

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
NELLORE | SATURDAY | 5 DECEMBER 2020



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Nadda begins nationwide tour



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Britain defends vaccine decision amid criticism

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India off to winning start in T20s



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WEATHER



Max: 25.2°C
Min: 23.0°C
RH: 75%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: clear.
Max/Min temp. 25/23 °C

COVID-19 CUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+42,245)	(+598)
96,06,810	1,39,700
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+631)	(+2)
TS: 2,72,123	1,467
(+599)	(+6)
AP: 8,70,675	7,020

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

	6,59,21,383
	DEATHS
	15,18,657
	COUNTRIES WITH CASES
	218
worldometers.info/coronavirus	

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Bahula Panchami till 8.06 pm
Star: Pushyami till 2.23 pm
Varjyam: 3.21 am to 4.58 am (Sunday)
Durmuhurtam: 6.36 am to 8.04 am
Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am
HILIRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Aakhir 19, 1442 AH
PRAYERS (SHAHI MASJID)
Fajar: 5.05 am
Zohar: 12.01 pm
Asar: 4.03 pm
Maghrib: 5.41 pm
Isha: 6.56 pm
SUNSET TODAY 5.39 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.21 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 9.07 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 10.24 AM

COUNTER POINT



Dinner meet of our leaders to discuss the farmers' agitation!

IN BRIEF

Anantapur caste colonies renamed

Anantapur: Thanks to a major initiative taken by collector Gandham Chandrudu, almost 480 localities which had caste inspired names like Dalit colonies have been rechristened. Anantapur now boasts of Viswarathna Nagar, Ferror Nagar, while RDT Nagar replaces the earlier name of Harijana Wada. It may be noted that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment issued fresh guidelines with instructions to do away with the word harijan. The committee also sought renaming of colonies that had Harijana Wada, Girijana Wada, Dalit Wada and such other names. The committee found many colonies and areas with boards as harijans and girijans.

■ Report on Page 3

AP will get 1 crore vaccine dose: CM

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 4

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy announced in State Legislative Assembly on Friday that AP is getting ready to vaccinate one crore people against Covid in three months, as the Centre has indicated that it will

release the doses of vaccine to AP in the first phase.

Replying to a discussion in Assembly on Covid and other health initiatives, the CM stated that as per guidelines of the Centre, 3.6 lakh healthcare workers will get the vaccine first.

■ Page 2: Farmers got loan for selling milk to Heritage

Refinery fire



Thick smoke billows out from the HPCL Visakha Refinery at Malkapuram industrial area in Visakhapatnam on Friday.

Mining barons fume as AP, K'taka fix borders

DC CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR, DEC. 4

The ongoing process of fixing borders between Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka at Anantapur and Bellary districts is erupting into a major controversy as some mining owners are raising a serious objection.

It should be noted that iron ore is richly present in the specific area and speculation is rife that pressures are being mounted by representatives from BJP-led Karnataka.

A group of mining owners is against the present survey, which is 'ignoring the earlier genuine reports'.

The Union Government was conducting a survey to fix borders between Bellary and Anantapur district forest lands following a 15-year dispute

after borders were destroyed by mining companies. Illegal mining of 29 lakh tonnes of rich quality iron ore from the reserved forests had caused considerable damage to the border areas.

It should be recalled that there was a dispute between two mining companies- OMC (Obulapuram Mining Company) and BIOP (Bellary Iron Ore Private Ltd.) over their limits and leased areas and a big scam of illicit mining of rich ore. OMC mining baron Gali Janardhan Reddy has been facing restriction of entry into Anantapur and Bellary districts in connection with cases against him.

Further, a legal dispute arose between both the state governments over fixing of borders as the mining companies

increased from ₹35 to ₹100 when Kiran Kumar Reddy was Chief Minister. When Naidu returned to power in 2014, the share price rose to a record ₹827 by December 2017. Heritage shares fell to ₹205 by March 2020 after Naidu stepped down."

The Chief Minister stated that the Opposition leader had killed Chittoor Dairy, which once competed with Heritage, while ordering its closure in 2003. Showing the orders, Reddy stated that this is an example of how the cooperative sector was badly affected during the Telugu Desam regime.

■ Page 2: Farmers got loan for selling milk to Heritage

CAG punctures Naidu

Report reflects financial mismanagement in TD regime

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 4

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)'s report has taken the steam out of the Telugu Desam's accusations of financial bungling by the Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government. It highlighted the mismanagement under the chief ministership of N. Chandrababu Naidu.

The 'State Finances Audit Report 2019' tabled in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly on the last day of the winter session on Friday referred to several instances of financial mismanagement like diverting employees' insurance fund, unproductive investments, excess dependence overdraft facility and failure to contain revenue deficit.

After losing power last year, the Telugu Desam has made the alleged financial mismanagement by the YSRC government a major issue to target the Chief Minister. Y. Ramakrishnu, former finance minister and senior TD leader, has several times demanded imposition of financial emergency in the state to "save" it from further bankruptcy.

The CAG mentioned in its report that the "Government incorrectly used funds that belong to

Auditor picks holes in AP's revenue receipts

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 4

AP government introduced in the State Legislative Assembly on Friday CAG Reports for 2019 on the last day of winter session.

Finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy tabled CAG reports according to which total revenue receipts of the government for the year 2017-18 amounted to ₹1,05,062 crore against ₹98,984 crore in the previous year. Of this, 51 per cent was raised by the state through tax revenue (₹49,486 crore) and non-tax revenue (₹3,814

crore). The balance 49 per cent was received from the Centre in the form of state's share of divisible Union taxes (₹29,001crore) and grants-in Aid (₹22,761crore).

Test check of the records belonging to 324 units out of 1,445 auditable units under Commercial Taxes, Prohibition and Excise, Transport, Land Revenue, Registration and Stamps and other departments during the year 2017-18 showed underassessment, short levy / loss of revenue aggregating ₹222.19 crore in 1,245 cases.

■ Page 2: Coordination among depts poor: CAG

its employees and created uncertainty in respect of benefits due to the employees" besides enhancing the avoidable financial liability to the government. The accounting agency found that there was a short transfer of ₹663 crore to the National Securities Depository Limited.

The CAG highlighted the low-return investments made by the Naidu govern-

ment in 2018-19 fiscal. The government's investments in statutory corporations, government companies and others were ₹9,500 crore of which unapportioned investments were ₹8,400 crore which is 88 per cent of investments.

"The average rate of return on investment was negligible at 0.01 per cent, far lower than the average rate of interest the govern-

STATE RESOLVES NOT TO HOLD PANCHAYAT POLL

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 4

The Andhra Pradesh Assembly on Friday passed a resolution unanimously against conduct of gram panchayat elections due to prevalence of Covid-19.

Minister for health Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas (Alla Nani) introduced the resolution in the House opposing the State Election Commission's move to conduct gram panchayat polls in February. The minister said that as coronavirus was still prevalent in the state and as there was a threat of a second wave, the government cannot conduct polls as health of the people was more important.

The minister, while stating that the SEC had taken a unilateral decision in this regard, assured that once the pandemic was brought under control, gram panchayat elections would be conducted.

Earlier, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy stated that as the US went ahead with its Presidential polls, it witnessed a surge in Covid-19 cases.

VACCINE WILL BE READY IN A FEW WEEKS, SAYS PM

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 4

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said, quoting experts, that it is believed a coronavirus vaccine "will be ready in the next few weeks". Speaking at an all-party meeting to discuss the roadmap on ways to combat the pandemic, Mr Modi said India's vaccination programme will start as soon as the scientists gave the go-ahead.

■ Report on Page 4

IS IT OUR FAULT?

The only allegation against Sahara India Pariwar is that our repayments to the esteemed investors are getting delayed. Of course we are also paying the interest of delayed period.

Nobody is writing the reason.

The reason is -

Owing to the embargo imposed for the last 8 years by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, any money generated through selling or mortgaging our assets of the entire group (including Co-operatives) or from joint ventures will be deposited in the Sahara-SEBI account, as per the directives of Hon'ble Supreme Court. Out of this, we cannot use even a single rupee for organizational work. Not even for repayment to the esteemed investors.

On the other hand, till date, approximately ₹22,500 crore including interest (which will surely come back to us as per Hon'ble Court's order) has been deposited in the Sahara-SEBI account. Whereas, despite giving four rounds of advertisements in 154 newspapers by SEBI in the last 8 years across the country, SEBI has repaid only ₹106.10 crore to the esteemed investors (means only 0.5% payment has been done) and there is no claimant anymore.

Now Sahara should not be required to deposit more money in the Sahara-SEBI account. The embargo on us should be lifted now and the order of verification should come. But all these decisions will be taken by the Hon'ble Supreme Court. On the other hand, due to COVID-19 for the last 10 months, we haven't been able to get a date from the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

We hope that we will soon get a date and everything will be good.

We are working on various sources of money. Everybody's money is totally safe. You are getting the interest of the delayed period.

Do have some patience. We shall all emerge victors by 31st March 2021.



SHORT TAKES

CALL TO CURB
IRREGULARITIES
IN YSR CHEYUTHADC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 4

The contractors are alleging several irregularities in the tender process called by the government for the supply of livestock required for distribution to eligible beneficiaries under the YSR Cheyutha scheme and sought the government to set right them.

Addressing the media here on Friday, contractors Abdul Kareem said the government was implementing a good scheme under the name of YSR Cheyutha to provide buffaloes to the deserving people in AP. He lamented that, but sadly, some officials in the Department of Animal Husbandry are giving contracts to their people for commissions.

Mr Karim and others said that the buffaloes could give six to seven litres of milk per day, but the department is procuring the buffaloes that are giving litre milk from a few selected contractors for their commissions. They deplored that as a result, the purpose of the YSR Cheyutha scheme is completely undermined. Mr Karim demanded that the government take stern action on the officials and see that the scheme is appropriately implemented.

IMA AP BODY FOR
WITHDRAWAL OF
CCIM NOTIFICATIONDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 4

The doctors of Indian Medical Association (IMA), Andhra Pradesh, strongly opposed and condemned the predatory poaching on Modern Medicine and its surgical disciplines by the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) by allowing non-allopathic doctors to practice allopathic treatments. In this connection, the members of the IMA strongly demand withdrawal of the CCIM notification and the Niti Aayog committees for integration.

Stating that the notification by the CCIM to 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 will only lead to mixopathy, and the IMA demanded an immediate withdrawal of the decision.

Speaking to the media here on Friday, IMA AP secretary Dr G. Nanda Kishore said that allowing of Ayurveda doctors to practice allopathy and studying PG (allopathic) courses is unethical and unscientific as Ayurvedic procedures are not that from modern medicine (Allopathy). He said the IMA had directed public demonstrations and withdrawal of non-essential and non-Covid services on December 11, from 6 am to 6 pm.

HC RESERVES
VERDICT ON GRAM
PANCHAYAT POLLSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 4

The AP High Court on Friday completed its hearing on the state government's petition against allowing the gram panchayat polls in February next due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and reserved its verdict.

Advocate General S. Sriram told a division bench headed by Justice D.V.S.S. Somayajulu that the State Election Commission (SEC) had taken a unilateral decision to conduct of the polls despite the prevalence of Covid-19. He asked the court to issue stay order on SEC's proceedings.

SEC counsel N. Ashwani Kumar informed the court that earlier a division bench headed by Chief Justice J.K. Maheswari had directed the SEC to continue its election process. Based on that order, they were going ahead to conduct the polls.

Kumar said that the conduct of elections was the responsibility of the SEC and the role of the state government was limited to advising it. He said that the SEC was informing the state government about its plan to conduct the gram panchayat polls.

The AG contended that the SEC had issued the notification earlier to conduct the local body polls and they were stopped due to the outbreak of Covid-19. The SEC's claim that they were continuing the election process was not correct as the SEC issued proceedings to conduct polls only for gram panchayats.

After hearing both the parties, the court reserved its verdict and it may pronounce it on Monday.

10 TD men suspended
from House on last day

Opposition party MLAs create disturbance near Speaker's chair

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 4

Ruckus continued in AP State Legislative Assembly on last day of the winter session on Friday, with 10 Telugu Desam MLAs suspended from the House for creating disturbance near the Speaker's chair and podium.

Trouble started after the adjournment motion given by Opposition TD on pending bills related to National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme was rejected by Speaker Tammineni Sitaram.

When the House started its proceedings as per the agenda, the TD legislators started shouting and raising slogans. They then rushed to the podium seeking that their adjournment motion be taken up. But business of the House continued as per agenda despite sloganeering.

Following this, the TD MLAs climbed on to the space near the Speaker's chair and intensified their protest shouting slogans and showing placards.

The Speaker repeatedly requested TD legislators to get back to their seats

AP ASSEMBLY ADJOURNED SINE DIE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 4

Andhra Pradesh Assembly adjourned sine die after completion of five-day sessions on Friday.

Assembly Speaker Tammineni Sitharam said that the sessions which started on November 30 were held up to December 4 by registering total sessions' time

and raised the subject from their own designated places in the House. But as the protests continued, the Speaker adjourned the House.

When the Session resumed, TD legislators once again rushed to the well of the House, climbed up to the desk and Speaker's chair and started shouting slogans loudly that their adjournment motion on NREGS be taken up.

At this, the YSRC legislators pointed out that on Thursday, the TD had demanded a discussion on dairy industry in AP in partnership with Amul. Hence the same has been taken up in the House. The

to be 39 hours and four minutes. He said that 18 bills were introduced in the Assembly by the state government and out of them, two were withdrawn while 19 bills were passed.

The 175-member Assembly was attended by 151 MLAs from the ruling YSRC, 23 from the Opposition Telugu Desam and one from the Jana Sena.

ruling party legislators objected to the rude behaviour of Opposition MLAs in surrounding the chair of Speaker, thereby insulting him.

Agricultural minister Kurasala Kannababu pointed out that TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu had in his biography "Manasulo Maata" stated that "we should market self every day". Practising the same, Naidu has been creating ruckus in the House to market himself and hogging news headlines. The minister pointed out that the government is conducting an inquiry about corruption in the NREGS works. Funds have been

released for works where no objections had been raised. Wherever there have been allegations of corruption, release of funds has been kept pending, which would be released on basis of the inquiry report.

As shouting by TD members continued, the Speaker said, "You are disrupting the House every day. I am pained at having to suspend you but I am left with no option."

Information minister Perni Venkataramaiah alias Nani then moved a motion for suspension of opposition members, which was approved by a voice vote. Following this, TD MLAs K. Atchannaidu, Gorantla Butchaiah Chowdary, Nimmala Rama Naidu, Bendalam Ashok, Yeluri Sambasiva Rao, Anagani Satyaprasad, Jogeswara Rao, Ramakrishna Babu, Manthena Ramaraju and Dola Balaveeranjanya Swamy were suspended.

Protesting over these suspensions the remaining Telugu Desam legislators led by Naidu staged a walk out from the Assembly.

Frontline govt staff to
get vaccine second

FROM PAGE 1

Vijayawada: Seven lakh frontline staff of different government departments and 90 lakh aged persons above 50 years of age. Accordingly, he said, the Health Department is gearing up for the vaccination programme.

The CM announced that nearly 4,065 cold chain facilities will be storing the vaccine at a temperature of between 2-8 degrees Celsius. Government has kept 29 refrigerated vehicles ready for transporting the vaccine, which will be administered to the one crore population by 19,000 ANMs. He asked health authorities to train Asha workers too about how the vaccine is to be injected into people.

Jagan Mohan Reddy said AP has a population of six crore. Until all people are vaccinated, he advised people to remain compliant with the requisite precautionary measures, like wearing face mask, maintaining social distance, washing hands with sanitisers and protecting oneself from getting infected with Coronavirus.

A state-level steering committee headed by the chief secretary and task forces at state, district and mandal levels are being set up to implement and monitor the vaccination programme in compliance with the stipulated Standard Operating Procedures.

Referring to the spike in number of Covid-19 positive cases due to prevalence of cold weather conditions, the CM pointed out that countries like the

FARMERS GOT LOAN FOR SELLING
MILK TO HERITAGE, SAYS JAGAN

from page 1

Jagan Mohan Reddy said, "When Naidu was Chief Minister, Bank of Baroda and Heritage signed a MoU on 30.12.2016 in the name of easy loans to farmers under which milk farmers should sell milk only to Heritage for low price. This is the terrible approach of Naidu and his efforts to cheat farmers."

The CM affirmed that their target was not Heritage but to empower women. "If the cooperative sector is strong, competition will increase and the income of farmers and our sisters will increase. This will benefit over 27 lakh sisters in rural areas engaged in the

milk sector," he said.

Jagan Mohan Reddy said that if Amul does not come, a majority of bulk milk cooling units would be closed and milk will be collected from only 800 villages. He said that special focus on women's empowerment, socio-economic uplift of milk producers, providing better milk price and providing quality milk to consumers was their endeavour.

The CM said that the government has found that milk production is high in 9,899 villages and that was the reason bulk milk cooling units were being set up in those villages. Establishing women's dairy co-operative societies are integral to the initiative, he pointed out.

UK, France, Italy and states, such as New Delhi, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh are witnessing this phenomenon.

He dwelt at length on how infrastructure was skeletal in hospitals of the state when Coronavirus started spreading in March 2019. Not a single lab was available to conduct Covid-19 test in the early days. Since then, the state government has set up 150 labs and has conducted 1.02 crore tests so far. Andhra Pradesh stood first in the country by conducting 1,91,568 tests per one million population.

Coronavirus positive rate has been brought down to 8.51 percent on an average from the earlier 16 per-

cent. Rate of fatalities has been reduced to 0.81 percent from the earlier 1.46 percent by providing all requisite health care to virus-infected persons.

The CM pointed out that even now, a set of six doses of Remdesivir injections are available at each of the Covid-19 hospitals, besides 17,000 Tocilizumab injections at all district headquarter hospitals in the state for treating infected patients.

The CM announced revamp of the entire health infrastructure in the state, besides setting up 16 new medical colleges in addition to the existing 11 colleges in AP at a cost of Rs. 16,000 crore in the next three years.

TD chief praises the spirit of Amaravati women for continuing protests peacefully

RAY OF HOPE

Nobody can shift capital from Amaravati: Naidu

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 4

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu alleged that the YSRC government aimed to trouble farmers hence was trying to shift capital and claimed that nobody can shift the capital from Amaravati. He visited pro-Amaravati protest camp at Mandadam on Friday and expressed solidarity to agitating women and farmers.

While returning home after walking out from the Assembly, Naidu has stopped at the pro-Amaravati protest camp at Mandadam. He praised the spirit of Amaravati women for continuing to agitate peacefully since the past one year. "We cannot value the sacrifices of Amaravati farmers who wholeheartedly offered their farmlands for world-

class Amaravati capital. Naidu claimed that 90per cent of the people of the state are supporting Amaravati and want the police notice the same.

He said that some policemen are creating troubles to Amaravati farmers but they will face dire consequences if they continue following the orders of politicians.

Affirming complete support of the TD to Amaravati farmers, Naidu predicted win to pro-Amaravati supporters in the coming days and continuation of Amaravati as only capital of AP state.

Welcome into party-fold



YSRC president and Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy welcomes Venkatram, son of Rajolu MLA Rapaka Varaprasad, into the party by putting on puts on party kanduva when the latter met him on Monday.

— DC

CAG finds lapses in
several corporationsDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 4

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India report on general and social sectors for the year ended 2018 found a series of lapses in several departments, including municipal administration and urban development, higher education and others.

According to the report, Guntur Municipal Corporation (GMC) failed to revise annual rental value for residential properties since 2002 and for non-residential properties since 2007. Lack of coordination between Town Planning and Revenue wings resulted in no proper assessment and levy of property tax for 107 out of 6,116 properties regularised under Building Penalisation Scheme as also for 55 out of 822 properties, where occupancy certificates were issued. This resulted in loss of revenue to the tune of ₹17.19 crore.

GMC had not installed the water flow meters in 1,01,679 households for measuring consumption of water. No review was taken to revise water charges even though amounts collected were insufficient to cover even the operation and maintenance costs. The objective of providing 135 lpcd of water to all residents was yet to be realised.

The audit report found that improper planning in construction of Narasipatnam municipal office building that made it infructuous even as an expenditure of ₹60.78 lakh was incurred.

As Rajahmundry Municipal Corporation failed to revise contracted maximum demand, it resulted in avoidable expenditure of ₹88.63 lakh.

Failure to levy and collect labour cess in accordance with the norms of Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996, by the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority resulted in non-collection of ₹4.82 crore.

Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University-Kakinada failed to collect affiliation fee dues of ₹141.65 crore from colleges during 2012-17 due to lack of internal control for collecting dues from affiliated colleges.

Though the state government allocated ₹82.65 crore during 2015-18, for construction of ITI buildings and installation of machinery and equipment, the department has spent ₹12.62 crore so far. It was found that several ITIs were operating from hired accommodation and the state government had also not released grants for the period 2015-18 for training, grant, stipend, and maintenance of tools and equipment.

The audit report found

party manifesto, which he described as his Bible.

The TD chief lamented that now, after 18 months of CM's misrule and misgovernance, people are going through a nightmarish experience broken promises, non-stop atrocities and attacks. "Such is the new Bible after Jagan has come to power," the Leader of Opposition remarked.

Addressing a press conference here, Naidu recalled how Jagan talked about creating lakhs of jobs for youth by forcing the centre to give Special Category Status. But now, there is neither talk about job creation nor any effort in that direction.

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COORDINATION
AMONG DEPTS
POOR: CAG

From page 1

Under value added tax, central sales tax and goods and services tax declaration of turnover of ₹86.74 crore resulted in short levy of tax of ₹7.28 crore in eight offices.

Incorrect exemption of sales turnover of ₹26.21 crore of textiles and fabrics in six offices had resulted in non-levy of tax of ₹1.31 crore.

Assessing authorities in nine offices did not levy interest and penalty on belated payments of tax in 26 cases that amounted to ₹2.48 crore.

The non-conversion of TOT dealer as VAT dealer in nine offices resulted in short payment of tax and non-levy of penalty to the tune of ₹49.90 lakh in 21 cases. Tax of ₹8.61 crore was not/short levied due to incorrect determination of taxable turnover under Works Contracts in six offices involving seven cases.

Tax of ₹67.02 lakh on works contracts was short levied due to determination of turnover on the basis of incorrect detailed accounts as well as incorrect application of works contract provisions.

Assessing authorities levied penalty equivalent to tax instead of at 200 per cent on ITC claims based on false invoices leading to short levy in penalty by ₹80.95 lakh.

Non-restriction of Input Tax Credit (ITC) to works contractors and allowing ITC on ineligible goods led to excess / incorrect allowance of ITC amounting to ₹80.61 lakh in four offices involving nine cases.

The detailed study on transition from VAT to GST was conducted and deficiencies noticed in three out of five offices test checked.

Excess claim of transitional credit of ₹14.57 crore was made by 113 dealers in five offices.

Transitional claim of ₹1.41 crore was erroneously allowed to three dealers though CST assessments were not completed and declaration forms for claiming concession / exemptions were not filed.

Detailed compliance Audit on "Functioning of Registration and Stamp Department" disclosed lack of coordination between Departments of Land Revenue and Registration, apart from Agricultural under which rate was adopted in respect of lands that had already been converted to non-agricultural use in nine offices of District Registrars / Sub-Registrars.

This led to undervaluation of properties by ₹32.38 crore resulting in short levy of stamp duty and registration fees of ₹2.11 crore.

● The detailed study on transition from VAT to GST was conducted and deficiencies noticed in three out of five offices test checked.

TD take out rally, demands
payment of NREGS duesDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 4

The Telugu Desam MLAs and MLCs, led by the Leader of Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu, staged a rally on the Assembly premises demanding payment of pending NREGS dues to farmers all over the state. The TD leaders maintained that the YSRC Government was deliberately avoiding payment of bills despite orders from the central government and courts to make the payment.

Besides Naidu, TD deputy leader in the Assembly K. Atchannaidu, national general secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh, MLAs

Anagani Satya Prasad and Yeluri Sambasiva Rao, apart from others participated in the rally.

Holding placards and raising slogans, the TD legislators said that the bills were not being paid out of political vengeance.

The TD leaders asked how the government could defy even orders of the High Court. They protested that not a single road was laid or a single building constructed or single drain developed in the past 18 months of YSRC misrule.

They alleged that but the ruling party leaders were claiming payments by submitting fake and bogus bills on works that were never taken up.



TD national president and former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu speaks to a woman protester during his visit to the Amaravati Parirakshana Samiti protest camp at Mandadam in Guntur district on Friday.

— DC

SHORT TAKES

SPL TRAIN TO FROM TIRUPATI TO CLEAR RUSH

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 4

To facilitate the extra rush of passengers, Railways will run additional festival special trains between Tirupati-Chamarajanagar.

According to a statement released by the railway authorities, train 06219 Chamarajanagar-Tirupati festival express special daily will commence from December 7, and the train service runs up to December 31.

The train usually departs Chamarajanagar station at 3.10 pm and arrives at Tirupati at around 5.25 am the next day.

In the return direction, train. No 06220 Tirupati-Chamarajanagar, festival express special daily will commence from December 8, and the train service runs up to 1 January 2021.

The train usually departs the Tirupati station at around 9.35 pm and arrives at Chamarajanagar at around 12.30 pm on the next day.

En route, the train stops at various stations via Katpadi junction, KSR Bengaluru city Jn, Mysuru Jn and Chamarajanapuram in both directions.

UNIQUE KNEE OPERATION PERFORMED

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 4

TTD's BIRRD ortho hospital honorary director Dr Madanmohan Reddy informed that they have carried out a unique knee replacement operation - first of its kind, in their hospital in Tirupati on Friday.

The doctors had successfully carried out the operation on a 48-year-old patient Sujata of Kurnool, who had a twisted knee and was unable to walk. Disclosing the operation details to the media along with his team comprising Dr Girija, Dr Naveen and Dr Chaitanya, Dr Reddy said that the woman was suffering from severe knee pains from the last three years. "On June 6 we did right knee operation and on October 30 operation for the left knee was done. The operation lasted for nearly four hours each and now she is able to walk without any pain," he added.

The BIRRD chief appreciated the work of his team of doctors who successfully executed the advanced pain management technique to carry out the operation on the lady without loss of much blood in an innovative manner.

Ms. Sujata also thanked the team of doctors terming them as her life saviours and real gods. "I never thought that I would walk again and lead a normal life. It's like a rebirth to me and I whole-heartedly thank all the doctors for the same," she reiterated.

WOMAN, TWO SONS TRY TO END LIVES

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 4

A mother along with her two children tried to end their life after jumping into a local tank at Utukuru village in Vinjamur mandal on Friday. Relatives of the victim, however, rescued the mother, while her 7-year-old son died in the incident and another son, who is nine years old, gone missing in the tank.

According to the reports reaching here, Vemula Aswini hailing from Utukuru village along with her two children visited Poleramma temple here on Friday morning. However, she didn't return to the house and her relatives started searching for her in the temple premises.

After a few minutes, they spotted Aswini and her two sons standing on the edge of the tank. Ignoring the relatives, she jumped into the tank along with her children. Some of her relatives immediately jumped into the tank and rescued the mother, but her younger son Yaswanth (7) was dead by that time.

On learning about the incident, Vinjamur SI Baji Reddy rushed to the spot and deployed swimmers in search of her elder son Jaswanth (9). A case is registered and further investigation is being done.

● Ignoring the relatives, she jumped into the tank along with her children. Some relatives immediately jumped into the tank and rescued the mother, but one son was dead, search is on for the other

ENC pays tributes to 1971 Indo-Pak War heroes

Navy Day observed in commemoration of Operation Trident

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 4

The Navy paid homage to its personnel who made the supreme sacrifice in various actions including the 1971 war. A wreath was placed by Vice-Admiral Atul Kumar Jain, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command, at the Navy War Memorial on Beach Road Visakhapatnam on Friday.

Wreaths were placed by collector V. Vinay Chand, police commissioner Manish Kumar Sinha, GVMC commissioner G. Srijana and Vice-Admiral V.K. Namballa (retd), president of the Navy Foundation.

The country celebrates December 4 every year as Navy Day in commemoration of Operation Trident when missile boats of the Indian Navy delivered a lethal missile attack on the Karachi harbour, paving way for an indian victory during the 1971 Indo-Pak war, and in memory of those who made the supreme



Eastern Navy Commander-in-Chief Vice Admiral Atul Kumar Jain pays tributes at the Navy War Memorial, Victory at Sea, on Beach Road to mark Navy Day celebrations in Visakhapatnam on Friday.

sacrifice. On this occasion, personnel of the Eastern Naval Command rededicated themselves to the service of the country and to protect the vast maritime boundaries and the national assets off the Eastern

Seaboard. A 50-an Guard of Honour was presented on the occasion. On arrival, Vice-Admiral Atul Kumar proceeded to the War Memorial in slow march with the wreath-bearers marching in front. The Guard per-

formed the 'Salam Shastr', the salute, followed by the 'Shok Shastr' and the Commander-in-Chief placed the floral wreath. While the bugle sounded the 'Last Post', a two-minute silence was observed.

No caste-based locality names

HOSKOTE
NAGABHUSHANAM | DC
ANANTAPUR, DEC. 4

Thanks to a major initiative taken by district collector Gandham Chandrudu, almost 480 localities which had caste inspired names like Dalit colonies have been rechristened. Anantapur now boasts of Viswarathna Nagar, Ferror Nagar, while RDT Nagar replaces the earlier name of Harijana Wada.

It may be noted that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment issued fresh guidelines with instructions to do away with the word harjan. The committee also sought renaming of colonies that had Harijana Wada, Girijana Wada, Dalit Wada and such other names. The committee found many colonies and areas with boards

as harijans and girijans. "We changed names for more than 480 colonies and areas in the district soon after the directions from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment," he said.

The Dalita Wada near RDT area was named RDT Colony in honour of the NGO that works for the people of the district. Thus, there are now names like of RDT founder Ferror, Jagjeevanram Nagar and Indira Nagar.

Interestingly, Maharashtra government cleared a proposal to rename residential areas in the state having caste-based names two days ago. The government chose to rename localities to maintain social harmony and national unity. The Anantapur district administration is about to complete renaming of colonies, including schools and other offices.

AP RECORDS 599 COVID-19 CASES, 6 DEATHS IN 24 HRS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 4

AP registered 599 new Covid-19 cases out of 63,406 samples tested and six deaths rising toll to 7,020 in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities released Covid-19 bulletin on Friday reporting that out of a total number of 1,02,93,151 samples tested so far in the state, 8,70,675 persons were found infected with Coronavirus and out of them, 8,57,233 patients were recovered while 6,422 patients are still active with the virus.

Among daily Covid-19 cases, Krishna registered the highest of 115 followed by 92 in Chittoor, 85 in West Godavari, 71 in Guntur, 60 in East Godavari, 41 in Srikakulam, 25 in Kadapa, 24 in Anantapur, 23 in Nellore, 22 in Visakhapatnam, 20 in Prakasam, 13 in Kurnool and eight in Vizianagaram.

DEPRESSION OVER GULF OF MANNAR STATIONARY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 4

The deep depression over Gulf of Mannar close to Ramanathapuram district coast remained practically stationary during past 12 hours and lay centred over Gulf of Mannar close to Ramanathapuram district coast, about 40 km south-west of Ramanathapuram, 70 km west-south-west of Pamban and 160 km northeast of Kanniyakumari.

The associated wind speed is about 50-60 gusting to 70 kmph.

The deep depression is likely to remain practically stationary over the same region and weaken into a depression during the next 12 hours.

Thereafter it will move slowly west-south-westwards across Ramanathapuram district towards south Kerala and weaken into a well marked low pressure area during subsequent 24 hours.

PK: WE WILL REVOLT IF YSRC LEADERS ATTACK US

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 4

Lashing out at the YSR Congress leaders, Janasena chief Pawan Kalyan warned that his party will not keep quiet if they resort to attacks on his party leaders.

Referring to the YSRC party workers' alleged bid to block his second-day tour in the cyclone-hit areas in Chittoor district on Friday, the actor-turned politician said that they are maintaining refrain with respect towards democracy and police system.

"We won't tolerate if the attacks continue on Janasena workers and leaders. We will revolt and teach the ruling party a befitting lesson," Mr Pawan Kalyan said addressing the farmers at the cyclone-hit Poya in Srikalahasti constituency. "I am not a person to fear if they resort to attacks and we will revolt strongly. But we are maintaining refrain as persons who respect democracy. I am on the field level tour to instil assurance and stay in support of the farmers who lost everything due to the Nivar cyclone," he reiterated. He said they are chalking out 'Jai Kisaan' programme and will not rest until the government provides farmers the rightful compensation.

TTD mulls garden with auspicious plants in Tirumala

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 4

To enhance the aesthetic value of green precincts in Tirumala, TTD has mull to develop Sri Venkateswara *pavitra udyanavanam* (garden) on the lines of the green gardens with auspicious plants as mentioned in the 38th chapter of *Varaha Puranam*, said TTD EO Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy.

The TTD EO along with additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy and CVSO Gopinath Jatti on Friday inspected Gita gardens, Padmavathi, Dharmagiri and Silathoranam areas in Tirumala.

Speaking to media persons, EO Dr Jawahar Reddy said that the *pavitra*

udyanavanam will represent the glory and the purpose of the incarnation of Lord as Venkateswara on Venkatachala in Kaliyuga as stated in *Varaha Purana*.

He said that the TTD engineering officials were instructed to complete the hardscape part to develop greenery at Gita Park and Padmavathi area, while the GMR constructions will do the soft landscaping and maintenance. Later he also visited the Kakulakonda area to see the possibilities of erecting solar plants to the extent of nearly 20 acres of land for Tirumala utilities. CE Ramesh Reddy, SE-2 Nageswara Rao, DFO Chandra Sekhar, Garden Superintendent Srinivasulu were present.

WITHDRAW CASES ON ACTIVISTS: WSS WRITES OPEN LETTER TO CHIEF JUSTICE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 4

Women against Sexual Violence and State Repression (WSS) in its open letter asked the chief justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court to see that the complaints registered against HRF activist and others in Munchingput be withdrawn immediately to ensure protection to the lawyers and to the Human Rights activists, who are aiding in the process of ensuring justice to the weakest and the most marginalised in society, from harassment by the state agencies.

The letter signed by Nisha Biswas, Ranjana Padhi, Shohini Shoaib, Maheen Mirza, Aloka Kujur and Padmaja Shaw said Krishna of HRF, along with several civil society activists, have stood in solidarity with the

victims of gang-rape of Vakapalli all these years, at great personal risk to themselves and to the victims. The long-drawn-out trial itself has been a testimony to the courage of the victims. Krishna and the others supported these victims as they belong to the poorest of the poor Adivasi communities.

The alleged gang-rape case of 11 adivasi women of the Konth tribe by 13 men of AP Special Police personnel during a raid conducted in Vakapalli, has had a long legal history since August 2007, first in High Court of AP and then in Supreme Court, and now in the SC/ST Special Court where it is in the final stages of hearing. After a decade-long chequered legal battle, the SC in 2017 ordered that the case be heard by an SC/ST Special Court.

YOUNGSTER DIES OF ELECTROCUTION WHILE WORKING ON ELECTRICITY POLE

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 4

A 24-year-old youth died when he was electrocuted and fell from an electric pole while trying to fix a power problem in Naidupalem of Dakkili mandal in Nellore district on Friday.

According to reports reaching here, power supply was interrupted in Naidupalem village and a

local lineman has obtained permission from the substation for a power cut to carry out restoration works.

The lineman reportedly sought assistance from one Vamsi to climb on the electric pole. While Vamsi climbed the electric pole, substation staff allegedly resumed the power supply after which he was electrocuted and fell from the pole. He died on the spot.

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GOVT | SOP

5,500 transformers are required to clear the applications

Farmers wait for agri power connections

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, DEC. 4

Farmers are waiting for agricultural electricity connections in the district. Applications for agricultural electricity connections are not being cleared due to non-supply of transformers as required.

About 9,880 farmers across the district are still waiting for farm electricity connections. Officials say the amount will be cleared by the end of this month, but the reality is different.

While 5,500 transformers are required to clear the entire applications, only tens are currently avail-

able. According to Kadapa Electricity Circle officials, there are already 1.67 lakh agricultural electricity connections in the district. Farmers are applying for new connections to increase cultivation extent. The establishment of power connections has been severely delayed due to unavailability of transformers. The situation has remained the same for the past three years.

Farmers usually use pumpsets of 5 HP, 7.5 HP and 10 HP capacities for agriculture. Farmers have to pay a security deposit of ₹40 per HP capacity and a development charge of

₹1,000 per HP. The power department will supply a conductor of up to 180 meters, three poles and a transformer with a power of 25 kilowatts. The transformer is given to a group of four or five farmers.

Transformer, poles, power cables and other expenses incurred ₹1.30 lakh. It seems that the company is not financially ready to spend that much amount. Hence the information is that there is a shortage of transformers in the district. With this, it seems that 9,880 applications for which fees have been paid by the farmers so far are pending in the dis-

trict. While 400 applications were pending in 2017-18 and 300 in 2018-19, the number has increased to 9880 by 2019-20. Officials say all applications will be cleared by the end of this month. However, the reality is that the authorities' promise does not seem to be fulfilled. If thousands of transformers are needed, coming in tens, the goal does not seem to be accomplished in any way.

For the uninterrupted power supply for 9 hours a day, the capacity of existing transformers has to be increased along with the need for new transformers. Under the current circum-

stances, that process is also underway. Currently only 70 per cent of the area is supplied with 9 hours of electricity in day time.

SPDCL Superintending Engineer Nallabotula Srinivasulu speaking to the *Deccan Chronicle* said that the management was ready to supply the required number of transformers. He said all the applications would be cleared by the deadline by the end of this month.

It was also revealed that all arrangements are being made for a nine-hour power supply during the day and it will be 100 per cent complete soon.

SHORT TAKES

M.P. MINISTER 'UNFIT' AS VACCINE TRIAL VOLUNTEER

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, DEC. 4

Madhya Pradesh home minister Narottam Mishra was on Friday disqualified to be a volunteer for Covid-19 vaccine trial.

Doctors in a private medical college hospital here where trial of a vaccine candidate was in progress have declared him ineligible to become a volunteer for the vaccine trial when they found that 2 members of his family had earlier tested positive for Coronavirus.

"The minister offered to volunteer for a vaccine trial During counseling, we have found that 2 members of his family had earlier tested positive for Coronavirus. Hence, he was disqualified to be a vaccine trial volunteer", principal investigator of vaccine trial in the hospital Dr Raghavendra Gumasta said here.

Earlier on Thursday, Mishra appealed to the people to volunteer for a vaccine trial and announced that he would be a vaccine trial volunteer.

Sources said People's Medical College and Hospital could so far motivate hardly 50 people to become vaccine trial volunteer in the last one week, whereas it has provision to vaccinate 2,000 people on trial.

COURT DENIES BAIL TO PNB SCAM ACCUSED

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, DEC. 4

A special CBI court on Friday rejected the bail application filed by Vipul Chitalia, the vice president of Gitanjali Group of Companies, arrested in connection with multi-crore Punjab National Bank scam.

Special judge V.C. Barde on Friday rejected the second bail application filed by Chitalia. He has been behind bars since his arrest in March 2018.

As per the investigating agencies, Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi, in connivance with certain bank officials, allegedly cheated the Punjab National Bank (PNB) to the tune of ₹14,000 crore through issuance of fraudulent Letters of Undertaking (LoUs).

An LoU is a bank guarantee under which a bank can allow its customer to raise money.

These LoUs were allegedly issued in a fraudulent manner by a Mumbai branch of the PNB to the group of companies belonging to Modi and Choksi since March 2011 till the case came to light.

According to the CBI, Chitalia is one of the prime accused in this case and he was "mastermind" for putting through fraudulent transactions along with absconding accused Mehul Choksi.

2008 MALEGAON BLAST TRIAL RESUMES

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, DEC. 4

The trial in the Malegaon blast case resumed on Friday with defence lawyers cross-examining the panch witness who had conducted the spot panchnama and identified two motor-cycles and five bicycles recovered from there.

The witness had recorded his testimony before the special court in July last year and his cross-examination was pending since then.

Courts were not working at full strength during the lockdown period of Coronavirus pandemic hence his cross-examination couldn't be completed. On Friday the court began the trial in the case again and advocate J.P. Mishra along with other defence lawyers cross-examined this witness.

During cross-examination the witness replied to a question that even though the police has noted down his statement in Marathi but he doesn't understand the language.

The court has fixed December 7, as next date of hearing.

On September 29, 2008 the blast occurred in front of Shakeel Transport at Bhikku Chowk, famous for its tea stalls. Six persons died and 100 others were injured when a bomb fitted on an LML Freedom motorcycle exploded.

According to the police, one of the bikes found from the spot was registered in the name of accused BJP Bhopal MP Pragna Singh Thakur, who is out on bail currently.

LOW-KEY POLITICAL DRAMA IN TN

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, DEC. 4

The day after actor Rajinikanth announced his political entry by launching his own party in January, there was no perceptible reaction to it in the state's political arena, where all players were seemingly going about their business as usual without seeing any threat to their electoral prospects.

However, social media was agog with memes and trolls. Some social media users unearthed old videos and visuals to highlight the irony in the latest averments and positions taken by not just Rajinikanth but also others associated with the present drama.

One visual in which Rajini, in an old interview, saying that spirituality and politics do not go hand in hand as they travel in the 'opposite direction' was juxtaposed with a recent video in which he is saying that he would usher in 'spiritual politics'. Needless to say, it went viral in social networking sites.

Heavy rains lash TN



Due to heavy showers, the ancient Nataraja temple at Chidambaram witnesses flooding of its inner corridors on Friday. Heavy rains continued in Tamil Nadu leading to inundation of crops and waterlogging in many rural and urban areas while the deep depression over the Gulf of Mannar near Ramanathapuram is likely to weaken into a depression on December 5.

— DC

Vaccine will be ready soon: PM

Prime Minister says one crore health workers will be among the first to get the Covid vaccine

DC CORRESPONDENT With agency inputs NEW DELHI, DEC. 4

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said, quoting experts, that it is believed a Coronavirus vaccine "will be ready in the next few weeks". Speaking at an all-party meeting to discuss the roadmap on ways to combat the pandemic, Modi said India's vaccination programme will start as soon as the scientists gave the go-ahead, adding all eyes were on India for developing the most affordable vaccine to fight the pandemic.

Once the vaccine

becomes available, the PM said about one crore health workers, along with elderly people and those with co-morbidities as well as those suffering from life-threatening diseases, will be among the first to get the shot.

"Experts expect the vaccine will be ready within the next few weeks itself. Once the scientists approve it, the nationwide vaccination drive will be started. Our scientists are very confident of succeeding in their endeavour of making the vaccine. The world is keeping a watch on the cheapest and safest vaccine," he said at the meeting, which was attended

by around 12 leaders from major political parties. Modi, who last week visited India's top vaccine hubs to personally review the development of the vaccine and the manufacturing process, also pledged that the country has the necessary infrastructure to manufacture the vaccine on a large scale. Nearly eight vaccines are at different stages of trial, with their manufacturing assured in India, he said.

"The vaccine distribution and administration is given to a national expert group. Advice will be taken from them on a comprehensive and real-time manner. India has the facilities

needed to manufacture the vaccine on a large scale. In fact, our preparations are better than most others," the PM said at the meeting, which is the second such called by the government over the issue.

Three vaccines from India are also at different stages of trial, he said. "The Centre is in talks with state governments over the price of vaccines and a decision on it will be taken keeping public health as the topmost priority," he added. In an effort to administer the vaccine in an efficient, smooth, transparent manner, the database of healthcare and frontline workers, aug-

mentation of cold chains and procurement of syringes and needles are in advanced stages of preparation, the PM told the leaders of the various parties.

Meanwhile, according to a global analysis, India is the largest buyer of Covid-19 vaccines in the world with 1.6 billion doses, a number some scientists say could cover 800 million people, or 60 per cent of its population, and will be enough to develop herd immunity".

India has purchased 500 million doses of the Oxford University-Astrazeneca vaccine candidate, one billion from the US company Novavax and 100

million doses of the Sputnik V candidate from Russia's Gamaleya Research Institute, according to the US-based Duke university global health innovation center. The Launch and Scale Speedometer' analysis, which is updated every two weeks, shows India has confirmed 1.6 billion doses of three vaccines as of Nov. 30 while the US and the EU have purchased doses of six candidates.

According to the analysis, India is the top vaccine buyer followed by the European Union which has confirmed 1.58 billion doses and the US that has managed to purchase just over a billion doses.

Nadda begins nationwide tour

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 4

BJP president J.P. Nadda on Friday began his nation-wide tour to assess the party's organisational strength, till the booth level, and further strengthen the party machinery before Assembly polls and the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Nadda commenced his tour from Uttarakhand, where Assembly polls are scheduled in 2022 and is also the venue for the religious congregation 'Kumbh' next year.

On a four-day visit to the hill state, Nadda visited the Shanti Kunj Gayatri Pariwar in Haridwar on the first day and met saints and seers of the Niranjani Akhara and later participated in the Ganga aarti.

Nadda will be holding meeting with the chief ministers, state office-bearers, MLAs, MPs and

cadre to take stock of the party's "real strength on the ground."

During this nation-wide tour, Nadda's priority will also be visiting those constituencies which the BJP lost in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Nadda will take stock of the Assembly election preparations in the states and will also meet eminent citizens in each and every state. He will also hold meetings with the social media volunteers, who play a key role in conveying the party's messages, including during the election season.

On Sunday, the BJP president will be holding a detailed meeting at the Bijapur House in Dehradun with MPs, MLAs and party leaders and will also hold deliberations with the party leaders on BJP's ideology, political viewpoint and how to guide the party ahead.

12 infants die in govt hosp, Shivraj reviews situation

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, DEC. 4

As many as 12 infants have died in the intensive care units of a government hospital in a Madhya Pradesh district in the last one week, setting alarm bells ringing in the state administration.

The deaths occurred in the special newborn care unit and pediatric intensive care unit of district hospital in Shahdol.

"Total 12 infants died due to various reasons such as premature birth, underweight and pneumonia in the district hospital since November 27", V.S. Waria, civil surgeon in Shahdol district hospital said on Friday.

According to him, four infants died in the hospital in last 48 hours itself.

While one of them died due to premature birth and underweight, 11 other

● THE DEATHS occurred in the special newborn care unit and pediatric intensive care unit of district hospital in Shahdol.

● THE CHIEF MINISTER ordered the local health administration to take urgent measures to check mortality of infants in the hospital.

infants succumbed to pneumonia and other cold related diseases in the hospital in the last one week, he added.

He, however, admitted that the only pediatrician in the hospital had earlier tested positive for Coronavirus and was absent in his duty for some time. He joined his duty on Thursday.

He attributed the high infant mortality in the hospital to the late arrival of sick children for treatment. The sick infants

were being brought from far off places such as Annapur and Umaria for admission in Shahdol district hospital.

All the sick newborns admitted in the hospital were found to be in critical conditions, he added.

Death of 12 infants in the government hospital has alerted the state government with Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan convening an emergency meeting here on Friday to review the situation.

Chouhan ordered the local health administration to take urgent measures to check mortality of infants in the hospital.

In a related development, former chief minister and MP Congress president Kamal Nath constituted a 4-member-team of the party to make on-the-spot inquiry into the matter and submit him the report.

C'garh to have new revenue admin units

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 4

With a simpler, convenient, and easily accessible way, the functioning of the Revenue Administration in the Chhattisgarh, people of the state are heaving a sigh of relief.

Revenue administration plays a quintessential role in the regulation of the administrative affairs of the state.

It is the responsibility of the government to provide easy, simple, and timely access to these services so that people get benefitted to the fullest.

With the formation of a new government in Chhattisgarh under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, the regulation and simplified accessibility of revenue administration is given the highest priority.

The revenue and disaster management department of the state government, under the guidance of the Chief Minister, has worked towards the strengthening of the Public Service Centers for the past two years. Various matters falling under the revenue administration like land registration, distribution of land, government land, diversion, registry of small land blocks have been simplified.

As a part of this system, new revenue administrative units are being established. These will include new sub-tehsils, tehsils, and sections.

Also, a new district of Gureala-Pendra-Marwahi was carved out from Bilaspur district.

New tehsils have been constituted for the revenue works of people close to their residences.

OPPN FLAG GST SHORTFALL IN PM'S ALL-PARTY MEETING

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 4

Though the main agenda of the Prime Minister's all-party meeting was the strategy for rollout of a Covid-19 vaccine, many Opposition parties flagged the need for the government to urgently bring the economy back on track. Most parties demanded financial help from the Centre and a holistic plan for rollout of the vaccine.

The meeting was attended by 13 parties which included Congress, Shiv Sena, Trinamul Congress, DMK, among others. The parties highlighted the GST dues that the Central government owed states adding that they were facing severe revenue shortfall due to Covid-19 pandemic.

The Congress was represented by Ghulam Nabi Azad, who said that the pandemic should be a part of India's internal security policy, and all political parties should be involved against any misinformation campaign on vaccine.

Telangana Rashtra Samithi MP Namma Nageshwar Rao said the government should provide the vaccine free of cost. The Central government, he said, should ensure that cold storage units are set up across the country for easy transport of the vaccine.

The Shiv Sena's Lok Sabha MP Vinayak Raut said that the GST collection by the Central government was more than ₹1 lakh crore and thus the Centre should not withhold the share of the State governments.

Similar views were echoed by the Trinamul Congress, represented by Sudip Bandopadhyay. He too said there was a need for additional financial help for the State governments, considering the financial stress they were going through.

BJP lost a seat in its bastion Nagpur after 54 years

BIENNIAL | ELECTIONS

Maha: BJP suffers setback in MLC polls

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, DEC. 4

In a major setback to BJP, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) of Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena on Friday won four seats out of six Graduates' and Teachers' constituencies of the Maharashtra Legislative Council (MLC).

The BJP lost a seat in its bastion Nagpur after 54 years. BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis said his party failed to gauge the combined strength of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) allies. He said the party will analyse the poll results and prepare for the next election in a better way.

Meanwhile, NCP chief Sharad Pawar said that

the results of biennial polls to the Legislative Council show that the political situation in Maharashtra has changed.

A senior official from state branch of election commission of India (ECI) said that the biennial elections to six legislative council seats including three graduates, two teachers and one local body seat were held on December 1. Of these, results on three graduate's seats and one local body have been declared. Counting for two teachers' constituencies is underway.

He also said that NCP's Arun Lad and Satish Bhanudasrao Chavan have registered victory from Pune Division Graduates'

● SHARAD PAWAR says the results of polls show that the political situation in the state has changed.

constituency and Aurangabad Division Graduates' constituency, respectively. BJP's Amrish Patel won the byelection to Dhule-Nandurbar seat. While Congress candidate Abhijit Wanjarli won the Nagpur division graduates' constituency election by defeating BJP's Sandip Joshi.

Joshi's defeat is considered a big setback to BJP leaders as this seat had been held by BJP stalwart and Union minister Nitin Gadkari in the past.

He also said that Congress candidate

Jayant Dinkar Aasgavkar is leading in Pune Division Teachers' constituency and Independent candidate Kiran Saranaik is ahead of his rivals in Amravati Division Teachers' constituency. However, the results are yet to be declared.

NCP chief Sharad Pawar said the victory of BJP's Amrish Patel was expected, as he resigned from the Congress and contested. He had support from one big section of the Congress which continued to support him in the election, so it cannot be a real victory.

The NCP chief also claimed that the results of the remaining constituencies where the MVA won was a reflection of the

MVA government's performance in the past one year.

Speaking with the reporters on the results polls, Fadnavis said, "We could only win one seat out of the six. We will analyse the results and plan for the next challenge. We could not judge the combined strength of Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress in these polls. We will prepare better for the next polls."

He also taunted Shiv Sena saying, "Although Shiv Sena has the Chief Minister' post, it could only win one seat. The election has actually benefited the Congress and the NCP more than the Sena. The party should think about it."

IN BRIEF

Indian wins \$3M in Dubai raffle draw

Dubai: A 51-year-old Indian expat in Dubai has won a whopping over \$3 million in a raffle draw, according to a media report. George Jacobs, a medical equipment salesperson, was announced the winner in the Big Ticket draw held in Abu Dhabi on Thursday, the Khaleej Times reported. Jacobs, who lives in Dubai with his wife, daughter and son, said that the lucky draw has come as huge blessing as he was suffering from financial difficulties. “Congratulations to George Jacob, from India, with winning ticket no. 069402. He won AED (United Arab Emirates Dirham) 12 Million in The Dream 12 Million series 222,” the organisers said in a Facebook post. Jacobs had bought the ticket on November 30.

Rains cause havoc in Indonesia

Medan: Torrential rains in Indonesia's third largest city caused four rivers to overflow, flooding thousands of homes and killing at least two people, officials said Friday. The local disaster mitigation agency said rescuers were searching for six missing people, including a toddler, after the heavy rains in Medan, the capital of North Sumatra province. At least two people were found dead after being swept away by the floods, which began on Thursday evening, the agency said in a statement. More than 2,700 houses were flooded in the city, which has about 2.9 million people, forcing authorities to cut off electricity and water supplies, it said. On Friday, rescuers took 181 people to temporary shelters after floodwaters reached as high as 5 meters (16 feet) in several places.

By 2050, Denmark to halt oil drilling

Copenhagen: Denmark has decided to end to all oil and gas offshore activities in the North Sea by 2050 and has cancelled its latest licensing round, saying the country is “now putting an end to the fossil era.” The Danish Parliament voted late Thursday to end the offshore gas and oil extraction that started in 1972 and has made it the largest producer in the European Union. Non EU-members Norway and Britain are larger producers. Denmark is estimated to pump some 83,000 barrels of crude oil and another 21,000 barrels of oil equivalent this year, according to the government. That is relatively little in a global context. The UK produces about ten times that amount while the US, the world's largest producer, pumped over 19 million barrels of oil a day last year. Environmental activists nevertheless hailed the move as significant as it shows the way forward in how to fight climate change.

QATAR HOPEFUL NEIGHBOURS WILL LIFT BOYCOTT

Dubai, Dec. 4: Qatar's foreign minister said Friday that his energy-rich nation has seen “some movements” toward resolving the boycott of Doha by four Arab nations. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani cautioned that the crisis wouldn't be immediately resolved in comments to Italy's annual Mediterranean Dialogue. He declined to offer any timetable nor any details of the negotiations. Jared Kushner, President Donald Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, recently visited Doha along with other American officials in an effort to help resolve the crisis. Sheikh Mohammed said “this needless crisis needs to come to an end.” “There are some movements that we hope that this will put an end to this crisis,” he said. “We believe actually that Gulf unity is very important for the security of the region.” However, even he acknowledged a promised breakthrough over a year ago also fell apart. The four boycotting nations have not publicly acknowledged any coming breakthrough. Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates cut ties to Qatar on June 5, 2017, just after a summit in Saudi Arabia in which Gulf leaders met with Trump. They say the crisis stems from Qatar's support for extremist groups in the region, charges denied by Doha.

Santa can't escape Covid test

A man dresses as Saint-Nicolas (Santa Claus) undergoes a Covid-19 detection test at a street detection centre in Schiphol on Friday as global Coronavirus cases top 65 million. — AFP

Britain defends vaccine decision amid criticism**UK plans to distribute initial batch of 8 lakh doses next week**

London, Dec. 4: Britain's medicines regulator insisted on Friday its world-first approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech Coronavirus vaccine met all safety standards, after officials in Europe and the United States queried the rapid process.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) on Wednesday announced emergency approval for the vaccine's general use against Covid-19, and the government plans to start rolling it out next week.

Any vaccine “must undergo robust clinical trials in line with international standards”, the MHRA said in a statement.

“No vaccine would be authorised for supply in the UK unless the expected standards of safety, quality and efficacy are met.”

Leading US infectious disease scientist Anthony Fauci on Thursday said the MHRA had “rushed through that approval”, but later apologised.

“I have a great deal of confidence in what the UK does both scientifically and from a regulator standpoint,” Fauci, who leads the US National Institute of Allergy and

infectious Diseases, told the BBC. “Our process is one that takes more time than it takes in the UK. And that's just the reality,” he said. “I did not mean to imply any sloppiness even though it came out that way.”

MHRA chief executive Wurzburg, Dec. 4: At first sight, they look like regular containers. But the rectangular boxes made by German company Va-Q-Tec will in fact play a key role in keeping life-saving Covid-19 vaccines ultra cool as they are shipped across the world. After Britain this week became the first country to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for general use, other medical authorities around the world could in the next days or weeks decide on similar applications by a host of pharmaceutical companies developing Coronavirus vaccines. There will be an enormous logistical challenge to transport billions of

doses at the right temperature across the globe, maintaining the so-called “cold chain” from a vaccine manufacturer into a patient's arm.

Pfizer/BioNTech's vaccine for instance, must be stored at a frigid minus 70 degrees Celsius (minus 94 Fahrenheit). The Va-Q-Tec containers will serve this purpose of

keeping the vaccines cool enough, the company's founder and chief executive Joachim Kuhn said, describing them as “big thermos flasks”.

In the company's factory in the Bavarian city of Wurzburg, workers were assembling panels with glue or making vacuum-packed linings.

— AFP

agency, which has stressed it prefers to wait for further review and consultations across the 27-nation bloc.

Britain plans to distribute an initial batch of 8,00,000 doses starting next week, prioritising care homes.

— AFP

POOR COULD BE ‘TRAMPLED’ IN VACCINE PUSH, WARNS W.H.O.

United Nations, Dec. 4: The head of the World Health Organisation warned on Friday that the poor risk being “trampled” as wealthy nations roll out Covid-19 vaccines, which he said should be a public good. Speaking at a virtual UN summit on the pandemic, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the world was seeing “light at the end of the tunnel” in the nearly year-long Covid crisis.

“But let me be clear: We simply cannot accept a world in which the poor and marginalised are trampled by the rich and powerful in the stampede for vaccines,” Tedros said.

“This is a global crisis and the solutions must be shared equitably as global public goods. Not as private commodities that widen inequalities and become yet another reason some people are left behind,” he said.

He also warned that the world has plenty of other challenges, saying: “There is no vaccine for poverty, no vaccine for hunger. There is no vaccine for inequality. There is no vaccine for climate change.”

Britain has become the first Western nation to approve a vaccine for Covid-19, with the United States and other countries expected to follow soon and begin mass immunization drives.

A UN-backed COVAX consortium has been set up to provide vaccines equitably around the world.

The United States has been a notable holdout, with President Donald Trump attacking Tedros and moving to pull out of the World Health Organisation, although President-elect Joe Biden plans to stay in the UN body.

Tedros, an Ethiopian doctor and diplomat, praised nations for providing free vaccines, tests and treatment for Covid-19 but questioned why similar efforts are not being devoted for earlier diseases such as cancer, tuberculosis or HIV/AIDS — or for needs such as maternal health.

“The pandemic has only underlined why universal health coverage is so important,” he said. — AFP

Iran's N-plan on track despite scientist killing

In an online chat with **Mohammed Anas**, Dr Foad Izadi, head of the department, International Relations, at Tehran University, tries to explain Iranian response to the assassination of its top nuclear scientist, Dr Mohsen Fakhrizade. Apart from teaching and articulating Iran and its relations with the world, Dr Izadi also advises Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif at times. Excerpts:

Q How big a setback is the assassination of nuclear scientist Dr Mohsen Fakhrizade to Iran's nuclear programme in particular and Iranian scientific development in general?

A: Dr Mohsen Fakhrizade was a renowned nuclear physicist in Iran. He was known throughout the country for his efficiency. Apart from being a good scientist, he was believed to be a good manager. He was attached to Iran's defence ministry and was overseeing several defence projects. In addition to that, he was working on research for Covid vaccine and was instrumental in developing a handy test kit, which was perhaps the only one manufactured in the Middle East. Iran's “peaceful nuclear programme” is extensive and doesn't depend on any individual. However, the loss of a scientist of Dr Fakhrizade's stature is difficult to make up for and Iran will miss him a lot.

However, to think that the absence of Dr Fakhrizade will hamper the Iranian nuclear programme is hogwash. Rather, the Iranian Parliament has passed a Bill this week to enhance the pace of the nuclear programme. So, Iran is now determined more than ever to achieve its nuclear targets.

Q Does Iranian government admit to security and intelligence failure for such a daring attack in the vicinity of its capital in Tehran? If yes, then what is their assessment of this failure?

A: Yes, many government officials, including the secretary of Iranian Security Council, have said that it was a serious security lapse. Dr Fakhrizade was a target of foreign enemies for the last 20 years and there had been previous attempts on his life. Iranian security services managed to save this scientist for all these years but this particular lapse cost his life. As we are talking, the Iranian security establishment is investigating all contours of this assassination. They have discovered that no human being was used in this assassination and that only remote-controlled technology was put to use. It was not done ever before by even Israeli intelligence service. That's why the Iranian security apparatus was bamboozled. But, I am sure Iranian security services will learn from this mistake and will brace up for future threats more carefully.

Q Will this assassination have any bearing on the clerical regime in Iran? Will it weaken their position or will it coax people to rally behind them?

A: The news of the terrorist attack (the assassination) was a shock to the people. Irrespective of whether they support the regime (clerical regime) politically or not, they don't want to see scientists of the country getting killed. Moreover, Iran is a religious society. There is a huge respect for martyrdom. In Dr Fakhrizade, people are seeing a martyr who laid down his life for the country. It will inspire people and they would want to emulate Dr Fakhrizade.

Q&A DR FOAD IZADI

Dr Foad Izadi

Q Will it impact travel and stay of non-Iranians in Iran for a while?

A: No, there is no indication from the Iranian regime that it will curb the movement of non-Iranians. They will not have any difficulty in traveling to or from Iran. Iran will continue to be friendly towards people from outside.

Q Iran has alleged that Israel is behind this gruesome assassination. Do you see any direct conflict emerging between Iran and Israel in near future?

A: It's not just Iran that has blamed Israel for this assassination. The American and western sources have clearly suggested that it was the handiwork of Israeli intelligence agency. The Zionist regime (Netanyahu government) plotted it thoughtfully. As far as Iranian response is concerned, the reply will come. If Iran doesn't respond, it will embolden the other side and it will continue to attack more often. However, Iran will respond in its own way, at a chosen moment and in a measured extent.

Q If Iran chooses to indirectly respond to its enemies instead of going into direct conflict, what possible steps will Iran take?

A: Iran will not disclose how it will respond. Neither has the Iranian regime hinted any such thing. Even experts like us are not privy to any such detail. Early in the year 2020, when Gen. Qasem Soleimani was killed, Iran had attacked American bases in Iraq. It was a quick and open response. But, this time, there is complete secrecy.

China ‘greatest threat’ to world: US intel chief

Washington, Dec. 4: The US intelligence chief on Thursday branded China as “the greatest threat to democracy and freedom worldwide since World War II,” as Washington clamped down hard on travel visas for members of the Chinese Communist Party.

US Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe, writing in a Wall Street Journal opinion piece, pointed to China's theft of US business secrets and defense technologies.

“Our intelligence shows that Beijing regularly directs this type of influence operation in the US,” he wrote.

“China's leaders seek to subordinate the rights of the individual to the will of the Communist Party,” Ratcliffe said.

“They exert government control over companies and subvert the privacy and freedom of their citizens with an authoritarian surveillance state.” Meanwhile, the State Department said Chinese Communist Party members are “hostile to US values” and engage in “nefarious activities.” Under new rules effective immediately, visas issued to party members and their immediate family will remain valid for just one month after issuance, and for single entry. — AFP

● US DIRECTOR of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe, writing in a Wall Street Journal opinion piece, pointed to China's theft of US business secrets and defense technologies.

threat to democracy and freedom worldwide since World War II,” he wrote.

He also described operations in which Chinese operatives used economic pressure to influence or undermine US legislators.

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subordinate the rights of the individual to the will of the Communist Party,” Ratcliffe said.

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Under new rules effective immediately, visas issued to party members and their immediate family will remain valid for just one month after issuance, and for single entry. — AFP

FISHING HOLDS KEY TO BREXIT TRADE DEAL

Brussels, Dec. 4: In the decisive final days of talks, the tiny fishing industry is holding up a massive trade deal between the European Union and recently departed Britain, putting at risk hundreds of thousands of jobs and tens of billions of euros in annual production losses.

While fishing is a negligible part of the nations' economies, it is an important point of national pride for coastal and island nations and has a massive impact on politics.

Arch-Brexiteer Nigel Farage put so much stock in the importance of fishing that at one point during his successful 2016 campaign to get Britain out of the EU he steamed up the Thames on a fishing vessel.

Sir Ivan Rogers, a former career diplomat who long was the UK's man at EU headquarters in Brussels, knows what the task is of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson during the final weeks before the Jan. 1 deadline. — AP

market by enterprising British corporates in a less regulated environment.” Germany currently holds the EU's rotating presidency and is also the bloc's biggest economy and most influential country. — AFP

BETTER | ABODE**Many were reportedly unwilling to move to the isolated place Bangladesh relocates 1,600 Rohingya**

Dhaka, Dec. 4: Bangladesh on Friday relocated the first batch of 1,600 Rohingyas to a remote island in the Bay of Bengal for a “better abode” amid reservation from rights groups fearing the place's vulnerability to tropical cyclones and climate change.

Rohingyas, who are Myanmar's ethnic minority Muslim community, fled their homeland to evade a ruthless military clampdown since August 25, 2017 and after initial reluctance Bangladesh offered them the refuge on humanitarian grounds.

“The Rohingyas onboard



Rohingya refugees disembark from a Bangladesh Navy ship to the island of Bhashar Char in Noakhali on Friday. — AFP

six navy and one military ship reached the Bhashan Char (island) this after-

noon.” Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Shah Rezwan Hayat

told the media.

A batch of 1,600 Rohingyas were the first group of people who agreed to move to a “better abode”, while 19 more ships were kept ready to ferry fellow refugees to the island in the next few days.

Officials earlier said that Bangladesh spent \$350 million in the recent past to build the facilities to accommodate 1,00,000 refugees of over 1.1 million Rohingyas living in cramped makeshift camps in southeastern Cox's Bazar, which borders their homeland in Myanmar's Rakhine state.

Aid agencies and rights groups, however, expressed their reservation against the relocation campaign fearing the vulnerability of the island to tropical cyclones and climate change.

Many Rohingyas were reportedly unwilling to move to an isolated place severing ties with relatives and neighbours. But the government said embankments and other infrastructures would protect the island and only those who expressed their willingness to be moved after Rohingya representatives visited the place were being relocated there. — PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

5 DECEMBER 2020

BJP real winner in Hyd, though TRS stays No. 1

A municipal election so *sui generis* it grabbed the attention of an entire nation has finally ended with a verdict that will be a watermark moment in the history of Telangana politics. The ruling TRS managed to narrowly edge out all challenges to slip past the ribbon with a wafer-thin margin, to manage to hold on to the GHMC mayoral seat. The AIMIM, player number three and factor X in the polls, held its fortress unscathed.

But the real political winner of the battle and narrative is the BJP, which has succeeded in managing to seed its narrative of being a challenger for power for Telangana, reducing the Congress to an insignificant naught in state politics. The BJP juggernaut has only strengthened from Nizamabad in Lok Sabha elections, 2019, to Dubbaka a few weeks ago to Greater Hyderabad on Friday; promising to keep aggressively surging ahead, with Nagarjunasagar as the next episode.

By holding the TRS far from increasing its tally of 99 to a century or more, to even denying the pink party a clear majority of 76 in popular vote for 150 divisions to bring it below 60 divisions, the BJP has scripted an exceptional win. What is more significant is that it has managed to surpass the AIMIM as the second largest party.

The TRS now has an additional immediate problem of having to formally enter into some alliance or agreement with the MIM to resolve the impasse of the numbers of a hung municipal council. This will further give the BJP an additional benefit of having portrayed the TRS as a clandestine partner of the MIM.

What surprised nobody is that the Congress party has been reduced to a big zero in its ability to impact the politics of the state. The party was the principal Opposition less than two years ago when the results of the December 2018 Assembly elections came out. The TRS has used many a Machiavellian tactic to weaken the Congress, thus losing its advantage of two incompatible national parties splitting the anti-incumbency vote. Like a snake biting its own tail, the TRS is now paying a price for its strategic blunder. The anti-TRS sentiment was reflected early in the day when postal ballots revealed a strong verdict amongst government employees.

While parties win or lose, the state election commission under the stewardship of a retired IAS officer, C. Parthasarathi, has not covered itself in glory with several controversial decisions, one passed late last night after midnight being stayed by the high court. The perception that SEC was hardly Caesar's wife will go down as a sad day in the otherwise illustrious story of Indian election commissions being the highest upholders of the core values of our democracy.

Finally, now that elections for GHMC are over, it is a fair expectation that the winners will forget politics and apply their minds to addressing the problems of people and bettering the civic amenities of the city. Three cheers to that hope.

Innovate to glory

She is just 15 years old, but this Indian-origin scientist from Lone Tree, Colorado, is making history as *Time's* first-ever “Kid of the Year”. Leadership it is that helped Gitanjali Rao make the cut out of 5,000 other talented teenagers. After Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg who was last year's *Time* “Person of the Year”, she is now the youngest kid on the role model block. Gitanjali uses her intellectual prowess to tackle some of the world's pressing concerns like cyber bullying and opioid addiction. She is exercised by the gender pay gap and climate change, for both of which she matter-of-factly holds older generations responsible. But she does not believe in big fixes, doing, as she says, what she can and taking on one urgent question at a time.

Surprisingly or not, this isn't the first time Gitanjali has been feted. In 2019, the teenage innovator was included in the *Forbes'* list of 30 under 30, when she was way below that age bar. Two more years back, at 12, she was named the United States' top young scientist for creating a device that detects lead in water. Gitanjali had been inspired by the drinking water crisis of 2014 that hit Michigan to design the gadget. She has worked in refugee camps and conducts global innovation workshops wherein she has mentored 30,000 students. Her amazing aptitude ranges from artificial intelligence to carbon nanotube sensor technology, while including more commonplace activities such as baking. The Stem School Highlands Ranch student is preparing to pursue genetics and epidemiology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This generates promise: Perhaps, she will be the one to save the planet from the next pandemic.

To diaspora Indians, Gitanjali's feat though is the latest one in a long line of academic laurels that youngsters from the community have been bringing home. The question then is about how to have more people emulate her achievement. Gitanjali's personal experience has been that students just don't know where to start. But if one can give them that spark that they can then build off of, then that changes everything, and may mean that one more person in this world wants to come up with ideas to solve problems. A point to ponder, and take a leaf from, for parents, teachers and child-raisers.

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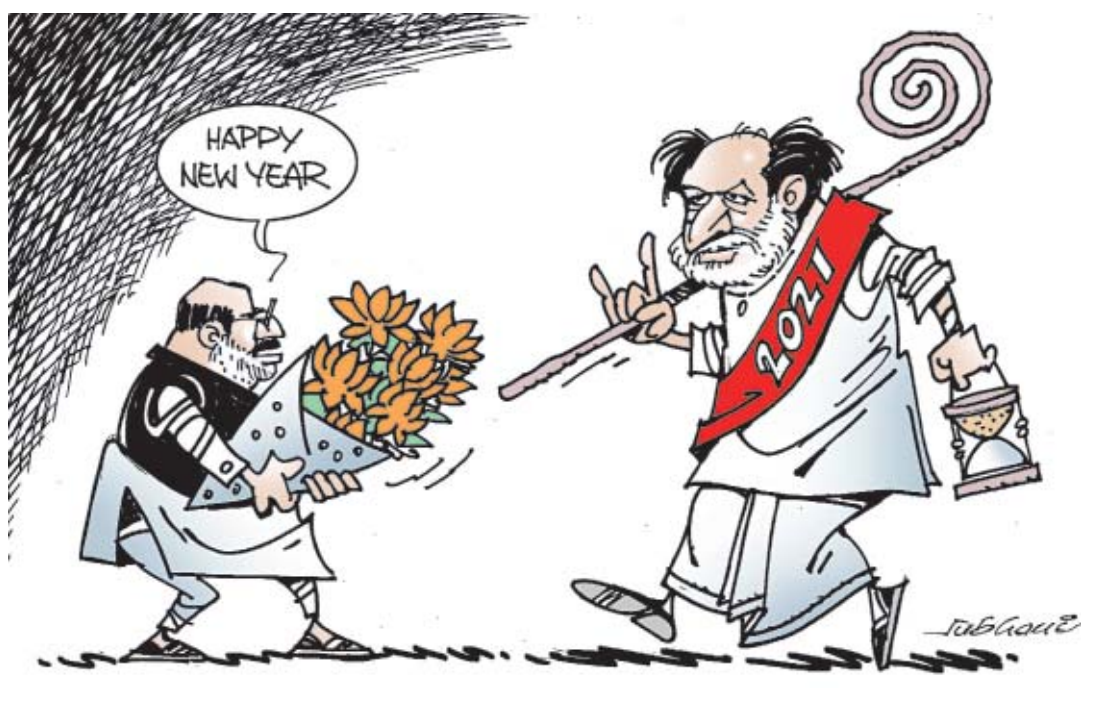
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Subhani



Pivot or perish: India's heartland sends signal



Shikha Mukerjee

Twenty-first century India's farmers have written themselves into the history of the country and into the international chronicles of historic protests. It's an irresistible force that is finally giving voice. Just as the 250 million who joined the nationwide strike by the trade unions had articulated the anger and distress of the working poor.

The solidarity, scale and pared-down simplicity of their call, that is, for the repeal of the three laws rushed through without consultation by the Narendra Modi government in September, as a confirmation of stealthily issued ordinances, is imperative and compelling. The farmers' protest has called out the Modi government as essentially autocratic, and the BJP as unrepresentative of the farming poor, who are the predominant sector of India's population and economy.

The protest has established that if dissent or disagreement is ignored, the discontented will make their presence felt. It proved that brutality against dissenters and the discontented cannot be used as a solution. The use of violence by the State against people is especially dangerous, when the individuals deployed to unleash the violence belong to the same rural base as the protesters. The inadequacy of the Modi government is stark, because it failed to realise the reality of the umbilical connection between the law enforcers and fighting forces and the *kisan*, even as it plagiarised Lal Bahadur Shastri's slogan of “*Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan*”.

The Modi government, described by the ordinary protesting farmers from Punjab as “arrogant,” can now do one of two

things: pivot or perish. The swelling numbers of farmers representing the collective discontent are a fact that cannot be fictionalised as a conspiracy or as anti-national. Pivoting will require trashing the three laws – Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, and the Essential Commodities Amendment Act – legislating the minimum support price mechanism into law for government and private buyers in agricultural markets, and rewriting the law on commercial rates for power consumed by farmers, cancelling fines for stubble burning. If the Modi government does what is being asked, peacefully and unanimously by the 40 representatives who attended the second round of meetings with agriculture minister Narendra Tomar, then it can save face.

To defy the demands by India's farmers is as politically risky for the BJP as it would be reckless for the Modi government. If the BJP were an urban phenomenon, it could try and confuse its constituents about the character of the protest and the position of the farm union leaders who have virtually surrounded New Delhi. But it is not. The politics of an ephemeral Bharat Mata has been overturned by the reality of farmers, men and women, precisely articulating their problems, their clear-eyed understanding of how their protest shall continue and what is the minimum outcome they are waiting for.

The remarkably controlled and peaceful farmers, especially from Punjab, as the Modi government ought to understand, have quit their fields at the beginning of

the rabi crop season. The winter wheat, rice, pulses, oilseeds, is a commercial crop, sold to sustain the permanently indebted farmer. As every economist and cultivator-politician like Narendra Singh Tomar and Rajnath Singh is well aware, farming is a zero-profit and negative profit sector the world over. Generation after generation a few farmers barely break even, that is, zero profit, while the rest remain in debt, that rolls over, season to season. The cash they make is not profit.

Having harvested the kharif crop, which for the 86 per cent marginal and small farmers of India, is the crop they stock to feed their families and sell only the tiny surplus that is left over, missing the rabi season, which is irrigation and therefore power intensive, means that they are impoverishing themselves in order to change the rules enacted by the Narendra Modi government. Recent reports indicate that around 40 per cent of the rabi crop has been sown in Punjab. Without the 60 per cent that remains to be sown and cannot be sown without the men, who are joining the protest in increasing numbers from Punjab, western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra, the Indian economy could be looking at an unprecedented crisis, deeper than the current level of contraction and recession.

India is the third largest producer of wheat, rice, pulses, cotton, peanuts in the world. Its trade in agricultural commodities is around \$40 billion. The states that produce the surplus which keeps the Indian economy ticking, including Karnataka, where farmers have called a seven-day protest

The new laws must be drafted in consultation with the farmers' organisations, who know what they need and what is due to them as the backbone of India's economy

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist in Kolkata

LETTERS

RAJINI'S FORAY

With the entry of actor Rajinikanth into Tamil Nadu politics, one can expect a totally new scenario that will leave the present stakeholders at sea. He can be a messiah of the poor and deprived classes. We only expect him not to fall into the trap of people waiting to fish in troubled waters.

D.S.P. Rao
Kakinada

NOT MINOR OFFENCE

Social media is providing youth a platform and students are becoming bolder because of it (*Minors marry in class as a prank, suspended, DC, Dec. 4*). However, there is a limit to conceive a prank and execute it. In this case, the three students deserved the harsh punishment so that it acts as a deterrent in future. The college principal did the right thing in issuing TCs.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

SPICE KING'S DEATH

It is sad and touching but highly inspiring and motivating to read that a school dropout Mahashay Dharamapal Gulati, also known as MDH Dadaji, who started his meagre business with a small shop, went on to build a ₹1,500 crore empire.

Dr C Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

DISHA CREDIT

The credit goes to the AP government for being the first state to make such a law. Otherwise there was no fear of punishment for criminals. I am sure this will lead to decline in such crimes.

Kantamsetti Lakshman Rao
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Yunus Salim favours separation of states

INDORE, Dec. 4. Mr Yunus Salim, Union Deputy Minister for Railways said here today that the people of Telangana had “genuine grievances” and their demand for a separate State must be conceded. If that was not possible, some other “fair” solution would have to be found early to remove their “deep sense of long standing injustice to their region.”

Speaking at a reception by the Indore Press Club, he said that after the reorganisation of States, emotional integration between the people of Telangana and Andhra was not brought about.

wards? Putel? Yes, it was she!

Then the whole glorious scheme fell into place when I recalled that after Rustom's plan for his revenge restaurant fell through, he didn't seem in the least despondent. He would disappear for what he said were walks in Crystal Palace, but he'd be gone for hours and why call for an Uber to go for a walk? Then there were the phone calls he shielded from me. Only once I caught him saying “Yes, Canada would be ideal”. The next day two immigration fellows called and carried him away.

Now, gentle reader, I am not one to believe in conspiracy theories, but the evidence is overwhelming, and these are my conjectures. Russi has consolidated his attack on the Empire at the highest level. Consider the facts:

Several individuals with an ex-colonial ancestry infiltrate the Tory Party and diligently rise to high positions and begin their work of dismantling the British economy, its social fabric and work unflinchingly towards its ruin. First of all, they pretend to be ardent advocates of Brexit, knowing that it will leave Britain isolated and poorer for decades.

Then, having achieved high office, they begin the ruinous policy of “borrow and sorrow”, and then “Free ports and deserts”.

Rishi Sunak has compelled the Bank of England to print, in this year, £500 billion in inflationary borrowing to pay for wild schemes — ten times as much as a Labour government did in ten years. Now he proposes 10 “free ports” which will turn Britain into Bringapore — the world's leading money-laundering and tax dodging drug haven destroying what's left of its manufacturing base.

And here, gentle reader, I must apologise for consistently calling home secretary “Pritti” Patel “Clueless”. I now realise that as part of Russi's plan, she is grooming the great liberal British public to jail and deport the non-Brits on whom several sectors of the economy and social fabric rely. I can only speculate that the last batch of deportees will include “Miss Let up” who will thus, at the state's expense, be given a free ride to Canada or Uganda and anyway away from a failing, flailing Britain. The Empire strikes mercilessly back!

Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



“They say it's not over till the fat lady sings
That final and fatal aria
And in that moment stumbles and clings
To the neck of the lover who'll carry her
Off the stage and into the wings
Without having promised to marry her!”

— From *Showcase Mein Itna Tho Godown Mein Kitna* by Bachchoo

The empire strikes back! Secret plan is unveiled

My demented second cousin twice removed (each time by the deportation authorities), “Rusty”

Immoralearningswalla, would always boast of his intention to balance history by striking back at Britain's imperial past. He's been reading these books by Shashi Tharoor and William Dalrymple and has become obsessive.

One of his mad schemes was to start a restaurant in London called “The Revenge of the Empire”. He would import a substance we were aware of in our short and happy childhoods in Poona (now Pune), called *jamal gota*, a strong horse purgative fed to the

poor animals who pulled tongas before rickshaws infested the city's streets. Russi would poison bits of the food served to the British clientele of his restaurant, inducing in them the relentless symptoms of Delhi-Belly — or worse.

I attempted in vain to point out that no one would eat at a restaurant called Revenge of the Natives. Better to call it Memories of the Raj. He simply said that the clientele he was aiming at wouldn't notice what it was called — they'd just stagger in after the pubs closed, muttering “I could murder an Indian!” and wouldn't remember where they ate that night.

Rustom's efforts to raise capital for his restaurant came to naught. When he was deported, he left this sack of *jamal gota*, the horse purgative, in my study. I have advertised it on e-bay and other Internet sites but have had no buyers rushing to avail of the low asking price.

At first, I thought nothing of Rustom's deportation. With all his activities and schemes, he was asking for it. But then one day it struck me as extremely odd that he hadn't been

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	45,079.55	+1.00
Nifty 50	13,258.55	+0.95
S&P 500*	3,690.32	0.64
Dollar (₹)	73.79	0.17
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.50	-0.42
Euro (₹)	89.79	-0.26
Gold (₹)	48,813	-0.27
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	49.21	1.03
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.898	-0.556
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.941	+2.172

*As of 9:30 PM IST

Zyklus Cadila gets DGCI nod for phase 3 trials



Zyklus Cadila said it has received the approval from the drugs controller to start phase 3 clinical trials with its biological therapy PegiHep in Covid-19 patients. The firm had completed the phase 2 clinical trials with PegiHep last month. The trials, which will start this month, will be conducted on 250 patients across 20-25 centres. Sharvil Patel, MD, said, "we are encouraged by the results of phase 2 study."

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

SA-England game put off due to virus

Cape Town: The first cricket one-day international between South Africa and England was postponed Friday after another player tested positive for the Coronavirus in the host team's secure bio-bubble. The South African player wasn't named. The game, the first of three ODIs, was postponed from Friday to Sunday, the two cricket federations said. Cricket South Africa and the England and Wales Cricket Board said the decision was made "in the interests of the safety and well-being of both teams, match officials and all involved in the match." The CEOs of both boards, Kugandrie Govender of CSA and Tom Harrison of the ECB, agreed to the postponement. — AP

Williamson hits double century

Hamilton (New Zealand): New Zealand captain Kane Williamson hit the highest Test score of his career on Friday with a majestic 251 as the hosts posted an imposing 519 for seven declared on day two of the first Test against the West Indies in Hamilton. In reply, the injury-hit West Indies were 49 without loss with John Campbell on 22 and Kraigg Brathwaite on 20 after cautiously negotiating the 26 overs to stumps. Williamson's third double century, eclipsing his unbeaten 242 against Sri Lanka nearly six years ago, included 34 fours and two sixes. It extended his New Zealand record to 22 Test centuries, three more than teammate Ross Taylor. For the West Indies, Gabriel took three for 89, Kemar Roach took three for 114 and Joseph one for 99. — AFP

Brief Scores, Day 2: New Zealand 519/7 decl. (Williamson 251, Jamieson not out 51; Kemar Roach 3/114, Gabriel 3/89) vs **West Indies 49 for no loss** in 26 overs (J. Campbell not out 22.

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Status quo on rates; GDP contraction seen at -7.5% RBI ups growth forecast

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, DEC. 4

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) monetary policy committee (MPC) on Friday unanimously decided to keep policy rates unchanged while continuing with the accommodative policy stance "as long as necessary—at least through the current financial year and into the next year", despite higher-than-expected inflation and growth outturns. This means the equated monthly instalments (EMIs) on home loans, auto loans and personal loans will remain more or less steady for borrowers.

The RBI revised its current fiscal real GDP growth from a decline of 9.5 per cent to a decline of 7.5 per cent; retail inflation (CPI) inflation is projected at 6.8 per cent for Q3, and 5.8 per cent for Q4 FY21.

Contrary to market concerns of measures to withdraw the abundant liquidity in the system, RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said the flush liquidity conditions will be kept up while flagging that the RBI is increasingly looking to sterilise its forex interventions keeping in mind the liquidity and inflation dynamics. The RBI announced extended liquidity support to 26 stressed sectors.

"Our expectation on inflation which we had over the last two months has not materialised. And we have to keep in mind that we are dealing with an extraordinary situation, a once in 100 years kind of event that and the kind of impact it has produced on the economy and on

Highlights of RBI's monetary policy statement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Benchmark rate kept unchanged for third time at 4% ▶ Economy to contract 7.5% against 9.5% projected in October ▶ Economy to clock growth of 0.1% in Q3; 0.7% in Q4, FY21 ▶ Retail inflation projected at 6.8% in Q3, 5.8% in Q4 ▶ Inflation to remain elevated, barring transient relief in winter ▶ Fiscal stimulus helping growth-generating investment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Private investment slack, capacity use not fully recovered ▶ RBI to ensure ample liquidity is available in the system ▶ RBI to maintain accommodative monetary policy stance ▶ central bank committed to preserving depositors' interest



Contactless card limit raised to ₹5K

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, DEC. 4

The RBI has decided to increase the limit on contactless card transactions at Point of Sale (PoS) terminals and e-mandates for recurring transactions via cards and UPI from Rs 2,000 to Rs 5,000 from January 1.

This will help customers execute their high ticket recurring payments like utility bills, investments, two-wheeler EMIs, consumer durable EMIs etc. seamlessly.

The RBI has also decided to make the Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) transaction facility available round-the-clock from

December 14. The RTGS system is used for high value transactions. The system will be available for customers and inter-bank transactions round-the-clock, except for the interval between 'end-of-day' and 'start-of-day' processes, whose timings would be duly broadcasted through the RTGS system.

RBI also has proposed to allow settlement files of payment systems like AePS, IMPS, NETC, NFS, RuPay and UPI to be posted to the RBI all days of the year. This measure will reduce build-up of settlement and default risks and enable better management of funds by banks.

human lives not only in India but across countries which is huge and we have

to respond to that situation," Das told reporters at a virtual press conference.

This was the fourth bi-monthly policy for the fiscal and the third consecutive policy where the MPC decided to keep the repo rate (the rate at which RBI lends funds to banks) unchanged at 4 per cent. The policy stated that while growth has begun to recover, it was not yet broad-based and the RBI's objective remains to support growth. Inflation, while sticky, is largely a supply-side phenomenon, with little evidence of demand-side pressures.

The RBI expects a faster economic recovery and has revised upwards its outlook for GDP growth for FY21. At the same time, its outlook for inflation has turned adverse leading it to raise it outlook on prices levels. In his monetary policy statement, Das said, "The MPC was of the view that inflation is likely to remain elevated, with some relief in the winter months from prices of perishables and bumper kharif arrivals. This constrains monetary policy at the current juncture from using the space available to act in support of growth."

"At the same time, the signs of recovery are far from being broad-based and are dependent on sustained policy support... The MPC decided today to maintain status quo on the policy rate and continue with the accommodative stance as long as necessary—at least during the current financial year and into the next financial year—to revive growth on a durable basis and mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the economy, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target,"



Burger King IPO get subscribed 156 times

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, DEC.4

Burger King India's Rs 810-crore initial public offering received huge response from all categories of investors and was subscribed over 156 times.

As per NSE data, overall the issue was subscribed 156.65 times, with the issue receiving over 24.15 lakh applications.

Qualified institutional buyers turned up on the last day and their quota of shares was subscribed 86.64 times, non-institutional investors or high net worth individual's portion was subscribed 354.11 times as per sources close to the merchant bankers.

Retail individual investors portion was subscribed 68.14 times.

Burger King India is among the top-3 most-subscribed IPO this year along with Happo-iest Minds Technologies and Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders.

Sensex crosses 45000-mark



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, DEC. 4

Equity benchmark Sensex rose above the 45000-mark for the first time ever and touched a new all-time high of 45,148.28 as the RBI raised the GDP growth projections for the current fiscal to 7.5 per cent contraction from 9.5 per cent contraction projected in October and positive global cues in expectation of a stimulus package by the new US administration.

The Sensex closed at 45079.55, up 446.90 points while the Fifty-50 gained 124.65 points, or 0.95 per cent, to close at a new all-time high of 13,258.55.

The BSE's market capitalisation hit a new high of over Rs 179.48 lakh crore. Rate sensitive bank, realty, capital goods and auto stocks led the gains as the overall accommodative stance of the Reserve Bank to support economic growth boosted sentiments.

"The MPC expectedly kept the policy rates

unchanged but this was accompanied by strong accommodative guidance and assertive market signaling of lower-for-longer. The MPC reckoned the inflected growth momentum, while also stressed that the case of an eventual fall in inflation with easing supply shocks is yet to play out," said Emkay Global Financial Services.

The BSE Bankex index gained 2.14 per cent and Nifty Bank index gained 2.05 per cent while BSE Realty index gained 1.00 per cent.

The top gainers among the banks included ICICI Bank (4.20 per cent), SBI (2.77 per cent), Axis Bank (1.98 per cent), IndusInd Bank (1.96 percent), Kotak Mahindra Bank (1.34 per cent) and HDFC Bank (0.59 per cent).

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 2,969.59 crore while the domestic institutions were net sellers of equities worth Rs 1,971.60 crore.

INDIA ROAR BACK

Turn in allround show to beat Oz by 11 runs

Canberra, Dec. 4: Yuzvendra Chahal turned out to be the perfect concussion substitute after an injured Ravindra Jadeja did his part with the bat as the duo played their roles to perfection in India's impressive 11-run victory over Australia in the first T20 International here on Friday.

While Jadeja smashed an unbeaten 44 off 23 balls to propel India to 161 for 7, his head injury turned out to be a blessing in disguise with India unleashing Chahal (3/25 in 4 overs) on an Australian side caught completely off-guard. The hosts could manage only 150 for 7 in 20 overs.

Credit was also due to the lion-hearted effort from debutant Thangarasu Natarajan (3/30) and off-spinner Washington Sundar (0/16 in 4 overs), who bowled well in Powerplay.

ICC match referee David Boon allowed the visitors a "like for like" replacement, as mandated by the rules, for Jadeja in Chahal even though home team coach Justin Langer looked visibly angry.

And to make matters worse, Chahal dismissed two form men — Aaron Finch (35) and Steve Smith (12) — in his first two overs to turn the game on its head.

Earlier, vice-captain KL Rahul continued his impressive run in the shortest format with yet another fifty but it took Jadeja's brilliant back-end flourish to take India to a fighting total.

The Indian vice-captain hit 51 off 40 balls but leg-spinner Adam Zampa (1/20 in 4 overs) and all-rounder Moises Henriques (3/22 in 4 overs) were brilliant between overs 11th and 15th, which shifted the momentum in favour of the home team till Jadeja came into play with a 44 not out off 23 balls.

During 11th and 15th over, India scored 22 runs and lost three wickets in Sanju Samson, Manish Pandey and Rahul. — PTI



Indian captain Virat Kohli (centre) celebrates with teammates after Thangarasu Natarajan dismissed Australia's Glenn Maxwell during their T20 cricket match at Manuka Oval in Canberra on Friday.

— AFP

● **ICC match referee David Boon allowed the visitors a "like for like" replacement, as mandated by the rules, for Jadeja in Chahal.**

● **Jadeja smashed an unbeaten 44 off 23 balls to propel India to 161 for 7 while Yuzvendra Chahal 3 wickets wreaked havoc on Australia.**

SCORECARD

India: Lokesh Rahul c Sean Abbott b Henriques 51, Shikhar Dhawan b Mitchell Starc 1, Virat Kohli c and b Swepson 9, Sanju Samson c Swepson b Henriques 23, Manish Pandey c Hazlewood b Adam Zampa 2, Hardik Pandya c Steve Smith b Henriques 16, Ravinder Jadeja not out 44, Washington Sundar c Abbott b Mitchell Starc 7, Deepak Chahar not out 0. Extras (LB-2, NB-1, W-5) 8. **Total (for 7 wickets in 20 overs) 161.** **FoW:** 1-11, 2-48, 3-86, 4-90, 5-92, 6-114, 7-152. **Bowling:** Starc 4-0-34-2, Hazlewood 4-0-39-0, Adam Zampa 4-0-20-1, Sean Abbott

2-0-23-0, Swepson 2-0-21-1, Henriques 4-0-22-3. **Australia:** A. Finch c Pandya b Chahal 35, D. Short c Pandya b Natarajan 34, S. Smith c Samson b Chahal 12, G. Maxwell lbw Natarajan 2, M. Henriques lbw Chahal 30, M. Wade c Kohli b Chahal 7, S. Abbott not out 12, M. Starc b Natarajan 1, M. Swepson not out 12. Extras (LB-4, W-1) 5. **Total (for 7 wickets in 20 overs) 150.** **FoW:** 1-56, 2-72, 3-75, 4-113, 5-122, 6-126, 7-127. **Bowling:** Deepak Chahar 4-0-29-1, Washington Sundar 4-0-16-0, Mohammed Shami 4-0-46-0, Chahal 4-0-25-3, Thangarasu Natarajan 4-0-30-0.

Sneha shimmers in women's golf

Noida, Dec. 4: Amateur Sneha Singh took the spotlight with a wire-to-wire win in the seventh leg on Friday, as the Women's Pro Golf Tour staged its first event after nine months due to the Covid-19 pandemic at the Noida Golf Course here.

Hyderabad teenager Sneha, who won a title on the Hero WPGT in 2019, overcame a difficult start and then a potentially crippling triple bogey to hold her nerve over the closing stretch to win by a comfortable margin of four shots. Her closing 74 gave her a total of one-over 217.

Hunar Mittal, another talented amateur, carded the final day's best score with an even par 72 that showcased a bogey-free back nine of two-under 34, as she aggregated five-over 221.

With amateurs holding sway, Amandeep Drall was the top professional as she shot two-over 74 and finished in a tie for the second spot with Hunar.

Ridhima Dilawari (80) in T-12th and Diksha Dagar (81) in 15th place, just did not get going this week.

Sneha opened the day with a one-shot lead but bogeyed the par-5 first. She quickly made amends with a birdie on second, but a



Sneha Singh in action during the Women's Pro Golf Tour at the Noida Golf Course on Friday.

triple bogey on par-4 sixth endangered her title ambitions.

She bounced back again with a birdie on par-4 seventh and added another on par-3 10th. Despite bogeys on 11th and then 14th, she held on with a birdie on 15th.

Vani Kapoor also had three bogeys and no birdies in the front nine. She managed only one birdie and then gave it away on 18th, allowing Sneha to stay in the race and eventually win.

— PTI

COVID-HIT PAK DENIED RIGHTS TO TRAIN IN NZ

Wellington (New Zealand), Dec. 4: The Pakistan cricket team has been denied the right to train while in managed isolation in New Zealand after eight members of the touring squad tested positive for Covid-19.

Under exemptions granted to visiting sports teams, members of the 53-strong Pakistan team could have been allowed to leave their Christchurch hotel to train in small groups after the third day of their 14-day isolation period.

But the positive tests and a breach of isolation protocols by team members on their first day in isolation has led New Zealand authorities to withhold the training exemption.

Dr Ashley Bloomfield, New Zealand's director-general of health, confirmed Friday the exemption would not be granted.

The team was issued a final warning after the breaches of isolation protocol occurred shortly after the team's arrival in New Zealand last week. Close circuit television coverage from their hotel showed players breaking rules by mingling in corridors and sharing food.

— AP




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