

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VIJAYAWADA | MONDAY | 7 DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER

Max: 33.0°C
Min: 20.0°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Cloudy.
Max/Min temp.
33/20 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Bahula Saptami till
6.42 pm
Star: Magha till 2.28 pm
Varjyam: 10.13 pm to 11.46 pm
Durmuhurtam: 12.29 pm to
1.13 pm; 2.41 pm to 3.25 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
HILIRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Aakhir 21, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.45 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 4.30 pm
Maghrib: 5.40 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.23 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.34 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 11.50 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 12.39 AM

COUNTER POINT



The Opposition parties are demanding a spacious Well of the House!

INSIDE

CITY... PAGE 3
Tourist spots swell on last Sunday of Karthika

NATION | 4

All parties except BJP are family-centric

SPORTS | 8

Fiery India seal T20 series vs Oz



CASES (+37,113)
96,73,854
DEATHS (+473)
1,40,545

STATE GOVT BULLETINS
TELANGANA (+622)
2,73,341
(+2)
1,472

ANDHRA PRADESH (+667)
8,71,972
(+9)
7,033

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES
6,71,08,654
DEATHS
15,38,194
COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES
218

CHINESE VILLAGES POP UP NEAR LAC IN ARUNACHAL

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 6

Continuing with its aggressive stand, the Chinese government has built new villages near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Arunachal Pradesh this year, to beef up its defences and also to put pressure on India in the disputed area, the satellite images shared by independent OSINT indicate on Sunday.

This follows reports of the Chinese building a village within Bhutanese territory near the site of the Doklam standoff between India and China in 2017.

Going by the satellite images, OSINT analyst Detresfa said one of the villages constructed this year is a mere 5 km from the Bum-La pass at the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh.

Poonam commits financial irregularity worth ₹54 crore

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 6

Senior bureaucrat Poonam Malakondaiah has committed a financial irregularity to the tune of ₹54 crore in Andhra Pradesh. While the state government could recover ₹36 crore, its efforts to realise the remaining amount from a beneficiary contractor are yielding no result. Poonam is currently special chief secretary of the agriculture department.

She had transferred ₹54 crore to Powermech-BSCPL, a private consortium engaged in developing AP Medtech Zone (AMTZ) during her stint in the health department a few years ago. "Transfer of amount was

highly irregular and against the rules of the Central government. It tarnishes the image of the state government," said K. Bhaskar, the commissioner of health and family welfare, in a communication to the government.

Bhaskar, who is also nission director, National Health Mission, shot off a letter to K.S. Jawahar Reddy, then Special CS, health, after noticing the irregularity committed by Poonam.

As per the guidelines of the NHM, funds should be used only for the activities approved under record of proceedings issued by the Centre, he said.

■ Page 2: Funds transferred at behest of AMTZ MD

Pfizer seeks India's vaccine nod

New Delhi, Dec. 5: Pfizer India has become the first pharmaceutical firm to seek from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) an emergency use authorisation for its Covid-19 vaccine in the country, after its parent company secured such

clearance in the UK and Bahrain.

The firm, in its application submitted to the drug regulator, has sought permission to import the vaccine for sale and distribution in the country, besides waiver of clinical trials on Indian popula-

tion in accordance with the special provisions under the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019, official sources said.

The United Kingdom approved the use of Pfizer vaccine on Wednesday, followed by Bahrain on Friday. —PTI

Oppn unites to support farmers' Dec. 8 Bandh

Wants agri laws, Electricity Amendment Bill withdrawn

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, DEC. 6

The Opposition parties, led by the Congress, five Left parties, NCP and DMK, on Sunday supported the December 8 "Bharat Bandh" call given by the farmers' unions demanding a repeal of the three agriculture-related laws passed recently by the government. The AAP, Trinamul Congress, RJD, TRS and several other regional parties have also supported the strike call.

"We the undersigned leaders of political parties extend our solidarity with the ongoing massive struggle by the Indian farmers organised by various kisan organisations from across the country and extend our support to their call for a Bharat Bandh on December 8 demanding the withdrawal of these retrograde agri-laws and the Electricity Amendment Bill," the parties said in a joint statement.

The statement further said the new agri-laws were passed in Parliament in a "brazen anti-democratic manner preventing a structured discussion and

KCR: TRS to enforce bandh in Telangana

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 6

The farmers' call for Bharat Bandh on Tuesday got a shot in the arm in Telangana state with the ruling TRS supporting it. TRS chief and Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao extended his complete support and asked his cadre to directly participate in it.

The TRS chief appealed to the people to stand by farmers and make the bandh a success.

The Chief Minister justified his support and stated that farmers are legally agitating against the Centre's Farm Bills.

He said that since the Farm Bills will harm the interests of the farmers, the TRS had opposed them in Parliament.

TAKE PROTESTS SERIOUSLY, END DEADLOCK: PAWAR

Mumbai, Dec. 6: NCP supremo Sharad Pawar on Sunday warned the Centre that if the deadlock continues much longer, the agitation will not be limited to Delhi and people from across India will stand by the protesting farmers.

"I hope wisdom dawns on the government, and it takes cognisance to resolve the issue," the NCP chief said.

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 multi-national agri-business corporates and domestic corporates".

"The Central government must adhere to the democratic processes and norms and meet the legitimate demands of our

kisans-annadatas," it said. The letter was signed by Congress president Sonia Gandhi, DMK chief M.K. Stalin, NCP president Sharad Pawar, RJD's Tejaswi Yadav, National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav and CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, among others.

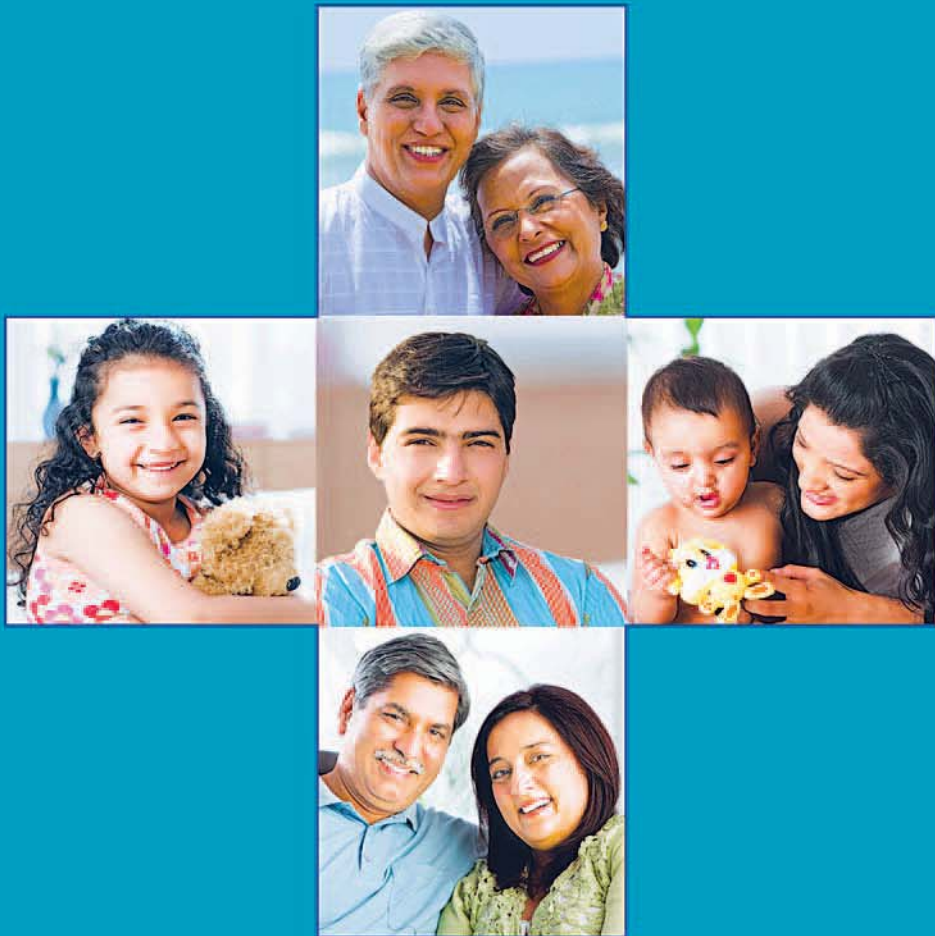
Expressing solidarity with the farmers' unions, the Congress said it will hold protests that day at

all district and state headquarters in solidarity with the demands of the farmers. "I would also like to announce that the Congress extends its wholehearted support to the Bharat Bandh on December 8," its spokesman Pawan Khara said while addressing the media at the AICC headquarters.

"All our district headquarters and pradesh headquarters will participate in this bandh," Mr Khara said.

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SHORT TAKES

FUNDS TRANSFER
AT BEHEST
OF AMTZ MD

FROM PAGE 1

The private consortium, however, is not assigned any activities under NHM and there is no relation between it and NHM, he pointed out.

Deccan Chronicle had earlier reported about the missing of ₹18 crore from the NHM kitty and about the audit firm raising serious objections over the non-receipt of the amount. It also highlighted that ₹54 crore was released to the contractor twice within two days based on the same invoice, which again is a serious lapse on the part of Poonam.

Documentary evidence available with this newspaper establishes that she had released the amount to the contractor at the behest of Dr Jitender Sharma, the tainted managing director of AMTZ (Proceeding No. 03/AMTZ/2014 dated November 19, 2018). The company, however, did not repay the amount till date.

The state vigilance and enforcement department has already submitted a preliminary investigation report on AMTZ in which it pointed out financial and administrative lapses committed by Poonam and Dr Sharma.

In another case, former chief secretary L.V. Subrahmanyam sought Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's permission to register a case by the Criminal Investigation Department to investigate administrative and procedural lapses in health department projects that resulted in huge financial loss to the exchequer. "Poonam was special CS, health at the time the lapses took place," he pointed out.

FAKE MAOISTS
HELD FOR
EXTORTIONDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 6

The Srikakulam police nabbed two persons for allegedly posing as Maoists and indulging in extortion in Veeraghattam mandal in the district.

As per the reports, two youngsters tried to extort money from a trader posing as members of the banned outfit. The duo also allegedly threatened the trader with weapons including a country made firearm for money.

When the trader raised the alarm, the neighbours rushed to the spot and nabbed the duo when they tried to escape from the spot. The duo was handed over to the police.

Srikakulam superintendent of police Amit Bardar said that they nabbed two persons on the charges of extortion. However, he ruled out the Maoists' connection in the case and said that they are verifying with other sources. He said that they will disclose more details only after further interrogation into the case.

The locals said that some youngsters are indulging in extortion for easy money to meet their vices.

PROMOTION OF
AMUL BY AP GOVT
OBJECTEDDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 6

The cooperative milk dairies objecting the AP government promotion of Amul. The Milk Producers Sangam dairy chairman and former MLA of Telugu Desam, Dhulipalla Narendra, objecting to the promotion of Amul by YSR Congress government said it was surprising that the government was working for Gujarat companies. He said that AP government-Amul project would destroy the entire cooperative milk dairies in the State.

Mr Narendra alleged that the Amul would not spend ₹3,000 crore on infrastructure but the government is spending which is severely objectionable.

He questioned why Amul became a brand ambassador instead of Vijaya Dairy which is operated by farmers of AP State. Alleging that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is working for the Gujarat companies like Amul, he expressed suspicion that Jagan is Chief Minister of AP or the CM of Gujarat. He said that Amul is paying very less prices to milk in AP compared to the payments in Gujarat State.

Mr Narendra sought that Amul should come on its own irrespective of the government. Mentioning about the government dictum to milk farmers to sell their milk to Amul, he said that it is not right for the government.

Tributes to Ambedkar



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy pays tributes to portrait of Dr B.R. Ambedkar at the camp office on Sunday. Home minister M. Sucharitha, Bapatla MP Nandigam Suresh are also seen.

Hopes plenty on new law
to curb online gambling

Police initiated strict measures against the cultural clubs in the state

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 6

The passing of the AP Gaming (Amendment) Bill 2020 is giving a ray of hope to restrain online gambling in the state.

The Andhra Pradesh Gaming Act of 1974 imposes many restrictions on gambling and, in most cases, prohibits the use of land-based premises for gambling with the aim of making any profits or gains but does not cover online gaming comprehensively.

The online gambling had become an addiction in a bid to earn easy money but in most cases players end up losing. Various sections of society including social activists and politicians are welcoming the ban of online gambling and are seeking strict implementation of the new law.

The physical card games for skill and gain were popular in the state like the Teen Patti but is illegal in the state. Each year, cockfights are also conducted all over the state during the three-day Sankranti festival in January. During the festivity, card game lovers indulge in Teen Patti and rummy unofficially.

Public also play card games openly during mar-

riages and even deaths to pass time waiting for the completion of the rituals. Private clubs which operate in the name of cultural and recreation clubs are famous for organising card games in Guntur, Vijayawada, Narasaraopeta, Ongole, Nellore, Eluru, Kakinada, Rajamahendravaram and so on.

Police initiated strict measures against the cultural clubs for the past few years which limited card game activities as only a few clubs operate card games on the sly to its members and sometimes they give chance for guests to play after taking guest charges. With gambling applications on mobiles everyone got a chance to play cards and other gambling games without fear of police of anyone knowing.

Soon online card games and gambling turned fatal and traps which resulted in suicides by losing players. For instance, a naval dockyard employee M. Satish, 33, ended his life by suicide unable to pay ₹15 lakh he borrowed to play

online rummy. Police found that ₹30,000 of his salary of ₹35,000 was being paid for interest. His parents had to mortgage their house and cleared ₹8 lakh but unable to clear remaining debts and continuous losses, he ended his life.

Minister Muttamsetti (Avanthi) Srinivas, AP BJP vice-president S. Vishnuvardhan Reddy, CPI state secretary K. Ramakrishna, several legislators and other leaders raised their voice seeking a ban of online rummy in view of several incidents of addiction and suicides. Further, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had announced bringing in a new legislation to ban online rummy and the new Bill passed on December 1.

Welcoming the ban, social activist P. Chandra said that online rummy and other gambling activities are destroying the lives of people. He said that the government which is implementing phase-wise liquor ban should initiate measures in true spirit to implement the new law to restrain online gambling activities.

Telugu Desam MLA Anagani Satyaprasad welcomed the new law to contain online gambling. He lamented that there are

ABSENCE OF ENTERTAINMENT DURING
COVID ATTRACTED TO ONLINE GAMESDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 6

The Covid-19 lockdown came in handy for card game lovers who switched over to digital platforms offering games. The absence of other entertainment during the lockdown provided a lot of time for gambling lovers to play online.

Online gambling activity also increased in AP due to virtual activity due to ban on online rummy in Telangana state. Sources said that online rummy lovers belonging to TS had adopted virtual methods through hosts in other states where there is no ban on online rummy. For instance, if a person living in TS wants to play online rummy but as the ban would not allow him there, he would depute a person

in AP where earlier there was no ban on online rummy to play the card game for him.

Sources said that the host will play amidst supervision of main players through live video telecast with the help of various live video applications.

Further, as the CCTV camera is linked to the main player's mobile phone or computer through online, he would watch the host through live video and give suggestions about the moves to the host. There is no legality to this method and only mutual trust between the main player and host will help one play online rummy virtually. The fresh passing of new law is going to curb this virtual online rummy in the state.

still gambling dens in physical forms in various parts of the state hence the government should work with dedication to end the menace.

Home minister Mekathoti Sucharitha said that stringent action and increased penalty and

imprisonment for online and offline gambling have been included in amendment to the Gaming Act. Affirming strict implementation of the new law she said that a toll-free number would be started to receive complaints about gambling.

STATE FAILS IN
DETECTION OF
DISEASE: AP BJPDC CORRESPONDENT
ELURU, DEC. 6

Bharatiya Janata Party state president Somu Veerajulu said that the state government had failed to detect the disease in the early stage, when such cases were reported in Eluru with the same symptoms few days back.

He visited the government hospital at Eluru of West Godavari and consoled the victims who are suffering from viral encephalitis symptoms.

Had the government reacted promptly, the situation would have been brought under control by now. He wanted the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to detect the roots of the problem.

Due to the second wave of Covid-19 cases, the minister said the legislators using their privileges passed a resolution in the Assembly stating the conduct of local body elections is not feasible under the current situation. The SEC, therefore, the minister argued, cannot be questioned.

He said the local body elections were supposed to be held in 2018 during the Telugu Desam government but SEC Ramesh Kumar did not take any measures

decision. Addressing a press meet here on Sunday, Mr Satyanarayana objected to the SEC writing a letter to Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan questioning the resolution passed by the Assembly.

He said the SEC has no right to question the rights of legislators and the Legislative Assembly. The minister said the responsibility to protect the health of people is on the shoulders of the govern-

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 6

Municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana on Sunday said State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar could not object to the Assembly passing a resolution on the postponement of local body elections till the threat of Covid-19's second wave subsides. He also said that the SEC has no right to comment on the Legislative Assembly's

Mystery disease
hits Eluru, 270
sick, 1 diesVADREVU SRINIVAS |
DC
ELURU, DEC. 6

A 45-year-old man on Sunday succumbed to an undiagnosed illness which exhibited the symptoms of viral encephalitis, at Government Hospital, Eluru, even as over 290 people were reportedly being treated for similar symptoms in the city.

According to doctors, patients being treated for the disease are from all age groups, including diabetics. "They are having symptoms of viral encephalitis. Some of the patients have even been discharged from the hospital after they recovered within two to three hours of treatment," the doctors said.

The symptoms exhibited by patients include unconsciousness, fits with froth, nervous weakness, severe headache, loss of memory and snoring.

Viral encephalitis is an inflammation of the brain caused by a group of viruses called enteroviruses. Once inside the blood, the viruses migrate to the brain where they start to multiply. The body notices the invasion and mounts an immune system response. This causes the brain to swell, causing permanent brain damage.

However, it is not yet confirmed that the illness affecting patients in Eluru is viral encephalitis.

Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will be visiting Eluru on Monday to review the situation personally. Deputy chief minister Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas, meanwhile, visited wards of various hospitals in the district.

Officials have taken 25 samples from patients and sent them to various laboratories to diagnose the disease. Results of blood and urine samples have shown no virus. They are, however, waiting for results of other samples.

West Godavari district collector Revu Muthyala Raju said a team consisting of six medical experts arrived in Eluru for examining the patients

from All Indian Institute of Medical and Sciences, and a team of etiologists headed by the state health director has also come to take stock of the situation.

He said two teams from the Indian Institute of Nutrition and the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology would arrive in Eluru on Monday and samples taken from vomiting were sent to the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology.

The collector said the disease could be identified within 48 hours. He, meanwhile, instructed officials to do a house-to-house survey and shift any person showing such symptoms to hospitals through ambulances.

Many of the cases reported are from Dakshina Veedhi, Padamata Veedhi, Ashoknagar, Chodidibba, Kothapeta, Sanivarapupeta and Arundhathi Peta. People with diseases belong to all classes and areas, including well-to-do and slum areas. The first victim of this disease was identified as Sridhar, a resident of Vidyanagar in Eluru.

Though the hospital had handed over the body to relatives to take it home, police and medical personnel went back to the victim's house to take back the body for a post-mortem examination. The relatives, however, refused to hand over the body, resulting in heated arguments between the relatives and the police.

According to sources, a woman, who had gone to a vegetable market to buy vegetables, had suddenly collapsed. Local traders admitted her to the hospital. She was later identified as Paleti Radha of Southern Street in Eluru.

An attendant of another patient, V. Rupa said she had collapsed while speaking to her neighbour. Froth started coming out of Rupa's mouth, and she was immediately admitted to the hospital.

The attendant of another patient, Ramana, said his father suddenly collapsed while he was getting ready to leave for his work. However, after being treated at the hospital, he recuperated, but he is unaware of what happened.

TD holds YSRC
govt responsible
for illnessesDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 6

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday slammed the YSR Congress government for he termed as neglecting the public health which had now led to over 150 people falling ill in Eluru in West Godavari district.

He expressed concern that most of the sick people were children and the illness spread because contaminated drinking water was being supplied in the town.

He lamented that the locals have not been getting getting clean and potable drinking water supply for the past 18 months with nobody making any efforts to set right the situation.

Mr Naidu said that ironically, this Eluru sickness outbreak took place in the AP health minister's own

DECLARE HEALTH
EMERGENCY,
SAYS LOKESHDC CORRESPONDENT
ELURU, DEC. 6

Telugu Desam leader and MLC Nara Lokesh demanded the government should declare a health emergency and improve the sanitation conditions in the state. He visited the hospital where the patients are getting treatment on Sunday.

constituency which once again exposed the ineffectiveness and inability of the YSR Congress to provide efficient administration and good governance.

YSRC objects to SEC's letter to Gov on Assembly

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 6

Municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana on Sunday said State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar could not object to the Assembly passing a resolution on the postponement of local body elections till the threat of Covid-19's second wave subsides. He also said that the SEC has no right to comment on the Legislative Assembly's

decision. Addressing a press meet here on Sunday, Mr Satyanarayana objected to the SEC writing a letter to Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan questioning the resolution passed by the Assembly.

He said the SEC has no right to question the rights of legislators and the Legislative Assembly. The minister said the responsibility to protect the health of people is on the shoulders of the govern-

ment, and therefore it has decided not to conduct local body polls until the threat of the second wave of Covid-19 subsides.

Satyanarayana accused the SEC of parroting the words and statements of the Leader of Opposition and Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu.

He questioned why the SEC did not release the letter addressed to the Governor when he officially wrote it objecting to the Assembly resolution.

Due to the second wave of Covid-19 cases, the minister said the legislators using their privileges passed a resolution in the Assembly stating the conduct of local body elections is not feasible under the current situation. The SEC, therefore, the minister argued, cannot be questioned.

He said the local body elections were supposed to be held in 2018 during the Telugu Desam government but SEC Ramesh Kumar did not take any measures

to conduct elections. "Later, when the YSRC government prepared everything to conduct elections in March this year, Ramesh Kumar postponed them without any reason."

The minister alleged that Ramesh Kumar and Naidu are now trying to put the lives of the people at risk by conducting elections. However, the government, he said, has the responsibility to save people's lives and therefore has refused to conduct the local body elec-

tions. Satyanarayana alleged that Naidu destroyed cooperative dairies to promote his firm Heritage during the TD government and now he is opposing the benefit that milk farmers are getting under the AP government-Amul project. He also said that the government is taking all measures to contain mass illness at Eluru and said that an investigation had been started to find out the cause.

OTHER STORIES

VIZAG POLICE COVID FREE, SAYS TOP OFFICIAL

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 6

The Visakhapatnam Police, which did a commendable job during the lockdown and the subsequent months, is now Covid free with zero active cases, said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Law & Order - D), Aishwarya Rastogi.

Addressing a press conference here on Sunday, the DCP said as many as 698 police personnel were affected by the Covid-19 and four personnel including two head constables have succumbed to it, in the process of attending duties.

Aishwarya Rastogi recalled the efforts put by his personnel during the Covid-19 period.

In accordance with the guide lines of the Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi, during lock down period, the Visakhapatnam City Police with the strength of 3,811 which includes 2,936 police personnel and 875 Home Guards strived relentlessly round the clock of the public on roads and also Containment Zones, he said.

He said the city police have achieved zero Covid-19 active cases following a number of safety measures. He said that a dedicated Covid-19 cell was continuously monitored by the control room. Required drugs were given free of cost to all the needy police personnel and separate wards were allotted to police personnel and their family members in various hospitals.

HOME GUARDS SERVICES WERE COMMENDABLE

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, DEC. 6

Deputy Chief Minister S.B. Amjad Basha said that the services of home guards in the Police Department are commendable and the same spirit should be maintained in the future. He was the chief guest at the 58th Home Guards Foundation Day function at the Police Parade Ground at the District Police Office in the city on Sunday.

The Deputy CM received the salute of the Home Guards. On this occasion, he said that in addition to maintaining law and order on par with the police, other departments such as Vigilance, Transport, Transco, Prisons, etc. home guards are performing key duties with discipline.

Mr Amjad Basha lauded the district Police Department for saving nearly 2,000 people under the auspices of SP Karur Karunapathi Nagendra Kumar Anburajan during the recent Cyclone Nivar storm in the district and leaving an indelible mark on the minds of the people.

District SP Anburajan said 710 home guards were working across the district, 58 of whom were women home guards. During the Covid-19 lockdown, during the Nivar cyclone floods, in Tungabhadra Pushkars in Kurnool home guards performed their duties efficiently and won the admiration of the people, he said.

VELIGONDA FIRST TUNNEL TO BE READY BY JAN. '21

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 6

Denying the allegations of TD leaders against Veligonda project, TTD chairman and YSR Congress senior leader Y.V. Subba Reddy has expressed confidence in completing the Veligonda project within next six months citing sizable funds sanctioned for the project.

He laid foundation stones for various development programmes which are estimated to cost ₹4 crore in Yarragondapalem constituency in Prakasam district along with education minister Adimulapu Suresh on Sunday.

Mr Subba Reddy said that the first tunnel work of Veligonda would be ready by Sankranti festival and second tunnel within six months.

Referring to ₹1.30 crore allotted to build a Kalyana Mandapam under the auspices of TTD at Yarragondapalem, he said they would also construct a temple of Lord Venkateswara in the same premises.

In his address, the minister said they had taken steps to provide water to tail-end areas of Pullalacheruvu mandal through Thigaleru canal.

He said they had laid foundation stones for a TTD Kalyana Mandapam, Administrative Building for Agriculture Marketing department and a Rythu Bazar on Sunday.



Children along with their parents rejoice while watching the rhinoceros at its enclosure during their visit to Indira Gandhi Zoological Park in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

Tourist spots swell on last Sunday of Karthika

Not a single tourist from West Bengal was seen around

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 6

Most of the tourist places in Visakhapatnam were seen with a large number of people on the occasion of the last Sunday of the Karthika Masam. Crowds were seen more in the Agency areas of Araku Valley, Ananthagiri and Jingle Bells in Tyda.

Around 10,000 people visited Borra Caves, more than the three previous Sundays. The collection was ₹5 lakh at the time of closure of the caves for the day, said an official of APTDC.

● Around 10,000 people visited Borra Caves, more than the three previous Sundays.

● Half of the people seen violating Covid-19 norms by not wearing masks

The official said all the tourist resorts of the corporation were full till Sunday evening. The bookings were made on Friday. Haritha old and new in Araku Valley has 54 and 84 rooms,

Ananathagiri 26 rooms, Jingle Bells Tyda 24 rooms, Rushikonda in Visakhapatnam 55 rooms and Haritha near Appu Ghar in city has 34 rooms. Lambasinghi has four tents and all of them were booked.

“However, the occupancy in Visakhapatnam resorts of APTDC was 50 per cent, and private resorts and hotels in the Agency reported 40 per cent occupancy. Araku has over 2,000 rooms in the private sector,” the corporation official said.

Similarly, there was good footfall at Rushikonda Beach, RK Beach, Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Kambalakonda Ecotourism Park, Kailasagiri and Bhimili.

This year not a single tourist from West Bengal was seen either in Visakhapatnam city or at the Araku Valley. A tour operator said till now not a single enquiry was made by the Bengali tourists, unlike the previous years.

Half of the people seen violating Covid-19 norms by not wearing masks or maintaining social distancing, a tourist guide in Rushikonda said.

KGGH gets ready for surgeries, post-Covid-19

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, DEC. 6

Kurnool General Hospital gets ready to start super speciality cardio care surgeries as Covid-19 has receded. Last nine months, there was not even a single surgery done here.

Professor Prabhakar Reddy said there is a rising number of people dying at home due to lack of adequate medical care since all hospitals are focussed on Covid-19.

A lot of people are delaying the visit to the emergency department of the hospital due to fear of Covid-19.

KGGH Superintendent said repairs are carried on in operation theatres

and they will be ready by next week.

Prof Reddy, who is a cardiothoracic surgeon, said on an average he was performing 40 surgeries per month at Kurnool Government General Hospital.

Sounding a caution, Prof Reddy said, “Patients who have multiple comorbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery disease, kidney disease and heart failure are at a very high risk of developing complications of Covid infection. They should not avoid consulting their doctors, as many are also doing the online consultations.”

Prof Prabhakar Reddy who also served as state

Covid-19 Nodal officer, said all patients of heart attack should receive the recommend primary percutaneous coronary interventions or timely thrombolysis for patients presenting with Myocardial infarction even during the pandemic.

Many patients are also coming late for the treatment much beyond the initial golden one hour, some times even after a few days of suffering from an acute event.

This is not only increasing the mortality in these patients but also there are more complications which can be hazardous to them later on, he said as a matter of concern for the cardiac patients.

Man kills infant suspecting wife

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 6

In a bizarre incident, a father beat his 15-month-old son to death suspecting the fidelity of his wife at Machavaram in Naguluppalapadu mandal of Prakasam district.

According to in-charge SI Dasari Raja Rao, the accused identified as Karri Johnson and his wife

● THE COUPLE were married four years ago and had 2 kids

Chanravati were inmates of an orphanage home run by the government at Naguluppalapadu.

The couple were married four years back and they have a three-year-old daughter and 15-month-old son.

Suspecting that the son

named Joyel is not born to him, Johnson has been ill-treating him and beating him under one pretext or other. In this backdrop, Joyel suffered bleeding injuries on the head when Johnson hit him on the head with a TV remote late on Saturday night.

The couple rushed him to RIMS Hospital in Ongole and thereafter to

Government General Hospital in Guntur when his condition became critical. The child died during treatment at Guntur during the early hours of Sunday.

SI Raja Rao said they have booked a case against Johnson, a sweet shop worker in Uppugunduru, and taken him into custody on Sunday for further investigation.

FURTHER STUDIES

Opportunity for senior employees to get a doctorate

Special research programme for workmen

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, DEC. 6

Kadapa Yogi Vemana University offers opportunities for senior employees, entrepreneurs and public representatives who want to do research and get a doctorate. The decision was made to allow them to do research on a part-time basis.

The decision to run the Extramural Research Programme (EMR) was taken at a university governing body meeting last month. Authorities have issued guidelines for a

part-time research programme based on that decision. Those who have completed the master's degree with a minimum of 55 per cent marks are considered eligible for admissions. They are admitted under Extramural in January and July every year. Candidates have to pay a fee of ₹one lakh at the time of admission. Candidates will have to pay a fee of ₹15,000 per annum till the thesis is submitted and the doctorate is obtained as long as the research continues.

In addition, NRIs were also given the opportunity

to do research in the university for various courses. They have to pay a fee of ₹2 lakh at the time of admission and ₹30,000 per annum till the thesis is submitted.

Candidates seeking admission are required to attach a No Objection Certificate from the companies in which they are working. Candidates are required to attend a seminar conducted in the presence of the YVU Departmental Research Committee or Research Advisor Committee. The final decision regarding the admission of candidates will be

taken by this committee. Must have at least two years experience in regular position as executive scientist or technical officer in industries with a turnover of ₹2 crore per annum.

Officers with two years of experience as scientists or scientific officers in international, national, and state-level research organisations are recognised as eligible. Also eligible are Central Civil Service Officers (Class-1), Group-1 officers, and those with four years of experience as executive officers in cen-

Maha samprokshanam at Bhu Varahaswamy temple

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 6

The holy fete of Balalaya Maha Samprokshanam of Sri Bhu Varahaswamy temple commenced at Tirumala on Sunday.

The five-day fete started with Archakas lighting the Homa Gundams in the yagashala and began vaidika activities like Punyahavachanam, Viswakshena aradhana, Panchagavya aradhana, Vaastu homam, and Raksha bandhanam.

According to Agama traditions, Balalayam is conducted for the rejuvenation of the sanctum with repairs and gold plating of the vimanam. Since there will be no daily rituals dur-

● TTD is conducting special programmes at the temple yagashala from December 6-10 and maha prokshana of the temple is scheduled for Dec. 10

ing those days in the sanctum, a wooden model of the Mula Virat of Sri Varaha Swamy was installed in the mukha mandapam of the temple for devotees darshan.

As part of the Kalakarshana the Shakti of Mula Virat is captured in Kumbha (kalasha) and taken to the yagashala on Sunday evening. During the five days, daily rituals of

the deities will be performed for the model idols.

Meanwhile, TTD is also conducting special programmes at the temple yagashala from December 6-10 and maha prokshana of the temple is scheduled for December 10 morning in the makara lagnam.

Special vaidika programmes will be performed in the yagashala both morning and evening.

Kankana Bhattar and Chief Priest Venugopal Dikshitulu, Vaikhanasa agama advisors N.A.K. Sundara Varadan, Mohana Rangacharyulu, temple chief Archakas Govindaraja Dikshitulu and Sesha-chala Dikshitulu, Ritwicks and officials were present.

AP silk reelers demand for hike in incentives

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, DEC. 6

Silk reelers from the state are demanding increase in incentives due to poor trading for the past few months following the Covid-19 pandemic. Andhra Pradesh is the second largest raw silk producer in the country next only to Karnataka. In view of potentiality of the sector to develop the farming community to up-lift rural economy, the AP government is assisting the farmers and entrepreneurs to take up sericulture activities.

It also has heritage of traditional silk weaving pockets like Dharmavaram, Venkatagiri and also Uppada of East Godavari district is the latest silk weaving pocket developed by the Sericulture Department in the recent years. Silk saris and fabrics produced in the state are famous throughout the country along with a thriving export market to other counties.

The reeling sector is widely spread in Hindupur competing with nearby Karnataka reelers. Tens of hundreds of *charakhas* are existed in Hindupur town alone and a big number of families dependent on the

reeling sector which purchases cocoons from Hindupur Cocoon Market and also other markets in the state. Top quality of silk is reeled at Ramanagar in Karnataka while *charakha* and filature reeling sector exists in AP.

The AP Silk Reelers Association has been demanding for a hike in incentives to reelers as they were incurring losses for the past few months.

The state government has been assisting an incentive for a reeler. Sources said ₹30 per kg as production incentive to raw silk produced by silk reelers on various reeling devices on charakha silk, cottage basins, back-end reeling is implemented while ₹80 per kg cross breed silk and ₹130 per kg for Bivoltine silk on multi-end reeling machines.

The association president Riyaz Ahmed and a team of reelers association met with an accident in Guntur district while they were on way to represent the state government two days ago. Riyaz was killed on spot and others suffered injuries. MP Gorantla Madhav met the family members of reelers at Hindupur on Sunday assured to solve their demands.

Abandoned ship crew fly back home

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 6

The 15-member crew of Bangladesh vessel *mv Maa*, which ran aground near Tenneti Park on the Beach Road in Visakhapatnam, flew back to their home country on Sunday evening. Customs and immigration department gave all the clearances, sources said.

They got stuck in the vessel since October 13 when the vessel got its anchors snapped and drifted towards shore. They waited all these days as the man-

agement of the vessel made serious efforts to retrieve and put on float.

Meanwhile, the state government is making serious efforts to take over the ship to convert into a tourist place. Few officials from APTDC visited the ship area and noted down the features and the locations.

They are also in consultation with the engineering department of Visakhapatnam Metro Regional Development Authority to convert it into a museum. They also sought the opinion of Indian Maritime University.

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SHORT TAKES

COP, CIVILIAN HURT AS MILITANTS OPEN FIRE IN SRINAGAR

Srinagar, Dec. 6: Two people, including a civilian, were injured after militants opened fire on a police party here on Sunday, police said.

The incident took place in Hawal area of the city, they said. Militants opened fire on the police party at Hawal Chowk, resulting in injuries to a policeman and a civilian. They have been taken to the hospital, a police official said. The area has been cordoned off to track down the militants, he said.



Justice G. R. Udhwani

GUJARAT HC, COURTS SHUT AFTER JUDGE DIES DUE TO COVID

Ahmedabad, Dec. 6: The Gujarat High Court and subordinate courts in the state will remain closed on Monday on account of the death of Justice G. R. Udhwani, the HC said on Sunday. Justice Udhwani (59), the sitting HC judge, tested positive for Covid-19 on November 19 and died at a private hospital here on Saturday due to complications arising out of the infection.

The high court in a notification said a holiday is declared on Monday in the Gujarat HC and subordinate courts as well as their offices in the state on account of the sad demise of Justice G. R. Udhwani.

A full court reference via video conference will also be held at the HC on Monday to offer him tributes and condolences. Justice Udhwani, who hailed from Ahmedabad, was elevated as additional judge of the high court on November 12, 2012 and was confirmed as a permanent judge on July 10, 2014.

Before that, he served as registrar general of the high court between June 20, 2011 and November 11, 2012. He had also served as registrar of the high court. In his legal career spanning over three decades, he had also served as judge of the city civil court in Ahmedabad and as additional judge of a special POTA (Prevention of Terrorism Act) court.

BODY CAMERAS ON AURANGABAD CONDUCTORS

Aurangabad, Dec. 6: Bus conductors and ticket inspectors in Maharashtra's Aurangabad city will soon be equipped with body cameras to keep a tab on the behaviour of passengers and other activities during transportation, an official has said.

A few days back, some women conductors of the civic-run buses complained of misbehaviour with them during their duty hours. "Acting on it, the Aurangabad Smart City Development Corporation has decided to install body cameras in the front pockets of shirts of the conductors and inspectors of its buses to record the activities in the vehicles during their duty," the ASCDCL official said in a statement on Saturday.

The cameras will help in the real-time examination of tickets and to keep an eye on other activities in the buses, he said. The ASCDCL administration has also deployed former defence servicemen as line inspectors, who will check tickets of passengers and their behaviour, the official said. They will also ensure security of passengers and give the feedback of commuters to authorities, he added.

The ASCDCL has a fleet of 100 buses, out of which 29 are currently being run on 12 routes in the city, ferrying around 5,000 passengers in a day, another official said. The Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation's employees have been hired as drivers and conductors of these buses, he said. During the lockdown period, these civic-run buses were used to ferry Covid-19 patients. Last month, the ASCDCL resumed its bus services for normal passengers, the official added.

The ASCDCL has been formed by the Aurangabad Municipal Corporation to implement smart city projects. Aurangabad Municipal Commissioner Astik Kumar Pandey heads the ASCDCL.



Health workers scan temperatures of farmers during their ongoing Delhi Chalo agitation against the new farm laws, at Singhu border in New Delhi, on Sunday. farmers' organisations have given a call for a Bharat bandh tomorrow.

— PTI

Pawar warns of escalation if farmers' demands not met

NCP chief to brief Prez, feels Centre not keen to touch basic issues

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, DEC. 6

NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday warned the Central government that the farmers' agitation will further escalate if their concerns are not addressed soon.

The NCP chief is also scheduled to meet President Ram Nath Kovind on December 9 at 5pm over the ongoing farmers' protest against the new farm laws. Mr. Pawar will be accompanied by CPM leader Sitaram Yechury, CPI leader D Raja and DMK MP T.R. Baalu. Responding to Mr Pawar, BJP leader Chandrakant

Patil said that the farm bills will not be withdrawn, though the government may agree on a few changes.

Mr. Pawar said that if the Central government does not take serious notice of the ongoing protest, then this would not be limited to Delhi but people from every corner of the country would stand up in support of the farmers and resolve the problem in their own way.

Speaking with reporters on Sunday, the former union agricultural minister said that the contribution of farmers of Punjab and Haryana are in the agriculture sector is the highest in the country.

"Farmers from these states not just fill our stomach but are also major contributors to India's supply of food grains, especially rice and wheat, to more than a dozen countries. Therefore, when the farmers of Punjab and Haryana hit the road, the central government should have taken serious note of it. But unfortunately the central government is not paying attention to it."

Mr. Pawar said that it seems that the central government does not want to touch the basic issues. "When the farm bills were being passed, we'd requested the government

that they shouldn't be passed in a hurry. They should be sent to a Select Committee and a discussion is required, but that didn't happen and the Bill was passed in haste. Now the government is facing problems because of that haste," former union agriculture minister said.

However, Mr Patil, the Maharashtra BJP president, said that the central government is holding a discussion with the farmers every day. The government has admitted to bring MSP on the paper. "The government is committed to MSP. Now what is the issue?," he asked.

Mr Patil also said that the opposition had created

rumors that new farm bills would wipe out the MSP. "The government will not scrap these new farm laws," he added.

Maharashtra NCP unit president Jayant Patil said in a statement that the party workers will join Tuesday's nation-wide shutdown in protest against passing of the agri laws by Parliament without holding discussions. "The ongoing talks between farmers and the Centre have failed due to which farmers' organisations have given a call for a Bharat bandh on December 8. The Maharashtra NCP will support the bandh," the NCP leader said.

ASSAM TO PROBE BAJRANG DAL'S THREAT AGAINST VISITING CHURCH

Silchar, Dec. 6: The Cachar district administration of Assam has asked the police to investigate an inflammatory speech reportedly made by a local Bajrang Dal leader threatening to beat up Hindus visiting churches during Christmas celebrations.

Taking note of a viral video in which the saffron outfit's leader was seen issuing the threat, Cachar Deputy Commissioner Keerthi Jalli on Sunday said she has instructed the superintendent of police to probe the matter and "take necessary steps".

Police, however, said no case has been registered as of now and the incident is being investigated.

"We have not received any complaint from anyone. However, we are looking into the incident after seeing the video," a senior police officer said. — PTI

Health ministry: Not aware where Covid-19 vaccine records are kept

New Delhi, Dec. 6: The Union Health Ministry has said in response to an RTI application that it does not know where records related to agenda circulated in meetings of the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 are held.

Venkatesh Nayak of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative had approached the ministry seeking details of the constitution and working of the expert group such as dates of meetings, a copy of the detailed agenda circulated in relation to every meeting, presentations made before its members, and material it had shared with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Nayak had also sought to know the amount of sitting fees and every other remuneration or allowances payable to the chairperson and every member of the expert group and the amount of sitting fees and every other remuneration or allowances actu-

India cases lowest in 138 days as Pfizer seeks vaccine nod

SANJAY KAW | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 6

India's total Covid-19 active caseload dropped to 4,03,248 — the lowest in 138 days — as 36,011 fresh Coronavirus infections were recorded against 41,970 recoveries in the last 24 hours.

After getting the nod for emergency use in the UK and Bahrain, Pfizer Inc. has become the first pharmaceutical company to seek from the Drugs Controller General of

India (DCGI) an emergency use authorisation for its vaccine in India.

This is the first such request received by the DCGI amid the race to find a potential vaccine for the deadly virus.

In its application submitted to the drug regulator, Pfizer has sought permission to import the vaccine for sale and distribution in India, besides waiver of clinical trials on Indian population in accordance with the special provisions under the

New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019. While five other vaccines are currently in advanced phases of clinical trials in India, Pfizer is getting ready for emergency roll-outs and is now in the final stages of planning before it starts its vaccination drive on December 14 in the UK.

The Pfizer vaccine's one major drawback is that it has to be stored at -70° Celsius, a temperature which most Indian cold storages cannot reach.

ally paid to them. The National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC) was constituted under the chairmanship of Member (Health) of Niti Aayog V. K. Paul on August 7 to pre-

pare a strategy for the roll-out of Covid-19 vaccine.

The information on these points was not provided by the Central Public Information Officer (CPIO), saying the details of meeting, agenda

and material circulated during the meetings do not come under the definition of "information" which can be shared under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. — PTI

Not first time China built LAC villages

From page 1

He said that these villages had been built in order to strengthen the weakening border forces by balancing the outflow of residents. He said that the relocation move also promises to offer China better border surveillance and patrols through a network of herders. All these new villages are within Chinese territory.

This development is significant as the villages have come up at a time when India and China are involved in a major military standoff in eastern Ladakh. These villages will also help China to solidify its claim over these disputed areas.

However, this is not for the first time that China has built villages near the LAC. China had been building villages along the LAC for some time now. Even in 2019, there were reports of the Chinese building around 20-25 "model" villages at several points near the LAC. These villages had well connected roads and boasted of community halls, shops and playing areas. The Indian Army had been keeping a close watch on these villages.

Last month there were reports that China had established a village "Pangda" 2 km within Bhutan's territory near Doklam as part of its "salami slicing" strategy, by taking over territory in a gradual manner.

There is now a virtual deadlock between India and China over the move to disengage from the seven-month military standoff in eastern Ladakh. There has been no progress on the disengagement proposals which were discussed at the eighth round of the corps commanders' meeting. There has also been no discussion on the next date for the corps commanders of India and China to meet again.

The Indian Army has completed the establishment of its winter habitat facilities for all troops deployed in eastern Ladakh. The winter deployment in Ladakh is particularly difficult due to the tough terrain, low temperatures and bone-chilling winds that make survival extremely difficult. India has deployed around 50,000 troops in the area to tackle any threat that may emerge from the Chinese Army.

Nadda: All parties are family-centric except the BJP

Dehradun, Dec. 6: Describing rival political parties as family-centric, BJP president J. P. Nadda on Sunday said the BJP is the only ideology-based party where the whole organisation is "one big family".

Nadda was addressing a booth committee of the Pradesh BJP on the third day of his four-day tour of Uttarakhand to galvanise the party's organisational structure.

"All other political parties have become confined to families, whereas ours is a party which in itself is one big family," he said. "We are an ideology-based party that does not discriminate between classes, castes and religions," Nadda said.

Underlining the key role of the cadre in the party, he said even a booth level

worker can be seen rising to eminent positions only in the BJP. "Our cadre base is our speciality and it is built through booth committees," Nadda said at the meeting where he shared the dais with Pradesh BJP president Bansidhar Bhagat, district president Sita Ram Bhatt, Mandal president Vijendra Thapliyal and booth president Sonia Verma.

Presided by Verma, the meeting was termed as "historic" by the party. It is for the first time in the country's political history that the national president of a party shared the dais with the presidents of mandal and booth committees — two primary units of the party, Pradesh BJP vice president Devendra Bhasin said. — PTI

Pressure on Shivraj to expand Cabinet

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, DEC. 6

Pressure is mounting on Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan from a strong section of the ruling BJP here to expand his Cabinet to accommodate two loyalists of senior party leader Jyotiraditya Scindia in his ministry.

Two former ministers, Govind Singh Rajput and Tulsi Silawat, had resigned from the Chouhan ministry ahead of the November 3 Assembly bypolls in the state when their six-month-tenure as non-MLA ministers came to an end on October 27.

The two former ministers, close lieutenants of Mr Scindia, staked claim

for reinduction in the Cabinet after they won the November 3 bypolls.

Mr Scindia has already held discussions with the chief minister on this as well as on accommodating two other former ministers, Imarti Devi and Giriraj Dandotia, who lost the byelections, heads of some corporations, BJP sources said.

"Mr Scindia discussed the issue with Mr Chouhan during his Bhopal visit last week. He is scheduled to arrive here on December 11 and may take it up with the party leadership here", sources close to Mr Scindia said.

Pressure is also mounting from other senior MLAs and former ministers seen as close to Mr Chouhan to induct them in the Cabinet.

REAL | LIFE Child found badly bruised with bite marks in September last year, director says mother unstable

Biological mom seeks toddler in custody of film maker

Mumbai, Dec. 6: A Bollywood film maker who is the foster father of a two-year-old and the toddler's biological mother feature in a custody row, while a man has surfaced claiming to be the boy's father, an official said on Sunday.

The toddler was found at Borivli in September last year badly bruised and having bite marks with the woman who claimed he had slipped out of her hands and hurt himself, an official of the Women and

Child Development department said.

While the woman, who had reached Mumbai from Uttar Pradesh leaving behind a daily wage labourer husband and a 12-year-old son, was referred to a local NGO for mental illness treatment, the infant was taken by the Child Welfare Committee under its care, the official said.

After living in two foster care homes, the toddler was shifted to the Bollywood directors home

in May this year as the previous family said the Coronavirus-induced lockdown had made it difficult to look after him, the official said.

At a recent meeting of the Child Welfare Committee in Mumbai, the Bollywood director said he should be allowed to keep the toddler longer, as the mother was not mentally fit.

However, the 30-year-old mother said she was medically fit to look after her

son now. The Committee sought a fresh medical fitness certificate for the mother from a government hospital and a decision on with whom to keep the toddler is expected in a few days, the official said.

Meanwhile, a person claiming to be the toddler's biological father has approached the authorities, the official said, adding they will match his DNA report. A DNA test last month confirmed the woman is the toddler's bio-

logical mother.

The toddler may be placed with the Children's Aid Society at Mankhurd here as per provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act, before the issue is resolved, the official said.

As per the Centre's model guidelines for foster care, a foster family can adopt a child after five years of care, if the child has no biological family claiming her.

"We have been informed that the director, who is

married and has a son, is not looking to adopt the toddler," the official said. However, seeing the mother's condition, he became apprehensive and requested that the child be in foster care for a little longer till she is fine, the official added.

The NGO founder has informed the Committee that the woman may develop "severe reactive depression" if kept away from her son for long, the official said.

● **THE 30-YEAR-OLD** mother said she was medically fit to look after her son now. The Committee sought a fresh medical fitness certificate for the mother from a government hospital and a decision on with whom to keep the toddler is expected in a few days, the official said.

● **DNA TEST** last month confirmed the woman is the toddler's biological mother.

SHORT TAKES

SAUDI PRINCE
PLAYS ISRAEL AT
BAHRAIN MEET

Dubai, Dec. 6: A prominent Saudi prince harshly criticised Israel on Sunday at a Bahrain security summit that was remotely attended by Israel's foreign minister.

Prince Turki al-Faisal, who led Saudi intelligence for more than two decades and served as ambassador to the US and Britain, warned that any normalisation deals needed to help the Palestinians obtain their own independent state. He described Israel as a "Western colonising" power. He said Israel has "incarcerated (Palestinians) in concentration camps under the flimsiest of security accusations."

RETURN BUDDHA
STATUE: DUTCH
COLLECTOR TOLD

Beijing, Dec. 6: A Chinese court has ordered a Dutch art collector to hand over a Buddha statue in the latest twist in a 3-year-old legal battle with villagers who say it was stolen from a temple.

Residents of Yangchun, a village in the southeastern province of Fujian, say the statue is a 1,000-year-old relic that holds the mummified remains of a monk and disappeared in 1995. The collector says he bought the object in Hong Kong in 1996 but denied it was the stolen statue.

The ruling Communist Party is stepping up efforts to retrieve Chinese art and artifacts that are believed to be stolen and in foreign hands. The Sanning Intermediate People's Court on Friday ordered the collector, Oscar van Overeem, to return the statue within 30 days, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

Two committees representing villagers sued in a Dutch court in 2017, but judges ruled the following year they didn't count as legal entities that could make a claim.

OLI SKIPS
CRUCIAL RULING
PARTY MEETING

Kathmandu, Dec. 6: Nepalese Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, one of the chairmen of the Communist Party of Nepal (NCP), on Sunday skipped a crucial meeting of the party's 45-member strong Standing Committee, amid growing internal rift.

In a letter sent to the party's Standing Committee, Oli said that he was unable to attend the meeting, NCP spokesperson Narayan Kaji Shrestha said. Shrestha said that the next Standing Committee meeting has been scheduled for December 13.

The rift surfaced after the dissident group leaders, including the party's executive chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, demanded Oli's resignation from both as the party's chairman and as Nepal's PM after he accused them of conspiring to topple his government. In apolitical document presented on November 13 at the party's Secretariat meeting, Prachanda criticised Oli for failing to properly run both the government and the party.

PROTESTS
OUTSIDE BIBI
RESIDENCE

Jerusalem, Dec. 6: Several thousand protesters in Jerusalem gathered Saturday outside the official residence of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, demanding his resignation as Israel moves toward an early election.

The protesters have been gathering weekly for the past six months, saying Netanyahu should step down because of his corruption trial and what they say is mismanagement of the country's deadly coronavirus crisis. The protests began last spring when Netanyahu and his chief rival, Benny Gantz, agreed to form what they called an emergency government focused on managing the health and economic challenges stemming from the virus pandemic.

Their partnership has been paralyzed by infighting, and a pair of lockdowns hit the economy hard, sending unemployment skyrocketing to double-digit figures.

With wintry weather settling in, the crowds have begun to shrink. But participants remained vocal and animated Saturday. Nearly all wore masks, though not everyone observed social distancing.

2,30,000 new Covid-19 cases,
2,527 deaths in US over 24 hrs

Health officials warned of surge as people travelled for Thanksgiving

UK Oppn leader Starmer
self-isolates for 2nd time

Washington, Dec. 6: The United States notched a record number of Coronavirus cases in 24 hours for the third day running, as it was reported that Britain's Queen Elizabeth II will get a vaccine within weeks.

A tally by Johns Hopkins University showed the world's worst-hit country — which has seen a dramatic virus resurgence in recent weeks — reached nearly 230,000 new infections and 2,527 Covid-related deaths on Saturday alone.

For two weeks, the US has regularly topped 2,000 deaths per day, as it had in the spring at the height of the first wave of the country's outbreak.

US health officials warned of a surge after millions of Americans travelled to celebrate last week's Thanksgiving holiday despite pleas from authorities to stay home.

The Coronavirus has now killed more than 1.5 million people and infected 66 million around the world since emerging in China last year, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP.

In Britain, it was reported that the 94-year-old monarch will receive the Pfizer-BioNTech Coronavirus vaccine within weeks after UK regulators granted emergency approval. The rollout of the vaccine will begin next week.

The queen and her 99-year-old husband Prince Philip are in line to get the jab early due to their age and will not receive preferential treatment, the Mail on Sunday reported.

The newspaper said Britain's most senior royals would reveal they have been given the inoculation "to encourage more people to take up the vital jab", amid fears so-called antivaxers could dent enthusiasm for it.

British health officials are set to use criteria based on age and vulnerability to decide who gets the vaccine first.

Elderly care home residents and their carers will be the very first to get inoculated, followed by those aged 80 and over and frontline health and care

London, Dec. 6: Britain's Leader of the Opposition, Labour leader Keir Starmer, has gone into self-isolation for a second time after a member of his staff tested positive for Covid-19.

In line with the current government rules, even though Starmer was said to be well and not displaying any symptoms of Covid-19, he will now have to stay at home for 14 days since his last contact with the affected person, which his spokesperson said ends on December 16.

"I'm pleased to say my colleague is feeling ok. I'm not showing any symptoms. But will now be working from home. Keep safe and follow the public health advice," he said.

staff. Britain has pre-ordered 40 million doses of the vaccine in total, and is set to receive an initial batch of 800,000 to begin next week's rollout.

The World Health Organisation has warned that vaccines are no magic bullet for the Coronavirus crisis, as Russia started vaccinating its high-risk workers and other countries geared up for similar programmes. The WHO cautioned against what it said was an erroneous belief that the pandemic would end soon with vaccines on the horizon.

"Vaccines do not equal zero Covid," said WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan, adding that not everyone will be able to receive it early next year.

"Vaccination will add a major, major, powerful tool to the tool kit that we have. But by themselves, they will not do the job," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus also cautioned against the "growing perception that the pandemic is over" with the virus still spreading fast.

— AFP

● "BLACK PANTHER" star Letitia Wright has deleted both her Twitter and Instagram profiles, days after the actor came under fire for sharing a video by a coronavirus vaccine sceptic on her social media accounts. The "Small Axe" actor had shared a link to a 70-minute YouTube video which expressed doubts over the in-progress Covid-19 vaccines, which will begin roll-out in the UK in the coming week.

The Opposition leader has previously had to self-isolate in mid-September

when a member of his household showed possible symptoms of the deadly virus. He did not experience any symptoms at the time. His latest self-isolation follows a week after Prime Minister Boris Johnson came out of his self-isolation after coming in contact with an MP who had later tested positive with the virus.

It comes as the UK recorded 15,539 new cases of Coronavirus and 397 new deaths on Saturday, taking the country's death toll beyond 61,000 to make it the fifth highest in the world. The vaccine developed by American drug-maker Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech was being sent to hospitals across the UK.

— PTI

Peshawar, Dec. 6: Seven patients being treated for the Coronavirus died after one hospital in Peshawar ran out of oxygen supplies, officials said Sunday.

Farhad Khan, a spokesman at Khyber Teaching Hospital, said the patients died Saturday night when the vendor who supplies the hospital with medical oxygen to refill tanks with failed to arrive in time. The hospital, which is the second largest in Peshawar, receives its oxygen cylinders from a vendor in Rawalpindi, Khan said.

Provincial Health Minister Taimur Saim Jhagra tweeted about the incident, saying the hospital's board of governors has been ordered to probe the incident and take action within 48 hours.

— AP

VIRUS AID GRAFT:
INDONESIA MIN
SURRENDERS

Jakarta, Dec. 6: Indonesia's social affairs minister turned himself in to anti-corruption authorities Sunday to face charges of taking bribes related to the government's Covid-19 aid distribution.

Social Affairs Minister Juliani Batubara arrived at the Corruption Eradication Commission's headquarters in the capital, Jakarta, hours after the commission's Chairman Firli Bahuri called on him to surrender in a news conference just before midnight Saturday.

Batubara, who is also a member of the ruling Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, made no comment. The anti-corruption commission said he is accused of receiving at least 17 billion rupiah from two supplier companies through his two subordinates, who were also named as suspects.

— AP

Japanese eager
to scrutinise
asteroid samples

Tokyo, Dec. 6: Japanese space officials said they are excited about the return of a capsule that safely landed in Australia Outback on Sunday while carrying soil samples from a distant asteroid so they can start analysing what they say are treasures inside.

The capsule's delivery by the Hayabusa2 spacecraft completes its six-year sample-return mission and opens the door for research into finding clues to the origin of the solar system and life on Earth. "We were able to land the treasure box" onto the sparsely populated Australian desert of Woomera as planned, said Yuichi Tsuda, Hayabusa2 project manager at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA, adding that the capsule was in perfect shape.

"I really look forward to opening it and looking inside." The capsule will be packed in a container as soon as its preliminary treatment at an Australian lab is finished and brought back to Japan this week, Satoru Nakazawa, a project sub-manager, said during an online news conference from Woomera. Hayabusa2 left the asteroid Ryugu, about 300 million kilometres from Earth, a year ago.

After it released the capsule on Saturday, it set off on a new expedition to another distant asteroid. Scientists say they believe the samples contain valuable data unaffected by space radiation and other environmental factors.

— AP

US Sikhs protest
Indian farm laws

Washington, Dec. 6: Hundreds of Sikh-Americans have held peaceful protest rallies in several cities across the US in support of the Indian farmers who have been protesting against the new agricultural reforms in India.

A large car caravan of protesters from various

CHINESE PROBE
TO BRING MOON
ROCKS TO EARTH

Beijing, Dec. 6: A Chinese probe that landed on the moon transferred rocks to an orbiter Sunday in preparation for returning samples of the lunar surface to Earth for the first time in almost 45 years.

The upper stage of the Change'e lander blasted off Friday from the lunar surface. If the mission succeeds, it will make China the third country after the United States and former Soviet Union to bring moon rocks to Earth.

— AP

CHINA LAUNCHES
SAT FOR EARTH
OBSERVATION

Beijing, Dec. 6: China on Sunday successfully launched a new Earth observation satellite which can take high-resolution pictures of ground objects across the globe.

The satellite was launched from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in southwest China's Sichuan province, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The satellite, Gaofen-14, was sent into orbit by a Long March-3B carrier rocket.

It can efficiently obtain high precision stereo images globally.

— PTI

Last-ditch effort by UK, EU
to strike post-Brexit pact

London, Dec. 6: The UK and European Union (EU) are holding crunch talks on Sunday to give one last push to try and thrash out a post-Brexit trade agreement before the end of the transition period on December 31.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen spoke on the telephone on Saturday to try and find a way out of a stalemate that has lasted months, ending in the chief negotiators on both sides concluding the latest round of talks without achieving a breakthrough. There are lingering divergences on key areas of EU fishing rights in UK waters and governance matters after Britain ceases to be a member of the economic bloc from January 1, 2021.

"In a phone call on the ongoing negotiations between the European Union

and the United Kingdom, we welcomed the fact that progress has been achieved in many areas. Nevertheless, significant differences remain on three critical issues: level playing field, governance and fisheries. Both sides underlined that no agreement is feasible if these issues are not resolved," read a joint statement issued by Johnson and Von Der Leyen.

"Whilst recognising the seriousness of these differences, we agreed that a further effort should be undertaken by our negotiating teams to assess whether they can be resolved. We are therefore instructing our chief negotiators to reconvene tomorrow [Sunday] in Brussels. We will speak again on Monday evening," they said.

Lord David Frost, the UK's Brexit negotiator, and his team travelled back to Brussels to resume a final set of talks with EU chief

negotiator Michel Barnier and his team to try and find a way through the "significant differences" that remain in the path to a deal.

The key focus is over access to UK waters by the EU's fishing fleets. According to reports, France is leading the charge in this area and demanding rights for at least 10 years — a demand the UK is unwilling to give in to, claiming it fails to meet its "take back control" criteria for leaving the bloc.

Other stumbling blocks include what measures there should be to ensure a "level playing field" for businesses on both sides of the English Channel and the role of the European Court of Justice. If a deal is not reached before the December-end deadline, border checks and taxes will be introduced for goods travelling between the UK and the EU.

— PTI

Unrest in Moldova



People take part in a rally to demand the government's resignation and snap parliamentary elections on Sunday in central Chisinau. Moldova last month elected pro-European Maia Sandu to the presidency, earning her a surprise victory over pro-Russian incumbent Igor Dodon. After Moldovan lawmakers passed a bill transferring control of the country's intelligence agency from the president to parliament, Sandu called for her supporters to rally.

— AFP

COVID | IMPACT

Study evaluates multidimensional effects of the pandemic over the next decade

Additional 207 mn can be pushed into poverty by '30

United Nations, Dec. 6: An additional 207 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030 due to the severe long-term impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, bringing the total number of the world's extremely poor to more than a billion, a new study from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has found.

The study assesses the impact of different Covid-19 recovery scenarios on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), evaluating the multidimensional

effects of the pandemic over the next decade. The study is part of a long-standing partnership between the UNDP and the Pardee Center for International Futures at the University of Denver.

"Severe long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic could push an additional 207 million people into extreme poverty on top of the current pandemic trajectory, bringing the total to over 1 billion by 2030," noted the study.

The 'Baseline Covid' scenario, based on current

mortality rates and the most recent growth projections by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), would result in 44 million more people living in extreme poverty by 2030 compared to the development trajectory the world was on before the pandemic. Under a 'High Damage' scenario, where the recovery is protracted, Covid-19 is likely to push an additional 207 million people into extreme poverty by 2030, and increase the female poverty headcount by an additional 102 mil-

lion compared to that baseline, says the report.

The 'High Damage' scenario anticipates that 80 per cent of the Covid-induced economic crisis would persist in 10 years' time due to loss in productivity, preventing a full recovery to the growth trajectory seen before the pandemic. However, the study also finds that a focused set of SDG investments over the next decade in social protection/welfare programmes, governance, digitalisation, and a green economy

could not only prevent the rise of extreme poverty, but actually exceed the development trajectory the world was on before the pandemic.

"This ambitious, yet feasible 'DG Push' scenario would lift an additional 146 million people out of extreme poverty, narrow the gender poverty gap, and reduce the female poverty headcount by 74 million, even taking into account the current impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic," UNDP said.

UNDP Administrator Ac-

him Steiner said as this new poverty research highlights, the Covid-19 pandemic is a tipping point, and the choices leaders take now could take the world in very different directions.

"We have an opportunity to invest in a decade of action that not only helps people to recover from Covid-19, but that re-sets the development path of people and planet towards a more fair, resilient and green future," he said.

The concerted SDG interventions suggested by the

study combine behavioural changes through nudges for both governments and citizens, such as improved effectiveness and efficiency in governance and changes in consumption patterns of food, energy and water.

The proposed interventions also focus on global collaboration for climate action, additional investments in Covid-19 recovery, and the need for improved broadband access and technology innovation, UNDP said.

— PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

7 DECEMBER 2020

To end farm stir, PM must signal shift in govt stand

In the confrontation between the country's farmers and the Centre, the Union government first appeared to be uncaring, relying on its brute Lok Sabha majority. Before the vote on the troubling farm-related laws in September, it gave no value to farmers' representatives who travelled to Delhi to have its ear. Bureaucrats, rather than political leaders, were sent to meet them, which basically meant reeling off the catchism. In Parliament, the government laughed off moves by Opposition parties to have the three contentious farm bills sent to a select committee for a close discussion.

And now the government appears stuck on the Singhu border with Haryana and on to Punjab, and on the UP border, where farmers from several states, with the robust contingents from Punjab becoming the toast of the country, are amassed — several divisions of them, if military terminology be permitted, with women and the elderly participating too.

Five rounds of talks between the 30-odd farmers' unions and the government's representatives — with the Union agriculture minister in the lead — have produced no results. The farmers have given an all-India strike call for tomorrow (December 8). The government has offered another round of talks the following day in which it has promised to come with some "concrete proposals". If the proposed strike is met with repression in the smallest degree, the next meeting is unlikely to take place.

In any case, "concrete proposals" would appear to be wispy. This is because, in effect, the government side has so far reiterated in different ways that it is not going to budge from the stand the BJP took in Parliament. Prime Minister Narendra Modi battling repeatedly for the three agri-laws passed in Parliament has become the stumbling block. In effect he has taken up cudgels for the corporate sector directing through contract farming what crops to grow and in what quantities and then dictating the price through large-scale storage and market operations.

The Indian farmer has thus come to fear losing his agency. This is why even in states — and these are the majority — where the minimum support price is not offered in practice, farmers appear to be rallying to the wider cause being currently articulated. There are few takers for the government's assurance that the MSP regime will not be scrapped when the new laws kick in. Since the PM's public stance has become the limiting factor, the negotiations in Delhi's Vigyan Bhavan have been pretty pointless, really speaking. Perhaps only some assurance from Mr Modi can unlock doors at this stage.

Since farmers have risen in agitation against existing laws, only Parliament has the authority to modify them in a way that will satisfy India's food growers, or to undo them. Calling a special session of Parliament, which the agitating farmers as well as some Opposition parties, including Congress, the main Opposition party, have demanded, to discuss the whole issue afresh, suggests itself. Also remember that the bills were passed in Rajya Sabha by a voice vote, with the deputy chairman not permitting division. This was irregular. There is also substantial legal opinion, which suggests that the subject of agriculture in all its aspects is the exclusive remit of the states and not the Centre in our constitutional scheme. This makes the three laws *ab initio* suspect.

Rajini: A long way to go

His is a mystique that is so overpowering that whatever he does makes news. For, the klieg lights love to shine on him, be it inside or outside film studios. So it was only natural that his announcement on the launch of his own political party in 2021 sent the media corps into a frenzy. They continued to camp outside the gates of his house in Poes Garden, a professional practice that the media in Chennai is accustomed to since the days of the late J. Jayalalithaa, who too lived in that posh locality. Lingering on, hoping to catch up on any nugget of information that may be flung out of the gates, the media seeks to stitch a narrative on Rajinikanth's political future.

Beyond that, in a domain whirring with rumours and speculations, another strategy is scripted based on the secret wishlist of those who really want to see Rajinikanth as the next chief minister of Tamil Nadu. Dwelling in that domain is a set of serious politicians, desperately wanting the 69-year-old actor on the political arena, as their hatchet man. Theirs is an agenda distinctly different from that of the superstar's legions of fans, who blindly believe that their matinee icon can change the world upside down in real terms, too.

But the superstar has seemingly given in to the wishes of those serious politicians and not the devout fans after a quarter century of dilly-dallying. That he had a change of heart soon after BJP honcho Amit Shah came calling to Chennai, despite having conveyed his reluctance to take the political plunge just over a month ago on health grounds, and his surprise appointment of an otherwise obscure BJP "intellectual" as prime coordinator almost hit the nail on who exactly was choreographing his moves.

However, all media narratives, high hopes of fans and clever political manoeuvres notwithstanding, when the voter finally adjudicates on the matter, the mystique could be blown to smithereens.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Kishwar Desai
London Diary



After vax 1st, will 'lucky Boris' swing Brexit deal?

Yes — the vaccine is coming! The vaccine is coming! And I have been told — that people are now heading back to the UK as this may be the first country to get a reliable injection to beat the pandemic.

But the problem is how to keep the virus from spreading during these last few weeks — and once again rules, regulations, etc., are being trotted out. As always these have raised levels of dismay. But a week is a long time in politics — and from being one of the most unpopular prime ministers for imposing restrictions — "lucky" Boris is now shooting up the popularity charts!

Who even remembers that just last Monday Parliament debated legislation about imposing a system of tiers in different parts of the country to replace the lockdown? This was so unpopular even among Tory MPs that Boris Johnson faced the worst backbench revolt of his year long Premiership. Fifty six Tory MPs voted against the government. Had Labour Party and Scottish Nationalists also voted

against, the government would not have been able to impose the tiers.

Yet the very next day came the good news that the Pfizer vaccine was ready and had won its approval from the UK regulators. Someone had the foresight to book forty million of these vaccines for us. So the Prime Minister was pulled up from the depths of defeat to a sense of being the first off the starting line! UK had once again beaten the world!

A list has been quickly drawn up of who has priority for receiving the first round of shots. The vaccines have to be kept at -70 degrees C so the logistics are tricky. They also arrive in packages of 975 so only hospitals can deal with such large numbers. As of now care home patients and frontline workers have top priority. Then comes the turn of the NHS staff followed by the over 80s and then down the age ladder. Fortunately, thanks to the NHS — there are detailed lists of everyone — their addresses and even who has what illness. This will make the task easier.

Fortunately, unlike in India, the VIP system does not apply here. While I am worried about whether my father at 97 will get the vaccine in India (as he should be in the first list), in the UK everyone awaits their turn, and Parliamentarians and other VIPs are not a priority. And even the Queen, at 94, will wait to receive it, when her turn comes. This is always reassuring.

The triumph of UK being first in the world among the "vaxxers" did not go down well with everyone. Tory Ministers could not help boasting that it was thanks to Brexit that UK could be the first, leaving the EU behind — as all of Europe will get it at the same time. The EU regulators then retaliated by casting some doubts on the early bird decision of the UK regulators. Had corners been cut? Then the Americans joined in. Dr Fauci, hitherto the hero for standing up to Donald Trump, said the US regulators would take longer to approve. But he later added that he did not doubt the decisions of the UK regulators.

However, just when things were

beginning to look rosy, the Brexit crisis has resurfaced. A deal has to be signed by end of December. Otherwise UK exits Europe without a deal. If that happens, lorries going from here to Europe across the Channel as well as EU lorries coming to UK will need to fill in many forms and pay tariff on the goods. Some people predict queues of lorries stretching for miles at the ports. Apart from the delay, it will play havoc with social distancing. It may even delay the vaccines arriving from Brussels. So it is a delicate few days of negotiations before the 27 nations of EU unanimously approve of the Brexit deal. Will 'lucky' Boris swing it again?

There is already huge excitement over Christmas. Decorations are up and going by the crowds thronging into Harrods — it seems Christmas has come early. This is the vaccine effect — though Oxford Street lights are a bit dim because several well known stores have gone into administration together. Arcadia, a consortium of well known brands

such as Top Shop, Top Man, D H Evans, Miss Selfridge Burton, Dorothy Perkins, was owned by Sir Philip Green — a billionaire who lives on a yacht in the South of France. He has refused to rescue these shops and 13,000 employees will be made redundant. As a consequence Debenhams which has been on the High Street across the country since 1,778 has also gone bankrupt with 12,000 employees losing their jobs. No "Merry Christmas" just a silent night for them. But this has also meant that it is a shopping bonanza for all those who have been at home for far too long. And so yes, those long queues you see in London are not for the vaccine — but to pick up some great discounts from the shops which are closing down. Ironically — the biggest profits will be made just before the cash registers stop ringing!

Kishwar Desai is an award winning author, and playwright. Her latest book, The Longest Kiss: The Life And Times of Devika Rani, will be published shortly.

Subhani



Biden in Afghanistan



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

In the wake of the September 9, 2001, terror attacks on the US, President George W. Bush greenlighted Operation Enduring Freedom on October 7, 2001. The avowed aim was to rid Afghanistan of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. For 17 months the then American Administration under the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld combine relentlessly pounded that war devastated country from air and land even as a bulk of the Taliban and Al Qaeda leadership escaped to Pakistan and even Iran where they were sheltered by the respective deep states of both these nations. Black sites, waterboarding, rendition and Guantanamo Bay were some of the new words that entered the everyday lexicon of people around the world.

On March 20, 2003, the United States of America invaded Iraq and soon Afghanistan became a sideshow for the Bush Administration. By the time Bush demitted office in January 2008 the number of US troops in Afghanistan were 47,000 in number. They were supplemented by 50,000 additional Nato troops and 70,000 personnel of the Afghan national army. However, the mission had not gone according to plan. Despite a civilian administration under Hamid Karzai assuming office on December 22, 2001, the hold of the Afghan government and the coalition forces on Afghanistan was at best tenuous.

Barack Obama inherited the war. Even as a Democratic presidential nominee Obama had visited Afghanistan on the 19th of July, 2008. He made a distinction between the United States' involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan by terming the latter as a war of necessity. In

February 2009, Obama increased the number of US troops by 21,000 that included 4,000 military trainers. Ten months later, bowing to pressure from the Pentagon and the ground commander in Afghanistan, General McChrystal Obama announced a surge of 30,000 troops in Afghanistan, bringing the total number of US troops deployed to a hundred thousand. Forty thousand Nato troops, additionally, were already serving their tours of duty in that country.

However, the situation did not stabilise and the Taliban kept on gaining ground. While its grip on the country side kept waxing and waning but on the whole its influence increased. On December 28, 2014, the United States and Nato ended their combat missions in Afghanistan and commenced Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) and the Nato-led Resolute Support. The objectives of both these missions were narrowly defined, namely to conduct counterterrorism operations targeting terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and its local ISIS affiliate, as well as focusses on building up local Afghan security forces to help fight the Taliban. However, this recalibration was nothing more than a fig leaf to create the illusion of an honorable exit. The fact being that the Taliban continued to hold sway over much of the countryside. Obama handed over

If Biden sticks to the Doha exit plan to bring US troops down to 2,500 with the Taliban not keeping its end of the bargain it is doubtful whether the Ashraf Ghani government would be able to hold up

All the blood and treasure that the US has expended would go down the tube with the clock being turned back to 2001. The Taliban and its mentor Pakistan will have the last laugh.

the Afghan war to Donald Trump who during his 2016 election campaign had heavily critiqued the continuing US presence in Afghanistan. However on the 21st of August of 2017, in the eighth month of his Presidency he declared at Fort Myer: "I arrived at three fundamental conclusions about America's core interests in Afghanistan. First, our nation must seek an honorable and enduring outcome worthy of the tremendous sacrifices that have been made, especially the sacrifices of lives. The men and women who serve our nation in combat deserve a plan for victory... Second, the consequences of a rapid exit are both predictable and unacceptable. 9/11, the worst terrorist attack in our history, was planned and directed from Afghanistan because that country was ruled by a government that gave comfort and shelter to terrorists. A hasty withdrawal would create a vacuum that terrorists, including ISIS and Al Qaeda, would instantly fill, just as happened before September 11. Third and finally, I concluded that the security threats we face in Afghanistan and the broader region are immense. Today, 20 US-designated foreign terrorist organisations are active in Afghanistan and Pakistan — the highest concentration in any region anywhere in the world." He added another 4,000 troops to the by-now-depleted US presence in Afghanistan that stood at 8,400 post the 2015 winding down.

However Trump realised that things were not working out. A year later, on September 21, 2018, he appointed Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad

as the American Special Representative for Afghanistan reconciliation to try and broker a deal with the Taliban. On February 29, 2020, Khalilzad and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar signed the agreement for bringing peace in Afghanistan in Doha. It was followed up with the intra-Afghan talks between the government in Kabul and the Taliban that began on September 12 to map out a political role for the latter. However, they are bogged down over procedural issues as yet with a huge trust deficit to bridge especially between the women of Afghanistan and the Taliban.

Concurrently, violence levels, rather than decreasing, are only escalating. At least 369 pro-government forces and 212 civilians were killed in Afghanistan in October 2020 marking the highest civilian death toll in a single month since September 2019 with the US also launching air strikes in the Helmand Province and Donald Trump threatening to bring the bulk of the US troops home by Christmas both from Iraq and Afghanistan.

This is the situation that Joe Biden inherits. In a piece in the *Foreign Affairs* magazine in spring, he stated: "It is past time to end the forever wars." However, it is easier said than done for if Biden sticks to the Doha exit plan to bring the number of US troops down to 2,500 with the Taliban not keeping its end of the bargain it is doubtful whether the Ashraf Ghani government would be able to hold up. All the blood and treasure that the US has expended would go down the tube with the clock being turned back to 2001. The Taliban and its mentor Pakistan will have the last laugh while a child born in 1979, who for the last 41 years only knows conflict as the new normal, the last weep.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

PARLIAMENT EDIFICE

The proposed new Parliament building is a sheer waste of public money after the installation of the world's tallest Statue of Unity commemorating the services of Sardar Patel (PM to lay foundation stone for Parliament building on December 10, DC, Dec. 6). This will meet the same fate like capital of AP which is still in limbo as to where it should be, Vizag or Amaravati.

Someswar
Visakhapatnam

VACCINE POLITICS

World health chief expressed his apprehension that the impending Covid vaccine may not reach the poor and less powerful nations due to the scramble to have it first and in the ensuing stampede the less fortunate nations may be deprived of it. While it is a global scenario, we are waiting to churn politics out of it, and of course some are waiting to make money out of it.

D.S.P. Rao
Kakinada

MYSTERY DISEASE

It is shocking that more than 46 youth and children mysteriously fainted (46 youth and children faint in Eluru, DC, Dec. 6). First of all the doctors diagnose the reason for it. The government is supposed to act so that this kind of mysterious incidents do not spread further by arranging medical infrastructure.

P. Govardhana Rao
Kankipadu, Krishna district

Mills to get cotton through permit

NEW DELHI, Dec. 6 On the eve of the meeting here of the Cotton Textile Consultative Board, Government is understood to have decided to introduce permit system under which the Textile Commissioner will issue cotton to mills.

Simultaneously, the Ministry of Foreign Trade is believed to have approved of a proposal to import 480 half a million additional bales of cotton from the United States to tide over the current shortage.

The overall imports for the current year will now total up 13.25 lakh bales. The Ministry's forecast of last cotton crop is yet not firm as no figures of production are available from Tamil Nadu and Haryana.

50 YEARS AGO IN
DECCAN
Chronicle

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	45,079.55	1.00
Nifty 50	13,258.55	0.95
S&P 500*	3,699.12	0.88
Dollar (₹)	73.79	-0.17
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.50	0.42
Euro (₹)	89.79	0.26
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,813	▼136
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	49.21	1.03
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.897	-0.034
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.941	2.172

* As of Friday

IRFC IPO may hit market later this month

Indian Railway Finance Corporation's IPO of about Rs 4,600 crore is likely to hit the market this month. This will be the first IPO by a railway NBFC. "In all probability, it (IPO) will be by the third week but, if the market is not okay then we can go to the first or second week of January also," Amitabh Banerjee, CMD, IRFC, said. The company, the dedicated financing arm of the Railways, will also be going for anchor investment.

Everstone snaps up pharma firm Calibre for ₹1K cr



Singapore-headquartered and India-focused PE firm Everstone Capital has acquired a controlling stake in Calibre, a specialty ingredients player focused on pharma, nutrition and personal care segments, in a reported Rs 1,000-crore deal. Mumbai-headquartered Calibre, founded in 1984 by Ranjit Bhavnani in Gujarat, is a leading specialty ingredients player in the iodine derivatives, persulfates and perchlorates segments.

Germany to spend \$7.3 bn on vaccination

Germany will spend as much as 6 billion euros (\$7.3 bn) on vaccinating its population against the coronavirus. "That's a lot of money," health minister Jens Spahn said. Still, the cost of "not getting it under control is higher," he said. The cost of drugs, vaccination stations and digital tools will likely be between 5 billion euros and 6 billion euros, Spahn said. Germany aims to begin mass vaccinations by the summer.

Traders creating artificial scarcity of plastic: Firms

Some traders are creating artificial shortage of raw material used to make plastic, resulting in a spike in prices, plastic manufacturers and processors alleged. Exploiting the demand for PPE kits, some profiteers have plunged the industry into a crisis, they said. S. Dandekar of APC Polymers said raw materials such as PVC, polyethylene and polypropylene and ABS are being sold in the open market at a substantial premia.



Insurer cuts stake in several firms LIC's holdings rise 40% in H1

FC BUREAU MUMBAI, DEC. 6

Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), India's insurance behemoth and a dominant player in the stock market, saw the value of its top 200 equity holdings jump by 40 per cent in the first half of this fiscal to \$77 billion (Rs 5.7 lakh crore). The figure must have gone up considerably since the end of the September quarter, as the stock market has rallied 13 per cent in the last two months.

LIC's market portfolio saw significant stride in the last two decades when compared with the market capitalisation of the BSE. In the March 2000 quarter, the value of LIC's holdings was just \$4 billion compared with the BSE m-cap of 102 billion. But in March 2010, LIC's portfolio value jumped \$59 billion while the BSE m-cap zoomed to \$1.14 trillion. According to a Kotak Institutional Securities report, when the BSE m-cap peaked to \$1.8 trillion in March 2019, LIC owned \$81 billion of that.

In March 2020, when the markets were at a low, having lost over 35 per cent to the pandemic scare, the value of LIC's equity holdings plunged to \$55 billion—the lowest in six years. However, its holding rose by \$22 billion, or 40 per cent, to \$77 billion during April-September 2020. LIC is said to have pumped Rs 55,000 crore into the equity market since April against Rs 32,800 crore in the same



FDI INFLOWS CROSS \$500 BN

New Delhi, Dec. 6: Foreign direct investment inflows into Indian equities crossed the \$500-billion milestone during the April-September 2020 period, booting India's credentials as a safe investment destination. According to DPIIT data, the inflows during H1 stood at \$500.12 billion. About 29 per cent of the FDI came through Mauritius and 21 per cent via Singapore. — PTI

period a year ago. During July-September, LIC raised its holdings in Yes Bank to 5 per cent from 1.6 per cent (in Q1), in HDFC AMC to 2.8 per cent from zero Q1 and in Mahanagar Gas to 4.2 per cent from 1.6 per cent. It picked up 2.6 per cent stake in Ramco Cement and 2.3 per cent stake in Alkem Laboratories from nil. LIC

DECLARATIONS UNDER 'VIVAD SE VISHWAS' SCHEME CAN BE REVISED

New Delhi, Dec. 6: Entities filing declaration under the direct tax dispute resolution scheme 'Vivad Se Vishwas' can revise them till the time tax authorities issue certificate mentioning details of tax arrear and the amount payable, the Income Tax Department has said.

Issuing a set of FAQs on 'Vivad Se Vishwas' scheme, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) also said the scheme cannot be availed of in a case where proceedings are pending before Income Tax Settlement Commission (ITSC) or where writ has been filed against the order of ITSC. The CBDT also clarified that in a case where Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP) resolution is pending or the assessee has not accepted MAP decision, the related appeal shall be eligible under 'Vivad se Vishwas'. "In such case, the declarant will be required to withdraw both MAP application and appeal," it added. — PTI

Foreign funds colonising start-ups: Naukri founder

New Delhi, Dec. 6: In perhaps the first red flag by a significant start-up curator against 'flipping', Naukri.com founder Sanjeev Bikhchandani said foreign funds are the new East India Company that are colonising successful start-ups in India by transferring ownership overseas to skip Indian regulations and taxes.

The internet entrepreneur says an estimated Rs 17 lakh crore of market cap has been transferred abroad after young Indian start-ups were forced to shift their company domicile overseas by foreign investors promising them growth funds. "Shades of the East India Company-type of situation here—Indian market, Indian customers, Indian developers, Indian workforce. However, 100 per cent foreign ownership, foreign investors, IP and data transferred overseas. Transfer pricing issues foggy," he tweeted. "Basically institutionalised transfer of wealth away from India while living off the Indian market and Indian labour somewhat like the days of the Company rule." Profits from such "global exploitation" of intellectual property (IP) created in India by Indians retained overseas. "Tax to Indian govt on such profits??? Indian investors shut out," he tweeted. Reached for comments on his tweets, Bikhchandani, whose listed firm Info Edge (India) owns job search portal naukri.com, matrimony site jeevasathi.com and real estate search engine 99acres.com, said flipping is externalising Indian companies. "You take an Indian start-up and transfer own-



ership of all its shares to an overseas company that has been usually freshly floated just for this purpose. So now the Indian company becomes a 100 per cent subsidiary of the overseas entity," he said. All shareholders will own shares in that overseas company, including the founders, employees and current and past investors. This is accompanied by transfer of all IP and data hitherto owned by the Indian company. "All IP developed and all data captured by the Indian entity in the future will also belong to the overseas entity," he said. "This overseas company is substantially outside of Indian jurisdiction and the influence of Indian regulators." He the government must insist that data and the IP belong to the Indian subsidiary. Bikhchandani, whose company also owns stakes in Zomato and policybazaar.com, said if this flipping option was not there, most would invest in Indian start-ups. — PTI

THERMAL PLANTS MAY GET TO SELL POWER BEYOND AGREED PERIOD

SUDARSHAN VARADHAN BANGALURU, DEC. 6

India's power ministry proposes letting coal-fired power plants keep selling power after completing their 25-year agreements with buyers, a letter seen by Reuters shows, despite national promises to close old plants to curb pollution.

The proposal, if approved, would help old coal plants earn additional revenue, increase liquidity in short-term power markets and help distribution companies in states access cheaper power, the ministry said in the draft proposal dated Friday.

"It is in the consumer interest to keep the tariff of electricity as low as possible," says the letter sent to states and utilities such as NTPC Ltd.

Such a move would enable federal-run electricity generators such as NTPC "to sell power in any mode" after distribution companies exit an agreement upon the completion of the tenure, the ministry said.

Power minister R.K. Singh and finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman have previously said they plan to shut old coal-fired power plants. The environment ministry has also pushed for shutting down coal plants, which account for 80 per cent of India's industrial pollution, if they do not comply with green laws.

A final decision on the proposal is not imminent. — Reuters

Angola stops diamond sales to boost local mfg

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 6

Angola, the third largest producer of diamonds in Africa, plans to stop direct sales of rough diamonds to India. It is putting pressure on the Indian polishing industry to invest in that country in order to create a diamond value chain locally.

Angola wants to increase diamond production from about 9 million carats per year to 15 million carats by 2022 as part of its efforts to cut its over dependence on oil exports and diversify its export basket. Angola has only explored 40 per cent of its diamond-rich territory within the country. As it is facing difficulties in attracting foreign investment, Angola wants Indian polishing companies to invest in the country.

"Angola is in the process of consolidating reforms for the diamond sector and we are working on setting up a bourse and selling rough locally through tenders. We do not plan to send rough directly to India, instead we would like Indian companies to manufacture diamonds locally," Eng. Fernando Amaral of Sodiam said. Gems and Jewelry Export Promotion Council in a recent meeting, Sodiam is the state-owned diamond trading company of Angola.

"Diamonds are an important source of avenue for Angola and its people, and with the new diamond policy modalities



ties we would like to sell through sights, tenders and spots. The sight contracts will be only for two years. Angola is hoping to increase diamond production from about 9 million carat per year to 15 million carat by 2022. We invite Indian companies to invest in Angola and cut and polish diamonds locally," he added.

"The Angolan state announced a diamond policy focused on marketing and trading of rough that offers incentives for those who invest in diamond mining in the country. We believe India can play a key role here," said Jose Carlos Ferreira de Sousa of Endiama, an Angolan national company dedicated to the prospecting, exploration and marketing of diamonds.

Currently, 95 per cent of the rough diamonds produced by Angola comes to India either through Belgium, Dubai or directly for polishing. India's imports of rough diamonds from Angola amounted to just \$6.01

million in FY20. According to Indian diamond industry, stoppage of direct sales of roughs will not affect Indian industry. "Angola is trying to develop its value chain. It wants Indian companies to invest in that country. However, it is not feasible. Only two companies—KGG Group and Kapu Gems—have set up manufacturing facilities in Angola. Even if they do not sell roughs directly, it is not going to affect us," said Vipul Shah, vice chairman, GJEPC.

In fact, Indian industry has a dominating presence in the global diamond value chain, which was evident during the lock-down times. When the industry had decided to stop imports of roughs in order to clear the inventories, mining companies had faced a tough time. The price of rough diamonds across categories had fallen by 20 to 25 per cent during the April-June period. With the resumption of imports, prices have returned to earlier levels.

Women's representation takes back seat on boards

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 6

Women's representation on corporate boards in 2020 saw a noticeable slowdown. The rate of increase is just 0.6 percentage points among the top global listed companies tracked by Morgan Stanley Corporate International (MSCI) since 2009.

"Emerging research has suggested that women are being more impacted by the economic fallout caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has the potential to undo years of progress," the global investment research firm said.

"If the trend over the past four years continues it may take until 2029 for women to comprise 30 per cent of corporate boards, and until 2045 to reach 50 per cent," MSCI said.

"In 2020, we saw a noticeable slowdown in the rate of increase for female representation on boards, with a gain of only 0.6 percentage points among constituents of the MSCI ACWI Index, after a jump of 2.1 percentage points last year," MSCI said.

MSCI ACWI is a stock index that tracks about 3,000 stocks in 49 developed and emerging market countries.

In the case of India, of the 86 companies in the MSCI ACWI Index five companies had no women on their boards.

Female representation on boards in CEO/CFO positions in India was 3.5 per cent compared to 16.6 per cent director seats held by women.

"Though fewer new female directors were added to boards this year than in the past, the number of all-male boards globally continued to decline. Only 17 per cent of constituents of the MSCI ACWI Index have all-male boards in 2020, down from 18.6 per cent last year," MSCI said.

There were 23 companies in the index with majority-female boards in 2020, up by just one from 2019, but still representing 0.8 per cent of companies.

Much of the change came in emerging markets, where the percentage of all-male boards dropped from 34.3 per cent in 2019 to 31.0 per cent in 2020.

PANDEMIC INCREASES TECH ADOPTION BY LOGISTICS COMPANIES



SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 6

The pandemic has accelerated adoption of new-age technology by the logistics and warehousing sector.

New-age tech-driven service providers form a small segment of the industry. From a smaller base they have been growing faster. The pandemic has accelerated the process with more logistics companies adopting new-age technologies.

With social distancing being the norm, logistics firms are reducing human interface. Companies in the last-mile segment are offering no-contact delivery options, according to a report by Dun and Bradstreet.

In order to ensure safe and efficient movement of goods, logistics providers are automating processes. Automation in cargo handling equipment is set to increase.

An increase has been visible in the usage of cloud platforms and SaaS solutions to enable organisations to adopt digital solutions without increasing their capex. They also have been increasingly using intelligent supply chain technologies, big data and analytics and machine learning to track and optimise supply chain operations.

Going ahead, robotics process automation (RPA), artificial intelligence (AI) and business intelligence will be adopted in various supply chain processes, including warehousing operations. Drones and use of smart locker solutions for contactless pick-ups is being adopted. Robotics, drones and autonomous vehicles will reduce dependence on labour.

According to Icr, e-commerce prefers technology-driven logistic companies. — PTI

SILVERY | GLITTER Platinum has nearly doubled from a mid-March low to \$1,060/Oz

Platinum back in vogue as gold acts pricey

ANNIE LEE, YULIYA FEDORINOVA & EDDIE SPENCE DEC. 6

Even before the release of the next James Bond film, *No Time to Die*, Swiss watchmaker Omega is offering a platinum-gold version of the Seamaster Diver 300M that actor Daniel Craig wears when playing 007.

The 51,700 Swiss franc (\$57,000) time piece—made 95 per cent from platinum—underlines a renaissance in demand for the silvery-white metal. Omega isn't the only luxury goods maker to note the trend, with interest in high-end watches helping to almost double platinum-jewellery demand in Europe in the third quar-

ter from the preceding three months.

That's helping platinum to make a comeback, after languishing behind gold and palladium for most of the year: its relative value is part of its appeal. Platinum posted its biggest monthly gain in November since 2008 amid a revival in investor buying. Jewellery purchases are being driven by demand in China, where wealthy consumers are starting to make emotional purchases with cash hoarded during the pandemic.

"We have observed that Covid has resulted in a re-evaluation of love gifting," said Trevor Raymond, director of research at the World Platinum Investment



Council. "Platinum has been very strongly associated with love gifting, globally and in China." The WPIEC expects China's platinum jewellery consumption to rise by 13 per cent next year, the first increase since 2013 and climbing above sales both this year and in

2019. The widening price differential with gold over most of this year has also spurred buying.

"Platinum is more competitive," said Michael Xue, chairman of Shenzhen Bofook Jewellery Co., a Chinese jewellery maker that specialises in working with the metal. "Gold prices have increased way too much since the pandemic."

Bofook said its platinum jewellery sales jumped 20 per cent in the third quarter from a year earlier.

Hong Kong-based Luk Fook Holdings International Ltd launched a new men's collection in June and is offering new products to meet expanding demand in the platinum market, said Nancy Wong, deputy chief execu-

tive officer of the jewellery chain.

Many Chinese jewellery makers built up platinum stocks in March when prices slumped, recalling the benefit from similar purchases during the global financial crisis, according to the WPIEC.

The association expects platinum markets to post a record deficit this year as disruptions to key producers in South Africa outstrip the Covid impact on automaker demand.

Now prices are rising too. Platinum has almost doubled from a mid-March low, with a 25 per cent surge since early November. But at \$1,060 an ounce, it's still much less pricey than gold, which was trading above \$1,800. — Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES



Mick Schumacher

Schumacher's son wins F2 title

Sakhir, Bahrain: Mick Schumacher, the Formula One-bound son of seven-time world champion Michael Schumacher, clinched the Formula Two drivers' title on Sunday.

Despite finishing 18th in the final race of the season at the Bahrain International Circuit, ahead of Sunday's later Sakhr Grand Prix, he took the title by 14 points ahead of nearest rival Briton Callum Iott, who finished 10th.

Jehan Daruvala won the race, taking his first F2 victory after Schumacher had flat-spotted a tyre on the first lap. Schumacher ended the season on 215 points and Iott on 201. "I don't really understand I am champion yet. It would sound a lot better if we did a good race today. Nevertheless, people will forget this race and remember the good times this year," he said. — *AFP*

Mbappe scores 100th goal for PSG

Paris: Kylian Mbappe scored his 100th goal for Paris Saint-Germain after making a late appearance as a substitute for the Ligue 1 leaders in Saturday's 3-1 victory at in-form Montpellier.

With Neymar preserved ahead of next week's Champions League clash against Istanbul Basaksehir and Mbappe rested from the start, Colin Dagba's first career goal gave PSG the lead on 33 minutes. English forward Stephy Mavididi levelled before half-time. Moise Kean restored the advantage for PSG on 77 minutes after Rafinha triggered a quick counter, hitting a magnificent solo goal. The Italy international was then replaced by Mbappe, who wrapped up the victory in stoppage time as he brought up his century of goals in his 137th game for PSG, tapping in a Layvin Kurzawa cross. "I've been wanting to score for a few matches, it's a bit of a release," Mbappe told Canal Plus. — *AFP*

Hyd Handball body elected

Hyderabad: Chamala Uday Chander Reddy and S. R. Sanjeev Kumar have been elected president and general secretary respectively of the Hyderabad District Handball Association, elections to which were held following the General Body Meeting at the Akashara International School in LB Nagar, Hyderabad, on Sunday. The body was elected unanimously, after adopting a 33 per cent reservation for women, a first for the Association.

THE PANEL

■ **President:** Chamala Uday Chander Reddy. **Vice presidents:** K. Narsimha, Ch Franklin, Vamshi Mohan Reddy, Md Rafiq Pasha. **General Secretary:** S. R. Sanjeev Kumar. **Joint secretaries:** K. Sudhakar, S. Silva Kumar, G. Srinivas Reddy, Y. Gamana. **Treasurer:** K. M. Ratnakar. **Executive Committee members:** Ch Shyam Rao, D. Ganesh, Kumudini Devi, A. Akhila Reddy, A. Randheer Kumar, Ramya Krishna, Ramakanth. ■ **Chief Patron:** Md Maqsood. **Patrons:** Bishop Prakash, S. Sudharshan Reddy, B. Vijay Bhaskar Reddy. **Chairman:** Kishore. **Chairman Referees Board:** P. Jagan Mohan Goud. **Convener Referees Board:** M. Sudhakar. **Chairman Technical Committee:** Alexander Francis. **Chairman Technical Development:** P. Venkatram. **Chairman Selection Committee:** M. Ravi Kumar.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Lanka Premier League: Colombo vs Galle from 3 pm; Jaffna vs Dambulla from 7.30 pm on Sony SIX, HD

WWE

Raw: Bouts from 6.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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SHORT AND SWEET

Dhawan, Pandya seal T20 series for India with a game to spare

Sydney, Dec. 6: India sealed the T20 International series against Australia with a game to spare after a swashbuckling Hardik Pandya finished what Shikhar Dhawan had set out to achieve with a scintillating 36-ball 52 in the second and penultimate match here on Sunday.

The visitors thus avenged their 1-2 ODI series loss, chasing down a challenging 195-run target set by the home side. They won the opener in Canberra by 11 runs on Friday.

Needing 25 of the final 12 balls after fetching 12 in the 18th over, Pandya brought the equation down to 14 in the last over with two fours. The all-rounder then hit two sixes to seal the match in India's favour.

Pandya remained unconquered on 42 off 22 balls.

India were off to a sedate start with no boundaries coming in the first two overs. But fours and sixes rained from the willows of Dhawan (52) and K.L. Rahul (30) once the duo got their eye in.

Dhawan got himself a couple of boundaries and a six off Glenn Maxwell as India scored 34 runs in two overs to gain the momentum they were looking for. Dhawan, despite coming down the wicket early, managed to pull Sean Abbott over deep mid-wicket for another six.

Australia got their first breakthrough when Rahul gave a simple catch to Mitchell Swepson at deep point. But India had still managed a strong start, reaching 60/1 at the end of the Powerplay.

Having played some fine shots, Dhawan topped an attempted slog sweep off leg-spinner Adam Zampa to give Australia their second wicket.

Sanju Samson got out after a 10-ball 15 but it



Captain Virat Kohli hugs teammate Hardik Pandya to celebrate India's victory in the second T20 international against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday. India won by six wickets. — *AP*

was debutant Daniel Sams, who gave the hosts their biggest breakthrough when he had Virat Kohli caught behind for a well-made 24-ball 40. Earlier, stand-in skipper Matthew Wade led from the front with a half century and powered hosts to a strong total after a fairly commanding performance with the bat. — *PTI*

SCORECARD

Australia: Matthew Wade run out (Kohli/Rahul) 58, D Arcy Short c Shreyas Iyer b T. Natarajan 9, Steven Smith c Hardik Pandya b Chahal 46, Glenn Maxwell c Washington Sundar b Thakur 22, Moises Henriques c Rahul b T. Natarajan 26, Marcus Stoinis (not out) 16, Daniel Sams (not out) 8. Extras (lb-1, w-8) 9. **Total (for 5 wkts, in 20 overs) 194.** **FoW:** 1-47, 2-75, 3-120, 4-168, 5-171. **Bowling:** Deepak Chahar 4-0-48-0, Washington Sundar 4-0-35-0, Shardul Thakur 4-0-39-1, T Natarajan 4-0-20-2, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-51-1.

India: K. L. Rahul c Swepson b Andrew Tye 30, Shikhar Dhawan c Swepson b Zampa 52, Virat Kohli c Wade b Daniel Sams 40, Sanju Samson c Steven Smith b Swepson 15, Hardik Pandya (not out) 42, Shreyas Iyer (not out) 12. Extra (lb-1, w-2, nb-1) 4. **Total (for 4 wkts, in 19.4 overs) 195.** **FoW:** 1-56, 2-95, 3-120, 4-149.

Bowling: Daniel Sams 3.4-0-41-1, Sean Abbott 2-0-17-0, Andrew Tye 4-0-47-1, Glenn Maxwell 1-0-19-0, Mitchell Swepson 4-0-25-1, Moises Henriques 1-0-9-0, Adam Zampa 4-0-36-1.

Kohli hails Pandya's raw talent

Sydney, Dec. 6: India captain Virat Kohli on Sunday said winning the T20 series against Australia without established players like Rohit Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah meant a great deal to him and lavished praise on the marauding Hardik Pandya's "raw talent".

Pandya struck an unbeaten 22-ball 42 to take India home with six wickets in hands in the second T20 International and help the visitors take a 2-0 unassailable lead in the three-match rubber here.

"Yeah meant a great deal. We've played as a team in T20 cricket. The fact that we don't have Rohit and Bumrah, our established white ball players, in and still doing well makes me happy and

CHAHAL EQUALS BUMRAH'S RECORD

■ Yuzvendra Chahal equalled Jasprit Bumrah's Indian record of most wickets in Twenty-20 Internationals by dismissing Steven Smith on Sunday.

■ It was leg-break googly bowler's 59th wicket at an average of 23.98 in 44th innings of as many matches. Bumrah also claimed same number of wickets in at an average of 20.25 in 49 innings of 50 matches.

■ Only three bowlers completed a half century of wickets in Twenty20 for India.

■ R. Ashwin the third one who claimed 52 wickets at an average of 22.94 in 46 innings of as many matches.

— *S. PERVEZ QAISSER*

I am very proud of this team," Kohli said after the win.

While Rohit has missed the series because of a hamstring injury he suffered during this year's

IPL, Bumrah has been rested from the T20 matches keeping in mind the upcoming four-Test series against Australia.

The India skipper believes that with his raw

talent, Pandya, who earned the man-of-the-match award for his batting, can become a bankable player for the team in years to come.

"The reason for him (Hardik) coming into the team in 2016 was pure ability. He has raw talent. And now he realises that this is his time, the next 4-5 years, to be that bankable player that can win you games from anywhere. His plans are right and I'm glad to see that," Kohli said.

"He now realises that this is the time to establish in that (finishing) role and play match-winning knocks for us. He plays with all his heart and he certainly got that competitive nature about him and also has the skill to execute that at the highest level." — *PTI*

STARC TO MISS FINAL T20 GAME AGAINST INDIA

Sydney, Dec. 6: Australian pacer Mitchell Starc has pulled out of the remainder of the T20 series against India due to an illness in his family.

The 30-year-old pacer had missed the third ODI due to back and rib niggles but returned to claim two wickets in the 11-run loss in the first T20I in Canberra on Friday.

He had arrived in Sydney on Saturday but soon left the team bubble after learning about a family illness.

"There is nothing in the world more important than family and in this case Mitch is no exception," said Australia head coach Justin Langer said in a statement.

"We will give Mitch all the time he needs." — *PTI*

Kiwis blow Windies away

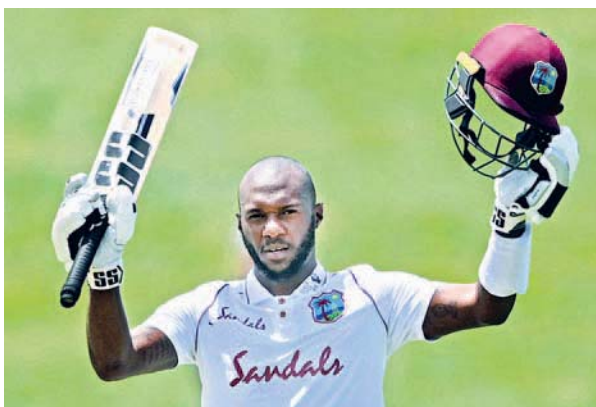
Hamilton (New Zealand), Dec. 6: New Zealand claimed the first Test against the West Indies by a comprehensive innings and 134 runs after ending a battling rearguard century by Jermaine Blackwood in Hamilton on Sunday.

The West Indies were all out in the first session on day four for 247 after only making 138 in their first innings in reply to New Zealand's 519 for seven.

Blackwood was the second to last wicket to fall for 104 after a 155-run stand with Alzarri Joseph who made 86.

The victory was set up over the first two days when New Zealand captain Kane Williamson, the man of the match, crafted a majestic 251 and the West Indies were always on the back foot from there.

The tourists went into the fourth day at 196 for six with Blackwood and Joseph advancing the total



West Indies' Jermaine Blackwood celebrates his century against New Zealand on Day Four of their first Test in Hamilton, New Zealand, on Sunday. — *AP*

to 244 before Kyle Jamieson and Neil Wagner combined to take the final three wickets in the space of 10 deliveries.

Wicketkeeper Shane Dowrich, who injured a hand on the first day, did not bat in either innings. New Zealand had a

chance for a key breakthrough early in the day when Blackwood, on 89, edged a ball straight to Ross Taylor.

Brief Scores: West Indies 138 & 247 (Blackwood 104, Joseph 86, Wagner 4-66, Jamieson 2-42) lost to New Zealand 519 for 7 decl.

Man Utd climb to fourth spot

London, Dec. 6: Manchester United roared back to beat West Ham 3-1 on Saturday, while Chelsea moved top of the Premier League by the same score-line over Leeds as fans returned to the English top-flight for the first time in nine months.

United fell behind at the London Stadium, but for the fifth consecutive away league game came back to win as a three-goal blitz from Paul Pogba, Mason Greenwood and Marcus Rashford turned the tables in a 13-minute spell after half-time.

United, who have won nine successive league games on the road, are now fourth in the table, one point ahead of Manchester City, who earlier cruised past Fulham 2-0.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer started with Bruno Fernandes and Rashford on the bench in an attempt to keep two of his star men fresh for Tuesday's crucial Champions League trip to RB Leipzig.

But they were needed to inspire a second-half turnaround after Tomas Soucek's goal seven minutes before half-time gave West Ham a deserved lead at the break.

Cheered on by 2,000 fans in their cavernous 60,000-seat stadium, the Hammers should have been further ahead but squandered their chances.

Pogba started the fight-back in the 65th minute

THE RESULTS

West Ham 1
(Soucek 38)
Manchester United 3
(Pogba 65, Greenwood 68, Rashford 78)

Manchester City 2
(Sterling 5, De Bruyne 26-pen)
Fulham 0

Chelsea 3
(Giroud 27, Zouma 61, Pulisic 90+3)
Leeds 1
(Bamford 4)

Burnley 1
(Brady 3)
Everton 1
(Calvert-Lewin 45+3)

with a superb strike from distance and minutes later United were ahead, Greenwood turning and firing home in the area.

CHELSEA GO ATOP

Chelsea also came from a goal down to win 3-1 as fans made a return to Stamford Bridge for the first time since March.

Patrick Bamford gave Leeds a shock early lead as he took advantage of hesitation in the Chelsea defence to round Edouard Mendy and slot home his eighth goal of the season.

However, Frank Lampard's men are now unbeaten in 16 matches in all competitions.

— *AFP*



Jatin Dev collects the Sub-Junior boys' winner's trophy at the Telangana State Table Tennis Championship at St Paul's High School in Hyderguda, Hyderabad, on Sunday.

Jatin and Palak power to titles

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 6

Jatin Dev and G. Palak won the Sub-Junior boys and girls titles respectively at the 7th Telangana State District & State Table Tennis Championship held at St Paul's High School in Hyderguda, Hyderabad, on Sunday.

Jatin of St Paul's High School and Palak of Gujarati Seva Mandal came up with impressive performances in the Superleague to wrest the trophies.

Jatin defeated Akshay of AWA 11-5, 11-2, 11-3; pinned schoolmate Pratham Dev 7-11, 11-5, 11-3, 11-5 and rapped Rishab Singh of Victory Playground 11-3, 11-3, 11-5 to keep a clean slate in the Superleague and win the State championship for the fourth consecutive year — he won the Cadets category for the last three years.

Palak powered past Pragyansha Patra of VPG 11-4, 11-6, 11-8; defeated P. Jalani 7-11, 11-6, 11-7, 11-5; beat J. Gouri 11-8, 11-7, 11-6;



G. Palak

nailed Nikitha 11-4, 11-6, 13-15, 11-1 before thumping A. Satya 11-4, 11-7, 11-4 in the Superleague.

P. Mercy (HVS), J. Gouri (MLR) and Pragyansha Patra (VPG) finished second, third and fourth in the girls category while Shourya Raj Saxena (AVSC), G. Vivek Sai (HVS) and Rishab Singh (VPG) took the second, third and fourth spots among boys.

THE RESULTS

Sub-Junior Boys Superleague

■ Jatin Dev (SPHS) bt Akshay (AWA) 11-5, 11-2, 11-3; bt Pratham Dev (SPHS) 7-11, 11-5, 11-3, 11-5; bt Rishab Singh (VPG) 11-3, 11-3, 11-5. ■ Shourya Raj Saxena (AVSC) bt G. Vivek Sai (HVS) 9-11, 11-6, 11-7, 11-6; bt Pratham Dev (SPHS) 6-11, 11-3, 11-4, 11-6. ■ Vivek Sai (HVS) bt Pratham Dev (SPHS) 11-1, 7-11, 11-3, 5-11, 11-9; bt K. Ishanth (AWA) 11-13, 12-10, 11-9, 11-7. ■ Rishab Singh (VPG) bt Akshay (AWA) 9-11, 8-11, 11-4, 11-6, 11-3; bt Dhruv Sagor (GSM) 11-9, 11-5, 6-11, 8-11, 11-5. ■ Dhruv Sagor (GSM) bt Pratham Dev (SPHS) 11-2, 11-8, 11-4; K. Ishanth (AWA) 11-6, 11-7, 11-4; Pratham Dev (SPHS) bt Akshay (GSM) 11-4, 11-4, 11-3; Akshay (AWA) bt Shourya Raj (AVSC) 9-11, 4-11, 11-9, 11-6, 11-9.

Sub-Junior Girls Superleague

■ G. Palak (GSM) bt Pragyansha Patra (VPG) 11-4, 11-6, 11-8; bt P. Jalani (VPG) 7-11, 11-6, 11-7, 11-5; bt J. Gouri (MLR) 11-8, 11-7, 11-4. ■ Nikitha (VPG) 11-4, 11-6, 13-15, 11-1; bt A. Satya (GSM) 11-4, 11-7, 11-4. ■ P. Mercy (HVS) bt A. Satya (GSM) 11-5, 11-8, 11-9; bt Ananya Donekal (GSM) 11-8, 11-5, 11-7; bt P. Jalani (VPG) 11-5, 11-6, 11-7. ■ J. Gouri (MLR) bt Mercy (HVS) 11-13, 6-11, 17-15, 15-13, 13-11; bt Pragyansha (VPG) 11-7, 11-9, 8-11, 11-6. ■ Pragyansha Patra (VPG) bt A. Satya (GSM) 11-8, 11-9, 12-10; bt Ananya (GSM) 11-6, 11-3, 11-7. ■ Ananya Donekal (GSM) bt G. Palak (GSM) 11-9, 11-6, 12-10; Nikitha (VPG) bt Pragyansha (VPG) 11-6, 11-5, 11-6; P. Jalani (VPG) bt J. Gouri (MLR) 11-8, 7-11, 6-11, 7-11, 16-14; A. Satya (GSM) bt Jalani (VPG) 11-7, 11-8, 11-9.