

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | FRIDAY | 11 DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER
Max: 32.0°C
Min: 18.0°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: NIL
Forecast: Mostly Clear.
Max/Min temp.
32/18 °C

COVID-19

COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+33,346)	(+479)
97,95,596	1,42,214

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+643)

(+2)

TS: 2,75,904

1,482

(+538)

(+2)

AP: 8,73,995

7,047

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

6,96,28,901

DEATHS

15,83,252

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

218

worldometers.info/

coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana

Tithi: Kartika Bahula Ekadasi till 10.02 am

Star: Chitta till 8.46 am

Varjyam: 1.50 pm to 3.17 pm

Durmuhurtam: 8.52 am to 9.35 am; 12.31 pm to 1.15 pm

Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

HILARI CALENDAR

Rabbi-ul Akhir 25, 1442 AH

PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5.30 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 4.15 pm

Maghrib: 5.38 pm

Isha: 8.30 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.22 AM

SUNSET TODAY 5.30 PM

MOONRISE TODAY 2.37 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 3.28 PM

COUNTER POINT

Don't worry, sir...
we will dig all
national highways!

IN BRIEF

Kamal Haasan on campaign trail

Chennai: Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) chief Kamal Haasan will launch his campaign for the 2021 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections from December 13 onwards, the party said on Thursday.

The actor-politician will embark on his first phase of campaign between December 13-16, MNM Vice president, Dr R. Mahendran said.

Drone spotted at IB, says BSF

Jammu: A drone was spotted flying over the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir's RS Pura sector, BSF officials said. Alert BSF troops at the border outpost fired on the drone, forcing it to return back, officials said.



NATION | 4
Rajnath suggests restraint for peace



WORLD | 5
3,054 die of Covid in 24 hours in US

SPORTS | 8
Italy's 1982 World Cup hero Paolo Rossi dead



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Will block trains: Farmers

Tomar urges agitating farmers to consider Centre's plan

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

Not satisfied with the Centre's offer to amend new agriculture laws, the farmers' unions on Thursday said that they won't relent on their demand of "complete roll-back" and threatened to block railway tracks across the country in coming days. It was despite agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar urging protesting farmers to consider the Centre's proposals and said that he is ready for further discussions with them. "We will block railway tracks if new farm laws are not immediately rolled back... We will decide on the date and announce it soon. The Centre has admitted that laws have been promulgated for traders. If agriculture is a state subject, the Centre does not have the right to make laws on it," said farmer leader Balbir Singh Rajewal after agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar and food and public distribution minister Piyush Goyal invited farmers' leaders for another round of talks. So far, the leaders have held several round of talks with the Central ministers.

The farmer leaders issued fresh threat to block railway tracks just a day after they had out-

FOLLOWING INDIA PROTESTS CLOSELY, SAYS BRITAIN AFTER JOHNSON'S GAFFE

London, Dec. 10: The UK Foreign Office is closely following the protests by farmers in India, a government spokesperson said on Thursday as it clarified that Prime Minister Boris

Johnson had "clearly misheard" a question when he responded with Britain's stance on the India-Pakistan dispute instead.

■ Full report on Page 5



Farmers offer prayer at the Ghazipur border during their ongoing protest against the Centres new agri-laws in New Delhi, Thursday,

rightly rejected the Centre's draft proposal to amend the new farm laws. They had rejected a 20-page proposal offered by the Centre for it being

"vague". The agitated leaders had announced to intensify their agitation by blocking highways from Saturday and by organising sit-in

● **THE FARMER** leaders issued fresh threat to block railway tracks just a day after they had outrightly rejected the Centre's draft proposal to amend the new farm laws. They rejected the proposal by the Centre calling it 'vague'

protests across the country on Monday. They had also threatened to gherao the residences and offices of the BJP leaders and ministers.

With the farmers' protests entering 15th day, the agriculture minister said on Thursday that it was not right to escalate protests when talks were still on. He said, "The talks are still on. There is no breakdown. Farmers should express their views during the talks."

Referring to farmers' demand to repeal the farm laws, Mr Tomar said "no law is completely bad". He said that the government is ready to discuss the specific clauses in the farm laws that the farmers think can hurt them. "We have sent them our proposal just on Wednesday and they have announced the next phase of agitation. This is not correct. I again appeal them to withdraw their agitation and start discussions."



Prime Minister Narendra Modi lays the foundation stone of the New Parliament Building during a ceremony, in New Delhi on Thursday.

— PTI

New Parliament to be sign of self-reliant India: Modi

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday performed the ground-breaking ceremony to mark the symbolic launch of the new Parliament building as part of the "controversial" Central Vista plan.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Modi said that it would be a symbol of a new and self-reliant India as well as a rich testament

to the nation's cultural heritage. The ceremony was a symbolic one as on December 7, the Supreme Court had come down heavily on the Centre for "aggressively" going ahead with the project, even though a slew of petitions against the project are still being heard by the top court. It had asked the Centre not to carry out any construction or demolition activity but at the same time allowed it to perform a symbolic cere-

mony. The proposed four-storied building to cover an area of around 13 acres is a stone's throw from the Rashtrapati Bhavan. It is the highlight of the government's ambitious ₹20,000-crore Central Vista project. There are plans to finish the building before the country's 75th Independence Day in 2022, but construction cannot begin yet as a legal challenge to the Project is pending in the Supreme Court.

Mystery illness cases falls to 13

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 10

In a major relief to the state administration there has been a gradual decline in the number of the mystery illness cases with only 13 fresh cases reported in Eluru on Thursday.

The state health authorities maintain that none of 13 cases have shown any convulsions unlike in earlier cases and patients complained about giddiness. After taking rest for some time and getting medication in the government hospital at Eluru, they were back to normal in a short while.

However, the authorities collected their blood and urine samples and sent them for analysis. At present, 32 patients are undergoing treatment at the government hospital in Eluru and another 23 in the government hospital at Vijayawada. So far one death due to mystery illness has been reported and two deaths reported in Vijayawada were due to other health problems even though the patients were referred from Eluru.

The health authorities say that both AIIMS and NIN confirmed the presence of lead in the blood samples of affected persons as of the 50 samples tested by AIIMS, 80% were found to be with lead while 10 samples

SAMPLES OF ANIMALS IN VICINITY TAKEN

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 10

Medical research teams from different institutions collected and took blood samples from animals, birds and fowl like buffalos, cows, hens and fish, which are consumed as non-vegetarian food in Eluru and in the vicinity to find out root-cause for the mystery illness that is creating a flutter.

According to sources, the central teams found the presence of lead, nickel and pesticide residues in the blood samples of patients.

■ Page 2: Blood samples results awaited

● **HEALTH AUTHORITIES** say that both AIIMS and NIN confirmed the presence of lead in the blood samples of affected persons as of the 50 samples tested by AIIMS, 80% were found to be with lead while 10 samples tested by NIN, also found its presence.

tested by NIN, also found similar presence.

■ Page 2: Organochlorine concentrations studied

BJP, JANA SENA TO CONTEST FOR LS FROM TIRUPATI

DC CORRESPONDENTS
VIJAYAWADA/NELLORE, DEC. 10

The BJP-Jana Sena alliance will fight the Tirupati Lok Sabha bypoll. "We have an alliance with the Jana Sena in AP and will continue with it to contest in Tirupati Lok Sabha bypoll. However, we have not yet decided on the nominee," said BJP MP and party's national spokesperson G.V.L. Narasimha Rao.

AP BJP sources said that they are holding a state level executive committee meeting in Tirupati on December 12 to come up with political resolutions on the party's strategy for AP.

■ Page 2: BJP failure in special status haunting

WEEKLONG PROTESTS FOR AMARAVATI

Vijayawada: Leaders of various political parties and organisations decided to protest in various forms from December 12 to 17 on the one-year completion of the Amaravati movement. A decision to this regard was taken by Amaravati Parirakshana Samiti JAC during a roundtable meeting here on Thursday.

■ Full report on Page 2

Lead kindly light



Women busy preparing pots for the Deepotsavam on the eve of Sri Vaari Karteeka Sahasra Deepotsavam organised by TTD at MGM Grounds in Visakhapatnam on Thursday.

KCR hints at 2nd global airport in TS at Siddipet

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 10

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao hinted at the possibility of Telangana state getting its second international airport at Siddipet in the near future on Thursday. He said this while laying the foundation stone for an IT Park at Duddeda village in Kondapak Mandal of Siddipet district.

The airport, when it materialises, will be in addition to the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport at Shamshabad.

"Siddipet is a dynamic place and is close to Hyderabad. We can expect another international airport in the area around Siddipet in the future. The establishment of an IT Tower will facilitate development of Siddipet on all fronts," the CM said.



Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao lauds finance minister T. Harish Rao for his contribution in developing Siddipet district on Thursday.

The IT Tower in Siddipet is being constructed by the state government at a cost of over ₹45 crore in three acres with a built-up area of 60,000 square feet in two phases. The first phase is expected to be completed in a year.

Rao said that it is fortunate that four entrepre-

neurs from Siddipet who settled in the US had come forward to set up their establishments in the IT Tower.

He said the four firms will provide employment to 900 people and that the four entrepreneurs have already signed MoUs with the IT department.

8 WOMEN SOLD TO ARABS AS HOUSE HELPS

ATHER MOIN | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 10

More than eight Hyderabad women are stranded in different parts of United Arab Emirates (UAE) after being cheated in the name of employment by a notorious local agent Mohammed Shafi of Misri Gunj. They were allegedly sold to Arab families. It is learnt that personnel from Task Force South Zone apprehended Shafi and handed him over to the CCS.

Parents of the eight women, Amreen Begum, Nazia Begum, Yasmeen Begum, Raheema Begum, Kaneez Fatima, Meher Unnisa Begum, Asma Begum and Zareena Begum addressed a letter to the MEA for help to rescue them.

Jagananna Jeeva Kranthi launched

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 10

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy launched another welfare scheme in the state on Thursday. He virtually launched the Jagananna Jeeva Kranthi scheme under which 2.49 lakh units of sheep and goats will be distributed in three phases at a cost of ₹1,869 crore.

Jagan stated that the scheme aims to raise the

● **THE CM** stated that the scheme aims to raise the living standards of women financially with less labour and investment.

● **HE PREDICTED** more economic development that will eventually benefit farmers with the promotion of agriculturally allied sectors.

● **HE EXPLAINED** that each unit of sheep and goats will consists of 15 sheep or goats (with one ram or billy) in each unit.

living standards of women financially with less labour and investment. He predicted more economic

development that will eventually benefit farmers with the promotion of agriculturally allied sectors.

Speaking on the occasion, the CM explained that under the scheme, women belonging to the Backward Class (BC), the Scheduled Caste (SC), and the Scheduled Tribe (ST) between the age groups of 45 and 60 years will benefit. He further explained that each unit consists of 15 sheep or goats (with one ram or billy) in each unit.

■ Page 2: AP to facilitate women to buy animals

OTHER STORIES

GUV CONGRATULATES PM FOR SETTING STONE FOR NEW PARLIAMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 10

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for setting the foundation stone for construction of new Parliament building under Central Vista Project in New Delhi on Thursday.

The Governor in his letter addressed to the PM, stated that the new Parliament building would become an icon for Indian democracy and opined that it would reflect the aspirations of new India. He wished for successful completion of the new Parliament building by 2022 to coincide with the 75th Independence Day celebrations. The Governor participated in the foundation laying for the new Parliament building by the PM through virtual mode from Raj Bhavan.

NAIDU APPLAUDS MODI ON CENTRAL VISTA PROJECT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 10

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday applauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi, describing the new Parliament complex project as an important milestone in the independent democratic history of India.

He congratulated the PM on the occasion of the foundation stone laying ceremony of the new Parliament building in Delhi on Thursday. He said that the Central Government's 'Central Vista' project would represent the aspirations of India as a whole considering its significance in putting in place an effective centralised administration.

NTR VARSITY INVITES APPLICATIONS ONLINE FOR ADMISSION

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 10

NTR university of health sciences issued notification inviting online application form and uploading of scanned original certificates for admission into MBBS/BDS courses in management quota (Category B and C) seats in private, un-aided, non-minority and minority medical/dental colleges affiliated to the university and also for NRI category seats in Sri Padmavathi Medical College for Women, Tirupati for the academic year 2020-21.

The same application form will be considered for all rounds of counselling including MOP-UP round of counselling. The submission of online application form and uploading of scanned original certificates will commence at 8 am on December 11 and close at 8 am on December 16 at the website: <https://appvtmedadm.aphtuhs.in>.

WATER ADEQUATELY TREATED BEFORE SUPPLY: KMC CHIEF

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, DEC. 10

Kurnool Municipal Commissioner D.K. Balaji has said raw water is not drawn directly from Tungabhadra to meet the drinking needs of Kurnool city.

In a rejoinder to a news item "Kurnool shocked by quality of KMC water" published in these columns on Thursday, he said water is drawn from KC Canal and adequately treated before supply. Clear water with residual chlorine of 2 ppm is maintained and supplied to the entire city as per standards, he said adding that proper treatment is also done for sedimentation of solids. Hourly levels are taken to check chlorine levels, he added.

Our correspondent replies: We stand by our report that Tungabhadra river is highly polluted and the same is drawn from Sunkesula barrage for supply to Kurnool city.

The AP Pollution Control Board data clearly shows that high density of coliform is found in the upstream of Sunkesula. The objective of the report is to highlight the contamination of river water which is being consumed by several people in Kurnool city and surrounding areas without treatment as they are out of the protected water supply area and recent incidents proved contamination of water even after treatment. The KMC on the other hand is letting out drainage into Tungabhadra and polluting the river in the absence of sewerage treatment plant.

Govt to facilitate ladies to buy animals on their own

Sheep and goats will be distributed in three phases

from page 1

The state will facilitate and give suggestions if the women want to buy the animals on their own.

"The state government has signed MoUs with Reliance, Allana group, Amul, HUL, Procter & Gamble and ITC to collaborate and empower women beneficiaries of YSR Cheyutha and Aasara schemes. The main objective of partnerships is to provide more business opportunities and bring self-reliance among women, by providing assistance for better investments. He said that Allana Group would buy the meat as the government has entered into an agreement with that firm. However, if the price anywhere else is more remunerative than Allana, women can sell their produce directly and there is no compulsion that they have to sell to Allana only. Allana Group is setting up meat processing units in East Godavari and Kurnool districts," Jagan said.

The Chief Minister also launched the distribution of 4.69 lakh cows and buffaloes for ₹3,500 crore to strengthen dairy sector. The total investment is ₹5,400 crore when one takes into account the 2.49 lakh units of sheep and goats. He said that the government is committed to women's welfare and their empowerment by launching various schemes like YSR Cheyutha, Aasara, Zero-interest loans, Sampoorna Poshana, Jagananna Vidya Deevena, Vasati Deevena, 50 per cent reservation in nominated posts and nominated works. Also, 31 lakh house sites are going to be distributed for women and



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is felicitated by shepherds after he launched the 'Jagananna Jeeva Kranthi' scheme from the camp office on Thursday. Ministers S. Appalaraju, Ch. Venu and others are also seen.

MP APPRISES CM ON VIZAG PROJECTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 10

Vizag Lok Sabha member M.V.V. Satyanarayana called on Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and spent four hours discussing the ongoing projects in Visakhapatnam district.

The MP was specific on getting water from Godavari to Visakhapatnam permanently to solve the drink-

ing water crisis in the urban areas. He also talked about the house committee recommendation on land disputes in Gajuwaka area, the progress of greenfield B h o g a p u r a m International airport, jobs for RR cardholders of steel plant displaced, the four-lane road between Araku and Pendurthi and six-lane road between Vizag beach and Bhogapuram.

In the second phase from April - August 2021, 1,30,000 units will be distributed, and in the third phase from September - December 2021, another 99,000 units would be dis-

tributed. Training centres for sheep breeding will be set up in Dhone of Kurnool district and Penugonda of Anantapur district, where they train them and issue certificates.

Irfan Allana, chairman of the Allana Group, said that they would be more supportive of the schemes and programmes being implemented by the state government. He said it was the right time to set up a mango processing unit along with meat processing units in the state, which was welcomed by the Chief Minister. He suggested that good breeds of goats and sheep are available in countries like Britain, Australia and South Africa, which can be provided to farmers for higher returns.

BJP failure in SCS haunting

from page 1

It is for the first time, the state level party leaders are meeting after its senior leader Somu Veerraju was anointed as party president in the state.

In the backdrop of the BJP failing to accord special category status to AP even after its national campaign committee chairman and Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised to do so while addressing the public meeting at Tirupati, sources say that the BJP leaders are worried it will impact the bypoll affecting the prospects of the party's nominee.

There is also the recent controversy over funding of the Polavaram irrigation project that is troubling the party. They felt their party's bypoll victory in Dubbak Assembly segment in Telangana cannot be taken for granted in AP as their party's strength varies in both the states.

Moreover, Jana Sena has sought the LS seat for itself as their nominee got more votes in the last election than the BJP. They said their party should be given some weightage to nominate its candidate under a mutual understanding.

In a related development at Nellore, BJP Yuva Morchha state president K. Surendra Mohan said that both BJP and Jana Sena

VEERRAJU VOWS TO COMPLETE ALL PENDING PROJECTS IN AP IF BJP VOTED TO POWER

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, DEC. 10

State BJP president Somu Veerraju vowed to complete execution of all pending projects once his party was elected to power in the elections to be held in 2024 in the state.

Addressing the party leaders and supporters at a meeting held here on Thursday, the BJP senior leader slammed Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for coming up with a whopping estimate of ₹40,000 crore to complete all the projects and said that his estimate was meant to fill his pockets.

He assured to complete all projects in Rayalaseema at a cost of ₹20,000

crore. The BJP MLC turned critical on TD supremo N. Chandrababu Naidu also, for failing to build the capital city Amaravati despite making tall claims on its designs.

Referring to establishment of the prestigious AIIMS in Mangalagiri at a cost of ₹1,800 crore by the Centre, the BJP leader asked as to why Naidu failed to build Amaravati with ₹7,200 crore.

Reacting to the practice of dynastic politics by some political parties in Tamil Nadu, Telangana and AP, the BJP senior leader asserted that the days were nearing to oust such parties from power.

would form an alliance to contest for Tirupati Lok Sabha seat and added that they would expose the failures of the YSR Congress government.

He said, "Though YSRC president and CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy was not so experienced, the people elected him in the hope that he will work honestly." However, he hinted that the CM failed to live up to the expectations of the people.

Referring to the YSRC government extending

FEE | ROW

Tollgate staff lodge complaint against Revathi for attacking employees

Woman leader and tollgate staff create chaos in Kaza

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 10

The video clip of AP Vaddera Corporation chairperson, Devalla Revathi, creating ruckus at a tollgate in Kaza went viral while the tollgate staff lodged a complaint against Revathi, for attacking the employees without paying the toll fee.

Refuting the allegations, Revathi defended herself and alleged that the toll staff scolded her for 30 minutes when she was shifting her mother to a hospital at Vijayawada for

emergency treatment and further abused car driver. She stated that the toll plaza released an edited video and said that the whole abusive episode of staff would be released to show the facts.

The video clip showed her forcibly removing the barricade from the lane, slapping an employee and trying to attack them. Then she left the toll plaza after the barricade was removed. The toll plaza staff in their complaint alleged that she had refused to pay toll fee and tried to move out from the



AP State Vaddera Corporation chairperson Devalla Revathi pushes the barricades against Kaza Toll Plaza staff near Kaza village of Guntur district on Thursday.

free lane meant for non-toll vehicles. They submitted a video clip with their complaint to Mangalagiri

Weeklong protests for Amaravati from tomorrow

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 10

Leaders of various political parties and organizations decided to protest in various forms from December 12 to 17 on the one-year completion of the Amaravati movement. Amaravati Parirakshana Samiti JAC conducted a roundtable meeting here on Thursday in which leaders from Telugu Desam, Congress, Communists and other political parties expressed their support to the Amaravati movement.

IUML AP president Basheer Ahmed announced their party's support to the protests.

He said that Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao faced humiliating defeats due to his dictatorial administration and similar results would befall Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. He suggested continuing Amaravati as the main capital and sought the government to start benches in other regions for administrative purposes.

● APSJAC convener A. Siva Reddy said that the week-long Amaravati protests would start with Amaravati Padayatra in Guntur on Saturday and a big public meeting would be held at Amaravati foundation place on December 17.

TD politburo member Varla Ramaiah asserted that women leading the Amaravati movement would prove more effective. He claimed that TDP was supporting the movement and asked APSJAC to muster support from all sections of the society.

CPI state secretary K. Ramakrishna alleged that the YSRC government was sponsoring a counter-movement in support of the three capitals against the Amaravati movement.

CPM state secretary P. Madhu urged the people to intensify Amaravati agitations on the lines of

farmers agitations at Delhi against the three agriculture bills. He sought collective protests to pressurise the government for cancellation of three capitals decisions.

APCC working president Sk. Mastan Vali sought to conduct bus yatras in all districts to gather support. He announced that they were supporting Amaravati as sole capital of the State and would participate in the agitations.

Praising the efforts of women and farmers for conducting Amaravati protests for the past one year Congress woman leader Sunkara Padmasree said that women would be in the forefront in Amaravati movement till cancellation of three capitals decision by the government.

APSJAC convener A. Siva Reddy said that the week-long Amaravati protests would start with Amaravati Padayatra in Guntur on Saturday and a big public meeting would be held at Amaravati foundation place on December 17.

AG URGES HC NOT TO INTERFERE IN STATE'S DECISION

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 10

Advocate General S. Sriram has urged the High Court not to interfere in the AP government's decision to set up three capitals.

Arguing in the hearing held on a batch of petitions challenging the acts of decentralisation and repeal of CRDA by the Division Bench headed by Chief Justice J.K. Maheswari here on Thursday, the Advocate General said that there was no need for the courts to interfere as long as the governments take decisions keeping in mind the welfare for all the people. He informed the court that the previous government ignored the interests of the majority section of the people in the state in order to safeguard the interests of a few people.

The AG informed the court that as the state government made a legislation on its decision to set up three capitals, it would be unfair to interfere in it by the court. He argued that the state government had taken such decision keeping in mind its financial position so that it could set up three capitals with less amount when compared to developing a capital city in large area spending huge amount of money.

He also informed the court that attributing wrong motives on the legislature especially in passing legislation on three capitals was unwarranted.

The AG informed the court that the state government had taken all requisite measures to protect the rights of the farmers who offered their lands for development of capital city Amaravati.

● APSJAC convener A. Siva Reddy said that the week-long Amaravati protests would start with Amaravati

From Page 1

Now, the authorities intend to find out the presence of organochlorine concentrations in the blood and urine of the affected persons by carrying out enzyme estimation for acetylcholinesterase. As concentrations of organochlorine in the blood cannot be found easily due to quick metabolism, the authorities have to rely upon enzyme estimation to find out its presence.

Meanwhile, teams of officials from National Center for Disease Control and National Institute of Nutrition are visiting several affected parts in Eluru and also its suburban areas to collect samples of food, vegetables, water and even the

leftover food of the affected persons for analysis to find out the reasons for the mystery illness.

On the other hand, Central agencies like AIIMS, NIN and IICET are expected to submit their test reports on Friday while CCMB will do so on Wednesday. Department of agriculture has also been roped in to find out about the type of pesticides being used by the farmers to raise crops.

Director of health Dr T. Geeta Prasadini said "We are hopeful of finding out the reason on Friday as several Central agencies are supposed to submit their test reports to the state government. Once we find out the cause, we will take all requisite steps to avoid its recurrence."

Blood samples results awaited

From Page 1

However, some more results of the blood samples are yet to come.

It is said that the water is also highly polluted with chemical contents and it is also one of the reasons for the diseases. It is said that "oregano chloro" 'oregano phosphors' and other substances were found in the waters and the central teams are studying on how the substances got mixed with the water. They tested Krishna and Godavari canal waters. Samples have been collected from nearly 80 villages in West Godavari district.

Rural water supply officials also collected samples for testing. Many of the central teams returned from Eluru after taking samples and conducting investigations.

At present experts from the National Centre for

Disease Control (NCDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) are on the job of conducting medical investigations of the disease. National Institute of Virology teams collected blood samples from animals. Meanwhile, Dr A.V.R.Mohan from DCHS said that on Thursday, 13 cases were reported and 31 patients are getting treatment. Overall 611 cases were reported about the mysterious illness disease.

Chief Secretary Neelam Sahney visited Eluru hospital and reviewed the situation and gave instructions for taking further steps on the matter.

Meanwhile, former CBI director Lakshminarayana also visited the area and suspected that the weeds floating during the floods could have caused the disease. He urged the government to ensure that it would not spread into other nearby areas.

staff stopped me saying that this was not the gate. Also, it was the regular gate I use. I told them this was an emergency but they did not listen. My car has a local pass through which the car is allowed to pass through this toll gate."

"Apart from hitting my car with their hands, they abused me and all this would have been recorded in the CCTV footage. It will be clear whether I misbehaved or they abused me if the toll plaza releases the entire clipping," she said.

OTHER STORIES

ALLANA GROUP
TO OPEN R&D IN
VISAKHAPATNAMDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 10

Allana Group, with whom the AP government tied up for Jaganna Jeeva Kranthi programme for establishing sheep and goat rearing units for women, will open a research and development centre in Visakhapatnam, announced district collector V. Vinay Chand.

Allana Group is India's largest exporter of processed food which includes frozen and chilled meat. The group exports to over 85 countries.

He along with minister Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao, Araku MP Gotteti Madhavi and senior officials participated in the video conference held by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy during the launch of the scheme.

Minister Srinivasa Rao said with this scheme the farmers would have additional income that would strengthen their financial stability. Lok Sabha member Madhavi said the scheme would do a lot more to the poor Adivasis living in the remote Agency areas.

UBER LAUNCHES
OPERATIONS
IN TIRUPATIDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 10

Uber launched its operations in Tirupati with services including Uber premier and Uber rentals, along with Uber Auto, which will offer riders the mobility solutions in the new normal.

The launch marks Uber's presence in 90th Indian city and makes Tirupati the third city in AP, along with Visakhapatnam and Vijayawada, where Uber has a presence.

Mr Subodh Sangwan, general manager, east and south India, Uber, said that they are happy to launch their operations in Tirupati with Uber Auto, Premier and Rentals products will provide mobility solutions to millions of tourists and pilgrims travelling to the city.

ACCUSED IN RAPE
OF MINOR GIRL
ARRESTEDDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 10

Disha Police of Nellore City have arrested a 35-year-old man for molesting an 8 years old girl at Jakir Hussein Nagar located in the limits of Nawabpetta police station at Nellore on Thursday.

The accused identified as Md. Nazeer Hussain, took the minor girl living in the neighbourhood to an abandoned house belonging to him in the banks of Penna river after 12 noon on December 8 and raped her. According to DISHA DSP Nagaraju, local residents alerted the mother of the girl after they heard screaming of the girl from the deserted house.

Police jumped into action and nabbed the offender after the mother of victim lodged a complaint at Nawabpetta Police Station on the incident.

Nawabpetta Police registered a case under section Cr.No. 547/2020 U/s 376 (2)(F) IPC and Sec 6 r/w 5(1) of POCSO Act 2012 and transferred the case to DISHA Police Station.

YSRC LEADER
KILLED IN ROAD
ACCIDENT ON NH 16DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 10

A YSR Congress leader Ravuri Ayyavaraiah of Tanguturu mandal in Prakasam district was killed on the spot and mandal in-charge Srihari sustained grievous injuries when their car hit a stationary lorry at Cheruvukommapalem on NH-16 near Ongole during the early hours of Thursday.

The car was mauled following the impact of hitting the lorry and police had a tough time in extracting the body of the deceased and the injured.

According to police, the ghastly accident took place when Ayyavaraiah is returning from Hyderabad along with Srihari. They blamed the lorry driver for parking the vehicle in a no-parking area. They said that the driver escaped from the scene.

YSR Congress leaders said that Ayyavaraiah is popular among tobacco farmers as he played a key role in convincing the government to buy tobacco through Markfed.

Medical test



Health workers conducting swab test to corporate college students at college cellar in Vijayawada on Thursday.
— DECCAN CHRONICLE

TTD chairman launches
Gudiko-Gomata phase-II

Devotees urged to donate desi breed of cow and calf to TTD

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 10

TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy on Thursday launched the second phase of Gudiko-Gomata program at Sri Venkateswara temple in Jubilee Hills in Hyderabad in Telangana on Thursday.

The TTD chairman said that there is a special place for protection and worship of cows in Hindu Sanatana Dharma. He urged devotees to donate the *desi* breed of cow and calf to TTD to take the programme further in all four southern states.

He informed that the programme was being sponsored by the Hindu Dharma Prachara Parishad and S.V. Goshala of TTD, as part of the campaign for the preservation of Desi Cows. TTD trust board members and others were present.

TTD files case against fake
laddu website operatorsDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 10

The vigilance and security wing of TTD has filed a case against a fake laddu website "www.balajiprasadam.com", which cheat devotees on social media that it could deliver Srivari Laddu Prasadam anywhere in the world.

Based on the complaint filed at the East Police station in Tirupati, the police have registered a case against the operators of the fake website on December 8.

The fake website was launched on December 6 and publicised that it would deliver Srivari laddu Prasadam any-

● The fake website was launched on December 6 and publicised that it would deliver Srivari laddu Prasadam anywhere in the world.

Upon receiving the tip-off, the TTD Board Chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy immediately directed Vigilance sleuths to identify and book cases against the fake website operators playing with sentiments of devotees.

The TTD IT wing also plunged into action and immediately blocked the fake website on December 7.

BALALAYA MAHA
SAMPROKSHANAM
ORGANISEDDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 10

The holy fete of Balalaya Maha Samprokshanam was held for Sri Varaha Swamy temple at Tirumala on Thursday in the Makara Lagnam.

Balalayam is conducted at any temple for rejuvenation of the sanctum with repairs and gold plating of the *vimanam*, according to Agama traditions. After the Balalayam fete, Kumbharadhana, Archana and other Vaidika rituals were performed in Yagashala of the temple. Later, Maha Purnahuti was performed.

Arrangements in progress
for Vaikunta EkadasiDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 10:

Police, Health and Corporation officials have been directed to pay special attention to follow Covid-19 protocol during the Vaikunta Ekadasi festival scheduled for December 25 at the ancient Sri Talpagiri Ranganadha Swamy temple in Nellore.

Pointing to the possibility of heavy turnout of devotees to the temple, Minister Dr Anilkumar underlined the need to ensure that devotees wear masks and maintain social distance.

SRIVARI KARTHIKA SAHASRA
DEEPOTSAVAM IN VIZAG TODAYDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 10

TTD has made elaborate arrangements for the conduction of Srivari Kartika Sahasra Deepotsavam at the MGM grounds on the Ramakrishna Beach Road at Visakhapatnam on Friday.

The minister instructed the civic body officials to maintain hygienic conditions in and around the

As per Covid-19 guidelines, about 800 women devotees observing social distancing would light the traditional Kartika Deepam. The TTD engineering department has put up barricades and colourfully decorated the dais on the ground with flowers.

shrine. He told the health department to open a medical camp at the temple from December 24.

FESTIVAL | TIME

Oldest churches get ready for the celebrations

Churches joyously look for Christmas

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, DEC. 10

With Christmas around the corner, Churches are getting ready to offer services.

Mutyalapadu Holy Nativity church, the oldest in the district, opens up its doors for worshippers post Covid-19.

It has a hoary past where several Missionaries visited and healed people in its 127-year-old history. Nandyal Diocese has 500 churches in the district. Kalasapadu is another church which is also 133 years old.

Mutyalapadu church was consecrated on 9 December 1893 and now is into its 127th year, said Michael, the church elder. He said the church stood as a symbol of progress, social transformation and



Mutyalapadu Holy Nativity church, the oldest in the district, was established on Decemeber 9, 1893.

cultural acclimatization in the area.

"We are joyously preparing for Christmas with all the Covid-19 care in place," he said.

Remembering the yeomen service rendered by Missionaries in Mutyalapadu village of

Chagalamarri mandal, Villagers

named their children after missionaries who brought a qualitative change in their lives.

Frederick, a church historian at India Theological Seminary, said that the mission organi-

sations which worked in Rayala-

seema were the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the Society for Propagation of the Gospel (SPG).

He said Missionary operations were first started in Cuddapah in 1822

Vizag GST unit detects
₹13 crore fraud, one heldDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 10

Director General of GST Intelligence, Visakhapatnam zone unit has busted a major fake input tax credit (ITC) racket being operated by a 38-year-old person based in Prodattur in Andhra Pradesh, according to a release issued by joint director of DGGI Mayank Sharma here on Thursday.

The accused was involved in issuing fake invoices to the tune of ₹84 crore using three fraudulent GST registrations

(without knowledge of the proprietors) and in turn, getting commission from the recipient firms of such fake invoices.

Various firms created with fictitious addresses in and around Guntur were identified, and simultaneous searches were carried. These searches revealed that the mastermind behind the creation of these firms had passed on ineligible ITC of ₹13 crore (approximately) to various business entities in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

The kingpin was located

after the sustained field-work and arrested on Thursday. Further investigation was underway.

Recently the DGGI has intensified its efforts on curbing fake ITC rackets which lead to a lot of evasion of taxes. In the last month alone, 11 cases were booked involving detection of 56 such dummy and non-existent GST registrations. These detections involved fake transactions to the tune of ₹527 crore involving duty evasion of ₹50 crore. Four persons were also arrested in these cases.

State records
538 Covid casesDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 10

AP registered 538 new Covid-19 cases and two deaths in the last 24 hours.

According to the Covid-19 bulletin issued by the state health authorities on Thursday, out of 64,354 samples tested, 538 persons were found infected with Coronavirus. Out of a total number of 1,06,35,197 samples tested so far in the state, 8,73,995 persons were found infected with the virus so far, and out of them, 8,61,711 persons were recovered, 5,237 persons are still active with the virus while 7,047 persons succumbed to the virus.

Among daily cases of Covid-19, Chittoor recorded the highest 95 followed by 86 in Krishna, 72 each in Guntur and WG, 50 in East Godavari, 35 in Prakasam, 31 in Visakhapatnam, 24 in Nellore, 21 in Srikakulam, 18 in Kurnool, 14 in Anantapur, 13 in Kadapa and seven in Vizianagaram.

Krishna continues to

lead the state with 994 cumulative active cases of confirmed Covid-19, followed by 772 in Guntur, 659 in East Godavari, 631 in Nellore, 495 in Chittoor, 382 in West Godavari, 301 in Prakasam, 245 in Visakhapatnam, 209 in Srikakulam, 200 in Anantapur, 151 in Kadapa, 109 in Vizianagaram and 89 in Kurnool.

AP registered the lowest ever cases of Covid-19 death s to be just two with one each from Guntur and Krishna.

Among cumulative cases of deaths, Chittoor topped the state with 834 followed by 655 in Guntur, 652 in Krishna, 636 in EG, 594 in Anantapur, 578 in Prakasam, 545 in Visakhapatnam, 529 in WG, 501 in Nellore, 487 in Kurnool, 453 in Kadapa, 346 in Srikakulam and 237 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities discharged 558 Covid-19 infected patients after recovery.

AP conducted Covid-19 tests on 1,99,161 samples per one million population and registered Covid-19 a positive rate of 8.22.

ANDHRA CRICKET ASSOCIATION
ADMIN OFFICE OPENED IN VIZAGDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 10

Andhra Cricket Association new administrative office was inaugurated at Dr YSR ACA-VDCA International Cricket Stadium, PM Palem, in Visakhapatnam on Thursday.

The Association later felicitated three former Ranji Trophy players and one qualified umpire on the occasion.

President of ACA P. Sarat Chandra Reddy presented a cheque of ₹5 lakh to P. Vijay Kumar, former Ranji player on the eve of his retirement.

Speaking on the occasion, Sarath Chandra

Reddysaid it was very apt for ACA to have its administrative office at Visakhapatnam stadium. New office will have a Corporate look well planned in 5000sqft. The process of the present office at Vijayawada is under shifting.

All administrative activities of ACA will be carried from this new office, he said.

He said that ACA with its new team of apex council is planning to incorporate a good system of operations in administration from here, also the cricketing activities. The ACA aims to upgrade every district to have its own ground, he said.

MAN HANGS SELF
WHILE ON A VIDEO
CALL WITH WIFEDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 10

Depressed after his father's death and unable to bear the financial burden of the family, a 32-year-old bank employee allegedly ended his life in Somala of Chittoor district late on Thursday night while on a video call with his wife.

According to Somala SI Lakshmi Kantha, Pankaj Beesin, who hails from Madhya Pradesh and working as a field officer at Corporation bank in Somala, ended his life by hanging himself from the ceiling of his room late at night.

Police have examined the mobile phone of the deceased and found that he made a video call to his wife in MP, before taking the extreme step. They also found a suicide note left by the deceased and it was sent to a lab for translation.

The Sub-inspector said that the deceased had availed a loan of ₹40 lakh from a bank and was in depression after his father's demise and was in severe financial stress, which may have led him to take the extreme step. A case has been registered and further investigation is on.

SEARCH ON TO NAB
7 YOUTH FOR ATTACK
ON DAILY WORKERSDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 10

Tension prevailed at the bus stand centre in Pullacheruvu town of Prakasam district when a group of seven youths attacked the daily wage workers (Hamalis) at the RTC bus stand on Thursday.

According to the SI V. Venkateswar Rao, the youth came to attend a marriage in the town and consumed liquor near the RTC bus stand.

Workers in the bus stand pulled up the youth when they misbehaved with some persons under the influence of alcohol at the bus stand.

The youths attacked the workers and stabbed one of them identified as Lashmiah with a broken beer bottle but the latter escaped with minor injuries.

13.5 sovereigns of
gold ornaments
stolen at AllavaramDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC 10

The series of gold thefts are scaring the people in Amalapuram Division limits. On Thursday, there was a theft taking place in the house of Indukuri Ramakrishna Raju at Allavaram.

About 13.5 sovereigns of gold ornaments worth ₹2.09 lakh were stolen from his house.

According to Allavaram police, Ramakrishnam Raju went to Bengaluru to console his co-brother who was undergoing brain surgery. He returned to his house at Allavaram on Thursday and found that the theft had taken place. Allavaram police registered a case. Two days back, gold and silver ornaments worth nearly ₹4 lakh were stolen from another person's house.

The Amalapuram DSP Y. Madhava Reddy who recently assumed charge that the offences occurred in the outskirts and teams launched search to nab the accused.

● THE POLICE officials request the people to inform them whenever they go out of the town.

Police also suggested the people make use of a locked monitoring system, when they go to visit other places.

He said that targeted beats would be strengthened soon. He requested the people to inform the police, when they go to visit other towns by locking the doors.

Then the police would strengthen the vigil in their areas and save them from the thefts.

He said that a new police beat plan would be drawn to strengthen the police vigil in the division. He also suggested the people make use of a locked monitoring system, when they go to visit other places.

SHORT TAKES

IMA CALLS FOR NATIONWIDE PROTEST TODAY

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, DEC. 10

Doctors across the country on Friday (December 11) will protest against government's decision to allow non-graduate practitioners in Ayurveda to perform general surgeries.

The doctors from medical colleges, general practitioners, specialists, government services, resident doctors and medical students will take part in the demonstrations.

As a part of the protest, the doctors will withdraw all non-essential and non-Covid services on Friday from 6 am to 6 pm. All emergency services including casualty, emergency room, critical care, ICUs, Covid care, emergency surgeries and labor room will continue to function. However, OPD services will not be available and elective surgeries will not be posted.

The Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) has issued a notification to train and allow the legal practice of surgeries by Ayurveda practitioners and the formation of four committees by NITI Aayog for the integration of all systems of medicine.

NE STUDENTS TO OBSERVE DEC. 11 AS BLACK DAY

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, DEC. 10

The North East Students' Organisation (NESO) a platform of students bodies of all the north-eastern states has decided to observe December 11, the day controversial Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 was passed by the parliament as "black day" across the region.

It was on December 11, 2019 that the controversial legislation was passed by the Parliament despite widespread protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

NESO chairman Samuel Jyrwa and secretary general Sinam Prakash here on Thursday said, "The CAA has been a glaring example of how a controversial bill was passed in the parliament in an autocratic manner, ignoring the massive protest by the people of the Northeast. The region, which is already bearing the burden of illegal migrants from neighbouring Bangladesh, would never accept this legislation and we would continue to fight against this black law."

CONG BATS FOR EARLY ASSEMBLY POLLS IN J&K

Jammu, Dec. 10: If District Development Council (DDC) polls can be held in times of Covid-19, Assembly elections can too, Jammu and Kashmir Congress in-charge Rajni Patil said on Thursday as she demanded for an elected government in the union territory.

She said the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ferried dozens of Union ministers, national leaders and film personalities to campaign in Jammu and Kashmir as it feared it would lose in these local elections.

Flanked by state unit president Gulam Ahmed Mir, Patil also hit out at the administration for withdrawal of security and vehicles of Congress leaders, claiming the move was aimed at stopping them from campaigning for the DDC polls.

Nadda's convoy attacked in Mamata nephew's LS seat

BJP alleges TMC workers involved, slam 'lawlessness, intolerance' in Bengal

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 10

BJP president J.P. Nadda, in a convoy with several other party leaders, came under a violent attack, allegedly by the ruling Trinamul Congress workers, at Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas of West Bengal on Thursday afternoon for reportedly daring to make inroads into the Lok Sabha constituency of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee.

The unprecedented incident took place a day after the BJP chief slammed the Trinamul Congress for political dynasty and also led a rally in party supremo Mamata Banerjee's Assembly constituency in Bhowanipore without any trouble.

Though Nadda, who enjoys Z-category security cover by the Central Reserve Police Force, escaped unhurt, he informed that BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya and party's national vice-president Mukul Roy were injured in the rain of bricks, stones and bottles thrown by the angry TMC supporters, who shouted "go back BJP" slogan, after blocking the convoy's way in Shirakol.

Apart from them, the cars of West Bengal BJP chief Dilip Ghosh and five more leaders were also damaged.

Braving the attack on the second and final day of his state tour, Nadda along with others reached Diamond Harbour and lashed out at the Chief Minister and her nephew.

"While coming here I witnessed how Bengal has slipped into anarchy under Mamataji's misrule. It has become a state of lawlessness and intolerance. Only Maa Durga's blessings helped me to reach here. I am safe because my car is bullet-proof. The TMC and it's goons left no stone unturned to throttle democracy. But this Goondaraj will not stay. Lotus will also bloom here, starting from this place," he told a BJP meeting.

The BJP chief claimed,



Injured BJP national secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya receives treatment in South 24 Pargana on Thursday following an attack by alleged TMC activists.

Didi wonders if BJP men strike their leader's cars

Kolkata, Dec. 10: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday alleged that the BJP is holding rallies with arms every day and its workers are attacking fellow activists while blaming it on the ruling Trinamul Congress.

Banerjee, also the TMC supremo, said in a sarcastic way that personnel of security forces such as the CRPF, BSF, CISF and the Army are present at convoys of every BJP leader visiting West

Bengal. Describing the TMC as the party of the state and the BJP as one belonging to Delhi and Gujarat, she urged people to stop "goons from outside" the state during elections here.

"They (BJP activists) are coming out (for rallies) with arms every day. They are slapping themselves and blaming it on the Trinamul Congress. Just think of the situation. They are roaming around with the BSF, CRPF, Army and the

CISF (personnel). Why are they so scared?" Banerjee said. Her statement came days after the death of a BJP worker during a protest rally in Siliguri on December 7.

The police have claimed that armed persons were brought in the rally and the man was killed in firing from a shotgun which is not used by the force.

The saffron party, however, maintained that the police were behind the killing of its activist.

— PTI

SHAH TELLS WB TO ANSWER FOR STATE TERROR

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, DEC. 10

Expressing his concern, over the attack on the convoy of BJP chief J.P. Nadda by alleged TMC supporters in West Bengal, Union home minister Amit Shah tweeted, "Today, the attack on the BJP national president @JPNadda ji in Bengal is really condemnable. The more it is condemned, the lesser would it be. The central government is taking this attack very seriously. The Bengal government will have to answer to the peace loving people of the state for this sponsored violence."

He added, "Bengal has slipped into an era of tyranny, chaos and darkness under the Trinamul rule. The way political violence has been institutionalised and taken to an extreme level in West Bengal under the TMC rule is both tragic and worrisome for all those who believe in democratic values."

Rajnath suggests restraint for peace

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

At a time when India is facing Chinese aggression in the Eastern Ladakh, Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday told ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) that exercising self-restraint in the conduct of activities and avoiding actions that may further complicate the situation, will go a long way in bringing sustained peace to the region.

ADMM Plus is an annual meeting of Defence Ministers of 10 ASEAN countries and eight partner countries.

● **RAJNATH SINGH** emphasises India's call for an open, inclusive order in Indo-Pacific based upon respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, peaceful resolutions of disputes through talks.

In his address, Singh emphasised that Indo-Pacific region in particular confronts numerous traditional and non-traditional security threats. Defence minister recalled the launch of the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in last year's East Asia Summit and stated that IPOI is an open global initiative which draws on existing regional cooperation architecture and mechanism. He noted the commonality between

India's IPOI and ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific, both being opportunities for cooperation. In his speech addressing the defence ministers of ASEAN member countries — USA, Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand — Singh emphasised India's call for an open and inclusive order in Indo-Pacific based upon respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, peaceful resolutions of disputes through dialogue

and adherence to International rules and laws. He also reiterated India's support to freedom of navigation and over-flight for all in International waters in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Singh stated that terrorism remains a major scourge for the region and world. He reiterated that the structures that support and sustain terrorism continue to exist, including in India's neighbourhood. He called for stronger commitment and need to strengthen International mechanism to fight terrorism, jointly and vigorously.

Kerala records 76.38 pc in 2nd phase of civic polls

DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC. 10

Huge voter turnout was witnessed in the second phase of local body elections in Kerala with the state recording 76.38 per cent polling on Thursday.

All districts which went to polls recorded high polling percentages. Wayanad recorded the highest polling with 79.46 per cent, Kottayam 73.91 per cent, Ernakulam 77.13 per cent, Thrissur 75.03 and Palakkad 77.97 per cent. The polls went off peacefully with no incident of violence being reported from any part of the state. However, there were routine complaints of EVM snag in some polling stations which held up polling for a brief period.

While the three major fronts; the CPM led ruling LDF, Congress led UDF and BJP led NDA made claims and counter claims about their electoral prospects, the top leadership of these parties are keeping their fingers crossed over the heavy turnout.

LDF Convenor A. Vijayarghavan said the ruling front is going to register a significant victory in the polls while Congress leader and former minister Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan said the high voter turnout indicated the electorate's anger against the government. The BJP leaders claimed that the two fronts were in for a surprise this time.

The LDF and UDF are locked in a direct fight in Ernakulam, Wayanad and Kottayam districts, while BJP is putting up a stiff competition in Thrissur and Palakkad districts where triangular contest is likely to be witnessed in many wards.

Triangular Parl to see Lotus symbol

New Delhi, Dec. 10: Indian Parliament's new building will have a triangular shape to reflect the importance of triangles being a sacred geometry in various religions, while its interiors will have three national symbols as their main themes — Lotus, Peacock and Banyan Tree.

The new building, being constructed by Tata Projects Ltd, will come up in front of the existing Parliament House that was built nearly 100 years ago at a cost of ₹83 lakh at that time and would eventually be turned into a museum.

The new building will house larger Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Halls, with capacities of 888 seats and 384 seats respectively, to accommodate an expanded Parliament after the freeze on its expansion lifts in 2026.

The Lok Sabha Hall will also have additional capacity, up to 1,272 seats, to host joint sessions.

"The new Parliament building is designed in a triangular shape, since it sits on a triangular plot and has three main spaces — Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and a Cental Lounge. Also, triangles are sacred geometries in various religions and cultures of the country," the new building's architecture Bimal Patel said. "In the Lok Sabha chamber,

we have used the national bird Peacock as its theme, in Rajya Sabha chamber we have used the national flower Lotus as its theme and in Central Lounge courtyard we have used the national tree Banyan as its theme," Patel said. The National Emblem will crown the new Parliament building.

He said the architecture of the new building is in harmony with the present building so that both buildings complement each other. The ceiling of the new Parliament building will have fresco paintings like that of Rashtrapati Bhawan and carpets will have traditional designs, instead of the current single colour carpets, Patel said.

To retain some of the characteristics of the existing Parliament, the interior walls of the new one will have shlokas inscribed on them. Dhoolpur stone will be largely used, as is the case with the existing Parliament, and in some interior portions, red granite may be used in place of the red sandstone.

This will be a building with most modern facilities but displaying our culture and tradition as well, the eminent architect said. The four-storey building will be built on 64,500 square metres area.

— PTI

Pressure mounts on BJD to sack Sahoo

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, DEC. 10

Aiming to nail the ruling BJD in the five-year-old girl Pari murder case, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led by its new Odisha in-charge Dagubati Purandeswari on Thursday visited the victim's village Jadupur and met her parents.

The party, while accusing the local lawmaker and state minister Arun Sahoo of shielding the accused involved in the kidnapping and murder of Pari, said it would not stop from its agitation against the ruling party unless the minister is sacked.

Accompanied by BJP's state president Samir Mohanty and several party leaders, Purandeswari held discussion with the deceased girl's parents and also visited the spot near the house where the girl's

body was found. "Minister Arun Kumar Sahoo, who is accused of shielding the accused, should immediately resign on moral grounds. The SIT formed by the state government has no judicial powers. For a proper investigation into the case, we demand a CBI probe. The matter is also linked to organ trading. We will fight till Pari's parents get justice," said Purandeswari.

She also said that the government was "incapable" of providing security to the couple. Purandeswari's visit follows unrelenting statewide protests by the BJP workers against the state government's inaction to arrest the Pari murder case accused and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's noncommittal attitude to sack Arun Kumar Sahoo from his cabinet for his alleged complicity in the crime.

HEINOUS | CRIME BJP: Crime against women on rise due to JMM

17 men rape 35-yr-old in J'khand

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, DEC. 10

A 35-year-old woman was allegedly gang-raped by seventeen men in Jharkhand's Dumka. The incident reportedly occurred under the Mufassil Police station on Tuesday evening. According to reports, the victim in her statement to the police on Wednesday said that the crime was committed while she was returning home from the weekly village market along with her husband.

According to reports, the victim in her statement mentioned that the men held her husband hostage before committing the crime.

An FIR against seventeen

● **THE VICTIM** in her statement mentioned that the men held her husband hostage before committing the crime.

● **AN FIR** against seventeen people has been registered and one person was detained for questioning based on the victim's statement.

people has been registered and one person was detained for questioning based on the victim's statement.

"The matter is being investigated. One person has been detained for questioning after he was identified by the victim", DIG Santhal region, Sudarshan Mandal told reporters.

According to Jharkhand Police statistics, on an average five cases of rapes have been registered in the state till July this year. The state police website shows that around 1,033 cases of rape

have been registered till July, which is higher than the figure recorded in 2019. Meanwhile, the BJP which is the main opposition party in Jharkhand has blamed the state government for failure in controlling law and order and rising crime against women.

Terming the scenario in the state as "Jungle Raj" BJP state unit has demanded action against all those who have been involved in the case.

"The system in Jharkhand has collapsed.

We demand strong action against the criminals through a fast track court", BJP spokesperson Praful Shahdeo said.

According to BJP leaders in Ranchi incidents of crime against women has increased after Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) formed the government in the state.

Senior BJP leader Louis Marandi said, "the situation has turned worse after the JMM came to power in the state. Crime against women has become frequent in tribal districts which is a major cause of worry for all of us. We feel that tribals are not safe under the current regime. We demand immediate action against all those who have been involved in the crime."

Scindia lobbies for accommodating his loyalists in Shivraj's ministry

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, DEC. 10

Senior BJP leader and Rajya Sabha member Jyotiraditya Scindia has started lobbying with the party leadership here to accommodate his loyalists in the state ministry as well as the organisation.

Scindia who is arriving here on Friday on a day's visit to the state is scheduled to meet Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan here to discuss with him on the issue, sources close to him told this newspaper on Thursday.

This would be Scindia's second meeting with Chouhan in the last fortnight.

● **JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA** is scheduled to meet Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan here to discuss with him on the issue.

Sources said Scindia was keen to re-induct 2 former ministers, Govind Singh Rajput and Tulsi Silawat, in the Shivraj cabinet as soon as possible.

The two former ministers, considered staunch loyalists of Scindia, had resigned from the Shivraj government on October 27 when their 6-month-tenure as non-MLA ministers ended.

They have been elected to the house in the November 3 Assembly by-elections. "The delay in their re-

induction in the state ministry has caused unease in the Scindia camp. Scindia is keen to see their re-induction in the Shivraj cabinet as early as possible", a BJP leader told this newspaper requesting not to be quoted.

Sources said the Chief Minister has so far shown no interest to go for a mini-expansion of his ministry to take back the two former ministers in his cabinet, apprehending that such a move would trigger resentment among other minister aspirants in the BJP legislature party.

"The Chief Minister does not want to send a message in the party that he has buckled under pressure to re-induct two former minis-

ters in his cabinet, by going for mini-expansion of his ministry", the BJP leader said.

Incidentally, the Chief Minister has earlier declared that ministry expansion was not in his agenda right now.

Scindia has also started lobbying with the party leadership to accommodate his other loyalists who crossed over to BJP from Congress, along with him in March this year, in the organisation as well as corporations. Sources said reconstitution of state executive committee of BJP has been delayed over the issue. Scindia was scheduled to attend some private programmes during his visit to the state.

SHORT TAKES
CHINA SANCTIONS
US OFFICIALS
OVER HK MOVES

Beijing, Dec. 10: China said on Thursday it will impose sanctions on US officials who have “performed badly” over Hong Kong issues, in response to restrictions slapped on Chinese officials this week over Beijing’s harsh clamp-down on the city.

The financial hub was rocked by pro-democracy protests last year that were largely halted by a sweeping national security law imposed by Beijing, drawing criticism over eroding rights from countries including the US.

On Monday, the US said it was freezing any US assets and barring travel to the United States for 14 vice chairs of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, which spearheaded the tough new law.

U.S. BOMBERS
FLY ON MISSION
TO DETER IRAN

Washington, Dec. 10: In a new show of military might, two American bomber aircraft took off from the United States and flew over a swath of the Middle East on Thursday, sending what US officials said was a direct message of deterrence to Iran.

The flight of the two massive B-52H Stratofortress bombers over the region, the second such mission in less than a month, was designed to underscore America’s continuing commitment to the Middle East even as President Donald Trump’s administration withdraws thousands of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The long-range heavy bombers, which are capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear weapons, are a formidable sight and are flown less frequently in the Middle East than smaller combat aircraft, such as American fighter jets. Adversaries often complain about bomber flights in their region, deeming them a provocative show of force.

NOBEL PRIZE
WINNERS WARN
ABOUT HUNGER

Oslo, Dec. 10: Accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in a ceremony held online because of the coronavirus, the World Food Programme (WFP) warned on Thursday of a “hunger pandemic” it said could be worse than Covid-19.

“Because of so many wars, climate change, the widespread use of hunger as a political and military weapon, and a global health pandemic that makes all of that exponentially worse, 270 million people are marching toward starvation,” WFP executive director David Beasley said.

“Failure to address their needs will cause a hunger pandemic which will dwarf the impact of Covid,” he said, removing his facemask to make his remarks broadcast from the WFP’s headquarters in Rome.

The largest humanitarian organisation fighting famine, the UN agency founded in 1961 feeds tens of millions of people each year — 97 million in 2019 — across all continents.

SEXUAL ABUSE
SHAKES FBI’S
SENIOR RANKS

Washington, Dec. 10: An assistant FBI director retired after he was accused of drunkenly groping a female subordinate in a stairwell. Another senior FBI official left after he was found to have sexually harassed eight employees.

Yet another high-ranking FBI agent retired after he was accused of blackmailing a young employee into sexual encounters. An Associated Press investigation has identified at least six sexual misconduct allegations involving senior FBI officials over the past five years, including two new claims brought this week by women who say they were sexually assaulted by ranking agents.

Each of the accused FBI officials appears to have avoided discipline, the AP found, and several were quietly transferred or retired, keeping their full pensions and benefits even when probes substantiated the sexual misconduct claims against them. Beyond that, federal law enforcement officials are afforded anonymity even after the disciplinary process runs its course, allowing them to land on their feet in the private sector or even remain in law enforcement.

3,054 die of Covid in 24 hours in US

Advisory panel convened to decide on endorsing mass use of Pfizer virus vaccine

Washington, Dec. 10: The US has set a new grim record of more than 3,000 Covid-19 related deaths in a single day, reflecting a bleak reminder of the pandemic’s devastating toll, even as two coronavirus vaccine candidates appear to be on the verge of clearing the country’s final regulatory hurdles.

According to The Covid Tracking Project, the US on Wednesday reported as many 3,054 reported deaths — the highest single-day total to date. The previous single-day record was on May 7 at 2,769 deaths, it said. Overall, there were 1.8 million tests reported on Wednesday, 2,10,000 cases, and a record 1,06,688 Covid-19 patients in US hospitals, it said.

The 7-day average for Covid-19 deaths are at an all-time high as deaths are rising throughout the country, it said. So far more than 15 million Americans have been infected with Covid-19 and 2,86,249 people have lost their lives, according to Johns Hopkins University.

The US, the worst-affected country by the Coronavirus pandemic, is in the final stages of approving at least two Covid-19 vaccines — one by Pfizer and BioNTech and another by Moderna.

A US government advisory panel convened on Thursday to decide

whether to endorse mass use of Pfizer’s Covid-19 vaccine to help conquer the outbreak that has killed close to 3,00,000 Americans.

The meeting of outside advisers to the Food and Drug Administration represented the next-to-last hurdle before the expected start of the biggest vaccination campaign in US history. Depending on how fast the FDA signs off on the panel’s recommendation, shots could begin within days.

The FDA panel functions like a science court. During the scheduled day-long session, it was expected to debate and pick apart the data — in public and live-streamed — on whether the vaccine is safe and effective enough to be cleared for emergency use.

“The American public demands and deserves a rigorous, comprehensive and independent review of the data,” said FDA’s Dr. Doran Fink, who

Cyberattackers hit vaccine regulator

The Hague, Dec. 10: Documents related to the Pfizer Coronavirus vaccine were illegally accessed during a cyberattack at the EU regulator, the company said Wednesday, as Germany and other northern hemisphere countries grappled with a winter surge in the pandemic.

The Amsterdam-based European Medicines Agency (EMA) reported the cyberattack as European countries eagerly await a vaccine, including Germany where Chancellor Angela Merkel is pushing for tougher action against a second wave of Covid-19 that is proving deadlier than the first there.

While the EMA did not give details on the attack, Pfizer and BioNTech said documents relating to their vaccine candidate had been accessed, but that “no systems have been breached in connection with this incident.” The EMA has promised to reach a decision on conditional approval for Pfi-

described agency scientists working nights, weekends and over Thanksgiving to get that done.

With unprecedented interest in the normally obscure panel, the FDA broadcast the meeting via Youtube, and thousands logged on to follow the discussion. The FDA is not required to follow the committee’s advice but is widely expected to do so.

Once that happens, the US will begin shipping millions of doses of the shot. The meeting came as the Coronavirus continues surging across much of the world, claiming more than 1.5 million lives, including more than 2,89,000 in the US. Hanging over the meeting is a warning from British officials that people with a history of serious allergic reactions shouldn’t get the vaccine.

Government officials there are investigating two reports of reactions that occurred when the country began mass vaccina-

tion on Tuesday.

Still, a positive recommendation and speedy US approval appeared nearly certain after FDA scientists issued an overwhelmingly positive initial review of the vaccine earlier this week.

FDA said results from Pfizer’s large, ongoing study showed that the shot, which was developed with Germany’s BioNTech, was more than 90% effective across people of different ages, races and underlying health conditions, including diabetes and obesity. No major safety problems were uncovered, and common vaccine-related side effects like fever, fatigue and injection site pain were tolerable.

“The data presented in the briefing report were consistent with what we heard before and are really exciting,” said Dr. William Moss, head of Johns Hopkins University’s International Vaccine Access Center.

— AFP/AP



France’s President Emmanuel Macron talks with Spain’s Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell as he arrives at the EU headquarters’ Europa building in Brussels on Wednesday, prior to a European Union summit.

— AFP

Deadline to salvage Brexit accord extended to Sunday

EU chief publishes ‘no deal’ Brexit contingency scheme

Brussels, Dec. 10: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen gave themselves until Sunday to decide on the future of post-Brexit negotiations, after a three-hour dinner left the two sides “far apart”.

Johnson came to Brussels on Wednesday in a last gasp effort to salvage trade talks that are teetering towards failure and the two leaders agreed that their negotiators should attempt one last push to bridge the divide.

“We had a lively and interesting discussion on the state of play across the list of outstanding issues,” Von der Leyen said in a statement after the dinner at her Brussels’ headquarters. “We gained a clear understanding of each other’s positions. They remain far apart,” she added.

A senior UK source said the talks were “frank” and that it remained unclear whether the “very large gaps” between the two sides can be bridged.

The leaders agreed to further discussions by their negotiating teams “over the next few days” and that a “firm decision” should be taken by Sunday, the UK source said.

EU negotiator Michel Barnier and his UK counterpart David Frost have narrowed the gaps over eight months but London insists it will reclaim full sovereignty at the end of the year after half-a-century of close economic integration.

Brussels, Dec. 10: EU chief Ursula von der Leyen on Thursday published a back-up plan to protect road and air travel and fishing rights if Britain leaves the union without a trade deal.

The UK left the European Union on January 31 and at the end of this month will leave the bloc’s single market and customs union, bringing a half-century of ever

closer economic integration to an end.

Negotiators from London and Brussels have been trying to agree a follow-on trade pact that would govern cross-Channel business after the transition period ends, but talks are deadlocked with three weeks to go.

The EU’s Michel Barnier and his UK counterpart David Frost resumed their talks on

Thursday with barely 72 hours left before the decisive moment, and the contingency plan served as “no deal” warning shot.

“Negotiations are still ongoing. However, given that the end of the transition is very near, there is no guarantee that if and when an agreement is found, it can enter into force on time,” von der Leyen said.

— AFP

EU weighs sanctions over Turkey’s Med drilling work

Brussels, Dec. 10: Concerned that their credibility is at stake, European Union leaders are set on Thursday to give the green light to the expansion of sanctions against Turkey over its exploration of gas reserves in Mediterranean waters claimed by EU members Greece and Cyprus.

At their last summit in October, the leaders offered “a positive political EU-Turkey agenda” to Ankara, including trade and customs benefits and

the prospect of more funds to help Turkey manage Syrian refugees on its territory if it halts its “illegal activities” in the eastern Mediterranean.

But EU foreign ministers agreed this week that Turkey’s behavior has not improved, and on Thursday’s summit is shaping up as a “crucial” meeting for EU-Turkey relations. “All of them considered that we have not seen a fundamental change of direction,” EU foreign policy chief Josep

Borrell told reporters after chairing a videoconference between the ministers on Monday.

“In several aspects the situation has worsened.” The 27 EU countries are split over how best to handle Turkey. France and Cyprus have pushed for tougher measures like economic sanctions, but other countries are concerned about further undermining the country’s already ravaged economy and destabilising the region.

— AP

Fed tax officials probing Hunter Biden

TRUMP, REPUBLICANS PIN HOPES ON TEXAS TRIAL TO OVERTURN RESULTS

Willmington, United States, Dec. 10: Hunter Biden, the son of US President-elect Joe Biden and a frequent target of Republican attacks, said Wednesday he was under federal investigation about his taxes.

The revelation about the probe included no details, but it promises to rekindle Republican rage about the Biden family, including Hunter Biden’s business dealings and the elder Biden’s anti-corruption push in Ukraine when he was US vice president.

It also presents a series of thorny issues during the president-elect’s transition into the White House in just over one month’s time, including the possibility his son will still be under investigation by the US Department of Justice.

“I learned yesterday for the first time that the US Attorney’s Office in Delaware advised my legal counsel, also yesterday, that they are investigating my tax affairs,” Hunter Biden said in a statement released by his father’s presidential transition team.

“I take this matter very seriously but I am confident that a professional and objective review of these matters will demonstrate that I handled my affairs legally and appropriately, including with the benefit of professional tax advisors.” Hunter Biden, 50, is a lawyer who has founded consulting and investment firms, worked in private equity, and served on the board of various organisations including national railroad corporation Amtrak.

— AFP

Washington, Dec. 10: A longshot Supreme Court lawsuit from Texas against four states key in the November 3 election gave President Donald Trump fresh hope of stalling if not overturning Democrat Joe Biden’s victory.

Texas — a state Trump won — lodged the suit late on Tuesday against Michigan, Georgia, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, challenging Biden’s victory in each of the four.

The suit was seen as audacious and barely legally sound, given that no one state has any legal right to interfere in another’s election processes.

Texas alleged that the

results in the other four states were “unconstitutional” because of their heavy use of “fraud-prone” mail-in votes during the Coronavirus pandemic. It offered no proof of significant fraud, and it didn’t challenge the use of mailed ballots in states Trump won.

The suit cited numerous alleged examples of potential fraud already repeatedly rejected by courts in dozens of Trump campaign cases. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton asked the Supreme Court to quickly freeze the process by which state vote counts are translated into electors at the Electoral College.

Following India protests closely, says UK after Johnson’s gaffe

London, Dec. 10: The UK Foreign Office is closely following the protests by farmers in India, a government spokesperson said on Thursday as it clarified that Prime Minister Boris Johnson had “clearly misheard” a question in Parliament when he responded with Britain’s stance on the India-Pakistan dispute instead.

The gaffe occurred during the weekly Prime Minister’s Questions (PMQs) session in the House of Commons on Wednesday, when Johnson reiterated that any dispute between India and Pakistan was for the two countries to

● **A UK GOVERNMENT** spokesperson said: “The Prime Minister clearly misheard the question in Parliament. The Foreign Office are following the issue of protests in India closely”.

settle bilaterally in response to a question by Opposition Labour MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi about conveying British Sikh “anxieties” over the ongoing protests against agricultural reforms in India.

A UK government spokesperson said: “The Prime Minister clearly misheard the question in Parliament. The Foreign

Office are following the issue of protests in India closely”. Dhesi, who has been very vocal on the protests by farmers against India’s agricultural reforms, had raised the issue of the footage of “water cannons, teargas and brute force” being used against the peaceful protesters.

“So, will the Prime Minister (Johnson) convey to the Indian Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) our heartfelt anxieties, our hopes for a speedy resolution to the current deadlock and does he agree that everyone has a fundamental right to peaceful protest,” he questioned Johnson.

— PTI

DYING | STATISTICS

Diabetes, dementia in top 10 causes of death, non-communicable diseases 7 out of 10 causes

Heart disease kills more people than ever: WHO

United Nations, Dec. 10: Heart disease, which has remained the leading cause of death at the global level for the last 20 years, is now killing more people than ever before, according to the World Health Organisation.

The WHO said diabetes and dementia are also among the world’s top 10 causes of death.

The WHO’s 2019 Global Health Estimates, released on Wednesday, said non-communicable diseases now make up 7 of the world’s top 10 causes of

death, an increase from 4 of the 10 leading causes in 2000.

The new data cover the period from 2000 to 2019. “Heart disease has remained the leading cause of death at the global level for the last 20 years. However, it is now killing more people than ever before,” the organisation said.

Heart disease now represents 16 per cent of total deaths from all causes and the number of deaths from heart disease increased by more than two million

● **DEATHS FROM** diabetes increased by 70 per cent globally between 2000 and 2019, with an 80 per cent rise in deaths among males. In the Eastern Mediterranean, deaths from diabetes have more than doubled and represent the greatest percentage increase of all WHO regions.

since 2000 to nearly 9 million in 2019.

Diabetes and dementia enter the top 10 causes of

death. Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia are now among the top 10 causes of death worldwide, ranking 3rd in both the Americas and Europe in 2019. Women are disproportionately affected: globally, 65 per cent of deaths from Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia are women.

Deaths from diabetes increased by 70 per cent globally between 2000 and 2019, with an 80 per cent rise in deaths among males. In the Eastern Mediterranean, deaths from dia-

betes have more than doubled and represent the greatest percentage increase of all WHO regions.

The WHO said the estimates reveal trends over the last 2 decades in mortality and morbidity caused by diseases and injuries, clearly highlighting the need for an intensified global focus on preventing and treating cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases, as well as tackling injuries, in all regions of the world, as set out in the agenda for

the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

“These new estimates are another reminder that we need to rapidly step up prevention, diagnosis and treatment of non-communicable diseases,” Director-General of WHO Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. “They highlight the urgency of drastically improving primary health care equitably and holistically. Strong primary health care is clearly the foundation on which everything rests, from combatting non-communi-

cable diseases to managing a global pandemic.”

While more non-communicable diseases are now causing deaths worldwide, there has been a global decline in deaths from communicable diseases, which however still remain a major challenge in low- and middle-income countries. In 2019, pneumonia and other lower respiratory infections were the deadliest group of communicable diseases and together ranked as the fourth leading cause of death.

— PTI



DECCAN
Chronicle

11 DECEMBER 2020

Farmers’ stand-off has
a few lessons for govt

After a meeting with Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday following a sudden and late invitation, and considering the government’s proposals advanced through a 20-page note, the protesting farmers have announced intensification of their agitation.

The protest is already a fortnight old. The new element in it is that it threatens to engulf the entire country, not just the borders of the national capital with Haryana leading on to Punjab, which has emerged as the epicentre of the dissatisfactions.

This is suggested in the programme announced by a coordination committee of the dozens of farmers’ bodies from across the country. This plan visualises demonstrations at district headquarters across India, taking over toll plazas nationwide, in measured steps blocking entry by road to the national capital, and protesting at the door of all BJP MLAs, MPs, and ministers.

From being seen as a movement of Punjab farmers to begin with, it is the all-India profile of the movement that has now emerged. This is a clear rebuff of the home minister who had invited only 13 of the many more farmer organisations for talks last Tuesday, excluding in fact the largest farmers’ union of Punjab, giving rise to speculation that, at one level, the effort was to sow seeds of discord among protesters.

Five representatives of Opposition parties led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, and including NCP chief Sharad Pawar, and leaders of CPI(M), CPI and the DMK, called on President Ram Nath Kovind to submit a memorandum in support of the farmers’ demands, and later addressed the media to publicise their endorsement.

While the farmers have not called for the support of political parties, the backing given to them by these entities can only impart operational resilience and muscle to any future deepening of a planned nationwide protest. Moreover, in the forum of Parliament, it is parties that represent various sections of the people, not associations and unions of occupation or trade groups. It is open to the government to appreciate that the linking of political parties brings on a new dimension, making it prudent to offer serious political conciliation. If not, the country is staring at serious economic dislocations and an atmosphere of confrontation and mistrust in the body politic.

In the written offer made to the farmers on Wednesday after the meeting with the home minister, the government has agreed to present its assurance in black and white that the minimum support price regime won’t be dismantled, that terms on which private traders (the feared big business and multinational corporations) will operate in the farm sector will be the same as the present APMC “mandis”, whose vanishing the farmers fear, and also that contract farming being encouraged through the contentious agri-laws will not cause land alienation from farmers.

These seem reasonable, but farmers still demand the total repeal of the three laws passed without due discussion in Parliament and without consultation with them, the key stakeholders. Their demands have sometimes been called “maximalist”. But what they emphasise, in effect, is that legislation must not be carried out on the strength of a party’s brute majority in legislature, ignoring those who are impacted the most.

It is open to the government to appreciate that the linking of political parties brings on a new dimension, making it prudent to offer serious political conciliation

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Breaking up Big Tech

The war against Big Tech just got bigger in the US where the Federal Trade Commission and a coalition of attorneys general of 46 states sued Facebook on the grounds that it transgressed antitrust law and hence should be broken up. This comes on top of the Justice Department taking similar legal action Alphabet’s Google two months ago. The day cannot be far when Amazon will be facing similar charges, perhaps Apple, too, for its restrictive App Store practices. Together, the quartet is the creme de la creme of the new economy, whose bloated growth into behemoths gave them the power to influence society by dictating digital lives and the economy while enjoying a global footprint.

The charge against Facebook is it used its dominance to crush rivals at the expense of everyday users even as its power rose manifold with the acquisition of Instagram and WhatsApp. The same charges could as well be aimed at other tech giants who have already been facing intense scrutiny from lawmakers in Congressional hearings. Given the US history of successfully breaking up monopolies like Standard Oil, US railroads and AT&T, besides Microsoft in the new millennium, Big Tech world could look quite different in a few years.

While socialist countries can move against monopolies by simply nationalising industries like India did its banks and the life insurance business, only to suffer a different kind of lazy monopoly, the US believes in dismantling monopolies to ensure healthy competition thrives. The Internet may not be that much different for users if Facebook were to hive off WhatsApp or Amazon were to divest some of its 88 acquisitions. The only difference would be that Google cannot demote competitors through clever search algorithms or Amazon copy goods of their own sellers to take a greater slice of the marketplace.

When threatened with anti-monopoly action by the UK, Mark Zuckerberg challenged a nation saying he would invest elsewhere in Europe. And now you know why the arrogance of unbridled power should be curtailed by promoting healthy competition free of restrictive trade practices.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

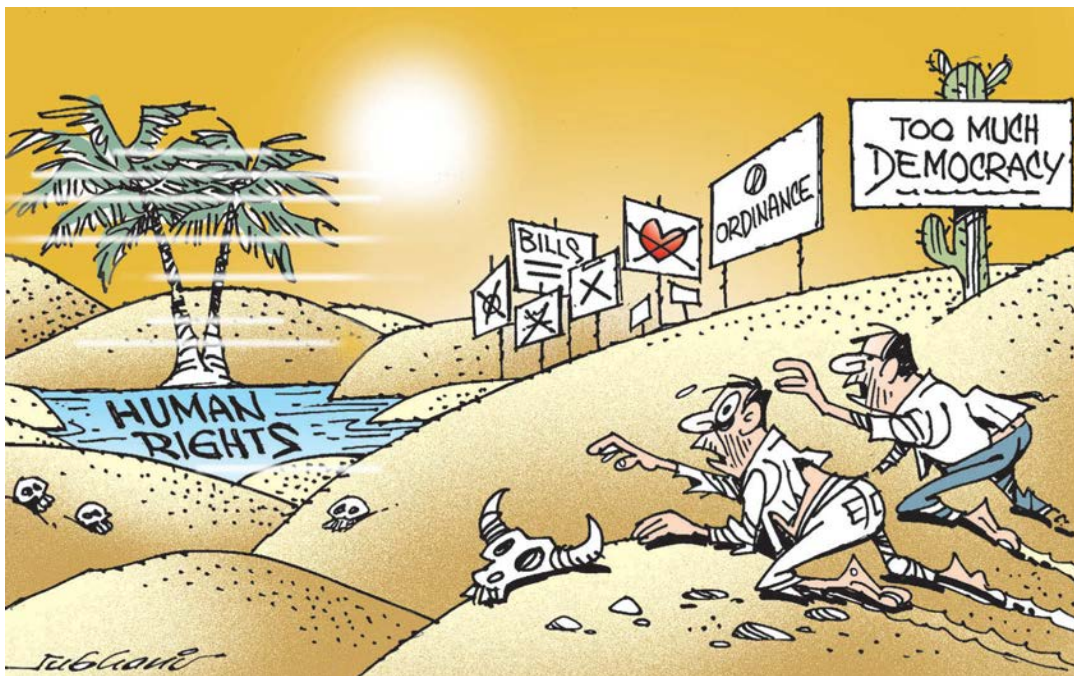
KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUBHAKAR
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, Vavilalpally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433
Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burrampur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemmudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580
Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/48/50/51; Adv: Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325
Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Rammagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph : 0422 2231255
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Subhani



How Nehru had gutted
the Constitution in 1951



Karan Thapar

As I See It

It is part of a generation that grew up thinking of Jawaharlal Nehru as the architect of our democracy and the guardian of our Constitution. For many this was beyond questioning. However, a book published earlier this year reveals a very different side of the first Prime Minister. It argues that the first amendment to the Constitution, that he got passed in 1951, gutted the original. So sweeping were the changes that constitutional scholar Upendra Baxi calls the post-amendment document “the second Constitution”. He doesn’t believe that it bears credible resemblance to the original.

In his book *Sixteen Stormy Days*, Cambridge scholar Tripurdaman Singh identifies several fundamental rights which the first amendment adversely affected. I shall only focus on two.

The first is freedom of speech, perhaps the most important of all rights in a democracy. Nehru’s 1951 amendment added new grounds on which this could be curbed. In addition to the existing grounds of libel, slander, defamation, contempt of court and anything that undermines the security of the state or tends to overthrow it, Nehru added relations with foreign states, public order and, most important, the interests of the security of the state.

Now, Tripurdaman Singh argues, this amendment created the grounds to validate sedition. This is because “the interests of the security of the state” can be variously interpreted and, thus, permits a wide range of speech to be classified under it. And this gave the state enormous powers. Admittedly Nehru did not misuse them, but his successors certainly did. Thus the first amendment “opened the floodgates for drastic and

oppressive laws” like the National Security Act, the Maintenance of Internal Security Act and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, all of which have been used to ban books, arrest journalists, jail activists and harass political opponents.

The second fundamental right that Nehru’s 1951 amendments made redundant was the right to property. Because the courts placed obstacles in the way of his attempts to acquire zamindari lands — in the case of Bihar requiring unaffordable compensation — Nehru amended the Constitution to ensure that such compensation need not be paid. Consequently, the right to property may have continued in theory but in practice, because compensation was not necessary when lands were forcibly acquired, it ceased to be a fundamental right.

Let me mention one other element of Nehru’s first amendment which seriously damaged the original Constitution. This is the insertion of the Ninth Schedule. Here, Tripurdaman Singh writes, “laws could be placed to make them immune to judicial challenge even if they violated fundamental rights”. In other words, the Constitution now provided protection for unconstitutional laws. Frankly, this is nothing short of a constitutional monstrosity and, arguably, the worst of the amendments pushed through in 1951.

Now, if the content of the amendments was troubling, the impact they had on Indian politics was no less disturbing. For a start, Nehru established the precedent of amending the Constitution to overcome adverse judicial pronouncements. His successors and his daughter, in particular, made this almost a regular practice. Today, when governments don’t like what the Supreme Court has said, they

blithely change the Constitution to overturn its verdict.

Tripurdaman Singh identifies two other equally important points. First, “the very concept of the judiciary and the Constitution as checks on the government” was undermined. Instead, a tradition of using executive power to subdue the judiciary began. Second, the 1951 amendments undermined the constitutional position of the individual qua class, caste, community and State. Since the original document had placed the individual at its heart, this changed not just its focus but, more critically, its character.

So why did Nehru do all of this? The answer is simple but hardly a valid justification. He felt the original Constitution was blocking his policies and reforms. As Tripurdaman Singh writes: “Zamindars, businessmen, editors and concerned individuals had repeatedly taken the Central and state governments to court ... (and) the courts had come down heavily on the side of the citizens and struck mighty blows against the government”. So, to rein in the courts, Nehru amended the Constitution from which they got their powers. In the process, he gutted it. Nehru thus became the first Prime Minister to damage the Constitution.

However, Tripurdaman Singh’s book goes one critical step further. It not only exposes what Nehru did to the Constitution, equally importantly it shines a cruel light on how he did it.

In June 1951, when the first amendment was passed, the Constitution was barely 16 months old. Yet in that brief period Nehru decided it was an impediment to his government’s policies. This doesn’t speak highly of his commitment to the Constitution. In fact, as Tripur-

daman Singh says, Nehru argued that his government, with its huge majority, represented “the will of the people” and thus took precedence over the principles of and the rights enshrined in the Constitution. Consequently, Nehru had no qualms using a provisional and largely unelected Parliament to amend the Constitution.

But it was worse than that. The Constitution stipulates that amendments require a two-thirds vote in both Houses of Parliament. However, the provisional parliament was a unicameral institution. In 1951, the Rajya Sabha did not exist. So Nehru misused the Constitution (Removal of Difficulties) Order to get around this. It wasn’t intended for this purpose, but that did not deter him.

This is a technical and complicated point and I deliberately won’t go into detail. However, what Nehru did is uncannily similar to what Narendra Modi did in 2019 when he changed the constitutional character of Jammu and Kashmir. Just as Nehru misused Article 392, from which the Constitution order gets its authority, to change the amendment procedure, so too Narendra Modi misused Article 370 to amend critical definitions thus enabling him to de-operationalise the article. Both were guilty of a sleight of hand.

The only thing I can add to salvage Nehru’s image is that B.R. Ambedkar, whom we consider the Father of our Constitution, was a member of Nehru’s Cabinet when the first amendment was approved and did not protest. Even Sardar Patel, who died six months earlier and may have had reservations about the impact on the right to property, would have supported the new curbs on freedom of speech. In fact, as Tripurdaman Singh points out, he considered free speech “exaggerated exuberance”.

This raises the question: how committed to protecting our freedoms were the men who fought for our Independence? The answer will have to wait for another day.

So sweeping were the changes in the first amendment that constitutional scholar Upendra Baxi calls the post-amendment document ‘the second Constitution’

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

AP SUFFERS

In AP, public services are in a bad condition. Local trains have not started running yet. When railways has reopened a few months ago, why is AP neglected?

Prathibha Sanku
Vijayawada

TOXINS IN FOOD

The toxins may have entered food chain through polluted groundwater or aquaculture pollutants (*Toxins in food may have led to mysterious Eluru illness, DC, Dec. 10*). The APPCB and agriculture department should work together to identify the places where there is excessive usage of pesticides and impose strict norms on their sale.

Chaitanya Susarla
Visakhapatnam

FARMERS PROTEST

There has been some climbdown on farm laws by the Centre and it has agreed to give a written assurance on MSP and fix uniform tax for APMCs (DC, Dec. 10). This is, needless to say, encouraging and welcome. However, the ruling dispensation needs to redouble its efforts to arrive at an amicable solution with the farmers’ unions.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

DEMOCRACY

Amitabh Kant, the CEO of NITI Aayog seems to have spelt out, though inadvertently, the mindset of his boss who happens to be the Prime Minister. According to him, too much of democracy is an impediment to rapid economic progress. The burning example is the promulgation of three farm laws besides many others.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

Air Traffic
paralysed

NEW DELHI, Dec. 10.

The Union Minister of civil aviation, Dr. Karan Singh today called a high level conference of his aides as the Indian Airlines pilots at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras refused to operate flights till suspension orders against their colleagues were withdrawn.

The Indian Aircraft Technicians’ Associations has warned the Indian Airlines management that if proper attention is not given to the pilot’s complaints, the Association will be forced to side the pilots.

According to a spokesman, the management was determined to be “very firm” and gave indications of further stern action,

Saeed Naqvi
Wide Angle



Is Naseer right?
That Hyderabad
more ‘cultured’
than Lucknow?

I don’t know when the interview was done but I saw it on YouTube last week. Naseeruddin Shah dismissed Lucknow as a centre of culture and praised Hyderabad sky-high by comparison. Naseer’s right but there’s a reason why Lucknow lost out in the culture stakes with both Hyderabad and Lahore. Both cities were around, their “culture” intact, till 1947. Lucknow had begun to “die” in 1857, after the British exiled Nawab Wajid Ali Shah to Metiabruz near Kolkata in late 1856, triggering 1857’s Great Uprising.

Lucknow, however, retained its premier slot for the institution of the “ulema”, plural for “alim” which derives from “ilm”, or knowledge with theology as the main expertise. With Maulana Kalbe Sadiq’s death at the age of 83 last month, the curtain finally fell on the institution of a long line of Lucknow’s “ulema”.

That this was largely a Shia institution is easily explained: the Nawabs of Awadh were Shia, which is where the patronage came from. This mustn’t detract from the fact that internationally known Sunni institutions like Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulema also flourished. There was considerable intellectual rapport between the sects. How

else does one explain the masterly study of Anis and Dabir, a comparative study of Anis and Dabir, written by one of Nadwa’s greatest scholars Shibli Nomani. Anis and Dabir were famous Marsia writers, a genre focused on the tragedy of Karbala, central to the observance of Muharram, not exclusively but primarily a Shia occasion.

Kalbe Sadiq came from a long line of “ulema”, theological scholars conversant with liberal traditions of which Sufism was another part. Saiyid Waris Shah, Pir of Dewa Sharief, 7 km from Lucknow, had a simple explanation for not going through the “namaz” rituals. “Where is the space to bow in supplication?” The implication was: “He is in me”.

During my schooldays, a phase of cultural bifurcation between school and home, the two towering “Alims” of Lucknow were Maulana Kalbe Hussain (alias Kabban Sahib), Kalbe Sadiq’s father, and Maulana Ali Naqi (Naqqan Sahib), both brilliant orators whose sermons were much valued at congregations called the “Majlis”, provided the speaker deftly brought in Karbala to clinch the argument.

Lucknow’s celebrated tapestry of manners found itself frayed even in this limited circle of theologians and

their followers. A group, clearly not from among “Naqqan Sahib’s” followers, created what for Lucknow was a major scandal. The group accused the respected cleric of blasphemy and physically assaulted him.

Apparently, Naqqan Sahib had in his research spotted mention of water in Imam Hussain’s tent. Even a hint like this was anathema to a bunch of fanatics. The absence of water in Karbala’s torrid heat heightens Hussain’s tragedy. For that reason, even a suggestion of water in Karbala would soften the tragic effect. The truth, of course, is “Naqqan Sahib” had never said “water” was available. He simply cited sources hinting at such a possibility.

Worst was the treatment of poet Yaas Yagana Changezi, a contemporary of Jigar, Firaq and Josh. Yagana wrote: “*Samajh mein kuch nahee ata./ Parhey jaaney se kya hasil?/ Namazon mein hain kuch maaney,/ to pardesi zabaan kyon ho?*”

In one of his “*naats*”, or religious songs, Yagana referred to Prophet Mohammad in less than reverent terms. He probably did not know that he had violated one of the unenforced codes: “*Ba Khuda deewana baash-o/ Ba Mohammad hoshiyar.*” (Take liberties

with God, but be careful with Mohammad)

Dara Shikoh’s prime minister, Chandrabhan Brahman, broke the code brazenly: “*Panja dar panja-e-Khuda daram/ Man che parva e Mustafa daram.*” (My hand is in the hand of God? Why should I worry about Mohammad?)

It reflects in the backward slide of a tolerant culture that Yagana did not go scot free. His face was blackened and he was given a donkey ride through the old city.

The liberal streak in the “ulema” of Lucknow comes out in bold relief in an incident concerning Josh Malihabadi. His Marsia titled “Hussain and Revolution” became a cult poem even in devout circles. Josh became a popular invitee to various Imambaras of Lucknow, indeed across the country, including Hyderabad. He built up a reputation for Marsias, second only to the great Mir Anis. A group of orthodox Shias turned up at the residence of the great Alim of his age, Maulana Naasir ul Millat, armed with a complaint. Josh, devoted to liquor (he called it *Kaaba e khaas o aam*), should be banned from reciting Marsias from pulpits in “our sacred imambaras”.

After reading Josh’s Marsias, the Maulana invited the complainants and Josh. What happened next was dramatic. The maulana spread out his personal prayer mat for Josh and invited him to recite “Hussain and Inqilab”. The message from the maulana was straightforward: it would be wrong to occupy the pulpit inebriated.

This was the open mindedness Maulana Kalbe Sadiq inherited from the generations of “ulema”. From the 1990s he had pleaded: Even if the Muslims win the Ram Jannabhoori land dispute, they should gift the land to the Hindus. “You will win their goodwill.” His point was that a Muslim can turn towards Ka’aba and say his prayers anywhere. “Ram is central to the Hindu ethos.” He initiated the joint Shia-Sunni namaz, allowing the Sunni cleric to take the lead.

He traced Muslim backwardness to a singular lack of education and dedicated his life to establishing non-sectarian institutions in every possible field. But he died a disappointed man because of the expanding communalism and a community trapped in the snare of selfish political leaders.

The writer is a senior journalist and commentator based in New Delhi

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	45,959.88	-0.31
Nifty 50	13,478.30	-0.38
S&P 500*	3,671.57	-0.03
Dollar (₹)	73.66	-0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.36	0.55
Euro (₹)	89.06	0.14
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,652*534	1.11
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	50.99	2.13
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.916	-0.001
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.933	-0.008

India's recovery faster than expected: ADB

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) upgraded its forecast for the Indian economy, projecting 8 per cent contraction in 2020-21 as compared to 9 per cent degrowth estimated earlier, on the back of faster than expected recovery. Observing that the economy has begun to normalise, the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) Supplement said the second quarter contraction at 7.5 per cent was better than expected.

Hina Nagarajan to head United Spirits from July 1



United Spirits Ltd (USL), a part of global liquor giant Diageo, appointed Hina Nagarajan as the firm's new CEO with effect from July 1, 2021. Incumbent Anand Kripalu will step down on June 30. Nagarajan is currently MD, Africa regional markets at Diageo and will join USL as the CEO-designate from April 1. She will be a member of the Diageo executive committee. Nagarajan will be based in Bengaluru.

Mukesh Ambani becomes a grandfather

Mukesh Ambani on Thursday became a grandfather after a son was born to his eldest son. "Shloka and Akash Ambani became proud parents of a baby boy today in Mumbai," a statement from the Ambani family said. Akash married diamondaire Russell Mehta's daughter Shloka in March 2019. Ambani, 63, and his wife Nita have three children—twins Akash and Isha, 29 years old, and Anant, 25.

Bayer to sell mini packs of hybrid vegetable seeds

Bayer said it is entering India's home garden segment with mini packs of Seminis vegetable seeds, to provide rural farmers and semi-urban growers a choice in cultivation. Bayer aims to leverage its broad portfolio of high-quality hybrid seeds with mini packs of bitter melon, bottle gourd, okra and beans, initially. Gradually, Bayer plans to extend its mini packs across the entire range of its Seminis hybrid seeds.



Smaller players may find norms tough Dividend cap won't affect large NBFCs

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, DEC. 10

The Reserve Bank of India's proposal to restrict dividend payments by non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) could impact several hundreds of unlisted NBFCs, but may not have any material impact on the listed ones.

The apex bank's draft norms on dividend payouts for NBFCs have been anchored on the capital adequacy ratio (CAR) and net non-performing loans (NPL) and only firms meeting the prescribed prudential requirements would be allowed to declare and distribute dividends. The RBI proposes to cap the dividend payout ratio for NBFCs at a maximum of 50 per cent.

Asutosh Mishra, head of research, institutional equity at Ashika Stock Broking, said, "There are thousands of unlisted NBFCs in India and of them around 400-500 could be impacted. Several manufacturers such as Hero, Maruti, Ashok Leyland, Bajaj Auto have their own unlisted NBFC arms and such NBFCs may have to restructure their operations to comply with the new regulatory norms in order to pay dividends. However, the large listed NBFCs may not have any significant impact."

A Kotak report said LIC Housing Finance (due to low capital adequacy ratio), Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services (due to high net NPL) and Shriram



Transport Finance (due to high net NPLs) will not be eligible to pay dividends, if the norms apply to the previous year. "Kotak awaits the final set of guidelines and implementation timelines," the report said.

According to the draft norms released by the RBI on Tuesday, NBFCs that have capital adequacy ratio (CAR) below 15 per cent or net non-performing loans (NPLs) above 6 per cent are not eligible for paying dividend. NBFCs have to comply with these requirements for three consecutive years (including the current fiscal) to be eligible for dividend payouts. The payout ratio caps range from 15-50 per cent based on the two ratios.

"The draft circular on dividend distribution by NBFCs is unlikely to impact most of the NBFCs. Over the last three years, dividend payout ratios have been about 10-20 per cent for most entities, with a few in the range of 20-30 per cent. Ica expects NBFCs to comfortably meet the CAR criteria but a few entities having high NPAs would find it difficult to meet the

net NPA filter and thus dividend payout could be impacted for those, if this circular is implemented. Ica notes that while HFCs have not been specifically mentioned in this draft, meeting the CAR criteria would be relatively easier given the lower risk weights on the large part of their portfolio. Also, the net NPA criteria specified for NBFCs may not be a constraint for HFCs to pay out dividend considering the low NPAs for the segment," said Manushree Saggur, VP-financial sector ratings at Ica Ltd.

Kailash Baheti, CFO, Magma Fincorp, said, "Within NBFCs the NPAs for different classes of NBFCs would be very different. A vehicle financing company would typically have higher NPAs. A tractor financing company would have even higher NPAs. The higher NPAs are well covered by higher yield and does not necessarily mean weak business. It would be sensible to have different thresholds considering the underlying business of each NBFC."

CCI raids offices of UltraTech, ACC, Ambuja

ADITYA KALRA NEW DELHI, DEC. 10

India's antitrust body on Wednesday conducted raids at offices of Ultra-Tech Cement and two subsidiaries of the world's largest cement maker LafargeHolcim, two sources close to the matter said.

Swiss firm LafargeHolcim in a statement to Reuters, confirmed officials visited the Mumbai offices of ACC and Ambuja Cements and said the companies were fully cooperating with the authorities, but could not comment further as the matter is ongoing.

Several officers of the Competition Commission of India (CCI) were involved in search operations conducted simultaneously at multiple locations, the sources said, asking not to be named because of the confidential nature of the raids.

Searches were also conducted at Shree Cement Ltd, a third source said.

None of the Indian cement companies responded to requests for a comment. The CCI did not respond either.

In 2012, the CCI imposed a total penalty of \$1.1 billion on several cement-makers for colluding to under-use their plants and create a shortage of cement. An appeal against that decision is still pending.

In recent years, the CCI has raided offices of other foreign firms, including beer giant Carlsberg and commodities trader Glencore.

—Reuters

Lawsuits could force FB to sell Instagram, WhatsApp

DIANE BARTZ, NANDITA BOSE & KATIE PAUL WASHINGTON/PALO ALTO, DEC. 10



Facebook Inc could be forced to sell its prized assets WhatsApp and Instagram after the US Federal Trade Commission and nearly every US state filed lawsuits against the social media firm, saying it used a "buy or bury" strategy to snap up rivals and keep smaller competitors at bay.

With the filing of the twin lawsuits on Wednesday, Facebook becomes the second big tech company to face a major legal challenge this year after the US Justice Department sued Alphabet Inc's Google in October, accusing the \$1 trillion company of using its market power to fend off rivals.

The lawsuits highlight the growing bipartisan consensus to hold Big Tech accountable for its

business practices and mark a rare moment of agreement between the Trump administration and Democrats, some of whom have advocated breaking up both Google and Facebook.

The complaints on Wednesday accuse Facebook of buying up rivals, focusing specifically on its previous acquisitions of photo-sharing app Instagram for \$1 billion in 2012 and messaging app WhatsApp for \$19 billion in 2014.

Federal and state regula-

tors said the acquisitions should be unwound—a move that is likely to set off a long legal challenge as the deals were cleared years earlier by the FTC.

"For nearly a decade, Facebook has used its dominance and monopoly power to crush smaller rivals, snuff out competition, all at the expense of everyday users," said New York attorney general Letitia James on behalf of the coalition of 46 states, Washington, DC and Guam, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and South Dakota did not participate in the lawsuit.

James said the company acquired rivals before they could threaten the company's dominance.

Facebook's general counsel Jennifer Newstead called the lawsuits "revisionist history" and said antitrust laws do not exist to punish "successful companies."

—Reuters

ICI Lombard offers cashless OPD, cover reset

Mumbai, Dec. 10: Non-life player ICI Lombard on Thursday announced 100 per cent resetting of the sum assured multiple times and also cashless OPD in its bid to offer maximum benefits to likely Covid-19 patients.

As part of offering a more comprehensive health policies, the fourth largest non-life insurer launched four refreshed policies of the existing ones—health shield, health shield plus, health elite and health elite plus—offering

enhanced protection.

Some of the new coverage benefits include donor expenses, domiciliary hospitalisation, emergency assistance, worldwide cover, unlimited reset, air ambulance, super no claim bonus, sum insured protector and claim protector; cashless OPD services, among others, the company said in a concall.

We are redefining the health insurance space by introducing benefits that are aligned to the new normal and contextual to

today's customer needs, it said.

With the unlimited reset benefit, a policyholder can reset up to 100 per cent of the base sum insured unlimited times in a policy year for an un-related ailment, the company said.

The sum insured protector feature increases the sum insured every year in line with inflation rates.

The new plans also comes with services such as free health check-ups and online chat with doctors and dietician.

—PTI

Tata rejects Mistry's offer as 'nonsense'

UPMANYU TRIVEDI DEC. 10

Tata Group rejected a truce offer by Pallonji Mistry's conglomerate that suggested swapping the Mistry family's stake for shares worth \$24 billion in the listed Tata companies.

"It's nonsense. This kind of relief cannot be granted," Tata's lawyer Harish Salve said during a hearing before the Supreme Court on Thursday. "I'm opposing it," he said, arguing on behalf of the largest Indian conglomerate.

The Mistry-led Shapoorji Pallonji Group had informed the court in October that it estimated its 18.4 per cent stake in Tata Sons-- the group's main holding company -- to be worth more than Rs 1.75 lakh crore (\$23.7 billion). It was seeking pro-rata shares in all listed Tata entities, cash, or any marketable instrument in lieu. Tata Group earlier this week pegged this valuation at \$11 billion, or less than half of Mistry's ask.

Salve said that accepting the Mistry's offer could cause the issue to spill over from Tata Sons, which controls the coffee-



Pallonji Mistry

to-cars empire, to its listed firms where the SP Group would then be holding minority stakes.

Tata's rejection of SP Group's proposal threatens to stretch India's biggest corporate battle in recent history. The Mistry family announced in September its intention to sever a 70-year relationship, capping four years of bitter feud that started with a boardroom coup in 2016 at Tata Sons and led to the abrupt ouster of Cyrus Mistry as Tata Group chairman. Cyrus is the son of billionaire Mistry, 91, who controls the 155-year-old SP Group.

—Bloomberg

Shippers reposition empty containers

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 10

In order to mitigate the shortage of containers for exports, shipping companies have started repositioning empty containers to Indian coast. Still, the shortage caused due to imbalance in trade will take at least two to three months to ease.

Integrated logistics company Maersk has started repositioning empty containers from the Middle East by almost three times in order to mitigate the

container availability issue in India.

"There has been a general shortage of equipment in the market caused by an imbalance between imports into and exports out of India. With imports being much lower than exports, there is a shortage of empty containers for exports," Steve Felder, MD, Maersk South Asia told *Financial Chronicle*.

"With exports rising from different parts of the country, we had to position empty containers accordingly across the country.

E-com shipments to touch 10 bn by FY25

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 10

Shipments by e-commerce platforms are expected to grow from 2.5 billion in FY20 to 10 billion by FY25.

In FY20, the number of e-commerce shipments stood at 2.55 billion, having grown at a 50 per cent CAGR for the past three years. In FY18, the sector had made shipments to the tune of 1 billion, as per a report by Bengaluru-based firms RedSeer and Shadowfox.

E-commerce shipments are expected to grow by a

30- 35 per cent CAGR for the next five years and touch 10 billion by FY25.

Some key drivers of growth are the latent demand in tier-2+ cities, logistics networks, infrastructure built by large horizontal players and growth of new-age third-party logistics players.

Horizontal players like Amazon and Flipkart accounted for 43 per cent of the shipments in FY20. Hyperlocal service providers like BigBasket, Grofers, Zomato and Swiggy accounted for 44 per cent of the shipments.

We are constantly in contact with our customers... We have increased our repositioning of empty containers from the Middle East by almost three times to support our customers exporting out of India. This has helped us in improving the situation to some extent," he said.

Traditionally, Indian exports have been relying on imports for empty containers. For the past few months, the exports have been moving up and imports have been lagging behind, creating an imbalance and shortage of empty containers. Containerised exports out of India were up by 14 per cent year-on-year in the September quarter but imports were lower by 28 per cent year-on-year.

K. Unnikrishnan, deputy D-G, Fieo, said, "Other shipping companies also are trying to reposition empty containers. However, the availability of containers and higher freight charges continue to be an issue. Until imports improve, we do not see the situation easing much."

Though the lockdown had put the logistics to a halt, the logistic services got up again. In a span of one year, Shiprocket witnessed 2.5x growth in the number of e-commerce shipments between October 2019 and October 2020," said Saahil Goel, CEO and co-founder, Shiprocket.

"Logistics is emerging as the bellwether sector indicating the economic recovery...Many critical sectors including e-commerce and retail are staging a recovery," said Abhishek Bansal, co-founder & CEO, Shadowfax.

CAUTIOUS | CHINA

Norm kicks in if infections exceed 500:1 million ratio in a region

Cabin crew told to wear diapers on risky flights

WILL DAVIES DEC. 10

China's aviation regulator recommends cabin crew on charter flights to high-risk Covid-19 destinations should wear disposable diapers and avoid using the bathroom to reduce the risk of infection.

The advice comes in a 38-page list of guidelines for airlines to prevent the spread of coronavirus. The sixth edition echoes similar instructions in previous, less lengthy versions.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China



said the recommendation applies for charter flights to and from countries and regions where infections exceed 500 in every one million people.

The diaper advice is in a

section on personal protective equipment, which also recommends the following for cabin crew: Medical protective masks; double-layer disposable medical rubber

gloves; goggles; disposable caps; disposable protective clothing; and disposable shoe covers.

Flight crew should wear masks and goggles, but they don't need diapers.

Other advice for the flights includes dividing the cabin into "clean area, buffer zone, passenger sitting area and quarantine area," separated by disposable curtains. The last three rows should be designated as an emergency quarantine area, CAAC said.

China's aviation market was hit hard at the onset of the outbreak in Wuhan and subsequent spread

around the country. But it has recovered -- on the domestic front at least-- to close to pre-pandemic levels, while other regions such as Europe and the US struggle to bring Covid-19 under control.

Airlines have insisted that it is safe to fly during the pandemic, partly thanks to the hospital-grade air filters on planes, but some researchers say it isn't yet clear to conclude there's minimal risk. Some cases have documented transmission on flights when passengers wore masks and sat far apart.

—Bloomberg

LEXUS SETS UP GUEST EXPERIENCE CENTRE IN H'BAD

Mumbai, Dec. 10: Lexus, the luxury vehicle arm of Toyota, on Thursday expanded its dealership network in India with the setting up its fourth guest experience centre (GEC) in Hyderabad.

Lexus, which entered India in March 2017, has such centres in New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru.

"The overwhelming response we received from Hyderabad to our self-charging hybrid electric portfolio is what prompted us to bring the Lexus Guest Experience Centre here," Lexus India president P. B. Venugopal said.

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

Dad-to-be Kane pulls out of Test

Wellington: New Zealand captain Kane Williamson on Thursday pulled out of the second Test against the West Indies in Wellington as he awaits the imminent arrival of his first child. The abrupt U-turn came just hours after batting mainstay Williamson had told head coach Gary Stead he would play in the match, which begins on Friday. Williamson had flown home to Tauranga to be with his wife Sarah on the even of the match. After confirming his availability he flew back to Wellington where, after further discussions with Stead, he agreed it would be best if he returned to be with his wife. "It's a decision that we've come to around the best interests for him and for Sarah, and also for our team," Stead said. Williamson had previously said the baby was due "mid-to-late December". — *AFP*

Akram backs out as Pak selector

Karachi: The Pakistan Cricket Board is finding it difficult to appoint a new chief selector after its top candidate backed out of working under the current system of selection in the country. A well-placed source said that former pacer Muhammad Akram was the top candidate for the chief selector's post but he has backed out demanding that the board return to the old system of selection. Under the old system, the board used to appoint an independent three to five-member national selection committee headed by a chief selector which picked the teams and had them approved by the Chairman of the board. "Akram made it clear he didn't want to work either under the present system of selection or with the head coaches of provincial teams," the source said. — *PTI*

Anand's academy to train youngsters

Chennai: Legendary Indian chess player Viswanathan Anand has joined hands with WestBridge Capital to launch an academy, through which the five-time world champion will train youngster. The academy, named WestBridge-Anand Chess Academy, has taken on board five of the country's most promising players to be trained by Anand. The initial list of trainees and grantees of the WACA Fellowship are: 15-year old R. Pragganandhaa, Nihal Sarin (16), Raunak Sadhwani (15), D. Gukesh (14) and Pragganandhaa's sister R. Vaishali (19). As part of the partnership, deserving candidates will be identified every year and provided help to break into the top world chess ranking. They will be granted fellowships. — *PTI*

East Bengal held by Jamshedpur

Vasco: SC East Bengal held a wasteful Jamshedpur FC for a goalless draw to secure their first point of the Indian Super League at the Tilak Maidan Stadium, here on Thursday. SCEB's Eugeneon Lyngdoh was given the marching orders following a second yellow card in the 25th minute but their defence led by Hero-of-the-Match Mohammed Irshad stayed compact and foiled every attempt. After three losses on the trot, laggards SCEB finally opened their account as they now have one point from four matches, while JFC moved to fifth place with six points from five games. — *PTI*

Live on TV

CRICKET

Australia 'A' vs India: Day 1 from 9 am on Sony Six, HD

Big Bash League: Melbourne Stars vs Brisbane Heat from 1.45 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

FOOTBALL

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

WWE

SmackDown: Bouts from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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SUPERMAN CITY

Real Madrid, PSG carve out victories; Reds held

Paris, Dec. 10: Karim Benzema sent Real Madrid through to the last 16 of the Champions League on Wednesday alongside their rivals Atletico, while Neymar scored a hat-trick as Paris Saint-Germain beat Istanbul Basaksehir in a match that had been delayed for 24 hours over a racism row. Real are Europe's most decorated club with 13 European Cups but they needed to beat Borussia Moenchengladbach in Madrid to be sure of making it through the group stage of the Champions League for a 24th straight year.

Benzema was their hero, easing the pressure on coach Zinedine Zidane with two fine back-post headers in the first half securing a 2-0 win in a game played behind closed doors at the Alfredo di Stefano Stadium.

The Frenchman also hit the bar in the second half and in the end it was a result that suited both teams, with a 0-0 draw between Inter Milan and Shakhtar Donetsk allowing Real to top Group 'B' and Gladbach, former European Cup runners-up, to go through as runners-up.

Players from the German club gathered around smartphones and laptops after full time in Madrid to follow events in Milan, where a winner for either team would have knocked Gladbach out.

They celebrated wildly when their qualification was confirmed.

"Moments like that live long in the memory. It was absolutely incredible and the joy was uncontainable," said Gladbach midfielder Christoph Kramer. Shakhtar go into the Europa League while Inter finish bottom of their group, failing to reach the last 16 for a third season running.

Meanwhile Atletico needed to beat Red Bull Salzburg in Austria to qualify as runners-up in Group 'A' behind Bayern Munich, and did so with Mario Hermoso and Yannick Carrasco scoring in a 2-0 victory.

Salzburg now go into the Europa League while reigning European cham-



Mohamed Salah (centre) of Liverpool and Midtjylland's Jens Cajuste vie for the ball during their UEFA Champions League Group 'D' football match in Herning, Denmark, on Wednesday. — *AFP*

pions Bayern completed the group stage unbeaten as Niklas Suele and Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting gave them a 2-0 win over Lokomotiv Moscow.

ATALANTA THROUGH

The other team to clinch qualification on Wednesday was Atalanta, whose 1-0 win away to Ajax secured second place in Group 'D' behind Liverpool and a last-16 spot for the second year running.

Luis Muriel scored a late winner for Atalanta in Amsterdam after Ryan Gravenberch was sent off for the hosts, who drop into the Europa League.

Already through, Liverpool were able to give a chance to several younger players in their 1-1 draw with Midtjylland in Denmark, where Mohamed Salah put the

THE RESULTS

Real Madrid (Benzema 9, 32)	2	Paris Saint-Germain (Neymar 21, 38, 50, Kylian Mbappe 42-pen, 62)	5
Borussia Moenchengladbach	0	Istanbul Basaksehir (Topal 57)	1
Manchester City (Torres 48, Aguero 77, Sterling 90)	3	Bayern Munich (Suele 63, Choupo-Moting 80)	2
Marseille	0	Lokomotiv Moscow	0
Liverpool (Salah 1)	1	Inter Milan Shakhtar Donetsk	0
Midtjylland (Scholz 62-pen)	1		0

2019 winners ahead early on but Alexander Scholz's penalty gave the hosts an honourable draw.

PSG had wrapped up their qualification for the last 16 on Tuesday thanks to Manchester United's defeat at RB Leipzig, despite their own game

being suspended after an unprecedented walkout.

Both sets of players refused to continue after a row erupted over an alleged racist remark by the fourth official aimed at Basaksehir's assistant coach, Pierre Webbo.

With a new set of offi-

cials, the game restarted in the 14th minute on Wednesday and Neymar scored a hat-trick while also winning a penalty converted by Kylian Mbappe.

That was Mbappe's first Champions League goal in 12 months, and he scored again later on after Mehmet Topal pulled one back. With their 5-1 victory, PSG go through as group winners.

Pep Guardiola's Manchester City made it five wins and a draw in Group 'D' as they eased to a 3-0 victory against Marseille with Ferran Torres and Sergio Aguerro getting second-half goals before an Alvaro Gonzalez own goal.

Also, Porto beat Olympiakos 2-0 in Piraeus courtesy of Otavio's early penalty and a Matheus Uribe goal. — *AFP*

KOHLI MAINTAINS TOP SPOT IN ODI RANKINGS

Dubai, Dec. 10: India captain Virat Kohli cemented his spot at the top of the ICC Men's ODI Player Rankings for batsmen after scoring two half-centuries in the recently-concluded three-match series against Australia.

Kohli, who had scored 89 and 63 in the second and third ODI against Australia in Sydney and Canberra respectively, has 870 points.

Despite missing the ODI series owing to a hamstring injury, Rohit Sharma (842) remains at the second spot, five points ahead of Pakistan skipper Babar Azam, who is number three in the rankings.

Playing his first ODI since the ICC Cricket World Cup 2019, India all-rounder Hardik Pandya struck 90 in the first game and 92 not out in the third to make his first appearance in the top 50 batsmen at 49th place with a career-best of 553 points.

From the Australian camp, captain Aaron Finch's innings of 114 in the first ODI, followed by 60 and 75 helped him up to a career-best tally of 791 points and fifth place.

Steve Smith's twin centuries in the first two matches enabled him to move back into the top 20 for the first time since 2018. He is currently at number fifteen with 707 points. Glenn Maxwell's 167 runs in the series and featured two half-centuries pushed him back up to 20th rank. — *PTI*

Chennai to host 2 Tests in India-England series

New Delhi, Dec. 10: India's much-anticipated Day/Night Test against England will be held at Ahmedabad from February 24 next year and the city will also be the venue of one more Test and five T20 Internationals at its newly-constructed Motera Stadium.

The two other venues that have been allotted matches as per BCCI's rotational policy are Chennai, which will host two Test matches, and Pune that will host the three ODIs during the February-March series.

BCCI secretary Jay Shah on Thursday announced Motera as the venue for the day/night Test during the Gujarat Cricket Association's Indoor Academy inauguration. The match will be India's second pink ball Test at home after the Bangladesh game at the Eden Gardens last year.

"England team will not travel the length and breadth of the country in the prevailing situation (Covid-19 pandemic). There are only three cities where BCCI is creating a bio-bubble. Two

Tests and five ODIs will be in Ahmedabad. The remaining two Tests will be in Chennai and three ODIs in Pune," a senior BCCI source said.

"As per our rotational policy, Pune and Chennai were due to get matches long back. With this series, they would get a chance to host their pending games," he further added. It is understood that a successful hosting of England series would pave the way for a good and successful IPL at home after it had to be taken to UAE this year. — *PTI*

Italy's 1982 WC hero Rossi dead

Milan, Dec. 10: Paolo Rossi, who fired Italy to victory in the 1982 World Cup after almost missing the tournament through a match-fixing scandal, has died aged 64, prompting an outpouring of grief and tributes.

Rossi's wife Federica Cappelletti announced the death in an *Instagram* post featuring a photo of the couple, accompanied by the comment "Forever," followed by a heart.

She did not disclose the cause of his death.

"He didn't want to go, I hugged him tightly and told him 'Paolo, now go, you have suffered too much'," Cappelletti said.

"It is not easy to summarise in a few words all that Paolo was," she continued.

"A unique person, full of optimism even in the most difficult moments, a great person but at the same time simple. He knew how to talk in the same way with Heads of State but also with the people we met at the supermarket. This was Paolo and this was his greatness," she further added.

Rossi's funeral will take place in his adopted city of Vicenza, in northeastern Italy, with his ashes returned to his native Tuscany, Cappelletti added.

Rossi won the hearts of Italian fans when his goals propelled Enzo Bearzot's Azzurri — who started the tournament with three uninspiring draws — to a third world title.

He exploded onto the stage of the 1982 tournament with a hat-trick in the 3-2 defeat of Brazil.

In the semifinals he scored both goals as Italy beat Poland 2-0, and he hit



In this file photo, Paolo Rossi poses at the Juventus Stadium in Turin, Italy. — *AP*

the opening goal in the 3-1 win over West Germany in the final.

Goalkeeper Dino Zoff, who captained the 1982 winning side, described Rossi as an "extraordinary footballer, excellent teammate and friend".

"He was irreplaceable in that group. And the relationship with him was great. We were a team of friends, a great group," Zoff said.

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte paid tribute to an "unforgettable champion", saying that his goals that summer "gave a dream to an entire generation".

"You will always remain our hero. Ciao Pablito," Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo, wrote on *Twitter*.

"Paolo was a friend, a golden boy; benevolent, humble and intelligent. He will be forever remembered by the (Juventus) team and everyone with a black and white heart," France football legend Michel Platini, who played alongside him at Juventus, said in a statement. — *AFP*



In this July 8, 1982 file photo, Paolo Rossi of Italy races across the pitch after scoring his team's first goal against Poland during their Fifa World Cup semifinal match at the Nou Camp Stadium, Barcelona, Spain. — *AP*

Highs and lows of Rossi's mixed life

Rome, Dec. 10: Football is mourning the death of Paolo Rossi, the prolific striker whose goals led the Azzurri to World Cup glory in 1982. Here are the stand-out moments from the career of one of Italy's greatest players:

INAUSPICIOUS START

Rossi made his debut with Juventus in 1973 and then loaned to Serie 'B' side Vicenza for the 1976-77 season. Rossi was Serie B's top scorer that year, firing Vicenza to promotion, and he led the Serie 'A' scoring charts the following season, earning a call-up to Enzo Bearzot's Italy squad for the 1978 World Cup in Argentina. Rossi shone in the tournament, scoring three goals as the Italians finished fourth.

TOTONERO SCANDAL

Despite his World Cup heroics, Rossi again struggled with injuries in the following season. Rossi then got embroiled in the 'Totonero' match-fixing scandal and was banned for three years, later reduced to two as he continually protested his innocence. The ban ruled Rossi out of the 1980 European Championship, where hosts Italy finished fourth. However, he was rehired by Juventus and returned in time for the tail-end of the Turin team's victorious

1981-82 season, earning a spot in Italy's 1982 World Cup squad.

WORLD CUP GOLD

A 2-1 win over Argentina was followed by the most memorable match of Rossi's career, when he hit a hat-trick as Italy dominated star-studded Brazil 3-2 to reach the semifinals. Rossi won the Golden Boot for top-scoring with six goals, the Golden Ball as the tournament's best player, and that year's Ballon d'Or.

HEYSEL TRAGEDY

After the World Cup, Rossi enjoyed his most successful club spell with Juventus, where he formed a formidable partnership with Michel Platini and Zbigniew Boniek.

Juventus won the 1983 Coppa Italia, the 1983-84 Serie 'A' title and UEFA Cup Winners' Cup and the 1984 UEFA Super Cup. Rossi also top-scored with six goals as Juventus reached the 1983 European Cup final, where they lost to Hamburg. However, Rossi's final game for Juventus was marked by tragedy. At the 1985 European Cup final 39 fans died in a stampede and wall collapse following crowd disturbances. Season-long spells at Milan and Hellas Verona followed, before Rossi retired in 1987. — *AFP*