

SHORT TAKES

AID UNDER AMMA
VODI PHASE-II
ON JAN. 9DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 12

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to give away financial assistance in phase-II under Amma Vodi scheme for the academic year 2020-21 on January 9, 2021.

Minister for education Adimulapu Suresh told media persons here on Monday that they had already taken up the registration of the names of parents and guardians of the eligible students to get financial assistance under the scheme and added that the list of eligible students to be displayed at ward/village secretariats on December 16.

The minister said that as the CM noted that no student should be deprived of the opportunity to pursue education due to poverty, the state government was implementing the scheme for the poor students pursuing first standard to intermediate education in government schools and colleges, aided and unaided institutions and also in government Gurukula schools to get annual financial assistance of ₹15,000 per head.

CM UNHAPPY
BILLS NOT
CLEARED

FROM PAGE 1

The CM expressed concern that project bills pertaining to year 2018 were still pending. At this, officials informed him that they need some funds as advance for getting funds from the Centre. Jagan Mohan Reddy assured that he will make all efforts to ensure no dues from the Centre are pending.

Later, officials informed the Chief Minister a committee comprising officials from Water Resources, Polavaram Project Authority and CWC will be set up to resolve any issues arising in models, designs or construction of the dam.

OFFICIALS TO
VISIT PROPERTY,
FIX BOUNDARIES

FROM PAGE 1

A team of officials comprising village secretary, revenue officer and village surveyor will visit the property and fix boundaries based on the village map and collect data. Later, based on government guidelines, the borders of the property would be marked and photographed. It is likely to take four months to complete land resurvey in each village.

At the time of land resurvey, proper owner or anyone authorised by him or her would have to be present with all requisite details of the property.

Earlier, the state government had carried out land resurvey on an experimental basis at Thakkellapadu of Jaggaiahpetta mandal in Krishna district for properties located in 152 survey numbers in 180 subdivisions.

MAOISTS KILL
ADIVASI IN VIZAG
AGENCYDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 14

The outlawed CPI (Maoist) allegedly killed a tribal farmer in Vakapalli village in G Madugula mandal in Visakha agency, after branding him as a police informer. The incident reportedly happened just before midnight on Sunday.

The deceased has been identified as one Gemmili Krishna Rao. Local reports said that around 20 to 30 Maoist cadres picked up the deceased from his home and hacked him to death at a place close to the village. The Maoists also left a letter at the spot, wherein they branded him as police informer.

Claiming responsibility, the Maoists in the letter stated that Krishna Rao was killed as he was actively playing a role in all the community policing initiatives taken up by the district police in the agency area. They further mentioned in the letter that the deceased was forcing the tribal youth to take part in the 'Jana Maitri' programme launched by the police and also asking them to take part in the volleyball tournaments being conducted by the police for the tribal youth.

The Maoists also stated that Krishna Rao had given shelter to a police informer, who had allegedly played a role in the aiding the police.



Candidates of Group-1 examination coming out of the examination centre after writing the test at One Town in Vijayawada on Monday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

BJP to fight for Amaravati
as only capital: Veerraju

We will develop AP across spheres if voted to power in '24

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 14

State BJP president Somu Veerraju assured the agitating farmers that his party would fight for the continuation of Amravati as the capital city.

Lauding the efforts of the farmers at a meeting organised by small and medium farmers in Thullur on Monday, he said that his party was committed to establishing the capital in Amravati and there was no second thoughts over it. He demanded the government to issue pattas to 64,000 farmers and develop the remaining 9,000 acres in the capital region.

Stating that BJP would build its party office in Vijayawada, Mr Veerraju said Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had



● Lauding the efforts of the farmers at a meeting organised by small and medium farmers in Thullur on Monday, he said that his party was committed to establishing the capital in Amravati and there was no second thoughts over it.

● He demanded the government to issue pattas to 64,000 farmers and develop the remaining 9,000 acres in the capital region.

promised to build the capital in Amravati soon after assuming power but later changed his mind and announced three capitals.

He said the previous government claimed that it had spent around ₹72,000 crore on the capital. Of this, the Union Government had sanctioned ₹2,500 crore and ₹800 crore for Amravati Smart city project and a ₹4,000 crore loan was given by Hudco.

"The TD wants that the Prime Minister should intervene in the capital issue but did not mention where he should intervene," Mr Veerraju said. He said even if the capital is proposed to be shifted, the Centre has been going ahead with its projects.

He said AIIMS was being built at a cost of ₹1,800 crore and many more like agriculture university and other institutions

were coming up. The Centre helped in the construction of Kanakadurga flyover, two flyovers at Benz circle, defense establishment at Avanigadda and Nimmaluru, six-lane road to Machilipatnam while many more projects are in the pipeline, he said.

"We will develop the state across spheres if BJP is voted to power in AP in 2024," Mr Veerraju said.

Likely recognition of tribal
villages creates tension in EGDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 14

A view is gaining ground that nearly 50 villages in East Godavari district should be treated as tribal villages and be included in the agency area. This stems from the fact that there is a mix of tribal and non-tribal population in these villages, and they are adjacent to the agency area. The tribal people in the villages want them included in the agency in order to be entitled to all the corresponding benefits.

But, there is a resistance from non-tribal farmers and non-tribal people in general, as their properties will come under the 1/70 Act. They cannot sell their properties or purchase lands. Therefore, they are opposing the move and a debate is rising in the villages whether they should be an agency or not.

According to sources, though tribes for a majority of the population, most of the properties are in the hands of non-tribal people, who are not willing to give up their rights on those lands.

Officials conducted grama sabhas and resolved not to merge the villages under agency. But

● The tribals in the villages want them included in the agency in order to be entitled to all the corresponding benefits

● There is a resistance from non-tribal farmers and non-tribal people

many tribal unions strongly condemned it and they said that some political leaders are influencing officials and passed resolutions without conducting grama sabhas.

In some villages, they alleged that officials told the people that they would get more schemes and took their signatures.

"We are not accepting the resolutions as it has been unilateral. The grama sabhas should be conducted again and opinions of the people should be taken," said Fifth Schedule Sadhana Committee member L. Subba Rao.

He said that tribals in these villages are demanding that the villages be declared as scheduled areas and all tribal rights be extended to them. Another member of the committee K. Rajendra said that Samatha Organization has been demanding that

Pedamallapuram be declared as 'girijan mandal' since 1985.

The BJP has lent its support and toured the villages. The party's Kakinada Parliament district president C. Ramkumar said that they would fight for the rights of the people. BJP State General Secretary Lokula Gandhi submitted a representation to the Superintendent of Police, seeking to focus on law and order as there a possibility of a showdown between tribal and non-tribals.

However, Prathipadu MLA Parvatha Purnachandra Prasad said that in some villages tribals are in majority, but lands belong to non-tribal people, who are worried about losing their rights under 1/70 Act, if these villages are merged with agency area.

He said that he would respect both sections of people. But, if the government takes a decision, nobody can oppose it.

Meanwhile, according to sources, officials are likely to conduct another grama sabha in the sub-plan areas. It is said that if the 1/70 Act is not applicable, even non-tribal farmers also may accept the merger.

SIT constituted by YSRC
govt focussed on Sec. 22ADC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 14

The second phase of Special Investigation Team (SIT), constituted by the YSRC government mainly focussed on the amended Section of the 22(A) Registration Act, which prohibited registration of land and had become a bane for the people. Due to lack of subdivision of land, it was not possible to identify which land fell under the purview of the government order.

Talking to this correspondent, chairman of the SIT and former Visakhapatnam joint collector K. Vijay Kumar said the team had a review meeting with the 13 tahsildars and suggested they speed up the sub-division process using mandal surveyors since people are suffering.

Around 110 acres of land have been locked under Section 22(A), he said and added that people who were preparing for their

children's marriage and other emergency needs were the worst sufferers.

Similarly, the team has focussed on the Urban Land Ceiling issue under which more than 450 applications were submitted for regularisation and issue of GO from the government. The applications are pending since 2017. Until the government issues GO for regularisation, the lands cannot be registered under section 22(1D).

The ULC issue is an entirely local issue which could be sorted out by the district administration, the chairman said.

Regarding encroachment of government lands, essentially for which the SIT was constituted, the chairman said around 400 acres of government land had been encroached by the private people, and key documents have tampered. The team will suggest the government on how to get back the land and identified around 20 revenue

officials who played a key role in the encroachments.

He said AP Housing Corporation has also been asked to file FIR against those who encroached into the government lands. Two such cases have been filed under Section 140 of CrPC.

He announced that final touches were being given to the report which might be submitted to the government in another fortnight.

The SIT received 1,380 petitions and of them, 679 were referred to the concerned tahsildars who in turn returned 420 reports and of them, 342 were disposed.

Former BJP MLA P. Vishnu Kumar Raju, who was responsible for the constitution of the first SIT by the then Telugu Desam government, said he hoped that this government would take the report to the logical end and put an end to the encroachment of government lands.

Festive lights



Steps way of Padmanabha Swamy temple illuminated with earthen lamps by the devotees alongside Padmanabha hills as part of Deepotsavam to mark the conclusion of Karthika month, at Padmanabham in Visakhapatnam district on Monday.

— DC

CBI submits report to
HC on doctor caseDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 14

The CBI submitted its report to the AP High Court on the arrest of Dr K. Sudhakar, the former anaesthetist at Narsipatnam area hospital in Visakhapatnam on Monday. But since the report was not incorporated in the registry, the High Court judges sought the report to be submitted to them and adjourned the case to March 21.

The order was delivered by judges Rakesh Kuamr and J. Uma Devi.

It may be recalled that Dr Sudhakar had abused the prime minister and the chief ministers of Telugu states on the National Highway in Visakhapatnam city in May this year following which the local police had arrested him.

He was allegedly dragged by the police before the arrest. Former MLA of Paykaraopeta V.

Anitha sent the video clip to the High Court along with a letter with an attachment of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's morphed video on Naidu. The High Court accepted the letter as a suo motu case and ordered the CBI to inquire into the mode of arrest of the doctor.

The High Court also ordered the CBI to submit the report on the social posts made against the judicial officers.

ILLEGAL ACTIVITY Police to continue combing, warned of stern action against smuggling
4 tonnes of red sanders logs seized in 3 daysDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 14

The Red Sanders Anti-Smuggling Task Force (RSASTF) have seized around four tonnes of red sander logs during its ongoing combing operation being held in the Seshachalam forests for the past three days. In a fresh catch, the task force team seized 30 red sanders logs on the outskirts of Tirupati and 32 logs in on

Monday.

Disclosing the details to media RSASTF SP G. Anjaneyulu said, acting on a piece of credible information that Tamil Nadu based woodcutters have ventured into Seshachalam forests, the task force team led by RSI Vasu have been carrying out intensive combing operations in the forests and also conducting vehicular checking at all the entry and exit points of

● The task force team seized 30 red sanders logs on the outskirts of Tirupati and 32 logs in on Monday

● In another catch, the task force teams have seized 32 red sander logs in Ramapuram of Kadapa

Srivari Mettu area and Bakarapeta ghat road for the past three days.

"In the early hours on Monday, the task force team had encountered a group of 30 woodcutters carrying logs in the forest area near S.V. Zoo park in Tirupati. On noticing the task force personnel, the woodcutters fled away from the spot, leaving behind nearly 30 logs. The teams have intensified the combing operation to nab the escaped woodcutters," the SP said.

In another catch, the task

Force teams have seized 32 red sander logs in Ramapuram of Kadapa district. RI Ali Basha and Ramapuram Police led this operation. A case was registered at the Ramapuram police station in this regard, SP Mr Anjaneyulu said.

The SP appreciated the efforts of Task Force DSP's K.C. Venkataiah, V.V. Gridhar, RI Bhaskar, Circle Inspector Subrahmanyam and other

ers for taking part in the combing operation, which led to the seizure of nearly 4 tonnes of logs in the past three days.

The SP informed that they would continue the combing operation and warned of stern action against the smugglers and the woodcutters. He said that they would not hesitate to slap the PD Act against repeated offenders involved in smuggling activity.

OTHER STORIES

ACB TRAPS VRO
ALONG WITH ₹1L
BRIBE MONEYDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 14

The Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) sleuths have trapped a Village Revenue Officer soon after he collected a bribe of ₹1 lakh as advance to issue pattadar passbook to a farmer at the Tahsildar Office in Santhanuthalapadu town in Prakasam district on Monday.

According to ACB officials, the farmer identified as Nannuri Madhusudhan Rao approached ACB DSP of Ongole after the VRO Poondla Srihari Babu demanded ₹1.5 lakh to issue pattadar passbook a few days back.

As per the directions of the DSP, Madhusudhan negotiated with the VRO and convinced him to take an advance payment of ₹1 lakh with an assurance to pay the balance ₹50,000 after the completion of the work. As agreed, Madhusudhan paid ₹1 lakh to the VRO Srihari Babu at his private room near the Tahsildar Office in Santhanuthalapadu around 12.30 pm on Monday.

The ACB team, led by the DSP, was hiding in the premises, jumped into action and caught the VRO soon after he received the money. The chemical test conducted on the fingers of both hands and the inner linings of the cover, which was used to keep the cash yielded positive results.

The ACB Inspectors seized the records related to the pattadar passbook and recovered the bribe amount from the accused officer Srihari Babu. He is being produced before the Special Court for ACB cases in Nellore.

13 PERSONS HELD
IN MURDER
ATTACK CASEDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 14

The Jaladanki police on Monday arrested 13 people involved in the murder attack against Pothala Ramanaiah and his relatives following land disputes in Vemulapadu village in Jaladanki mandal on December 10.

According to Jaladanki SI Venkata Rao, there were disputes between prime accused Moddu Rama Krishna and the victim Ramanaiah over the way to the lands of the former in Vemulapadu for a long time.

It was because of this tension, Ramakrishna and his relatives attacked Potala Ramanaiah and his relatives on December 10.

Ramanaiah sustained grievous injuries in the incident, and he was treated in Nellore and Chennai and now undergoing treatment in Tirupati.

The police tracked down 13 people, including Ramakrishna involved in the attack on Ramanaiah and his relatives in Brahmanakraka village on Monday.

The accused confessed to the crime when the police grilled them.

There were disputes between accused Moddu Rama Krishna and the victim Ramanaiah over the way to the lands of the former in Vemulapadu

SUSPICION OVER
DEATH OF
MARRIED WOMANDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC 14

A 24-year-old married woman Mandhani Ramyasri of Pallamaraju Nagar here was found dead hanging from a ceiling fan.

The relatives of the woman alleged that her husband Venkat and in-laws killed her as there was injury on her head.

They alleged that her husband and in-laws hit her and later created a scene like hanging from a ceiling fan.

According to Three Town police, Ramyasri of Diwancheruvu village of Rajanagaram mandal was married to Venkat of Pallamaraju Nagar in the year 2018. Later she went to her village for delivery.

Later Venkat did not bring her back to his house, after delivery since October, 2020. The relatives alleged that they have given ₹30 lakh dowry at the time of marriage and in October month, they promised Venkat and his parents to give another ₹50 lakh and after which Venkat brought his wife back to his house. The couple has a 13-months-old baby.

The three town police registered a case and investigation is on.



Left party activists take out a huge rally in support of the farmers who were staging protest against the New Farm Laws by the Central government near Dabagardens in Visakhapatnam on Monday. — DC

Left parties take out rally
in support of farmers stir

New laws would benefit only the corporate sector: Left parties

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 14

Left parties, including CPI and CPM, took out a rally in support of the agitating farmers in New Delhi, in Visakhapatnam on Monday.

The rally started from the RTC Complex and culminated into a meeting at LIC Building.

Party activists performed folk dance and raised slogans condemning the NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the new farm laws he launched.

State joint secretary of CPI J.V. Satyanarayana Murthy said the new laws would benefit only the corporate sector and not the farmers.

He appealed to the people to boycott the goods being manufactured by big corporate houses.

State committee member of CPM Ch. Narsinga Rao said the Prime Minister instead of solving the issue, has been blaming that extremist organisations have taken over the agitation.

"This indicates the sincerity the government has towards the farmers," Mr Narsinga Rao said.

CPI(ML-ND) Y. Kondaiah and leaders from other mass organisations and Left parties participated in the rally and meeting in support of farmers.

NATIONAL ENERGY
CONSERVATION
WEEK OBSERVEDDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 14

The week-long National Energy Conservation Week, observed by Waltair Division, East Coast Railway concluded on Monday.

During the weeklong observation, awareness campaigns were undertaken by displaying banners, posters, stickers and organised rallies with energy-saving slogans at different railway stations and locations of Waltair Division to create awareness among the public as well as the railway staff.

An exhibition was also organised today, with the display few of the techniques adopted for conservation of energy like the implementation of automation of lighting for offices and residences, solar energy based streetlights, BLDC fans that work by utilising less energy, i.e. 27W instead of 60W, Remote Sensing Lighting System, LED lights and insulated geysers which can keep the water hot for up to six hours, Inverter Type Air Conditioning system and others.

On the concluding day, a seminar was organised at the DRM's office. Mr Chetan Kumar Srivastava, DRM suggested exploring the new ways of utilising the natural forms of energy, like solar energy, wind energy and others.

Agri bills will help Adani,
Ambani: Kisan leadersDC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, DEC. 14

The All India Kisan Struggle Coordinating Committee (AIKSCC) said that the new agricultural laws are part of the internal agenda of the Modi government to double the income of Ambani and Adani companies, instead of working towards doubling the income of farmers before the elections.

An agitation was organized at the BSNL office in Kadapa on Monday in support of the farmers' initiative in Delhi.

The AP Farmers Association Kadapa District general secretary Gali Chandra said that the Central government was not implementing any of the recommendations made by the Dr Swaminathan Committee and was aiming to increase the revenue of Reliance and Adani by a hundred times.

He said the Central government was not going to let the farmers get rid of their debts but was only protecting their evaders like Vijay Mallya and Neerav Modi.

THE AP Farmers Association Kadapa District general secretary Gali Chandra said that the Central government was not implementing any of the recommendations made by the Dr Swaminathan Committee and was aiming to increase the revenue of Reliance and Adani by a hundred times.

He said the Modi government, which was incapable of resolving the problems of the peasantry, had brought in new agricultural laws in the name of trade deals with farmers, free transport and crop storage beyond the limit, and try to give up foodgrain income to the corporate sector.

Farmers' union leaders B. Narayana, Krishnamurthy, Dastagiri Reddy, A.V. Ramana, Shivareddy, Obulesu, Venkata Siva, Bellam Manohar, Subrahmanyam, Bashirunnisa and Prabhakar Reddy, were present on the occasion

GOVT SHOULD
ABOLISH THE FARM
BILLS: LEFT PARTIESDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 14

The Left parties along with Farmers Unions staged protests at Kakinada Rajamahendravaram, demanding that the government should abolish the 'Farm Bills' immediately and the activists said that they were supporting the farmers' agitation.

At Kakinada, the activists led by All India Farmers Unions joint action committee staged a dharna in front of Central Post Office here and raised slogans for withdrawal of the farm bills.

AP Rythu Sangham state treasurer Chluboyina Kesavasetty said that though the farmers were staging agitation for the past 18 days, the Central government did not respond and this proved the Prime Minister Modi is not having any interests in farmers problems.



Electricity employees take out a rally on awareness of Energy on the occasion of National Energy Conservation Week in Vijayawada on Monday. — DC

COVID | EFFECT The corporation is not yet on the path to profitability

RTC gaining popularity in Kadapa

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAPADA, DEC. 14

RTC is gradually gaining popularity in the Kadapa region. Services which had been suspended for two-and-a-half months due to the Covid-19 pandemic were resumed from May 21. Initially, it started with just 200 bus services, and now 500 buses are running across the district. These include running inter-state services.

Authorities say there is currently 65 to 70 per cent occupancy. Passengers are also turning to buses with the Covid-19 cases declining. With the num-

500 buses currently plying across the Kadapa region cover a distance of 2.3 lakh km per day, generating an income of about ₹70 lakh.

ber of passengers increasing day by day, the RTC ownership is getting happy.

Bus services in the district have been completely halted since March 22. On May 21, buses were partially allowed to seat passengers only on 50 per cent of the seats on the capacity. The limit was lifted last month and pas-

sengers are allowed to seat full in the buses.

Shopping malls are opening in towns as the Covid cases decline. This has led to an increase in traffic to towns. There are a total of 850 buses in the eight depots in the Kadapa region, of which 295 buses are private services. Of these, 500 buses now serve passengers. Authorities say the average occupancy ratio is 65 to 70 per cent.

At present RTC is running 14 services to Chennai and 44 services to Bangalore and 20 buses were operating from Kadapa to Hyderabad as per the agreement

AP registered 305 new
Covid-19 cases, 2 deathsDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 14

Andhra Pradesh registered a steep fall in the number of new Covid-19 cases as only 305 were reported with two deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin on Monday reporting that out of 44,935 samples tested, 305 persons were found infected with Covid-19. Out of a total number of 1,08,75,925 samples tested so far, 8,75,836 persons found infected with Covid-19 and 8,64,049 patients were recovered while 4,728 patients are still active with the virus.

Among the daily Covid-19 cases, West Godavari registered 45 followed by 43 in Chittoor, 37 in Krishna, 28 in East Godavari, 27 in Nellore, 24 in Guntur, 21 in Prakasam, 19 in Visakhapatnam, 15 in Srikakulam, 14 in Vizianagaram, 12 each in Kurnool and Kadapa and eight in Anantapur.

Krishna has the highest number of cumulative Covid-19 active cases with 884 followed by 816 in Guntur, 619 in Nellore, 537 in East Godavari, 424 in Chittoor, 306 in West

AP waives off fee
for Inter studentsDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 14

The state government waived off fee to be collected from the students of Intermediate education for getting a series of permissions from the Board of Intermediate Education keeping in view of the prevalence Covid-19 pandemic to avoid any financial hardships to the students.

BIE's secretary V. Ramakrishna in a release issued here on Monday stated that the minister for education and chairman of BIE, suspended the fee to

be collected from students.

Accordingly, all the Principals of the colleges were instructed to follow the guidelines to avail the permissions.

For getting re-admission, the prescribed fee is ₹1,000 and the same amount was waived off.

Similarly, for TC admissions-₹1,000, change of II language for first year only-₹800, change of medium for first year only-₹600, change of group for first year only-₹1,000 and change of group for second year regular students-₹1,000, were also waived off.

cumulative cases of death of Covid-19 infected patients with 835 followed by 657 in Guntur, 654 in Krishna, 636 in EG, 594 in Anantapur, 578 in Prakasam, 547 in Visakhapatnam, 530 in WG, West 503 in Nellore, 487 in Kurnool, 454 in Kadapa, 346 in Srikakulam and 238 in Vizianagaram.

STATE TOLD TO FOLLOW CENTRAL GUIDELINES

FROM PAGE 1

This must be done before undertaking the work of declining and dredging as part of maintenance of these water bodies.

It ordered that the state follow the guidelines provided by the Union ministry of environment and forests and also the guidelines of Sustainable Sand Mining and Management, 2016 and also Enforcement

and Monitoring Guidelines for Sand Mining issued in January, 2020.

The NGT directed the AP to have adequate control mechanism and monitoring mechanism on activities like mining/desilting/dredging by providing all necessary infrastructure including technical assistance. It asked for providing proper monitoring mechanism for transport

of miners extracted from the point of dredging/desilting/mining to the point of destination to avoid misuse of minerals for unauthorised purpose. It asked for registration of vehicles permitted for transport and also installation of GPS facility in the vehicles. The NGT asked the AP to set up a permanent Expert Appraisal Committee.

THREE HELD, 6
RED SANDERS
LOGS SEIZEDDC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, DEC. 14

The Railway Kodur police on Monday held three persons and seized six red sanders logs.

Rajampeta DSP Siva Bhaskar Reddy held a press conference at the Kodur Police Station and disclosed the information.

Railway Kodur Inspector Ananda Rao, Sub Inspectors Pedda Obanna and Reddy Suresh raided a place near Raghavarajapuram during the early hours of Monday.

The police team seized 69 kgs of red sanders logs valued at ₹1.38 lakh and arrested three persons.

DSP Rajampeta speaking on this occasion said that they are taking stringent action against red sanders smuggling.

He appealed the public to inform about red sanders smuggling anywhere, and assured that they would keep secret the information about the informers of red sander smugglers.

Thiruppavai ritual at
Tirumala till Jan. 14DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 14

The first and foremost pre-dawn ritual of Suprabhatham at the hill shrine of Lord Venkateswara in Tirumala will be replaced with Thiruppavai from Thursday onwards and continued till January 14, 2021.

With Dhanur Masam commencing on Wednesday, the awakening Seva of Lord will be replaced with Andal Sri Godai Thiruppavai Pasura Parayanam. Dhanur Masam has a unique place in Hindu spiritual calendar

for devotional activities especially worshipping Lord Sri Maha Vishnu during the early hours before Sunrise.

In Tirumala shrine, the 30 popular hymns penned by the only woman among the 12 Alwars, Andal Sri Goda Devi will be recited with each Pasuram on each day during the entire month.

Meanwhile, the temple body also mulled yet another spiritual live pravachanam programme on Nada Neerajanam platform at Tirumala from Tuesday onwards, on the occasion of Dhanur Masam.

TD demands aid to
ailing WB workersDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 14

TD politburo member Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy has advised the AP government to offer an ex-gratia of ₹10 lakh to the family of the deceased and financial assistance of ₹50,000 to the migrant workers from West Bengal who are undergoing treatment at GGH in Nellore.

Mr Chandramohan Reddy consoled the ailing workers, who are suffering from diarrhoea allegedly after consuming stale food and water from an abandoned

borewell, during a visit to GGH along with former Minister Pathhipati Pulla Rao on Monday.

Mr Reddy found fault with the district administration for the delay in obtaining the lab reports related to the food and water to ascertain the reasons for the illness.

He took a dig at the officials for not alerting the workers on the use of water from unused borewell and the locking the same after the incident. He said the government should provide better treatment to workers and shift them to Chennai, Vijayawada or Hyderabad if

CLASSIFIEDS

EDUCATIONAL
CAREER/ENTRANCE
COURSES

✓ ONE-SITTING / Fast track :-
Graduations (All), Post-Graduations (All), PG Diplomas, Polytechnic Diplomas, Secondary (10th) & Senior Secondary (12th), Provided Online results & Online verifications, Eligible for Private & Abroad. Ph:9912540011, 7 3 3 7 2 9 1 1 3 3, www.hyderc.com (A/2021/IC00082)

FILM

WANTED NEW faces Hero, Heroins, Friends, dubbing

character children artist, singers. Urgently required. Contact: 9391154732. (S/2021/C01626)

NOTICE

Readers are advised to make appropriate enquiries while responding to advertisements in these columns. Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. does not vouch for any claims made by the Advertisers. The Printer, Publisher, Editor and Owner of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. shall not be held responsible / liable for any consequences, in case such claims are found to be false.

SHORT TAKES

MODI, HASINA TO HOLD VIRTUAL SUMMIT ON DEC. 17

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

India and Bangladesh will hold a crucial virtual summit on Thursday (December 17) that will be co-chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina during which the “two leaders will hold comprehensive discussions on the entire spectrum of the bilateral relationship, including further strengthening cooperation in the post-Covid era”, New Delhi announced on Monday. This is likely to include the progress of development projects, sharing of river waters including the Teesta issue, the Rohingya migrants issue, border security, Covid-19 vaccines as well as the forthcoming golden jubilee celebrations of the 1971 war of liberation.

The summit will take place at a time when India is making a renewed bid to reach out to its immediate neighbourhood and also when Pakistan is trying its best to improve relations with Bangladesh.

On Monday, New Delhi said, “India and Bangladesh have continued to maintain regular exchanges at the highest level. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid an official visit to India in October 2019. Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a video message on the historic occasion of Mujib Borsho in March 2020. Both leaders have remained in regular touch during the Covid pandemic.”

“Mujib Barsho” refers to birth centenary celebrations of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman — popularly known as Bangabandhu — who had led the Bangladesh freedom struggle in 1971.

GMAIL, OTHER GOOGLE SERVICES FACE OUTAGE

New Delhi, Dec. 14: Gmail and a host of other Google services faced disruptions on Monday evening and the tech major is in the process of fully restoring the services. The company, which faced a similar outage in August this year, is yet to specify areas on for the outage.

In an update on the Google work space status dashboard at 18:17 hours, Google said Gmail service has already been restored for some users, and “we expect a resolution for all users in the near future. Please note this time frame is an estimate and may change”.

At around 17:25 hours, Google had said it was “aware of a problem with Gmail affecting a majority of users” and that the affected users are unable to access Gmail.

As per the dashboard, other Google services like Google Calendar, Google Drive, Google Docs and Google Meet have also been affected. Down detector, which detects outages and interruptions on networks, also showed that services like YouTube (Google’s video platform) and Gmail were facing disruption. Netizens turned to Twitter to express their emotions.

MAHA GOVT OFFERS HELP TO PRESERVE INS VIRAAT

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, DEC. 14

Claiming that the Maharashtra government is willing to help restore and preserve “the historical ship” *INS Viraat*, Shiv Sena MP Priyanka Chaturvedi on Monday said she has written a letter to the defence ministry seeking a no-objection certificate to preserve the decommissioned aircraft carrier.

The Shiv Sena leader in her letter addressed to defence minister Rajnath Singh has stated that the government of Maharashtra was happy to cooperate in restoring and preserving the historical ship. She has also requested Singh’s immediate intervention to grant No Objection Certificate (NOC) to preserve the aircraft carrier. *INS Viraat* is being dismantled at the Alang ship-breaking yard in Gujarat.

According to Mukesh Patel, chairman of the Shree Ram Group which bought *INS Viraat* as scrap, “About 5 per cent of the ship has already been broken.”

In her social media post she has stated that *INS Viraat* served as India’s aircraft carrier for nearly 30 years. “It has been the pride of our seas and our Indian Navy. To see it sold as scrap and dismembered will be a huge disservice to our naval legacy. With RM’s NOC, a memorial on *INS Viraat* will be a reality,” she said.



People witness the launch of GRSE-built first Project 17A stealth frigate Himgiri in Kolkata on Monday.

— PTI

India geared up for any China build-up: Rawat

CDS says armed forces can counter PLA’s constant moves

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, DEC. 14

In a veiled warning to China amid a prolong stand-off, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat on Monday affirmed that the Indian armed forces, undertaking steps on this side of the Line of Actual Control to counter the People Liberation Army’s military build-up on the other side, would leave no stone unturned to protect the nation’s interests from land to air to sea.

“We are in a stand-off situation in Ladakh and based on that there is some development activity which has been ongoing in Tibet Autonomous Region of China. Every nation will continue to prepare for ensuring it’s security based on its strategic interests. I do not

think there should be much concern in that because we, on our side, are also carrying out similar activity. China’s attempt to change the status quo on the LAC along the northern border amidst the Coronavirus pandemic necessitates high-level preparation on land, in air and at sea. I am fully confident that Indian armed forces will leave no stone unturned to safeguard our frontiers be it on land, in air or at ocean. We are fully prepared for any eventuality we may be faced with,” Gen Rawat said at the launch of *INS Himgiri*, the first GRSE-built P17A stealth frigate in Kolkata.

Referring to the Doklam stand-off between the two sides, Rawat elaborated, “A situation had evolved in Doklam in 2017. Ever since we have taken meas-

ures to ensure that the situation does not escalate. The PLA on the other side has been carrying out certain activity. We, on our side, have also been watching this activity very carefully. We have also taken necessary action to counter anything that could be a cause of concern to our national security.”

Underlining the importance of technology in military, he added, “What we are looking at is getting technology. Time has come to look at the future of warfighting imbining technology into systems. We have adequate force and reserves available to counter any threat or challenge that we may face on the northern border.”

On the Navy’s push for a third aircraft carrier vis-a-vis submarines, Gen

Rawat observed, “Both have their advantages and disadvantages. Sub-

marines have their separate place in naval warfare in domination of the sea. So does an aircraft carrier. I am no way saying the navy does not need it’s air wing. Yes it does. But how to manage air wing and how to ensure the security and sanctity of the sealine of our communication is something we are thinking about. I think we also need to look at our Island territories that we have in large numbers. We can leverage the island territory to our advantage. Then we can balance whether these can be used for launching our naval aircraft or do we need an aircraft carrier. Once we study all that and we understood in detail, we will take a call on that.”

UK FOREIGN SECY ON 4-DAY VISIT TO INDIA

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab is beginning a four-day visit to India from Monday and will hold ministerial-level talks with his Indian counterpart External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Tuesday. This comes just days after media reports that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been invited by India to be the chief guest at the Republic Day parade next month. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had recently evaded questions from the media on the reported invitation, saying earlier that in such matters, “the announcement is made closer to the event”.

In a statement on Monday, meanwhile, the MEA said, “The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP, secretary of state for foreign, commonwealth and development affairs, United Kingdom, will pay an official visit to India from 14-17 December 2020. During his stay in New Delhi, Raab will hold talks with Minister of External Affairs Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on 15 December 2020 on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. He will also have official meetings with the minister of environment, forests and climate change Prakash Javadekar and the minister of education Ramesh Pokhriyal.”

It may be recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had spoken on phone to his British counterpart Johnson last month in which the two “leaders agreed that officials from both sides would continue their work to quickly finalise an ambitious long-term roadmap for the India-UK partnership”.

Heavy voter turnout in last phase of Kerala polls

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC. 14

Heavy polling was recorded in the third and final phase of local body polls in Kerala.

More than 78.62 per cent polling was recorded till 8 pm in four northern districts Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasargod which went to polls on Monday.

Malappuram recorded 78.86 per cent, Kozhikode 78.98, Kannur 77.54 and Kasargod 77.14 per cent.

A total of 89,74,993 voters were eligible to vote in the third phase in 6,867 wards across 354 local bodies. The polling was held strictly complying with Covid safety protocol. Voters turned out in masks, maintained social distancing while waiting in the queues and used sanitisers before and after casting their votes. Barring minor incidents of scuffle between the supporters of rival parties, no major violence was reported from any of the northern districts.

The state had witnessed heavy turnout of voters in all three phases which



Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan casts his vote during the last stage of Kerala local body elections at Cherikkal in Kannur on Monday.

— PTI

clearly indicated the enthusiasm of the electorate.

Leaders of LDF, UDF and BJP are keeping their fingers crossed over the heavy polling with each party trying to interpret the trend according to their respective calculations.

It may be recalled that 72.67 per cent polling was recorded in the first

phase on December 8 southern districts Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Idukki.

A higher voter turnout of 76.38 per cent was witnessed in the second phase when central districts of Kottayam, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad and Wayanad went to polls on December 10.

Rajnath lauds valour of forces deployed at LAC

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said that unprovoked aggression on India’s Himalayan frontiers by China is a reminder of how world is changing and how power is being asserted across Indo-Pacific. He lauded the valour of Indian armed forces deployed along the LAC for standing up to aggression by Chinese troops and said our troops fought the Chinese military with “utmost bravery,” forcing it to go back. On farmer’s issues Singh said there is no question of taking “retrograde steps against our agricultural sector ever”.

“Unprovoked aggression on our Himalayan frontiers is a reminder of how the world is changing, how existing agreements are being challenged, how power is being asserted not just in Himalayas but across Indo-Pacific. How

uncertain the future of the region and world could be in this backdrop,” said Singh while virtually addressing the annual general meeting of apex industry chamber FICCI. Defence minister said that there is a big build up of armed forces at LAC in Ladakh. “In these testing times, our forces have shown exemplary courage and remarkable fortitude. They fought the PLA with utmost bravery and forced them to go back,” said Singh. He said that the coming generations will be proud of what our forces have managed to achieve this year.

Defence minister pointed out that whenever there is a situation at LAC the most obvious outcome is comparison between India and China’s military strength.

“There can be a serious debate on who owns more military might but when it comes to soft power there is no scope of ambigui-

ty India is far ahead of China when it comes to leading the world with ideas,” said Singh. “If one looks at East-Asia from Burma to Thailand to Indonesia and Malaysia and even Japan “there is a huge Indian cultural impact on these countries,” he added “Buddhism had a monumental impact on China to the extent that before the 1949 revolution almost 80 per cent of China population followed Buddhism,” said Singh.

He added that famous Chinese thinker Hu Shih, who was also the vice-chancellor of Peking University had said that: “India has culturally dominated and controlled China for more than 2,000 years without sending a single soldier.” “This statement by Hu Shih underlines the fact that India as a civilisation state has been inspiring and influencing the world through its cultural and soft power for centuries,” he said.

Kamal Nath hints at political retirement

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, DEC. 14

Former chief minister and Madhya Pradesh Congress president Kamal Nath has created a ripple in the political circle here when he hinted at retirement from politics.

Nath who is facing growing resentment in the party following the poor show by Congress in the November 3 by-elections to 28 Assembly constituencies in Madhya Pradesh, said, “I am ready to take some rest. I have no ambition or greed for any position or power. I have served in various posts at Centre. I have already achieved a lot. I am ready to stay at home”.

He was addressing a rally in his Assembly constituency of Sasaur in Chhindwara on Sunday evening.

Nath’ statement comes in the wake of reports of his running feud with veteran Congress leader and former chief minister Digvijay Singh.

“Nath is responsible for the drubbing of Congress in November 3 Assembly by-elections. The party suffered a setback in the

by-polls because Nath sidelined Singh in the Assembly by-elections”, Congress MLA Baburam Jandela said.

Jandela is considered close to Singh. Congress spokesman Narendra Singh Saluja, however, sought to underplay the development, saying, “Nath has several times in the past said he has achieved a lot and has no greed for power or position”.

Nath who holds dual posts of Madhya Pradesh PCC president and Congress Legislature Party chief is under pressure by a strong section of the party to leave one of the posts in the wake of party’s poor show in the November 3 Assembly by-elections.

Congress could win only nine out of 28 Assembly constituencies which had gone to by-elections on November 3.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan took a jibe at Kamal Nath for reportedly weighing the option of retiring from politics, saying, “It is up to him to decide whether to retire or sit at home. It is his affairs. If charges and counter-charges are made, he should come up with clarifications”.

— PTI

Centre upgrades Vijayvargiya’s security with bullet resistant car

New Delhi/Kolkata, Dec. 14: BJP leader Kailash Vijayvargiya’s VIP security has been upgraded with the addition of a “bullet resistant” car in his convoy during his West Bengal tour, official sources said on Monday.

The Union home ministry has issued an order directing the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to include an armoured vehicle in the convoy of the 64-year-old national general secretary of the BJP and ensure he only travels in that SUV, they said.

“The security of Vijayvargiya has been upgraded with the inclusion of a bullet resistant

four-wheeler in the convoy. This has been done keeping in mind the security requirements of the protectee in the wake of the recent attack on his vehicle that was part of a convoy of BJP president J.P. Nadda,” an official source said.

The CISF has been providing ‘Z’ category VIP security cover to Vijayvargiya since February last year. The protection includes a mobile team of about six-seven armed CISF commandos as well as a pilot and an escort vehicle. Vijayvargiya’s vehicle was attacked with stones during a visit to Diamond Harbour area in the state’s South 24 Parganas

district on December 10 when he was accompanying the BJP president.

Vijayvargiya confirmed his security upgrade to reporters after he arrived in Kolkata on Monday afternoon to take part in a programme at Mathurapur in South 24 Parganas.

“As per the order of the Union home ministry, I have been provided with a bulletproof vehicle,” he told the media at the airport. On December 10, several vehicles in Nadda’s cavalcade were damaged in the attack. Sources in the BJP said its leaders, including Vijayvargiya and vice president Mukul Roy, sustained injuries in the melee.

— PTI

WOMEN | SAFETY

Bill gives death penalty, ₹10 lakh fine for crimes on women, modelled after AP

Shakti Bill tabled in Maharashtra Assembly

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, DEC. 14

In a historical move, the Maharashtra government on Monday tabled the Shakti Bill in the Vidhan Sabha that provides a death penalty and a fine up to ₹10 lakh for crimes against women and children in the state.

State home minister Anil Deshmukh tabled the Maharashtra Shakti Criminal Law (Maharashtra Amendment) Act, 2020, as well as Maharashtra Exclusive Special Court (for certain

offences against Women and Children under Shakti Law) on the first day of the two-day winter session of the state legislature.

Based on the Disha Act in Andhra Pradesh, the bill has proposed strict punishments for crimes such as rape, acid attack and derogatory material on social media against women and children.

It has also proposed special courts ensuring speedy trial in cases of crimes against women and children, amendments in sections of Indian Penal

● **BASED ON** the Disha Act in Andhra Pradesh, the bill has proposed strict punishments for crimes such as rape, acid attack and derogatory material on social media against women and children.

Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) to sternly deal with such crimes.

The bills have assured to bring down the investigation period from two months to 15 days, the trial period from two months to 30 days, and appeal period to 45 days from the present

six months. It is expected to be cleared by the House on Tuesday.

The new law will have a separate judicial system to fast-track the cases that come under the Act’s purview with at least one special court in each of the districts. It has the provision for special public prosecutors and special police teams, which will have at least one woman

officer. It also aims to establish institutions for providing services to victims, including medical or psychiatric support and care, counselling, facilitating legal and financial aid, and rehabilitation.

Deshmukh said the legislation proposes to complete investigation, trial and sentencing within a stipulated time frame. “The offences against women and children, especially heinous and sexual offences have increased many fold in the state. The proposed law will also

have provisions to tackle threats and messages on social media platforms. It is an important legislation and provisions have been made to ensure that the accused are booked and sentenced at the earliest,” he added.

Several women’s groups had earlier urged Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to not table the Shakti bill, calling it draconian legislation that is fundamentally anti-women with the potential to negate the very offence of rape.

SHORT TAKES

RAWALPINDI
BLAST: 3 ULTRAS
HELD IN PAKISTAN

Lahore, Dec. 14: Three Taliban terrorists, involved in a blast in Rawalpindi, were arrested on Monday by Pakistan's security agencies.

At least 25 people, including women and children, were injured in the grenade attack in the Ganj Mandi area near a police station in the garrison city of Rawalpindi on Sunday.

The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of the Punjab police said in a statement on Monday that a CTD Rawalpindi team got information that three terrorists were hiding on Adyala-Kharakan Road along Swan River Rawalpindi. "On this information and evidence collected from Pir Wadhai crime scene, CTD raided the place on Monday and arrested three terrorists. Explosives, detonators, cell phones and other articles recovered," it said.

U.S. REMOVES
SUDAN FROM
TERROR LIST

Khartoum, Dec. 14: The United States has formally removed Sudan from its state sponsor of terrorism blacklist, its Khartoum embassy said Monday, less than two months after the East African nation pledged to normalise ties with Israel.

The move opens the way for aid, debt relief and investment to a country going through a rocky political transition and struggling under a severe economic crisis exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

US President Donald Trump had announced in October that he was delisting Sudan, 27 years after Washington first put the country on its blacklist for harbouring Islamist militants.

"The congressional notification period of 45 days has lapsed and the Secretary of State has signed a notification stating rescission of Sudan's State Sponsor of Terrorism designation," the US embassy in Khartoum said on Facebook.

GUNMAN SHOT BY
POLICE IN NEW
YORK CATHEDRAL

New York, Dec. 14: A man has been shot by police on the steps of a landmark New York City cathedral after he began firing a gun at the end of a Christmas choral concert.

Police said there was no indication anyone but the suspected gunman was shot. The man was taken to a hospital in critical condition.

The shooting happened just before 4 pm on Sunday at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, mother church of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. The 45-minute concert had just concluded and people were starting to walk away when a series of shots was heard, sending people running down Amsterdam Avenue screaming and diving to the sidewalk.

Officers who had been on hand to provide security for the event quickly moved in and shot the gunman, who police believe was armed with a rifle.

ECLIPSE BLACKS
OUT SOUTH CHILE,
ARGENTINA

Pucon, Chile, Dec. 14: A solar eclipse that lasted around two minutes plunged southern Chile and Argentina into darkness on Monday.

Heavy rain had threatened to prevent thousands of star gazers in Chile from seeing the eclipse but at the last moment the clouds parted just enough for the phenomenon to be partially visible.

"It was beautiful, unique. The truth is that no-one held much hope of seeing it due to the weather and clouds, but it was unique because it cleared up just in time. It was a miracle," an emotional Matias Tordecilla, 18, said from the town of Pucon on the shores of Lake Villarrica.

"It's something that you don't just see with your eyes but also feel with your heart," added Tordecilla, who traveled 10 hours with his family to see the eclipse.

In Argentine Patagonia, several families and foreigners had set up camp between the towns of Villa El Chocón and Piedra del Aguila hoping to see the eclipse.

While there was no rain there, strong winds had threatened to impact visibility of the second total eclipse for Chile in the last 18 months.

Hackers infiltrate
US fed networksExperts suspect Russian hand in attack on
FireEye, major cybersecurity player in USData leak exposes
China in top firms

Washington, Dec. 14: Hackers broke into the networks of federal agencies including the Treasury and Commerce departments as US government officials said Sunday that they were working to identify the scope of the breach and to fix the problem.

The FBI and the Department of Homeland Security's cybersecurity arm are investigating. The hacks were revealed just days after a major cybersecurity firm disclosed that foreign government hackers had broken into its network and stolen the company's own hacking tools.

Many experts suspect Russia as responsible for the attack against FireEye, a major cybersecurity player whose customers include federal, state and local governments and top global corporations. There was no immediate connection between the attacks, and it wasn't immediately clear if Russia was also responsible for the hack of the Treasury Department, which was first reported by Reuters.

National Security Council spokesperson John Ulliot said in a statement that the government was "taking all necessary steps to identify and remedy any possible issues related to this situation." The government's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency said separately that it has been working with other agencies "regarding recently

Melbourne, Dec. 14: Amid simmering tensions between Australia and China, the media here on Monday reported a major data leak containing official records like party position, birthdate, national ID number and ethnicity of nearly two million alleged members of the Communist Party of China (CPC) living and working across the world. The data leak obtained by 'The Australian' newspaper has revealed how the alleged CPC members are employed with some of the world's biggest corporations in the areas of defence, banks and pharmaceutical giants manufacturing Coronavirus vaccines. Among the companies

discovered activity on government networks. CISA is providing technical assistance to affected entities as they work to identify and mitigate any potential compromises." President Donald Trump last month fired the director of CISA, Chris Krebs, after Krebs vouched for the integrity of the presidential election and disputed Trump's claims of widespread electoral fraud.

Federal government agencies have long been attractive targets for foreign hackers. Hackers linked to Russia were able to break into the State Department's email system in 2014, infecting it so thoroughly that it had to be cut off from the internet while experts worked to eliminate the infestation. Reuters earlier reported that a group backed by a foreign government stole information from Treasury and a Commerce Department agency responsible for deciding internet and telecommunications policy. — *AP*

identified as having alleged CPC members as their employees are Boeing and Volkswagen, pharmaceutical giants Pfizer and AstraZeneca, and financial institutions including ANZ and HSBC, according to the reports.

The leak has exposed details of 1.95 million CPC members after being extracted from a Shanghai server by whistleblowers. An investigation by 'The Australian' has found that at least 10 consulates in the eastern Chinese metropolis Shanghai have CPC members employed as senior political and government affairs specialists, clerks, economic advisers and executive assistants. — *PTI*

Former aide accuses Cuomo of sexual harassment

FORMER AIDE
ACCUSES CUOMO
OF SEXUAL
HARASSMENT

New York, Dec. 14: A former aide to New York Gov Andrew Cuomo who is now running for Manhattan borough president accused him of sexual harassment in a series of tweets Sunday, saying he made inappropriate comments about her appearance.

Lindsey Boylan tweeted that the Democratic governor "sexually harassed me for years. Many saw it, and watched." "I could never anticipate what to expect: would I be grilled on my work (which was very good) or harassed about my looks. Or would it be both in the same conversation? This was the way for years," she continued. — *AP*

Electoral College to
formalise Biden win

Washington, Dec. 14: Joe Biden's march to the White House — overshadowed by President Donald Trump's frantic attempts to overturn the US election — is to be formalised on Monday when the Electoral College meets to confirm the Democrat's win.

Electors in all 50 states were meeting to cast their votes in a tradition that has long been considered mostly a formality for confirming the will of the people expressed at the polls. But this year the somewhat arcane procedure is at the center of an unprecedented — and many warn dangerous — challenge to the credibility of US democracy led by Trump.

Soundly beaten by Biden on November 3, Trump continues to cl-

aim, without evidence, that he was the real winner. Court after court has turned down his team's claims of election fraud around the country and last Friday the Supreme Court dealt a final legal blow when it threw out an appeal lodged by Trump allies from Texas and other Republican-led states. Based on the already legally certified state-by-state vote tallies, the Electoral College representatives are expected to vote by 306 to 232 in favor of Biden over Trump — a process expected to take much of Monday.

This will draw a thick line under a contest that saw Biden make Trump a rare one-term president after campaigning on a message of vanquishing the Covid-19 pandemic. — *AFP*

EU's chief negotiator still hopes
to clinch EU-UK trade accord

Brussels, Dec. 14: EU negotiator Michel Barnier on Monday signalled there was a "narrow path" to a post-Brexit trade deal with Britain, as key sticking points remain after both sides abandoned a supposed make-or-break deadline.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and EU chief Ursula van der Leyen pledged to "go the extra mile" on Sunday as they side-stepped a self-

imposed cut-off point to end talks if there was no progress towards a pact.

Johnson insists it remains "most likely" that Britain will crash out of the globe's largest single market on World Trade Organisation terms by year's end as the two sides spar over regulating future standards and fishing.

But von der Leyen on Monday said "there is movement. That is good".

"We are on the very last mile to go. But it is an essential one," she told a conference organised by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

An EU diplomat said following a briefing from Barnier that "there might now be a narrow path to an agreement visible - negotiators can clear the remaining hurdles in the next few days". — *AFP*

END OF | AN ERA

He wrote 25 novels, 1 memoir in a career spanning 6 decades, selling 60 million books

British spy thriller author John le Carre dies at 89

London, Dec. 14: John le Carre, the British writer best known for his Cold War espionage novels "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy" and "The Spy Who Came In From The Cold", has died aged 89, his agent and family said on Sunday.

The author, a former British intelligence officer whose real name was David Cornwell, wrote 25 novels and one memoir in a career spanning six decades, selling 60 million books worldwide.

His wife of nearly 50 years, Jane, and sons Nich-

olas, Timothy, Stephen and Simon, said in a statement that he died on Saturday night after a short battle with pneumonia.

"We all grieve deeply his passing," they said, thanking staff at the hospital in Cornwall, southwest England, for their care. "We know they share our sadness," they added.

"Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy" was adapted for television in 1979, with Alec Guinness starring as the enigmatic spycatcher George Smiley, and became a classic. Gary



John le Carre

Oldman reprised the role in the 2011 film, winning an Oscar the following year.



Sandra Lindsay, a nurse at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, is inoculated with the Covid-19 vaccine by Dr. Michelle Chester, at Long Island Jewish Medical Center in the Queens borough of New York.

— *AFP*US kicks off Covid-19 vaccine drive as
Germany returns to partial lockdownSanta infects 75 at
Belgian care home

Belgium, Dec. 14: A man from Belgium, who dressed up as Santa Claus to spread Christmas joy, ended up being labelled as 'super spreader' after inadvertently infecting 75 people at an old age home with Covid-19.

According to reports, the unnamed man visited the Hemelrijk aged care home in the Belgian town of Mol to entertain its residents and staff. However, he had no idea that he was already infected with Covid-19.

The man was welcomed to spread joy among 150 residents at the care home. While everything went smooth during the visit, he ended up infecting 14 staff members and 61 residents, one of which required oxygen support for breathing.

Fortunately, the other infected people only suffered mild to moderate symptoms, without any breathing troubles.

Just three days after the

visit, the man who dressed up as Santa fell ill and tested positive for Covid-19. The aged care home made it mandatory for residents and staff to wear face masks. But pictures from the Christmas event showed that not all residents wore masks and 'Santa' and his helpers stood very close to the elderly people.

"It was made with the best intent, but it went wrong. It has been a very dark day for the care home. It is a very great mental strain to bear for the man that played Saint Nicholas, as well as for the organisers and the staff," Mol's mayor, Wim Caeyers, told Belgian news organisation VRT News.

"Initially they said that the rules had been followed, but then straight away you receive photos from the families of residents where you can see that this wasn't the case," he added. — *Agencies*

SOUTH KOREA TO
OPEN MORE
TESTING SITES

Seoul, Dec. 14: South Korea was opening dozens of free Covid-19 testing sites in the greater Seoul area, as the country registered additional 718 new cases on Monday amid a surge in infections.

The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said the additional cases took the country's total since the pandemic began to 43,484 infections with 587 deaths. It said about 65 per cent of the new cases were found in the Seoul area, which has been at the centre of a recent viral resurgence.

Observers say the lower figures for Monday are a result of fewer tests taken over the weekend and that the country's caseload is expected to surge again this week. The announcement comes two days after New Zealand said it planned a similar bubble with the Cook Islands. — *AP*

Pak played over
overcrowded jails

Islamabad, Dec. 14: A human rights report released on Monday harshly criticized Pakistan's response to the Coronavirus threat faced by tens of thousands of inmates stuck in overcrowded and often unsanitary prisons.

Instead of following through on promises to ease prison overcrowding made when the pandemic first hit, Pakistan's government has actually increased its inmate population by over 6,000 between April and August, from 73,242 to 79,603.

Some of the few who were freed were later rearrested. The joint report by London-based Amnesty International and Justice Project Pakistan said inmates face a growing risk of infection, and called for renewed efforts to free

London, Dec. 14: Remdesivir may be a highly effective antiviral against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, according to a new single-patient study that contradicts previous research which found the drug had no impact on death rates from the disease.

The researchers from the University of Cambridge in the UK who gave the drug to a patient with Covid-19 and a rare immune disorder, observed a dramatic improvement in his symptoms and the disappearance of the virus.

Scientists had previously pinned hope on remdesivir which was originally developed to treat hepatitis C and subsequently tested against Ebola. However, results from large clinical trials have been inconclusive, and the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced in October that the drug did not significantly reduce mortality rates. — *PTI*



DECCAN
Chronicle

15 DECEMBER 2020

Vaccines only way out
of Covid; shun politics

The vaccine against Coronavirus is the silver bullet. A world caught in the throes of the deadly Covid-19 pandemic has no alternative but to trust the apolitical integrity of science, which has brought humanity to the point that it can hope to inoculate large sections of the population in order to spread immunity. There is no knowing how long the vaccines will continue to trigger the production of antibodies in the human body to stave off the virus. It isn't clear yet if two shots will be sufficient for life. Will the vaccine be a seasonal jab? The fact that it has found its way into 70 million people causing 1.6 million deaths globally — the figures for India is close to one crore persons infected and 1.43 lakh deaths — is proof enough of its insidious ways. Indian drug regulators are yet to permit even emergency use of vaccines that have received approvals in Britain, the United States, Russia and China. The need for thoroughness in studying the trial data is a priority right now, considering how even minor ill-effects or side effects of the vaccine can prove inhibiting and erode people's confidence in taking the jab. Dedicated scientists

While spreading awareness to build confidence in the vaccine should be a priority, the offer of free vaccines for entire populations as Kerala and Delhi have done is a political move.

have led international efforts to make various types of vaccines possible and their best efforts in giving "warp speed" to the projects have been beset not only by the logistics of distribution but also the politics injected into prioritising beneficiaries.

The United States and large parts of Europe, which are going through a nightmarish second Covid-19 wave in the autumn, are bracing for a winter of discontent, and they have found it necessary to fast-track the vaccination process. Their experience should prove useful as a case study for India to avoid the pitfalls and maximise the efficiency of what has been a truly international effort at finding vaccines. India, as the world's largest manufacturing hub, has a pivotal role to play in this as vaccines are the most effective route out of the pandemic as the production of monoclonal antibodies, which President Donald Trump might have been given, is painfully slow and mitigation of the disease is a complicated process that can overwhelm the health infrastructure.

The biggest stumbling block, as seen in the attitude of people, are the anti-vaccination sentiments. A recent survey reveals only 60 per cent of Americans are saying they will "definitely or probably" get a vaccine, while 21 per cent, constituting members of the "anti-vaxxer" movement, are dead against it. While spreading awareness to build confidence in the vaccine should be a priority, the offer of free vaccines for entire populations as Kerala and Delhi have done is a political move.

The idea of a free vaccine should, however, be welcomed if it were to become possible to inoculate all vulnerable people who must take it, even if it were to cost at least ₹2,000 per person to cover the vaccine, logistics and inoculation costs, and the total number in India is close to 100 crore people. Above all, we must disavow the politics and embrace the idea that a vaccine which promises to work, be it of any type or from any nation, is the only viable route out of the pandemic.

The greatest spy writer ever

The great English novelist John Le Carre — whose real name was David Cornwell — who died on Saturday at the age of 89 will probably be known as the greatest spy writer of any era, anywhere. But he showed through his nearly two dozen novels that he had transcended the genre of spy-writing from the moment his first book came out in 1961.

His third book, *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, published in 1963, established beyond doubt that it is human condition, and its frailties and moral ambiguities, that Le Carre depicted with delicate nuance and exquisite detail, using the field of spy-work as the medium for his message.

Before him, it was Ian Fleming and his flamboyant spy character James Bond who ruled the roost in the spy genre. Le Carre was a wholly different story. His books had no bang-bang stuff and they provoked reflection. Graham Greene, the famous English writer who was once an ordained priest, has called Le Carre the greatest English writer of the second half of the twentieth century.

John Le Carre's intricate plots came from the Cold War, in which, for a time, he was himself a participant as a junior British spy. But in his writings, men and women who fought from the Soviet side in the great ideological divide were not, as individuals, moral inferiors of their British (or Western) counterparts. It is not so well known that this writer of studied detail had once visited New Delhi, meeting people on the security circuit, with a view to writing a novel on Kashmir, though nothing came of it.

Le Carre shunned literary awards and state honours. When the Cold War ended, he wrote grippingly, fluently, and with understated eloquence — following on deep on-location research — about the drug trade, big pharma, and torture, in the wake of America's questionable interventions in Iraq and its "war on terror". He even began to take part in street demonstrations in Britain on such issues. The writer whose characters teetered on the fine line between right and wrong, good and bad, had begun to cast off ambiguity.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax : 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234
Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285
Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208
Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904
Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433
Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chennumudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580
Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22524747/ 48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325
Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph : 0422 2231255
Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No.H/SD-348/2006-08

Subhani



BJP in Bengal: Bruised,
battered... still upbeat?



Shikha Mukerjee

Bullets, bombs, bricks; broken glass, bruises, broken bones, blood and death. The BJP's offensive in West Bengal has not been a peaceful, orderly and rapid occupation. It has been a laborious endeavour, with the party's popularity waxing and waning.

To sustain the 40 per cent votes it polled in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP will have to deal with the physicality of the political space it so ardently wants to capture. And West Bengal's political culture, its history and traditions require the BJP to do much more than verbally assault the Trinamul Congress bastion. It will have to find the resources and the skills to match the confrontational capability of the state's ruling party.

Claiming that it is the victim of the Trinamul Congress' aggression may not be enough for the saffron party. The bricks that were hurled at the party's president J.P. Nadda on his way to a meeting in Diamond Harbour may have shocked the BJP and shaken Mr Nadda who, incidentally, was not injured because he was travelling in a bullet-proof car, but the response to the obviously pre-planned attack is sadly feeble.

Bricks hurled at VIP convoys are par for the course in Indian politics. In August 2017, Rahul Gandhi's convoy was attacked with bricks in BJP-ruled Gujarat when he was vice-president of the Congress. The BJP did not apologise for the incident; it was dismissed as "unfortunate" and Mr Gandhi was verbally attacked for making the visit.

Warning that the

Union home ministry would hear of it, orchestrating a media offensive on the "anarchy, lawlessness and intolerance" prevailing in West Bengal, declaring that orderly democratic politics was no longer possible, by the 2017 incident measure, is a serious overreaction. It falls short of a politically savvy response. Even with the state governor, Jagdeep Dhankar, weighing in and declaring that Mamata Banerjee was "playing with fire", that there was a "deterioration" in the law and order situation in the state, that he had written a special report and sent it to the Government of India because it was an attack on the "leader of the national party," the BJP missed its chance of using the situation to deliver a political punch. Having taunted both the "bhaipo" or nephew, Trinamul MP Abhishek Banerjee, and the "pishi" or paternal aunt, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, for an unholy nexus, accusing her of fostering "dynasty" by cutting out senior leaders of the Trinamul Congress who in their disenchantment were waiting to defect to the BJP, the visit to Diamond Harbour was a red rag that Mr Nadda waved. If the reaction shook up the "leader of a national party," it ought not to have surprised him. The BJP leadership needs to get it — that West Bengal is, like many other places, a mass of contradictions. Its people write and recite poetry even as they make bombs, perhaps plan to attack the convoys of VIPs and create chaos. In West Bengal, politics, peaceful demonstrations that are always edgy with the possibility of violence,

The BJP needs to reread the history of Mamata's hard labour before she became Chief Minister. She fought the CPM on the streets for decades.

poetry and piety coexist in perfect harmony. A familiarity with Rabin-dranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda is not enough. The BJP needs to delve into Sri Aurobindo's evolution to begin getting a glimmer of an understanding of what is a Bengali. For that matter, the BJP needs to know that Swami Vivekananda had a brother, Bhupendranath Dutta, who was a member of the "Jugantar", an organisation that believed in armed opposition to British imperialism, and who joined the Ghadar Party, toyed with the Comintern, met Vladimir Lenin, and then joined the Congress on his return from travels in the US, Germany and the Soviet Union.

The BJP in West Bengal needs to create a playbook that is in sync with the political culture of the state. Using the Government of India as a bogeyman or a shield can be effective only in very limited ways. Having imported many workers from the Left Front and Trinamul Congress, it has to know how to deploy these resources most effectively.

And the BJP has to work out how politically useful it is to constantly trash Mamata Banerjee. She is a grassroots leader. If the BJP really thinks that encouraging the governor to publicly reprimand the bureaucracy and the police in West Bengal for being an extension of the ruling party and then amplifying the message is savvy politics, it does badly need to have a rethink. However deplorable and however cynical it may be, voters are unlikely to be scandalised about

non-specific accusations of the police-politician nexus in Bengal, or even across India. It is passé. Taking on Mamata by publicly discrediting her shortcomings as Chief Minister or making personal attacks about her probity can be the frills on something much more substantial. By itself, accusing the TMC of corruption does not work.

The BJP needs to reread the history of Mamata's hard labour before she became Chief Minister. She fought the CPM on the streets for decades. She was relentless in her criticism of the Left. In 2001, Mamata Banerjee thought that she would win. In 2006, she again thought she would win. She finally won in 2011 and what a spectacular victory it was — chief minister Buddhadeb Bhat-tacharya lost the elections as did droves of his Cabinet colleagues and of course sundry CPM and other Left party candidates. It was a bloody, pitched battle that Mamata fought to oust the CPM-led Left Front. And she did not have the limitless resources that the BJP seems to as a party and the resources it has as the ruling party of the country.

The signs of disenchantment with the Trinamul Congress and disappointment in Mamata are growing stronger. But that does not make West Bengal any easier for a BJP takeover. The BJP's baggage is its performance as the ruling party at the Centre. The farmers' protest, now into its third week and just as robust, spontaneous and united as it was on the first day, November 27, is a challenge that the BJP has to be able to win with laurels. What happens in New Delhi will certainly have an impact in West Bengal, which is as politically conscious as it is culturally proud.

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist based in Kolkata

LETTERS

HEAR FARMERS

The question confronting every Indian is how to look at protests and their relevance in a democratic nation. Whether it is students protests, anti-CAA-NRC protests or the recent farmer protests, they all have been dealt with a very wrong attitude. It will only increase divisions among Indians. Britishers lost their hold over India due to suppressing the common man's voice. There is nothing like an ideal democracy. It's only attitude of a government in dealing with diverse opinions and giving them a space to express.

Ratnaraj Jain
Rajahmundry

SHUN TURNCOATS

If we look at people changing parties just as they change, robes, it has become clear that they do not believe in party policies but power which is not visible in the near future. Can parties and democracy survive this type of people in their home? It is a moot question and for sure, the fact remains that ethics and morals are given a go by and thrown overboard.

D.S.P. Rao
Kakinada

50 YEARS AGO IN
DECCAN
Chronicle

State check
on chit funds

BY A STAFF REPORTER
HYDERABAD, Dec. 14
A Bill to enable the Government to have proper control over the transactions of the chit funds in the State and to regulate the business thereof, was adopted by the Legislative Assembly today.

A Government motion reducing the security deposit from twice the chit amount to 50 per cent of the chit amount was voted by the House, while Opposition amendments for referring the Bill to Select Committee were rejected.

Replying to the debate, Home Minister, Mr. J. Vengal Rao, said that the Bill was brought to check the chit fund organisations from cheating people. He said that similar legislations are there in neighbour-ing states.

Aakar Patel



The head of the Niti Aayog had said something the other day that upset many people and so he had to explain himself. This was, of course, his statement, repeated twice, that India had "too much democracy". However, something else was said in the same speech that did not get as much attention though, in my opinion, it was far more important and concerning. The fact checking website alt-news.in analysed the video recording of his speech and confirmed that he had indeed used the word that he had denied using. It reported: "In India we are too much of a democracy, so we keep supporting everybody". He went on to elaborate: "For the first time in India a government has thought big in terms of size and scale and said we want to produce global champions. Nobody had the political will and the courage to say that we want to support five companies who want to be global champions. Everyone used to say ... I want to support everyone in India, I want to get votes from everyone."

That second bit is the thing that got ignored. The head of the Niti Aayog, which is the Prime Minister's think tank, was explaining the strategy of the Narendra Modi government on the economy. It has not been articulated as clearly as it was in this statement but has been expressed in policy quite clearly.

In brief, the theory is that India has too many small companies and this is inefficient. It should instead have only a handful of very large players running its economy, and these giants can then compete with the world. So, what will the government do to make this possible? It will try and make it difficult for the small and medium sized industrialists to compete. This is also called "formalisation".

It assumes that the small and medium sized entities in business are all tax thieves. They cheat the government by operating in cash. To make their existence difficult, if not impossible, the first step is to remove cash from the economy. This was done on Tuesday, November 8, 2016. Businesses that

depended on cash transactions, even if they were legitimate ones, were not able to operate for weeks and were hampered for months. The large businesses were not affected because they could do with electronic transfers just as the upper class in the metropolitan areas managed with their credit cards.

The second stroke against the small and medium sector was the Goods and Services Tax, which was made so complicated as to require large teams of people in-house for compliance. The repeated and frequent filing of returns and the mang-aging of the digital system meant that once again a large number of people exited from businesses that became unviable because of the added cost or simply because people could not cope with the compli-cations and chose to do something else. Who benefited from the exit of the small and medium businesses was again the large ones.

The third stroke was the lock-down of this year, which broke the back of the small and medium sector, who had neither the cash

reserves to be able to deal with such a blow or the ability to get their staff to "work from home".

The Economist, the most respected global magazine, reported that the net worth of Mukesh Ambani had gone up by 350 per cent since November 2016. The net worth of Gautam Adani has gone up by 750 per cent in the same period. And all this happened in an economy that has been in decline. This month, December, is the 36th straight month that India's economic growth has been slowing down.

The collapse began in January 2018, according to the government's data, and has continued for three years. The finance ministry's chief economic adviser last week urged that a survey the Narendra Modi government had refused to release be finally released. What did it show? It showed that Indians were spending less money in 2018 than they had been in 2012. Meaning that they were earning less as well. Not all Indians, of course — some were making much more precisely because of the fact that the others were making less.

Everything that appears to be puzzling to many people about the Modi government's economic policy makes sense after we consider what it is deliberately doing to this nation. Mr Modi's former adviser and enthusiast Arvind Panagariya had complained about the "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" programme, saying that it was merely import substitution and had failed before. What does that mean? It means that Mr Modi has applied tariffs on imported things that Indians buy, like television sets and mobile phones, so that local industrialists can sell their goods at a higher price than the imported ones. "Atma Nirbhar" privileges the industrialist over the consumer, but that is not the way that it is advertised. Who does the policy seek to make "Atma Nirbhar"? It is not the consumer or the citizen. It is those selected favourites of the government who have been tasked with winning, while the rest of us are made deliberately to fail.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	46,253.46	0.34
Nifty 50	13,558.15	0.33
S&P 500*	3,676.49	0.36
Dollar (₹)	73.56	0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.65	1.32
Euro (₹)	89.41	-0.19
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,371▼460	0.95
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	49.72	-0.25
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.946	-0.010
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.921	0.030

* As of 8:30 PM IST

IIM-B achieves 100% summer placements

All 525 eligible students of IIM Bangalore were recruited for summer placements by over 130 companies, which made 529 offers. Roles offered included in the domains of PE/VC, business analytics, consulting, finance, general management, IT/product management, operations, sales and marketing, IIMB said. Accenture, Amazon, Bain, BCG, Kearney and McKinsey were the top recruiters, it said.

Hyundai gets 30,000 bookings for i20 in 40 days



Hyundai Motor India said it has received around 30,000 bookings for the all-new version of its premium hatchback i20 in last 40 days. It has already delivered 10,000 units of the model, the firm said. "We are witnessing a truly superlative customer response," director (sales, marketing & service) Tarun Garg said. He said 85 per cent of the bookings are for higher trims. Hyundai launched the new i20 on Nov. 5.

UP plans medical colleges in every distt., woos PIOs

The Uttar Pradesh government plans to have a medical college in each of the 75 districts in the state, chief minister Yogi Adityanath has told potential US investors, adding that 30 are being constructed. Addressing an investment and tourism event organised by the Uttar Pradesh Association of North America, Adityanath assured every facility to those who planned to invest in the state.

Godrej Properties tops global sustainability list

Godrej Properties said it has been ranked first among listed global residential developers by Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark (GRESB). In a regulatory filing, the firm said GRESB, which provides environmental, social and governance (ESG) benchmarks for real estate organisations globally, has recognised the company as a real estate development sector leader both globally and in Asia for listed residential real estate.



Seek 51% stake with each staff putting in ₹1 L Employees bid for Air India

RAGINI SAXENA DEC. 14

A group of 219 Air India Ltd employees submitted a bid to purchase 51 per cent of the loss-making state-owned carrier. The remaining 49 per cent will be held by a financial partner, said Meenakshi Malik, Air India's commercial director. Each employee will have to contribute at least Rs 100,000 toward the bid, she said.

Air India has been on sale since 2017 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet signed off on a plan to sell all or part of the debt-ridden carrier. The government sweetened the deal earlier this year when it extended the bid deadline to December 14 from October 30, saying potential suitors will be allowed to decide how much of the flag carrier's debt they want to take on as part of the transaction. The rules before that required bidders to take over the carrier's \$3.3 billion of aircraft debt, deterring buyers.

"We always believed Air India can be a profitable set up," said Malik. "The government has removed a huge part of the debt, so we thought who better than us? We know the airline inside out, we know where the problems are. We're not bidding to win or lose, we're doing it because we believe we can run the airline well."

Air India has been unprofitable since its 2007



merger with state-owned domestic operator Indian Airlines Ltd, and has relied on taxpayer money to keep flying, with the bailouts adding to the pressure on already strained government finances.

The airline, which began operations in 1932 as a mail carrier before winning commercial popularity, saw its fortunes fade with the emergence of cut-throat low-cost competition. The state-run carrier's entire debt totals more than \$8 billion. "The government didn't find a single bidder when it tried to sell the company before."

That said, the airline does have some lucrative assets, including prized slots at London's Heathrow airport, a fleet of more than 100 planes and thousands of trained pilots and crew.

Malik said a financial partner had already been found, without disclosing

that entity's name. Employee participation has come from "the most junior employees to the most senior board members," she said, without elaborating.

A local media report on Monday said that US-based Interups Inc plans to bid with the employees. Interups chairman Laxmi Prasad confirmed the development, telling Moneycontrol that he "will be submitting a bid."

Tata Group is also said to have submitted an expression of interest for Air India over the weekend. Its interest was submitted via AirAsia India, in which Tata Sons Pvt Ltd has a significant majority stake. Singapore Airlines Ltd, with which Tata Sons operates full-service airline Vistara, won't be part of the bid in the initial stages, according to a news report.

— Bloomberg

Burger King more than doubles on debut



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 14

Burger King India shareholders made a bumper listing gain of 130.67 per cent on the stock's debut on the bourses.

Burger King's shares closed at Rs 138.40 per share against the public issue price of Rs 60 for each share of Rs 10 face value.

The public issue of Burger King, a subsidiary of US-based fast food chain, received overwhelming response from investors, with the Rs 810-crore issue getting subscribed 156.65 times.

The shares listed at Rs 115.35 on the BSE, a premium of 92.25 per cent over the public issue price of Rs 60, and at Rs 112.50 on the NSE. The stock moved up till the market close, indicating more upside as the shares closed at the day's high of Rs 138.40 on the BSE and Rs 135 on the NSE.

The market capitalisation of Burger King stood at Rs 5,282.10 crore, close to Rs 6,624.15 crore m-cap of Westlife Development, McDonald's India franchise.

Torrent to invest ₹5,000 cr in Chennai city gas project

New Delhi, Dec. 14: Torrent Gas Ltd on Monday pledged Rs 5,000 crore investment to develop infrastructure to retail CNG to automobiles and piped gas to households and industries in Chennai, the biggest city gas licence in its portfolio.

Torrent Gas, part of the pharma-to-energy Torrent Group, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Government of Tamil Nadu for development of city gas infrastructure at an event in Chennai, the company said.

The firm will lay pipelines and other infra-



structure in Chennai and Tiruvallur districts, covering an area of 3,569 sq. km, to provide piped natural gas (PNG) connections to homes, industries and commercial establishments. It will also set up the infrastructure to dispense compressed nat-

ural gas to automobiles. Torrent Gas holds city gas licence for 16 geographical areas spread across 32 districts covering seven states—UP, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana—and the Union territory of Puducherry. Jinal Mehta, director, Torrent Gas, said, "This investment of Rs 5,000 crore by Torrent Gas in development of CGD infrastructure is expected to have a major impact on the socio-economic development of the region by attracting fresh investment in the state." —PTI

GST shortfall: States, UTs get ₹42,000 cr

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 14

The central government has so far borrowed and released Rs.42,000 crore to states and union territories to meet the GST compensation shortfall of Rs 1.10 lakh crore.

The amount under seven installments was borrowed through the special borrowing window at an average interest rate of 4.7 per cent. Of the 7th weekly instalment of Rs 6,000 crore released on Monday, Rs 5,516.60 crore has gone to 23 states and Rs 483.40 crore to the three union territories. The interest rate on the amount borrowed this week is 5.13 per cent.

The Centre had set up the special borrowing window in October to meet the estimated shortfall of Rs 1.10 Lakh crore in revenue arising on account of implementation of GST. The borrowings are being done via this window on behalf of the states and UTs.

Karnataka has received the highest amount of Rs 5,668.31 crore, followed by Maharashtra at Rs 5,472.11 crore. North-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur have nil GST compensation gap.

The Centre has also granted additional borrowing permission equivalent to 0.50 per cent of GDP to the states choosing Option-I to meet the GST shortfall.

OLA TO INVEST ₹2,400 CRORE IN E-SCOOTER PLANT

New Delhi, Dec. 14: Ride-hailing firm Ola, backed by Japan's SoftBank Group, said on Monday it planned to invest Rs 2,400 crore (\$326 million) to set up a factory in Tamil Nadu to produce electric scooters.

The plant will have an initial annual capacity to produce two million scooters and will create nearly 10,000 jobs, Ola said, as it gears up to launch electric scooters in the coming months.

India needs an investment of over \$180 billion in vehicle production and charging infrastructure until 2030 to meet its EV ambition, says the CEEW Centre for Energy Finance. —Reuters

Pharma funds outshine rest in YTD return

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 14

Pharmaceuticals and healthcare funds have outperformed all other equity mutual fund schemes in Covid-hit 2020 with year-to-date (YTD) returns averaging over 60 per cent, far ahead of equity benchmarks Nifty and Sensex.

Moreover, the funds have more upside left as they had languished for many years before their outper-

formance in 2020, when healthcare has become prime focus area for governments and individuals. DSP Healthcare Fund has given a YTD return of 73.69 per cent, outperforming the BSE Healthcare Index's return of 57.1 per cent. Sensex and Nifty's YTD return, in comparison, are over 12 per cent.

The Mirae Healthcare Fund has given a YTD return of 69.64 per cent while the UTI Healthcare

Fund has given a return of 62.19 per cent. The Nippon India Pharma Fund has given a return of 61 per cent and the Tata India Pharma and Healthcare Fund, 59.97 per cent.

Analysts say more upside is likely for pharma and healthcare funds unlike Sensex and Nifty which are trading at their record highs.

"Besides, there was no lockdown effect on the pharma sector in 2020.

After a long period of revenue degrowth seen in the US market, the trend is reversing, pharma companies are expecting revenue pick up in the main export market," said Meeta Shetty, fund manager-Tata India Pharma Healthcare Fund.

"Also there is a healthy pipeline of launches for the US market that can boost revenue growth in the next two years," Shetty said.

Small-cap rally may run through 2021

NUPUR ACHARYA DEC. 14

The smaller stocks are beating their larger peers for the first time in three years, and some strategists say that outperformance will likely continue at least through next year.

The Nifty Midcap 100 Index has climbed 20 per cent this year, and the Nifty Smallcap 100 Index has advanced 17 per cent, outpacing the 11 per cent gain in the large-cap NSE Nifty 50 Index. While the

Nifty has set a series of new records this year, the smaller gauges remain below their peaks after two years of losses.

Broadly strong corporate earnings, efforts by the government and central bank to bolster the economy, and a surge in retail trading have helped smaller shares start to outperform since summer. And while the Nifty's price-to-earnings multiple has reached an all-time high, the small- and mid-cap gauges are trading at

similar valuations to late 2017, the last year they outperformed the larger index.

"Such turn in performance does not fizzle out so fast, especially when the valuation gap is still there," said Vinod Karki, head of strategy at ICICI Securities Ltd, the largest listed broker. "High liquidity and prospects of economic recovery are perfect recipes for relatively riskier assets such as smaller-sized companies."

Small- and mid-caps fell

over the last two years as concerns over slowing economic growth drove investors to the safety of their larger peers. Now there are hopes for a rebound.

"We believe that the lead current indicators on earnings and sentiment are supportive of a significantly new high over the next 18 to 24 months for the mid-cap and small-cap indexes," said Amit Khurana, head of equities for Dolat Capital Market Pvt Ltd.

— Bloomberg

APP | RIDE Firm plans to launch app-based ride-hailing service in select cities

Amazon's Zoox unveils driverless robotaxi

ED LUDLOW DEC. 14

Zoox Inc, the self-driving startup owned by Amazon.com Inc, unveiled a fully autonomous electric vehicle with no steering wheel that can drive day and night on a single charge.

The vehicle, which Zoox describes as a driverless carriage or robotaxi, can carry as many as four passengers. With a motor at each end, it travels in either direction and maxes out at 75 miles per hour. Two battery packs, one under each row of seats, generate enough juice for 16 hours of run time before recharging, the company said. To commercialise the technology, Zoox plans to launch an app-based ride-

hailing service in cities like San Francisco and Las Vegas.

"This is really about reimagining transportation," Zoox chief executive Aicha Evans said in a television interview. "Not only do we have the capital required, we have the long-term vision."

The company also plans to launch ride-hailing services in other countries, Evans said. Executives didn't say how much rides would cost but that they would be "affordable" and competitive with services operated by Uber Technologies Inc and Lyft Inc. Nor did they say when the service would launch but confirmed it wouldn't happen in 2021. In a video released on Monday,



Evans used Zoox's app to hail the vehicle outside San Francisco's Fairmont hotel and took a spin around the block.

Acquired by Amazon in June for an undisclosed sum, Zoox is one of several companies racing to put fully autonomous vehicles on the road, an effort that's taking longer than anticipated. Most are testing retrofitted conventional cars on public roads, and few are commercially deployed.

In October, Alphabet Inc's self-driving unit Waymo started a fully driverless taxi service in suburban Phoenix. General Motors Co-backed Cruise LLC is also testing autonomous cars—recently without safety drivers—in San Francisco, using a fleet of electric vehicles based on the Chevy Bolt.

Despite being years from deployment, several of Zoox's quirky-looking mint-green vehicles are already being built at a facility in Fremont, California. The factory has the capacity to eventually produce 10,000 to 15,000 units annually, executives said. Suppliers send the major components -- the drive unit, body, battery pack and so on-- pre-assembled, and Zoox then does final

assembly in stages, a process it likens to building a Lego set. Executives declined to reveal the battery supplier.

The unveiling of a production car marks a significant step for a company that has been working on an autonomous passenger vehicle since its founding in 2014. At times Zoox was "ridiculed" for what it was trying to do, chief technology officer Jesse Levinson said.

Zoox isn't the first to unveil a fully autonomous passenger vehicle. GM's Cruise showed off a battery-powered shuttle in January. Called the Origin, it also does away with many of the controls present in conventional cars: pedals, rearview mirrors, steering wheel.

— Bloomberg

Boeing ex-CEO hits ground, to head e-tractor firm



Dennis Muilenburg

JULIE JOHNSON DEC. 14

Former Boeing Co CEO Dennis Muilenburg is joining Monarch Tractor, a Silicon Valley startup that's angling to be the Tesla Inc of the agriculture world with an all-electric tractor that is "driver optional."

While Monarch isn't a household name, it combines longstanding interests for Muilenburg, an engineer by training who grew up on an Iowa farm and served on Caterpillar Inc's board for nine years. He is an investor and adviser as the Livermore, California-based company prepares to deliver the first of its \$50,000 tractors late next year.

"They have all the elements to be a strong, robust, growing business," Muilenburg said in an interview. The former Boeing chief has largely flown under the radar since being ousted a year ago after fumbling the plane-maker's response to two deadly 737 Max accidents and their aftermath. Since then, Muilenburg has pursued passions such as cycling—he's logged 17,000 miles this year—and advising companies with promising technology.

Monarch is one of about a dozen firms working with Muilenburg, who started a consulting business after a 35-year career at Boeing. He's embracing his new role with characteristic intensity, providing pointers to an executive team at Monarch. —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Ex-Reds coach Houllier dies

Paris: Gerard Houllier, a Frenchman who won three titles in one season as coach of English club Liverpool, has died. He was 73. Liverpool announced the death on Twitter on Monday. French sports daily *L'Equipe* said Houllier died following heart surgery in France. "We are mourning the passing of our treble-winning manager, Gerard Houllier," Liverpool wrote on Twitter. Houllier had a mediocre stint as coach of France's national team in the early 1990s, his short-lived journey ending with an embarrassing failure to qualify for the 1994 World Cup. His tenure at Liverpool was far more successful, leading the Reds to the FA Cup, League Cup and UEFA Cup treble in 2001. He is one of only three managers along with Alex Ferguson and Pep Guardiola to have won three trophies with an English club in the same season. — AP

Shuttlers alerted about fake events

New Delhi: The Badminton Association of India on Monday again cautioned its players, coaches and technical staff and asked them to stay away from unauthorised tournaments after it came to light that a Goa-based organisation is conducting such an event next month. According to a release issued by BAI, Goa-based organisation Youth & Sports Development Association of India is conducting the third National Federation Cup next month in Madgaon, Goa with the organisers claiming that it will be a selection trial for upcoming international championships. "Neither BAI nor its affiliated unit Goa Badminton Association is aware about such tournaments and organisation," BAI General Secretary Ajay Singhania said in the release. — PTI

Hockey side for foreign tour soon

Bengaluru: His side's Olympic preparation hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic, Indian men's hockey team chief coach Graham Reid is hoping to resume international action from early next year. The Australian said the sooner India gets to play international matches, the better will be their preparations for the Tokyo Games, which has been shifted to next year due to the global pandemic. "With the support of Hockey India, we have planned for matches from early next year. These matches will ideally show us the level we are truly at and the areas that will require work on leading into the Olympic Games," Reid said in a statement issued by Hockey India. — PTI

Injured Neymar stretchered off

Rio de Janeiro: Brazilian star Neymar gave fans a reassuring message on Monday after undergoing tests on the ankle he injured in Paris Saint-Germain's 1-0 Ligue 1 defeat to Lyon at the weekend. Neymar left the field on a stretcher in apparent agony on Sunday but on Instagram he said: "It could have been worse." "These tears, it's the pain, the fear, the worry, the surgeries, the crutches and other bad memories," Neymar wrote on his Instagram story alongside a picture of him in tears clutching his ankle. It was a reference to previous injuries he has suffered — notably twice breaking his foot — since joining the French champions in 2017.— AFP

Live on TV

CRICKET

Big Bash League: Hobart Hurricanes vs. Adelaide Strikers from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

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

English Premier League: Wolves vs Chelsea from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Italian League: Udinese vs Crotone from 11 pm (Wednesday) on Lazio from 11.15 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

Printed and published from Anantapur by K.Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Deccan Chronicle Press, Bye-Pass Road, Tapovanam, Anantapur - 515004
RNI Registration No. APENG/1999/401
Editorial : 276068 Phones : 276904, 276905
Editor: Kaushik Mitter

Finch wary of Virat

Aaron warns Aussies about 'ruthless' Kohli

Melbourne, Dec. 14: Australia limited-overs captain Aaron Finch wants the home team players to strike a "fine balance" when they confront Virat Kohli in the opening Test as he believes, if provoked too much, the India skipper can be "ruthless" against his opponents.

India and Australia have always shared an intense rivalry on the field, filled with verbal volleys, banter and controversies over the years.

The last time the two teams faced off in 2018-19, the Test series saw some heated exchanges between the two captains — Kohli and Tim Paine.

"I think there will be times when things boil over and when you have got strong characters on either team that's going to come to a head at some point," Finch was quoted as saying by *'Sydney Morning Herald'*.

"(But) there is a fine balance there, isn't there? You don't want him (Kohli) to get up and about in the contest. When he does, he can be ruthless on an opposition."

The first Test of the four-game series, a day-night contest, begins on Thursday in Adelaide and it gains prominence since Kohli will be returning home after the match for the birth of his first child.

Finch, who was part of the last home Test series between the two teams, said the Indian skipper looks much calmer the way he goes about his job now.

"I think the change is in the way he goes about it now. I think as a person he is probably a bit more relaxed out on the field and understands the tempo of the game."

Finch, who had played under Kohli in



A file photo of India captain Virat Kohli (left) and Australia's Aaron Finch.

— AFP

Royal Challengers Bangalore, said he was "surprised" to see the Indian's confidence in this year's IPL.

"What really surprised me was how, he obviously does a lot of planning and preparation himself, and into the opposition, but he never focused more on the opposition than his own team," he said.

"At Bangalore, he was always confident in the XI players that were picked and knew that if you played well, you had every chance of winning."

As someone who had many on-field duels with Kohli, Finch said it was good to learn about his relaxed side.

— PTI

HENRIQUES REPLACES INJURED ABBOTT

Sydney, Dec. 14: All-rounder Moises Henriques was on Monday added to Australia's injury-hit squad for the opening Test against India while pacer Sean Abbott was ruled out of the match due to a calf strain.

Henriques, who had missed the three-day second practice game due to a hamstring strain, cleared the fitness Test on Monday to return to the Test squad after a gap of four years. The opening game, a day-nighter, begins on December 17 in Adelaide.

"All-rounder Moises Henriques has been added to Australia's squad for the first Test against India

after the hosts' camp continues to be hit with injury," a report in *cricket.com.au* said.

Abbott became the latest Australian player to join the injury list after being picked up the strain during the second warm-up game here. He is, however, expected to be available for the second Test in Melbourne, which begins on December 26.

Abbott, who had taken three wickets in India's first innings, will not travel with the team to Adelaide.

"Fast bowler Sean Abbott will not travel to Adelaide with Henriques and the remaining Australia squad members from Sydney

today after picking up a calf strain in the day-night tour match at the SCG on Saturday."

Henriques last played a Test more than four years ago in Sri Lanka. He made a comeback to the national set-up after three years by featuring in the limited-overs series against India. He is the second player after Marcus Harris to be added late to the Test squad.

Harris was included in the squad for the opening Test following a spate of injuries, including David Warner and opener Will Pucovski being ruled out of the first game due to a groin injury. — PTI

NZ BEAT WINDIES IN SECOND TEST TO SWEEP SERIES

Wellington, Dec. 14: New Zealand joined Australia atop world cricket's Test rankings on Monday when they beat the West Indies by an innings and 12 runs in the second Test to sweep the two-match series.

The West Indies resumed their second innings at 244/6 on the fourth day, trailing New Zealand by 85 runs after following on 329 behind.

The tourists were eventually out for 317, their highest innings total of the series.

New Zealand made a positive start on Monday after a short rain delay, dismissing West Indies captain Jason Holder for 61 in the fourth over of the day and ending his 82-run partnership with Joshua Da Silva.

Holder was bowled by Tim Southee with a fuller ball which straightened and beat the outside edge of the bat. — AP

Brief scores: New Zealand 460 bt West Indies 131 & 317 (Jason Holder 61, da Silva 57, Wagner 3-54, Boult 3-96).

INDIAN | SUPER LEAGUE

Mumbai fail to crack open JFC

Goa, Dec. 14: A flurry of missed chances saw table-toppers Mumbai City FC settle for only a 1-1 draw against Jamshedpur FC in the Indian Super League at the GMC Stadium, here on Monday.

Owen Coyle's men took the lead through Nerijus Valskis (9') before Mumbai hit back through Bartholomew Ogbeche (15'). A red card for Aitor Monroy around the half-hour mark saw Jamshedpur reduced to ten-men but some dogged defending and a number of missed chances for Mumbai, saw the former get away with a draw.

Mumbai dominated the early exchanges as Monroy had to dive to block Ogbeche's shot as early as the first minute. But it was Jamshedpur who drew first blood. Just nine minutes had passed when Jackichand Singh found Valskis in the penalty box. The Lithuanian's first-time shot was unerring. Barely three minutes later, Monroy could only find the side netting from a free-kick.

Monroy was in the thick of things a couple of minutes later, hacking Cy Goddard down and getting himself in the referee's book.

Then, Mumbai found their equaliser. Adam Le Fondre made a run down the right before squaring the ball to Bipin Singh. The

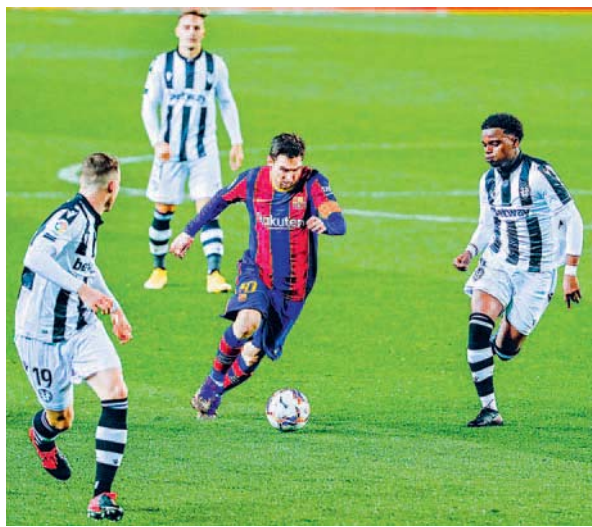
HYDERABAD FACE EB IN TRICKY TIE

Vasco, Dec. 14: Hyderabad FC will be keen to continue their unbeaten run when they take on a struggling SC East Bengal in an Indian Super League fixture at the Tilak Maidan here on Tuesday.

Four games into the season, Hyderabad FC are one of just three teams that are yet to lose a game a win and three draws) and they will be eager to convert their efforts into a victory, against the ISL debutants.

SC East Bengal have not had the best of starts to the season. They are yet to score a goal, but logged first point in the league table in a feisty clash against Jamshedpur last Thursday. They remain bottom of the table but could prove to be one of the biggest tests for Hyderabad so far this season. — PTI

latter found Ogbeche and the Nigerian unleashed a powerful drive past Jamshedpur keeper T.P. Rehenesh. — Agencies



Barcelona's Lionel Messi (centre) vies for the ball with Levante players during their La Liga match at the Camp Nou in Barcelona on Sunday. — AP

Messi comes to Catalans' rescue

Madrid, Dec. 14: Lionel Messi saved Barcelona from another embarrassing result by scoring the decisive goal in a 1-0 win over lowly Levante, while Real Sociedad returned top of La Liga on Sunday.

Messi struck with 14 minutes remaining of a lacklustre display from Barca at the Camp Nou which will do little to ease fan fears following their 3-0 hammering at the hands of Juventus midweek.

Ronald Koeman's side are still way off the pace in the title race, nine points behind Real Sociedad who reclaimed first place despite only drawing 1-1 with Elibar.

Barcelona do however have two games in hand on the Basque outfit. Atletico are level on 26 points with Sociedad and also have two games in hand while Real Madrid

are now just three points behind the leaders having played one less after beating their local rivals 2-0 on Saturday.

Villarreal are four points off the lead in fourth after drawing 1-1 at Real Betis, who are one point behind Barca in ninth.

Barca managed to force several saves from Aitor Fernandez, with the Levante goalkeeper doing particularly well to push away a stinging shot from Martin Braithwaite in the 16th minute and Antoine Griezman's header five minutes later.

However the best chance of the opening period fell to Jorge de Frutos in the 12th minute, the Spaniard somehow shooting straight at Marc-Andre ter Stegen after the ball broke kindly for him right in front of goal. — AFP

Saha has an edge over Pant

New Delhi, Dec. 14: Wriddhiman Saha's far superior glove-work may be given preference over Rishabh Pant's blazing blade in India's opening day/night Test against Australia, starting at the Adelaide Oval from Thursday.

One of the most hotly debated topics going into the first Test has been the Indian team's probable playing XI, with the jury still out on whether the better keeper in 36-year-old Saha pips the better batsman that the 23-year-old Pant is.

The Indian team management has kept its cards close to its chest with Hanuma Vihari terming it a "healthy competition" that augurs well for the side.

There is a school of thought in the team that Saha's superior glove-work and also safe batting should be valued more at this point of time.

Coach Ravi Shastri, captain Virat Kohli, assistant coaches Vikram Rathour, Bharat Arun and travelling selector Harvinder Singh will be assessing

GAVASKAR FEELS THERE WILL BE NO PRESSURE OF CAPTAINCY ON RAHANE

New Delhi, Dec. 14: Ajinkya Rahane will not be bogged down by the pressure of captaincy if he leads India in the last three Tests against Australia in Virat Kohli's absence, feels batting great Sunil Gavaskar.

With Kohli going on paternity leave after the opening day-night Test against Australia in Adelaide, Rahane is expected to lead the team in the remainder of the four-Test series.

"There is no real pressure on Ajinkya Rahane, because both the times



Ajinkya Rahane

that he has led the team, he has won. He led against Australia at Dharamshala and India won. He led against Afghanistan and India

won," Gavaskar said during Star Sports show.

"So, as far as his captaincy is concerned, there is going to be no pressure because he knows he is at the moment, only the stand-in captain for the 3 Test matches.

"So, I don't think the fact about being a captain or carrying on as captain is going to be part of his thinking at all."

Rahane had captained the side during the two warm-up games which ended in draws. — PTI

both Pant and Saha's performance based on their individual contributions in match situations.

Saha's 54 came when India could have lost the game and he bailed the team out while facing a top-quality attack. The score read 143 for nine

and the team could have lost to Australia A, but he guided a young Kartik Tyagi, scored his runs and saved the game.

The attack that Saha faced had James Pattinson, Michael Neser and Cameron Green, which was international

standard.

Compared to that, Pant came after India had already taken control of the pink ball dress rehearsal with leg-spinner Mitchell Swepson and part-timer Nick Maddinson in operation. — PTI



Leicester's James Maddison (right) celebrates his goal against Brighton in their Premier League match at the King Power Stadium in Leicester on Sunday. — AP

Leaders Spurs, Liverpool held

London, Dec. 14: Tottenham and Liverpool remain tied at the top of the Premier League after both were held to 1-1 draws at Crystal Palace and Fulham respectively, while Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's own goal condemned Arsenal to another shocking home defeat, going down 1-0 to Burnley on Sunday.

Leicester took advantage of slip ups by the top two to close to within one point of the leaders as James Maddison scored twice in a 3-0 rout over Brighton and Southampton are up to fourth as they also comfortably saw off Sheffield United 3-0.

Liverpool and Tottenham

THE RESULTS

Crystal Palace (Schlupp 81)	1
Tottenham (Kane 23)	1
Southampton (Adams 34, Armstrong 62, Redmond 83)	3
Sheffield United	0

face each other at Anfield on Wednesday and, after Chelsea, Manchester City and Manchester United failed to win on Saturday, they both missed the chance to open up a gap at the top in the title race.

The champions needed a Mohamed Salah penalty 11

Fulham (De Cordova-Reid 25)	1
Liverpool (Salah 79-pen)	1
Arsenal Burnley (Aubameyang 73-og)	0
Leicester (Maddison 27, 44, Vardy 41)	3
Brighton	0

minutes from time to avoid an embarrassing defeat at Fulham after a dreadful first-half performance left Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp seething on the touchline.

"We needed half an hour to get our feet in the game, that's why I shouted a bit at

them," said Klopp. "I think in the first half an hour we could have lost the game, in the last 60 minutes we should have won it. In the end we get a point and that's it."

Bobby DeCordova-Reid's thunderous finish into the far corner to take the lead was no more than Scott Parker's side deserved as the returning Alisson Becker kept Liverpool in the game before the break. Liverpool dominated the second-half to pin Fulham back, but needed a penalty to salvage a point when Aboubakar Kamara was penalised for handling Georginio Wijnaldum's free-kick. — AFP