first Test against India, but will try to return for the blockbuster second instalment on Boxing Day, Cricket Australia said Wednesday.

Warner is recovering from a strained adductor muscle that forced him to limp out of Australia's second one-day international against India last month, after a knock of 83.

“I feel I have made great progress in a short amount of time and it's best for me to stay here in Sydney to continue working on getting back to full fitness,” Warner said.

“The injury feels a lot better, but I need to be able to satisfy in my own mind and to my team-mates that it is 100 percent ready for Test match conditions.”

“That includes running between the wickets and being agile in the field. Right now I feel I am short of being able to play at peak fitness and another 10 days will make a difference,” he added.

The day-night first Test



David Warner

will begin in Adelaide on December 17, kicking off a four-match series.

It is not yet clear who will take Warner's place in Adelaide, but Cameron Green's century this week for Australia 'A' against a strong India 'A' attack — featuring Ravichandran Ashwin, Umesh Yadav and Mohammed Siraj — has put him in the running.

In contrast, Will Pucovski and Joe Burns, in line to form Australia's top order, both flopped in the warm-up match and Pucovski also had to leave the field with concussion symptoms after a delivery struck his helmet.

— AFP

RAHUL CRUISES INTO TOP 3 IN T20 RANKINGS

Dubai, Dec. 9: India captain Virat Kohli moved up a place to eighth while K. L. Rahul broke into the top three in the latest ICC rankings for T20 batsmen, after their impressive performances in the three-match series against Australia.

Taking the third spot in the chart, Rahul has bagged 816 rating points and is 55 points behind second-placed Babar Azam in the current standings.

England batsman Dawid Malan (915 points) retained the top spot, while Australian limited-overs skipper Aaron Finch slipped to the fourth spot.

— PTI

Kohli rues DRS miss in last tie

Sydney, Dec. 9: Captain Virat Kohli wasn't happy that his team lost out on a perfect DRS call just because replay of the delivery bowled to Matthew Wade was shown on giant screen before the permissible limit of 15 seconds.

India lost the third T20 International by 12 runs and one of the reasons could be attributed to the fact that Wade, who could have been adjudged leg before off T Natarajan at a score of 50, got a lucky reprieve and added 30 more runs.

“That lbw was a strange one because we were still discussing whether the ball was going down and within the 15-second time, they showed the replay on the screen. We decided to go for the review but the umpire said they have already shown the replay on the screen,” Kohli said.

In fact had the review been taken, TV replays showed that the umpire would have been forced to reverse his decision.

That lbw was a strange one because we were still discussing whether the ball was going down and within the 15-second time, they showed the replay on the screen.

— VIRAT KOHLI
Indian cricket captain

“I had a chat with Rod (Tucker, the umpire) and said: ‘what do we do in this situation’ and he said ‘nothing can be done. It's a mistake from TV.’” Kohli narrated the incident.

He said the Indian team management had made its displeasure clear with the authorities, saying a mistake of this magnitude in an international game is unacceptable. “I thought from the management perspective, a message has to be passed that this can't be done at the highest level because in a very important game, it can be very costly,” he said.

— PTI

Gopi delves into athletes' minds

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

Badminton guru Pullela Gopichand has stepped up his training by a notch, and has decided to delve into the minds of his trainees. On Wednesday, the champion coach launched Dhyana for Sports, an app that measures mental aspects via meditation and helps achieve emotional fitness.

Vouching for its mechanism, Gopi termed the application a “game changer” and stressed on the importance of mental training. As many as 10 meditation sessions designed, voiced by himself and inspired from his on-ground training sessions will now be available on the app that tracks mindfulness.

The 10 sessions in the ‘Dhyana for Sports’ section in the app — Uniting Your Innerself, Forgive, Winner Instincts, Gratitude, Stillness, Visualisation, Strengthen Discipline, Pre-Workout, Post-Workout and End of the Day — cater

to athletes and assist them in monitoring and analysing their state of meditation in order to help inculcate a champion's mindset.

“I am certain that these guided sessions will prove to be fruitful to anyone wanting to become the best version of themselves. In sport, you need to be a warrior and possess killer instinct. This is what we talk about in the app — the winning attitude,” the chief national coach said, adding, “I am so proud to be associated with it.”

Athletics coach N. Ramesh echoed Gopi's opinion. “This is a huge plus for track and field athletes, who have very little time to recover between the heats and the finals, that's when mental strength comes into play,” he said.

“Physical abilities can make you a national champion but if you want to excel on the international stage and stay there, mental ability is a must,” the Dronacharya awardee added.

Mumbai hammer Chennaiyin 2-1

Bambolim, Dec. 9: Mumbai City FC rallied to eke out a 2-1 win over Chennaiyin FC and record their fourth victory on the trot in the Indian Super League here on Wednesday.

Adam Le Fondre smashed in a 75th-minute winner after Hernan Santana (45th) had cancelled Jakub Sylvestr's first goal.

The Sergio Lobera's team maintained the top spot in the ISL table.

Chennaiyin FC had a perfect start and would

have been ahead in the second minute if it was not for Sylvestr missing a sitter. Rafael Crivellaro delivered a perfect corner which was flicked in by Enes Sipovic and found Sylvestr, who missed the target.

Mumbai were not at their best and took time to settle. But they did have their moments. The home side's best chance came in the 25th minute when Adam Le Fondre had a clear sight on goal, but his powerful drive from inside the box, was

straight at keeper Vishal Kaith. The rebound fell to Bipin Singh, but he couldn't utilise the opportunity.

Chennaiyin were clearly the better side in the opening quarter creating numerous chances through Lallianzuala Chhangte, Sipovic and Crivellaro. The Chennai-based side took the lead in the 40th minute. Sylvestr scored probably the easiest goal of the season.

Chhangte deserved credit for his initial

spadework on the right before he played a low cross from the byline to find Sylvestr, who slotted it in.

Just when it looked like Chennaiyin would walk into the breather with a goal advantage, Mumbai's Santana had different plans. The Spaniard, who was unmarked at the far post, nodded in a Hugo Boumous' corner to restore parity post which they doubled the lead in the 75th minute through another set-piece. — PTI

Parthiv announces his retirement

New Delhi, Dec. 9: Parthiv Patel, one of the youngest to have played Test cricket for India at the age of 17, on Wednesday announced his retirement from all forms of the game, three month's short of his 36th birthday.

The baby-faced Parthiv, who made his Test debut under Sourav Ganguly, aged 17 years and 153 days, played 65 international games for the country, which included 25 Tests, 38 ODIs and two T20 Internationals.

“Today, I announce retirement from all forms of cricket and as I bring down curtains on this 18 year-old cricketing jour-

ney, I feel heavier with gratitude for many,” the 35-year-old Parthiv said in a statement on his official twitter and instagram account.

The left-handed batsman scored nearly 1700 runs (1696) across formats with 934 runs (6 half centuries) coming in the longest format.

In ODIs, he scored 736 runs with four half-centuries and a highest score of 95. He effected 72 dismissals in Tests, which include 62 catches and 10 stumpings.

Parthiv burst onto the scene in early 2002, when he was sent to England after having played for India A in South Africa



Parthiv Patel

and even before he made his Ranji Trophy debut.

“The BCCI showed generous amount of confidence and faith in a 17-year-old boy to play for India. I have enormous gratitude towards them for guiding me and hand

holding me in the formative years of my young career,” Parthiv further stated.

In fact, he played his first Ranji Trophy after he was dropped from the India squad in 2004 due to below-par glove-work on tours of Australia and Pakistan.

He was thankful to all his captains and “especially Dada”, referring to BCCI president Sourav Ganguly.

Parthiv Patel called his first Test captain Sourav Ganguly a “leader in true sense” along with the legendary Anil Kumble and said their influence in his life went beyond the crick-eting arena.

“I would always hold Sourav Ganguly as a leader in true sense with his man management skills. Sourav and Anil Kumble were great leaders and they made me the kind of person I am,” Parthiv said.

“I still have the Test cap with my name wrongly printed ‘Partiv’ that Dada gave me. The victories at Headingley (2002) and Adelaide (2003-04) and the half-century opening the innings at Rawalpindi will be my favourite memories.”

He said that retirement was on his mind for the last one year and that the timing couldn't have been better.

— PTI


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