





## SHORT TAKES

## GAD TO HAVE NIGHT SHIFTS, TO WORK ON HOLIDAYS TOO

**Hyderabad, Dec. 3:** In addition to collaborating with other departments in tasks such as disaster management and relief, the General Administration Department (GAD), which manages essential issues such as appointments and procedures, will have a small group of workers working night shifts who will work in two shifts except on vacations.

In a circular issued here on Thursday, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar said a small group of employees will work on all working days from 8 pm to 8 am and in two shifts during holidays from 8 am to 8 pm and 8 pm to 8 am. The GAD will assign two section officers along with support employees for this purpose.

— INN

## HC DENIES INTERIM ORDER ON MAYOR, DY MAYOR POLLS

VUJJINI  
VAMSHIDHARA | DC  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 3

Telangana High Court on Thursday refused to give directions to the Telangana State Election Commission, Telangana government and GHMC on not proceeding with the process of electing the next Mayor and deputy Mayor. The court made it clear to the petitioner, who challenged the voting rights to ex officio members like former MPs, MLAs and MLCs, that even in the circumstances of such provisions for enabling voting rights proved invalid and arbitrary, the effect will be the prospective and not the retrospective date.

The division bench, comprising Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice B. Vijaysen Reddy, was dealing with a petition filed by former MLA and social activist E. Anil Kumar. He pleaded suspension of the operation of Section 90 (1) of the GHMC Act, 1955 on the ground that though this provision of Section in the GHMC Act enables the MPs, MLAs, and MLCs to elect the Mayor and his deputy.

Senior counsel Sarasani Satyam Reddy, appearing for the petitioner, submitted to the court that the ex-officio votes would influence the citizens thought process, which impacted the voter from exercising his adult franchise. He urged the court to restrain Telangana SEC, State government, and GHMC from initiating election to the office of the Mayor, until this matter was resolved.

The court denied passing an interim order in this regard.

## 'NO REDRESSAL MECHANISM FOR DHARANI'

From Page 1

He submitted that the requirement of enrolling in the Dharani portal was a vague and mammoth exercise, without any legislative backing.

"If any mistakes are done in updating the properties details like spelling mistakes in names, house numbers, and others, who should the victim approach and submit his grievances? Even without mentioning this information on a piece of paper, how can the government give an ultimatum to give his details to the enumerator," Prakash Reddy informed the court.

The counsel further said that "even the government has not defined the position of enumerators and their eligibility. It is supposed that the properties which are not registered on the Dharani portal would become bona vacantia (goods without an apparent owner)."

Mr B.S. Prasad, advocate-general of Telangana, contended that there was no need for a separate law to back the action of the Telangana government to obtain and feed the entire data of the non-agricultural properties into the Dharani portal. "This programme will help citizens in dealing with their properties as it will put an end to mischievous miscreants. The government has come up with this programme with good intentions," the advocate-general said.

The Chief Justice, however, observed that the 'intention' would be considered in only criminal cases, and it was not a matter of the criminal case. Moreover, this issue is related to law and rules.

The court adjourned the batch of PILs and petitions to December 8 for submissions of the advocate-general on behalf of the state government and other counsels for the other petitioners.



Hyderabad Police Commissioner Anjani Kumar reviews security arrangements at Old Malakpet division during GHMC repolling on Thursday.

— P. SURENDRA

## Peaceful repolling in 69 stations in Old Malakpet

## CPI members claim attack from MIM supporters

ATHER MOIN | DC  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 3

Repolling in 69 polling stations in the Old Malakpet division was completed on Thursday, with 54,655 people, who make up 42.5 per cent of the electorate, exercising their voting right.

Though the repoll was broadly peaceful, CPI candidate's election agent and CPI city executive council member Syed Abid Hussain Naqvi complained that he was attacked by MIM candidate's supporters.

According to Naqvi, Mohammed Ghouse, brother-in-law of MIM candidate Juweria

Fatima, Khalid, Wajihuddin and others attacked him near polling booth number 18 and 19 at Unique School, when he objected to their presence.

The repoll was held after the CPI's contesting candidate Dr Firdaus Fatima complained about erroneous depiction of her party symbol on the ballot paper.

Immediately acting on the complaint, the State Election Commission suspended the polling in the division on Tuesday and ordered a repoll on Thursday.

Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar visited the division along with senior officials and

reviewed security arrangements for the repolling at the Chaderghat polling station.

Speaking to media persons later, the commissioner said repolling in 69 polling stations in 25 places was peaceful. He said additional commissioner (law and order) D.S. Chauhan, additional commissioner (traffic) Anil Kumar, and DCP East Zone M. Ramesh were monitoring the situation at the repoll.

To review security arrangements for the counting of ballots on Friday, Mr Anjani Kumar said senior police officials had visited 15 places last night with GHMC and re-

venue officials, where the counting of votes will be held. "We made security arrangements in the light of guidelines issued by the State Election Commission. Only permitted persons will be allowed within 200 metres of the counting centres. After the counting, the victory procession will not be allowed for the next 48 hours."

He also warned people to be cautious while posting content on social media as the social media cell is monitoring inflammatory and objectionable posts on different platforms. He warned that persons who indulge in such activities will be prosecuted.

## TOP COP WARNS OF ACTION OVER FAKE NEWS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 3

Hyderabad city police Commissioner Anjani Kumar said that strict action will be taken against those spreading fake news, denying the news reports claiming 92 police personnel were suspended in one day for their alleged bias to local politicians during the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections.

The news reports had claimed that 72 constables and 20 head constables were facing suspension and salary cuts.

Hyderabad police chief Anjani Kumar took to Twitter stating that a criminal case was being registered against the publication that reported the fake news. "A criminal case is being registered for circulating FAKE NEWS that 92 police officers are suspended in one day. This is WRONG news. Please do not believe it. We are taking legal action against those spreading this FAKE NEWS for vested interest," (sic) he wrote.

Over the last two days, several allegations have been made by political parties, mainly the BJP and the Congress against the Hyderabad police, accusing it of being partial to party workers of the TRS and the AIMIM.

## BJP will be biggest gainer in GHMC polls

From Page 1

According to another survey agency People's Pulse, the TRS could get 68-78 seats, which is a steep fall from its previous strength of 99. The BJP is likely to get 25-35 seats, which is a tremendous improvement over its tally of four seats in 2016. If there is a silent wave, the tally for the BJP might cross over 40 seats, says the survey.

The AIMIM is expected to get 38-42 seats, which is a tad less than the 44 seats that it had got in 2016. The Congress will end up with one to five seats.

Another survey agency Pulse Today predicts 86 to 90 seats for the TRS, 18-20 seats for the BJP, 34-38 seats for MIM and 1-2 seats for the Congress. Another agency Aara claimed that the TRS would get 78 seats (plus or minus 7), followed by MIM 41 seats, BJP 28 seats, and Congress three seats.

The Center for Psephology Studies (CPS) has projected a 39.8 per cent vote share for the

## BELLFULL IDEAS SURVEY:

- TRS: 65-75
- MIM: 35-40
- BJP: 20-25
- Cong: 6-10

TRS, 27.9 per cent for the BJP, 14.7 per cent for the Congress, 13.4 per cent for the MIM, and 4.2 per cent for others. In 2016 elections, the TRS had around 44 per cent and the BJP 10 per cent.

Based on its exit polls, People's Pulse claimed that the TRS leads the BJP by six per cent of the vote share. The TRS would get 38 per cent of the vote share while the BJP would get 32 per cent. The MIM and the Congress would get 13 and 12 per cent respectively.

The BJP would be the single largest gainer in the elections both in terms of vote share and seat share. The party expected a considerable consolidation of Hindu votes because of its high voltage campaign. Though the consolidation

of the Hindu vote did not happen, there is a silent vote that has favoured the BJP. If this silent vote is substantial, then the BJP seat share may go up.

The Congress in the Malkajgiri Lok Sabha constituency appears to have performed well. This, however, could help the ruling party as the anti-government vote split has got among different parties.

The MIM is expected to register its best-ever strike rate among all parties that are in the fray. The agency has also pointed out that in several divisions there were multi-cornered contests which suggests that excitement would run high till the final votes are counted. The multi-cornered contests have also turned to the advantage of the TRS.

The issues that dominated the elections are housing (28 per cent), unemployment (21 per cent), flood relief (16 per cent), traffic (12 per cent), roads (10 per cent), sanitation (9 per cent) and other Issues (4 per cent).

## SWARNIM SEWA TO HELP RGIA PASSENGERS

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 3

Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) in collaboration with GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd. (GHIAL), on Thursday, launched a unique passenger-centric service - Swarnim Sewa, at RGIA. The service was launched jointly by Aditya Mehta, renowned para-cyclist and founder of Aditya Mehta Foundation (AMF) in the presence of senior officials from CISF and GHIAL.

This service will specially help passengers who are PRM (Passengers with Reduced Mobility); senior or aged passengers travelling alone; pregnant women; women with infants; first-time travelers and children travelling alone; and passengers in distress.

## Farmers under 19th major canal of the NSP worried

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC  
KHAMMAM, DEC. 3

The delay in repairing the 19th major canal, also known as the Mangapuramthanda canal of the Nagarjuna Sagar Project (NSP), left canal that passes through Mudigonda and Nelakondapalli mandals, has farmers who raised paddy in 500 acres in nine villages worried.

Farmers of Gokinepalli, Chinamandava, Pammi, Kamalapuram, Chandapuram, Anasagaram, Mujigude, Nachepalli and Mangapuramthanda in Mudigonda and Nelakondapalli mandals raise paddy under the Mangapuramthanda canal. Their crop is ready for reaping, but water needs to be released into the fields once or twice to get a good yield before reaping.

There is plenty of water in the Palair reservoir as well as in the Nagarjuna Sagar reservoir. All the



Boddu Abraham in his paddy field ready for reaping in need of water immediately in Chandapuram village in Nelakondapalli mandal in Khammam district.

— DC

other major canals, including the NSP left canal, are receiving water. However, the 19th major or Mangapuramthanda canal is not receiving water, as repairs are pending.

Sources said that the contractor, who received the contract to complete repairs of the Mangapuramthanda canal, went back, as the government did not clear his pending bills. Farmers worry that they may lose their crops if the water is released a bit late.

## FLOOD VICTIM'S FAMILY RECEIVE ₹4L EX GRATIA IN SANGAREDDY

**Hyderabad, Dec. 3:** On Thursday, Patancheru MLA Gudem Mahipal Reddy handed over ₹4 lakh ex gratia to the bereaved family members of Ameenpur resident Ananthula Anand (30), who was washed away in a stream in October.

The MLA has guaranteed that the administration will soon provide Anand's wife with a job. The MLA visited Anand alias Mallikarjun's house along with Ameenpur Municipal Chairman Tummalapanduranga Reddy. Since Hyderabad and its suburbs witnessed heavy

rains in October this year, heavy floods have occurred in the area of Ameenpur. On October 13, late at night, while Anand was crossing a stream at Uzkebavi, his car was swept away by the stream. Six days later, when the flow of water receded, his car and body were fished out by NDRF (National Disaster Response Forces).

They were told by Mahipal Reddy that they will always stand by the family. He regretted that, while they had made every attempt on the fateful day, they could not save Anand.

— INN

## COVID | DRUGS Healthcare workers look at prophylactic measures as prevention

## Ivermectin trials show positive results

KANIZA GARARI | DC  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 3

With many doubts being raised over efficacy of vaccines in dealing with Coronavirus pandemic, healthcare personnel are looking more at prophylactic measures as prevention. Towards this, Ivermectin is one of the potential drugs that has shown positive results in one month of its clinical trials.

These trials involved 904 healthcare workers who had been administered

● **IVERMECTIN HAS** been used as therapeutic treatment in mild-to-moderate cases of Coronavirus.

Two 300 ug/kg doses of Ivermectin with a gap of 72 hours. There was a follow up of these workers one month after administration of the drug.

Of the total 904, 670 tested negative while 234 of them turned out to be positive. In other words, use of Ivermectin as prophylactic showed 73 percent reduction in Covid-19 infection.

The study was carried out at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Bhubaneswar from September to October 2020. The results found are similar to randomised trials carried out elsewhere in the world.

Ivermectin has been used as therapeutic treatment in mild-to-moderate cases of Coronavirus. It has also been utilised in preventing symptoms of Covid-19 among healthcare workers post exposure to the virus.

Senior government doc-

tor Kiran Madhala says, "There have been a total, 64 trials of Ivermectin wherein no side-effects have been found. Medical literature shows 600 micrograms per kg per day can be administered safely as a prophylactic. The first trial results from India are encouraging. We are awaiting results of the second trial."

After taking the dosage of Ivermectin, participants also participated in strenuous outdoor activities like jogging and

sports. No adverse effects had been noted, it is stated. The dosage was administered to those healthcare workers working closely with patients in Coronavirus wards.

Dr G. Srinivas, senior general physician says, "Till the most-effective vaccine is available, we will have to rely on prophylaxis. However, such studies must be carried out on a larger scale. This will help determine their efficacy in running the healthcare system in a better manner."



## OTHER STORIES

## TOMATO FARMERS TOLD TO FOLLOW MULCHING SYSTEM

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, DEC. 3

The tomato farmers in Bhadradi-Kothagudem district were advised to follow best farm methods for optimum production.

The farmers of Chandrugonda, Annapureddypalli, Julurpad, Sujathanagar, Paloncha and Chunchupalli mandals in the district are raising tomato crop in 1,100 acres.

Horticulture director Jinugu Marianna visited the tomato plantations in Julurpad mandal.

He said that the tomato fruit contains vitamins like A, B, C and D apart from potassium and calcium. Using tomato will protect the eyes and teeth will be strengthened.

He asked the farmers to raise the plants using the mulching system and advised them to use monkey guns to keep monkeys away from the crop.

## JAMMIKUNTA PS IS AMONG 10 BEST PS IN INDIA

PULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC  
KARIMNAGAR, DEC. 3

The Jammikunta police station, which falls under the Karimnagar Police Commissionerate limits, has been ranked by the Union home ministry as the 10th best police station in the country.

Every year, the government of India through a nation-wide survey selects the best-performing police stations across the country, to incentivise police stations to function effectively and bring healthy competition among them.

Conducting the nation-wide poll this year, was challenging, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite facing difficulties in accessing police stations in remote areas due to restrictions, the team of officials from Delhi completed the survey successfully.

Three police stations from each of the big states, two from each of the smaller states and Delhi, and one from each Union Territory are selected.

The ranking is done based on how the station address issues like property offence, prevention of crime against women and weaker sections, tracing missing persons and unidentified dead bodies and for identifying techniques of improvement in policing.

The Jammikunta police station ranked 10th out of the 16,671 police stations in the country.

The parameters that Jammikunta police station received the 10th rank was on data analysis received, direct observation and public feedback.

The other parameters were better services provided, resolving public issues, improved quality of the lock-ups, toilets, the waiting hall, installation of CCTV cameras, maintenance of surroundings, greenery in the police station and for providing better facilities in the station for friendly policing.

Commissioner of Karimnagar Police Commissionerate, V.B. Kamalasan Reddy expressed happiness and said that the Jammikunta police station was able to secure 10th rank due to the constant efforts put by the police officials. The three years of hard work has paid off.

He expressed thanks to the public representatives and the people who cooperated and supported the Jammikunta police.

He congratulated the staff and announced ₹7,500 on-record reward and ₹2 lakh for bettering the facilities in the police station from the funds sanctioned by the government.

Meanwhile, the Director-General of Police, M. Mahendar Reddy, health minister, Etala Rajendar, vice-chairman of the state planning commission, Boinapally Vinod Kumar and BC welfare Minister, Gangula Kamalakhar congratulated the Karimnagar Police Commissioner, V.B. Kamalasan Reddy and police officials of the Jammikunta police station.

■ **THE RANKING** is done based on how the station address issues like property offence, prevention of crime against women and weaker sections, tracing missing persons and unidentified dead bodies and for identifying techniques of improvement in policing.

## Snack time



A flight of Pigeons eat grain from sacks stacked on the back of a stationed at the Nizamabad agriculture market yard on Thursday. The scene attracted many passers by. — NARENDER PULLOOR

## 7 hurt as speeding car rams into auto

3 seriously injured, 4 suffer minor injuries

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, DEC. 3

Three persons were seriously injured and four others escaped with minor injuries when a speeding car ramed into an autorickshaw on the outskirts of Shivunipally village under Station Ghanpur police station limits in Jangaon district on Thursday.

Station Ghanpur inspector, A. Srinivas, informed that all the passengers of the autorickshaw belonged to Palakurthy and were returning to their village from Station Ghanpur.

An overspeeding car coming in the opposite direction from Palakurthy ramed into the auto-rickshaw near Shivunipally and dragged it off the road.

The passengers were stuck inside the man-



The car and autorickshaw involved in the accident at Shivunipally on Thursday. — DC

gled autorickshaw for some time before the locals rescued them.

The police personnel reached the spot and shifted the injured passengers to the MGM

hospital for treatment.

"A case is registered against the car driver under section 337 IPC, and was taken into custody," said inspector Srinivas.



Congress senior leader and MLC, T. Jeevan Reddy cuts a cake on the occasion of World Disabled Day at Tahasil chowrasta in Jagtial district on Thursday.

## TRS behaving negligently towards disabled: Jeevan

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, DEC. 3

Telangana celebrated International Day of Persons with Disabilities on Thursday. Congress senior leader and MLC, T. Jeevan Reddy participated in an event held in Jagtial.

Speaking at the event, Mr Jeevan said that the TRS-led government is behaving negligently to people with disabilities who played a role in the separate Telangana movement.

Jeevan Reddy said, "Being born with disabilities is not the fault of a person. Dr B.R. Ambedkar in the Indian Constitution, mentions that the government must allot special reservations for persons with disabilities."

"In the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections that concluded recently, it was the persons with disabilities

who came out to register their vote, setting an example.

But, the state government, instead of giving them jobs and self-employment opportunities, is neglecting them. The state government even removed the Disabled welfare department," he criticised.

Several persons with disabilities are waiting to receive the new pensions. But the state government has not sanctioned new pensions for the last two years, and neither has it allotted funds for their welfare, because of which they are facing numerous hardships, he said.

Jeevan Reddy recalled an incident, a few days back, when a disabled person, resident of Thirumalpur village in Gollapalli mandal had been doing the rounds of government offices for the past one-and-a-half year for his pension. Jeevan said,

"I brought the issue to the notice of the district collector in Prajavani programme and made him sanctioned the pension."

The government must sanction ₹40,000 as subsidy for persons with disabilities to purchase tricycles and an additional ₹60,000 under the self-employment scheme.

He demanded that the government release a white paper on the funds released in the past six years for the welfare of persons with disabilities. He assured the persons with disabilities that he would speak up for them in the state council and will fight for 4 per cent reservation in all sectors.

Disabled welfare association district president, Lankadasari Srinivas alleged that the state government intentionally did not celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities, giving the reason of the Coronavirus.

## FARMERS STIR ENTERS 3RD- DAY IN NIZAMABAD

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, DEC. 3

Peoples' organisations continued to protest against the Centres farm laws on the third day on Thursday.

AIKMSS and CPI leaders took part in the protest at dharna chowk in Nizamabad. Showing solidarity with the agitating farmers in New Delhi, the peoples' organisations observed deeksha for the last three days.

Telangana farmers association state general secretary Pashya Padma demanded that the farm laws be cancellation immediately. She said, "If the NDA government failed to repeal the controversial laws, farmers agitation will spread across the country."

## 27-YEAR-OLD CHAIN SNATCHER DETAINED

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD DEC. 3

A 27-year-old man who was arrested for chain snatching was detained under PD Act by the Rachakonda Police on Thursday. Mucha Vamshi Krishna alias Bablu, a real estate agent, was part of a gang involved in chain snatching cases, said the police.

"The gang was involved in 11 property offences in the last year in the Rachakonda commissionerate. The Meerpet Police arrested them on August 29 and remanded to judicial custody by lodging them in the Central Prison at Cherlapally," police said. With a view to prevent them from committing such offences, an order of detention under the PD Act was invoked.

## Cong gears up for Warangal municipal polls

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC  
WARANGAL, DEC. 3

The Congress is gearing up for the elections to the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC), said TPCC working president Jeti Kusum Kumar after a core-committee meeting with Warangal Urban district Congress leaders at Hanamkonda on Thursday.

Speaking to the media later, he said that efforts are on to constitute Division and Booth-Level Committees in the GWMC limits, thereby preparing the cadres for the GWMC elections.

Expressing confidence that the Congress has a better chance of clinching the mayor post this time, he said, "Special committees such as campaign and media were constituted to focus on the elections."

Stating that there is not much difference between the TRS, BJP and the MIM, Kumar said that these three parties have an understanding with Delhi but look like arch-rivals in the state.

Referring to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections, he expressed confidence that the Congress will fare better than before.

"Although the BJP had brought in their national-level leaders to campaign in the GHMC elec-

■ **EFFORTS ARE** on to constitute Division and Booth-Level Committees in the GWMC limits, thereby preparing the cadres for the GWMC elections.

Kumar said. The people are aware of the failures of the TRS Government and will teach Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao and his son K.T. Rama Rao a fitting lesson. "The TRS Government offered ₹10,000 to each flood-affected household has neglected the people in Warangal who also suffered due to the floods in August," the TPCC working president said.

Accusing the government of making hollow promises, he demanded that the ruling party bring out a white paper on the ₹25 crore sanctioned for the Warangal flood relief fund by IT minister K.T. Rama Rao. The government had also promised ₹300 crore special development fund for Warangal and a second Road Over Bridge (RoB) near Kazipet, which they need to talk about, he said.

Warangal DCC president N Rajender Reddy, TPCC General secretary Syed Azmathulla Hussaini, former legislator Konda Muralidhar Rao and others were present.

## TS ACTIVE CASES NOW AT 8,999, OFFICIALS WARN OF 2ND WAVE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 3

The State reported 609 new Covid-19 positive cases and three deaths in the last 24 hours ending on Thursday evening. The current active cases are at 8,999.

Health officials have advised that the cold weather that is intensifying and laxity of people in following norms can lead to an increase in positive cases. Unless people abide by the protocol, chances of a second wave appear distinct, they said.

Unnecessary travel must be avoided and those who are suffering from respiratory diseases must exercise extra care. Due to the dip in temperatures, pollution levels will rise in the morning. There will be a mix of haze and pollutants and that is a cause of concern as it allows viruses to stay in air for a longer period of time. This can also add to the rise in Covid cases and other respiratory illnesses.

Around 53,686 samples were collected and testing is likely to be increased to 65,000 samples per day. GHMC limits recorded 114 cases, Medchal Malkajgiri 45 and Ranga Reddy 48 cases.

■ **UNNECESSARY TRAVEL** must be avoided and those who are suffering from respiratory diseases must exercise extra care.

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RM, TRIFED, Hyderabad



## SHORT TAKES

## SC PUTS ON HOLD GUJARAT HC'S ORDER ON COVID

PARMOD KUMAR | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 3

The Supreme Court on Thursday put in abeyance the Gujarat High Court order directing that those not wearing mask in public places be made to do community service in Covid-19 care centres as it expressed concern over the implementation of the Centre and the state government's guidelines at the ground level.

A bench comprising Justice Ashok Bhushan, Justice R. Subhash Reddy and Justice M.R. Shah directed the Gujarat government to ensure that the guidelines issued by the Centre under the Disaster Management Act and the one issued by the state government are implemented vigorously and those violating it are punished.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for Gujarat government said that the problem of people not wearing masks is serious but the solution prescribed by the High Court is not correct.

"Harm of not wearing masks is much less than sending such persons to Covid centre," he said.

However, Justice Shah said that there were serious gaps in the implementation of the guidelines on wearing masks and maintaining social distancing in public places, social gatherings and malls.

## MALEGAON BLAST TRIAL TO START ON DEC. 19

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, DEC. 3

A special NIA court on Thursday directed all the seven accused in 2008 Malegaon bomb blast case to remain present before the court on December 19, as the trial in the case would begin on regular basis from that day. The court passed this order on Thursday, as BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur, Lt Col Prasad Purohit and two other accused failed to appear before the court despite an earlier court direction.

Meantime, the Bombay High Court on Thursday clarified that it has not stayed the trial in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, and said the trial must go on.

The lawyers of the absent accused told the special NIA judge P.R. Sitré that their clients were absent due to the Covid-19 situation. Following this the court directed all the accused to be present before it on December 19.

A division bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and M.S. Karnik was hearing a plea filed by Lt Col Prasad Purohit, seeking that charges against him be quashed because prior sanction was not taken to prosecute him.

According to him, section 197 of the CrPC lays down the procedure for prosecution of public servants and mandates that a prior sanction be sought from the government. Purohit said that in the absence of prior sanction, the trial court couldn't have taken cognisance of the charges against him.

## AIRLINES TO ALLOW MORE PASSENGERS

**New Delhi, Dec. 3:** The cap on the number of domestic flights that Indian airlines are permitted to operate was increased from 70 per cent to 80 per cent of their pre-Covid levels on Thursday, said Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

The minister had said on November 11 that the Indian airlines can operate up to 70 per cent of their pre-Covid domestic passenger flights due to the prevailing demand amid the coronavirus situation.

Puri tweeted on Thursday, "Domestic operations recommenced with 30K passengers on 25 May & have now touched a high of 2.52 lakhs on 30 Nov 2020."

"Ministry of Civil Aviation is now allowing domestic carriers to increase their operations from existing 70% to 80% of pre-Covid approved capacity," he stated.

The ministry had resumed scheduled domestic passenger services from May 25, after a gap of two months due to the coronavirus lockdown.

However, the airlines were allowed to operate not more than 33 per cent of their pre-Covid domestic flights.

On June 26, this was increased to 45 per cent and on September 2, it was further increased to 60 per cent.



Farmers block a part of the Delhi-Meerut National Highway during their protest march against the new farm laws, in New Delhi on Thursday.

— PTI

## Farm laws: Mamata warns of a nationwide agitation

Mamata to hold party meet today, says Centre must withdraw farm laws

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, DEC. 3

As the farmers' protest against three laws continues, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday demanded that the Centre withdraw the laws immediately. Otherwise, she threatened to launch her agitation nationwide.

The Trinamul Congress supremo's threat came within few days of her support to the farmers' agitation and offer to join them, if invited, as the Left has already hit the streets over the issue in the state ahead of the Assembly election.

In a Facebook post, Banerjee said, "I am very much concerned about the farmers, their lives and livelihood. GOI must withdraw the anti-farmer bills. If they do not do so immediately we will agitate throughout the state and the country. From the very start, we have been strongly opposing these anti-farmer bills."

Clarifying her party's stand, she added, "We have called a meeting of the the All India Trinamul Congress on Friday, December 4. We will discuss how the Essential Commodities Act is

## ODISHA FARMERS EXTEND SUPPORT TO STIR IN DELHI

AKSHAYA KUMAR  
SAHOO | DC  
BHUBANESWAR, DEC. 3

Farmers in Odisha on Thursday extended support to the 'Delhi Chalo' protest by staging demonstrations here in state capital Bhubaneswar.

They echoed, among others, the demands for scrapping the recent farm laws enacted by the Parliament, legal assurance with regard to continuance of Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for agriculture produces and withdrawal of cases slapped on the agitating leaders. Several farmer organisations under the banner of All India Kisan Sangharsha Coordination Committee gathered at the Lower PMG Square here and tried to march towards the state Assembly.

impacting common people and resulting in sky rocketing prices. The central government must withdraw this anti-people

## Cong demands special Parl. session to repeal farm laws

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 3

Congress on Thursday demanded a special session of Parliament to discuss the "repeal" of the three recently passed farm laws and the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

In a letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Congress Leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury demanded that the former convene a short winter session of the House to discuss several issues, including the farmers' agitation and preparation for Covid-19 vaccine.

The letter asked Birla to convene the winter session of the House with all the Covid-19 protocols in place to help the people understand the important

issues the country is facing at present.

"There are a number of very important issues that the nation is facing in present times. The most notable among them are the ongoing farmers agitation and the status/preparation of the Covid-19 vaccine," it said.

Chowdhury listed issues like "economic slowdown, unemployment scenario, continuous stand-off along the India-China border and unabated ceasefire violation along the India-Pakistan border".

"There is a need for a thorough and transparent discussion on all the above mentioned important issues," he said.

Meanwhile, former Congress President Rahul Gandhi demanded a repeal of the new farm laws. He said accepting

anything less than a complete repeal of the new farm laws would be betrayal with the country and its farmers.

Incidentally, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh met Union home minister Amit Shah on Thursday morning to work out a solution to the farmers' protest against the Centre's agri-marketing laws.

Farmers have been staging protests at four busy border points of the national capital — Singhu, Noida, Ghazipur and Tikri — to press their demands for repealing the agri-marketing laws. Gandhi also attacked the Centre over its statement that it had never spoken about inoculating everyone with a vaccine against Covid-19.

Air India, Coal, BSNL, BHEL, banks, defence, etc. Withdraw ill-conceived disinvestment & privatisation policy. We must not

allow treasures of our nation to be transformed into Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) personal assets."

## TMC MLA hails PM as 'head of family'

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA, DEC. 3

Joining the league of rebel Trinamul Congress MLAs ahead of Assembly election in West Bengal, Bally legislator and late ICC president Jagmohan Dalmiya's daughter

Baishali Dalmiya has stumped her party, wondering how its leaders could call Prime Minister Narendra Modi an "outsider" when he is the "head of our family."

In a video message which went viral, she was heard saying, "These people are calling our honourable PM an outsider. Whenever someone comes here from another state, he is labelled as an outsider. They do not even know that India is a country. The PM is the head of our family. He is seen in

that way. When the PM, being the head, is tagged as an outsider in India then whom am I?"

Dalmiya's outburst, after several posters demanding no party ticket to an "outsider" in the next Assembly polls circulated allegedly by the TMC in her Assembly constituency in Howrah, came ahead of Modi's visit to the state on December 24.

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## Police close key routes connecting Ghaziabad-Delhi

**New Delhi, Dec. 3:** Police on Thursday closed routes on two national highways connecting Ghaziabad to Delhi as farmers remained adamant on their demand for scrapping of the Centre's agriculture reform laws and stayed put at the national capital's borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

The protesting farmers had on Wednesday threatened to block other roads of Delhi if their demands were not met.

"The local police have closed the routes on NH-9 and NH-24 from Ghaziabad to Delhi. On NH-1, both sides of the route have been closed near Shani Mandir," the Delhi Traffic Police tweeted.

The crowd of farmers continued to swell at Ghazipur, prompting the police to close the Delhi-UP border on NH-24.

"The Ghazipur border on NH-24 is closed for traffic from Ghaziabad towards Delhi due to farmers' protests. People are advised to avoid NH-24 for coming to Delhi and use Apsara/Bhopra/DND instead," the traffic police said.

It said NH-44 is closed on both sides and asked people to take alternate routes via NH-8, Bhopra, Apsara border, and Peripheral expressway. At the Chilla border, one carriageway from Delhi to Noida has been opened for traffic. However, the other carriageway from Noida to Delhi is still closed.

People commuting from Noida to Delhi are advised to avoid Noida link road, the traffic police said.

The Delhi-Haryana border at Jharoda and Jhatikra remained closed for traffic movement. The Badusarai border is open only for two-wheeler traffic.

However, people can travel to Haryana through Dhansa, Daurala, Kapashera, Rajokri, NH-8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam Vihar and Dundahera border points, the traffic police have said.

The police also kept the Haryana-Delhi border at Singhu and Tikri closed for traffic for the eighth day on the trot.

"Singhu border is still closed from both sides. Lampur, Auchandi & other small borders also closed. Please take alter-

## FARMERS WHO END LIFE ARE COWARDS, SAYS K'TAKA MANTRI

**Bengaluru, Dec. 3:** Karnataka Agriculture Minister B.C. Patil on Thursday said the farmers who commit suicide are cowards.

"The farmers who commit suicide are cowards. Only a coward who can't take care of his wife and children commits suicide. When we have fallen (in the water), we have to swim and win," Patil said

addressing farmers at Ponnampet in Kodagu district of Karnataka. The Minister was explaining to bamboo growers of Ponnampet how profitable the agriculture business is, but some cowards do not realise that and commit suicide. To buttress his point, Patil cited an example of a woman who was wearing gold bangles.

"When I enquired with her how her hands were full of gold bangles, You know what she said? She said, This mother earth has given me for my 35 years of toil. Doesn't this please you all after listening to this?" Patil told the gathering. He said when a woman who had depended herself entirely on agriculture and achieved big why other farmers cannot do it.

Reacting to this, Congress Karnataka unit spokesperson V.S. Ugrappa condemned the Minister's statement, saying he has shown disrespect to the farming community. "It's a disrespect to the farmers. He should apologise for it," Ugrappa said.

— PTI

nate routes. Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba Chowk & GTK Road," the traffic police tweeted.

"Traffic is very heavy. Please avoid Outer Ring Road from Signature Bridge to Rohini & vice versa, GTK road, NH 44 & Singhu, Auchandi & Lampur borders," it said.

As traffic spilled over to alternate routes, it led to long jams there as well.

The farmers' unions also called for a nationwide protest on Saturday to oppose what they claimed was "corporatisation" of farming.

— PTI

## MEA STILL MUM ON BORIS AS R-DAY GUEST

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 3

At its weekly media briefing on Thursday, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) evaded a question from reporters on whether British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had been invited by India to be the chief guest at the Republic Day parade next month, saying that in such matters on the chief guest attending the Republic Day event, "the announcement is made closer to the event".

There had been reports on Wednesday that had said that the British Prime Minister had been invited by India to be the chief guest at the Republic Day parade.

It may be recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had spoken on phone to Johnson just last week on November 27 in which the two "leaders agreed that officials from both sides would continue their work to quickly finalise an ambitious long-term roadmap for the India-UK partnership".

The MEA had said last week, "The two leaders exchanged thoughts about the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and reviewed the promising cooperation between India and United Kingdom in the area of vaccine development and manufacturing."

— PTI

## NEW BEGINNING

Finally, Rajini takes the political plunge; fans celebrate by bursting crackers

## Dawn of new era in TN politics, say Rajini fans

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, DEC. 3

A Rajini fan here aptly referred to the song 'Singam onnu purapataidhey' in Rajini-starrer 'Arunachalam', where the actor plays the role of a political party leader campaigning for his candidate, making a comparison of matinee idol Rajinikanth's entry into politics.

Amid the pouring rain on Thursday, Rajini fans and supporters here cele-

brated the actor's announcement on Thursday about his plans to start a political party, and celebrated the moment bursting crackers and distributing sweets to the public. These are the ones, who in a first among Rajini fans association in the state, had gathered in mid-December 2017 for a walkathon from the Nilgiris border to Chennai, to urge their hero enter politics.

Secretary, Rajini Makkal

Mandram, the Nilgiris, S. Kumar, said that Thursday was an auspicious day for Rajini fans. "No doubt our Thalaivar has decided to script a new history in state politics dominated by Dravidian parties. His entry into politics will certainly deal a blow to the five-decade-old political culture of Dravidian parties, where family and dynasty politics had been ruling the roost. Thalaivar's way is always unique with a touch of

spirituality, honesty and simplicity, and he will definitely deliver clean and transparent governance if voted to power. During many film shoots in the Nilgiris, 'Thalaivar' proved himself to be people friendly and accessible.

We are hopeful that people will be with him to usher in a new era of politics in the state," Kumar added.

Despite pouring rain, film star Rajinikanth's fans celebrated his announcement of floating

a political party, by bursting crackers and distributing sweets to the public across the central districts of Tiruchy, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Pudukkottai, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam on Thursday.

In Tiruchy district, many places including Srirangam, railway junction and central bus stand areas, his fans celebrated the moment by stopping buses and distributing sweets to the passengers.



Actor-turned-politician Rajinikanth gestures during a press conference in Chennai on Thursday.

— PTI



SHORT TAKES

FLORIDA COP, 1 OTHER WOUNDED IN SHOOTING

**St. Petersburg (Florida), Dec. 3:** A Florida police officer and at least one other person were wounded in a shooting Wednesday, authorities said.

The shooting occurred Wednesday afternoon, according to a St. Petersburg police Facebook post. The wounded officer was taken to a nearby hospital for medical treatment, the *Tampa Bay Times* reported. Officials didn't release details about the other person or how they were wounded. Police haven't released information about what led to the shooting.

A video posted to Facebook appears to capture the shooting. More than a dozen gunshots can be heard, as several plainclothes officers fire at a vehicle that appears to be blocked in by other vehicles, including marked police vehicles.

MAN GETS THREE MONTHS FOR SHOOTING FLARES

**Fort Myres (Florida), Dec. 3:** A Florida man has been sentenced to three months in federal prison for shooting distress flares from a boat when there was no real emergency and triggering a US Coast Guard rescue operation.

Justin Patrick Obert, 32, was sentenced Wednesday in Fort Myers federal court, according to court records. He must also pay \$13,414.78 to cover costs associated with the rescue. He pleaded guilty in August to communicating a false distress message. "Mariners on the water rely and count on Coast Guard assets and personnel to be ready and able to respond when they are in distress," Coast Guard Capt. Matt Thompson said in a statement. "Hoax calls can redirect critical rescue capabilities and put lives at risk in the dangerous maritime domain." Obert was on a vessel in the Gulf of Mexico near Fort Myers Beach in September 2019 when he drunkenly discharged two red flares, according to court documents.

The Coast Guard, Fort Myers Beach Fire Rescue and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission all responded. Officials determined that Obert had discharged the flares despite not needing emergency assistance.

KEYS-BYRNE, STAR OF MAD MAX FILMS, DIES

**Los Angeles, Dec. 3:** Veteran actor Hugh Keys-Byrne, who played villain Immortan Joe in George Miller's cult hit 'Mad Max: Fury Road', has died. He was 73.

A representative for the actor told *Deadline* that the actor died peacefully on Tuesday morning. Filmmaker Brian Trenchard-Smith, who worked with Keys-Byrne for 1975 film 'The Man from Hong Kong', was the first to break the news of the actor's demise in a Facebook post on Wednesday. "Hugh had a generous heart, offering a helping hand to people in need, or a place to stay to a homeless teenager. He cared about social justice and preserving the environment long before these issues became fashionable."

"His life was governed by his sense of the oneness of humanity. We will miss his example and his friendship. Vale, Hugh," Trenchard-Smith wrote. Born in 1947 in Srirangar, Jammu and Kashmir to British parents, the actor was very young when his family moved to Britain. Keys-Byrne later moved to Australia where he featured in many Royal Shakespeare Company productions, including "As You Like It", "The Balcony", "Hamlet", "King Lear", "The Man of Mode" and "Much Ado About Nothing". He started his acting career when he was cast in TV series "Bellbird", created by Barbara Vernon.

The actor appeared in a number of series and films, including as Morrie Grosse in Trenchard-Smith's 1975 action flick "The Dragon Flies". Keys-Byrne's big moment came when he was roped in to play Toecutter in Miller's 1979 movie "Mad Max", which featured Mel Gibson in the lead. More than thirty years later, Miller requested Keys-Byrne return for his another plunge in to the world of "Mad Max" with 2015's "Fury Road", starring Tom Hardy and Charlize Theron. In the movie, Keys-Byrne played the villainous Immortan Joe, the head of a cult reigning the Wasteland.

Throughout the film, Joe and his biker gang terrorised Theron's Furiosa and Hardy's Max Rockatansky as they seek to liberate the world.

China Moon probe to return with rocks

**Beijing, Dec. 3:** China's latest lunar probe has finished taking samples of the moon's surface and sealed them within the spacecraft for return to Earth, the government announced on Thursday.

Chang'e 5, the third Chinese probe to land on the moon, is the latest in a series of increasingly ambitious missions for Beijing's space programme, which also has a probe en route to Mars carrying a robot rover. The Chang'e 5 touched

down on Tuesday on a mission to return lunar rocks to Earth for the first time since 1976.

The probe "has completed sampling on the moon, and the samples have been sealed within the spacecraft," the China National Space Administration said in a statement.

Plans call for the upper stage of the probe to be launched back into lunar orbit to transfer the samples to a capsule for return to Earth. — AP

China tiff: Morrison seeks conciliation

**Wellington, Dec. 3:** A diplomatic war of words between Australia and China over a graphic tweet seemed to finally cool on Thursday as Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison struck a much more conciliatory tone.

Morrison's change in approach came even after he was thwarted in getting his views out directly to Chinese people over the messaging app WeChat, after the Chinese company deleted his post on the grounds it could distort historical events and confuse the public.

Earlier this week, Morrison expressed indignation and anger at the tweet posted by a Chinese official that showed a fake image of a grinning Australian soldier holding a bloodied knife to a child's throat. The post took aim at alleged unlawful killings and abuses by Australian soldiers during the conflict in Afghanistan.

Earlier this week, Morrison called the tweet "truly repugnant" and "deeply offensive" and demanded an apology from China. But China had not

backed down, saying that Australia should be the one examining its actions. On Thursday, Morrison took a much different approach, telling reporters in Canberra that his aim was for the two countries to have a "happy coexistence."

"My position and my government's position is to seek constructive engagement," he said. "The relationship with China is a mutually beneficial one. It supports both our countries, it is good for both of our countries." China is Australia's largest trading partner. Morrison said Australia had made its views very clear on both the tweet and the WeChat message. WeChat is ubiquitous in China and is used for everything from getting news to making electronic payments.

The company is held responsible for ensuring content doesn't attract negative attention, and censorship is relatively common. Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said he was disappointed about the tweet and the deleted post.

— AP

JuD spokesperson gets 15 years' jail

**Lahore, Dec. 3:** Mumbai terror attack mastermind and Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed's spokesperson Yahya Mujahid has been sentenced to another 15 years in jail by a Pakistani anti-terrorism court in a terror financing case.

Mujahid was last month handed down 32 years jail term by the anti-terrorism court (ATC) in two terror financing cases. Besides Mujahid, the ATC Lahore on Wednesday also handed down 15 years' imprisonment to JuD's senior leader Zafar Iqbal and six months jail term to Saeed's brother-in-law Hafiz Abdul Rehman Makki.

Earlier, the ATC Lahore had sentenced Iqbal for 26 years imprisonment in three such cases. Judge Ijaz Ahmad Butt announced the verdict under different provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997. The three convicts were present in the court when the judge announced the verdict. The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab police had registered as many as 41 FIRs against JuD leaders, including Saeed in different cities.

The trial courts have so far decided 25 cases. The ATC has sentenced Saeed for a collective imprisonment of 21 years on terror financing charges under sections 11-N of Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 in four

COP GUARDING POLIO TEAM GUNNED DOWN

**Peshawar, Dec. 3:** A police officer assigned to guard a polio immunisation team was killed when unidentified gunmen opened fire at him.

The incident happened on Wednesday in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province's Bannu district. Sub Inspector Akhbar Zaman was on his way back home after performing his duty when two men on a motorcycle opened fire at him, resulting in his death on the spot.

The accused fled the scene. No group has claimed responsibility. Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria suffer from endemic polio, a virus that can cause paralysis or death. — PTI

cases so far.

Saeed-led JuD is the front organisation for the Lashkar-e-Taiba which is responsible for carrying out the 2008 Mumbai attack that killed 166 people, including six Americans. Saeed, a UN designated terrorist whom the US has placed a \$10 million bounty on, was arrested on July 17 last year in the terror financing cases. — PTI

COVID | CURBS

**Miami, Dec. 3:** Brad Six becomes Santa Claus, pulling his black boots over his red pants in the office of a Miami outdoor supply company.

It's hot, so he forgoes the traditional heavy jacket for a lightweight vest and grabs his Santa hat. But before sliding it on, the gray-bearded 61-year-old dons a plastic face shield and then takes his chair positioned behind a plexiglass sheet. "Getting paid is nice, but to get your battery recharged and to really get something lasting

out of it requires interacting with the kids — you don't get a lot of that this year," said Six, who first portrayed Santa 35 years ago. This is Santa Claus in the Coronavirus Age, where visits are conducted with layers of protection or online.

Putting hundreds of kids daily onto Santa's lap to talk into his face — that's not happening for most. The physical attributes that make the perfect Santa align perfectly with those that make Covid-19 especially deadly.

100 world leaders to speak at UN session on Coronavirus

Will chalk out recovery path from pandemic which has claimed 1.5 mn lives

**United Nations, Dec. 3:** Nearly 100 world leaders and several dozen ministers are slated to speak at the UN General Assembly's special session starting Thursday on the response to Covid-19 and the best path to recovery from the pandemic which has claimed 1.5 million lives, shattered economies, and left tens of millions of people unemployed in countries rich and poor.

Assembly President Volkan Bozkir said when he took the reins of the 193-member world body in September that it would have been better to hold the high-level meeting in June. Nonetheless, he said Wednesday it "provides a historic moment for us to come together to beat Covid-19." "With news of multiple vaccines on the cusp of approval, and with trillions of dollars flowing into global recovery efforts, the international community has a unique opportunity to do this right," he said.

"The world is looking to the UN for leadership. This is a test for multilateralism." When financial markets collapsed and the world faced its last great crisis in 2008, major powers worked together to restore the global economy, but the Covid-19 pandemic has been striking for the opposite response: no leader, no united action to stop the pandemic that has circled the globe.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres sent a letter to leaders of the Group of 20, the world's richest nations responsible for 80 percent of the global economy ahead of their summit in late March as Covid-19 was starting its killing spree urging that they adopt a "wartime" plan and cooperate on an international response to suppress the coronavirus. But there was no response. The two-day special session will not be raising money to finance vaccine immunisations or taking any political action, and there will be no final declaration, just a summary document from Bozkir.

"The real point of this special is to galvanize concrete action to approach our response to Covid-19 in a multilateral and collective way," General Assembly spokesman Brenden Varma said Wednesday.

TURKEY PLANS TO USE CHINESE VACCINE

**Istanbul, Dec. 3:** Turkey's health minister has announced a vaccination plan starting with an experimental "inactivated vaccine" later this month to combat the Covid-19 pandemic amid a surge in infections and deaths. Fahrettin Koca had previously announced an agreement with Chinese biopharmaceutical company Sinovac Biotech for 50 million doses of CoronaVac, which is currently in Phase 3 trials.

Koca said in a statement late Wednesday that the first shipment of the inactivated vaccine will arrive in Turkey after December 11. Inactivated vaccines are made by growing the whole virus in a lab and then killing it. — AP



Local restaurant employees and staff members hold placards during a protest against the restrictions imposed by the authorities after indoor dining was banned following a rise in Covid-19 cases in Karachi on Thursday. — AFP

Not game over in the fight against virus, warns UK PM

**London, Dec. 3:** Prime Minister Boris Johnson sought to strike a note of caution amid the excitement of the UK becoming the first country to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19, warning that it is not "game over" for the deadly virus just yet.

Johnson hailed the "searchlights of science" fighting back against the world's "invisible enemy" but urged people to not get carried away with over optimism over the course of the "long and cold months" ahead while the two-dose vaccine starts to be injected into the arms of those at the highest risk of death from the disease.

He urged people to follow the Covid Winter Plan of tiered lockdown which is now in force across England, with a majority of areas still under high alert measures of social distancing.

"It is a fantastic moment, but the worst thing now would be to think that this is the moment when we can relax our guard and think it's game over in the fight against Covid. It's not. This is not the end," Johnson said, during a briefing at 10 Downing Street on Wednesday evening. "We have been waiting and hoping for the day when the searchlights of science would pick out our invisible enemy and give

us the power to stop that enemy from making us ill — and now the scientists have done it," he said.

"It is all the more vital that as we celebrate this scientific achievement we are not carried away with over optimism, or fall into the naive belief that the struggle is over. It's not, we've got to stick to our Winter Plan," he noted.

He said that in line with the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, the first phase of the vaccine deployment will include care home residents, health and care staff, elderly and those who are clinically extremely vulnerable. — PTI

Leaders and ministers from over 140 countries will deliver pre-recorded speeches on Thursday after an in-person opening in the General Assembly including speeches by Bozkir and Guterres. Among the leaders slated to address the session are French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, British

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, and European Union chief Charles Michel.

The US will be represented by Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar. Friday's session will focus on three panels, the first on the UN's response

to Covid-19 and the second on vaccines that will include representatives from producers BioNTech and Oxford University-AstraZeneca, and the World Health Organisation's ACT-Accelerator which is working to get vaccines to the world's poorest people. The final panel is on recovery from Covid-19. — AP

Biden urges Americans to avoid Christmas travel

**Washington, Dec. 3:** US President-elect Joe Biden has urged Americans not to travel during the Christmas and New Year holidays so as to prevent the spread of the deadly Coronavirus pandemic. The novel Coronavirus has so far infected 13,921,374 people and claimed 273,799 lives in the US — both the numbers highest in the world.

"You cannot be traveling during these holidays. As much as you want to," Biden told a group of workers and small business owners in Wilmington, Delaware. "Christmas is going to be a lot harder," he said during the virtual roundtable. "I don't want to scare anybody here, but

understand the facts. We're likely to lose another 250,000 people dead between now and January...because people aren't paying attention," the Democratic leader said.

The Centre for Disease Control (CDC) has warned that this winter may be the most difficult time in the US public health history. CDC Director Robert Redfield on Wednesday said the US could see another 200,000 Coronavirus deaths in the next three months if people do not take heed of mitigation measures like mask-wearing and social distancing.

According to the Covid tracking project, the number of Coronavirus patients in US hospitals have surpassed 100,000 for the

first time.

Biden said Americans need to take precautions till the vaccination is done. "There's two things that are happening for real. One, help is on the way in terms of vaccines. But the vaccine is not the most important thing. It's the vaccination. It's one thing to pay and the government having people show up and get the vaccine that's delivered to the state capital or to hospitals, wherever it's gonna be delivered," he said.

Biden said vaccination is a really expensive proposition. "We're talking about having to make sure over 340 million Americans and others have access to that vaccination." — PTI

CRONYISM AT CHINESE AGENCY SPREAD COVID

**Wuhan, Dec. 3:** Secrecy and cronyism at China's top disease control agency led to widespread test shortages and flaws that hampered the early response to the Coronavirus outbreak, an *Associated Press* investigation has found. China's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention gave test kit designs and distribution rights exclusively to three then-obscure Shanghai companies — GeneoDx Biotech, Huirui Biotechnology, and BioGerm Medical Technology — with which officials had personal ties.

It was based on interviews with more than 40 doctors, CDC employees, health experts, and industry insiders, as well as hundreds of internal documents, contracts, messages and emails. — AP

PAK TO START VACCINATION FROM APRIL '21

**Islamabad, Dec. 3:** The Pakistan government will provide the Coronavirus vaccine free of cost to its people and plans are afoot to start the immunisation drive by April next year, officials said on Thursday. Parliamentary Secretary on Health Nausheen Hamid said the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government has approved funds to purchase the vaccine doses.

"The PTI government will provide the Coronavirus vaccines free of cost to the people. The government will start the vaccination from the second quarter of 2021," Hamid tweeted. Hamid said the phase III of clinical trials of Chinese vaccines was proceeding well and the shots would be available to the people soon.

Pakistan's Coronavirus caseload rose to 4406,810 on Thursday after 3,499 new cases were reported in the last 24 hours. The Ministry of National Health Services, in an update, said 39 people had died due to Covid-19 in the last 24 hours. — PTI

sit in a parking lot where they to talk to people who remain inside their cars.

Some homeowners associations are moving their annual Santa-visitation parties outdoors; Grimes will arrive in his red convertible to greet the crowds from afar.

One of the hardest adjustments Santas have made is wearing masks that hide their painstakingly grown beards. "Santa performers are fairly vain people — if they are good," Grimes said. — AP



# DECCAN Chronicle

4 DECEMBER 2020

## Amid challenges, there is hope Covid's end is near

The British government clearing the vaccine against coronavirus, developed and manufactured jointly by German startup BioNTech and US pharma major Pfizer, so that vaccination in that country could start as early as next week, is perhaps the biggest news of 2020. The pandemic, Covid-19, which the virus causes, has made six crore ill and killed more than 14 lakh people, rendering itself into the biggest threat to public health in recent times. A vaccine to keep it at bay now offers humanity a reason to look at their lives and livelihoods with a little more hope than that they have done with in the past 10 months.

It was a truly global endeavour that resulted in the development of the vaccine at a record speed — the lead was taken by a Turkish couple who set up their startup in Germany and was supported by a US pharma major. And the final product, which the whole world was waiting for, was cleared for by the British regulator. The mRNA vaccine, or memory RNA vaccine, uses a fragment of genetic code from the coronavirus to teach the body how to prompt an immune response and fight the disease. It is for the first time that such a process has resulted in a vaccine that's authorised for public use. Reports say the vaccine is 95 per cent efficient, particularly among the elderly adults. The British regulator has insisted that the vaccine candidate has been subjected to thorough quality checking, allaying fears of expediency leading the push.

The challenges are not over. The vaccine needs to be stored at around minus 70 degrees Celsius, a logistical challenge only a few countries can take up. Mass production, safe distribution and proper administration based on a transparent protocol could still pose difficulties before the vaccine reaches all the needy people. One can take comfort from the fact that there are at least five more candidates that are easier to store and distribute and are in the final stages of clinical trials. Their arrival in the next few weeks will ease the situation substantially.

Now that science has done its job of coming up with an answer to a potential danger to human race, it's time for politics to take over and design a formula, which can address the needs of the last man on the street. Reports offer no hope in this, though: the entire bulk of early production has been pre-ordered by the rich western nations. India's hopes rest on its vast vaccine manufacturing capabilities built over decades; still the government has sounded cagy vis-a-vis assurances of inoculating everyone. Then there are nations with neither the money nor the production capacities but still house millions of vulnerable people. Their cries of desperation could easily be lost in the cacophony of global marketplace, which recognises only a few ideas, such as capital and profit. It is incumbent on countries, such as India, which in the past have used their leverage to amplify the voice of the less privileged on the global scene. There is a lot to gain by saying, "I am my brother's keeper", especially if he is a potential target of a deadly disease.

## Cricket: Individuals shine

On the current tour of Australia, Virat Kohli passed the milestone of 12,000 ODI runs in fewer innings than Sachin Tendulkar, who with 18,426 ODI and 15,921 Test runs, remains cricket's greatest gatherer of runs. More significantly, India stopped a run of seven ODI defeats on the trot since 2019 with a consolation win over Australia after having been comprehensively outplayed in the first two ODIs in Sydney when the series was alive. The celebration of Kohli's feat amid what is for him a leaner time at the crease in comparison to his purple patches in his more prolific years in international cricket since his debut in 2008 is, however, a pointer to how Indian cricket is extremely rich in individual feats of record breakers while rating considerably lower as a team.

The pattern of ineffectual cricket stemming from a lack of mental preparedness to be combat-ready even for what is considered a great rivalry with Australia was in stark evidence in the two defeats at the Sydney Cricket Ground, which presented belters for batsmen. The bowling attack was clueless about adjusting to the challenge and was taken to the cleaners twice by Australian batsmen, most of all Steve Smith who held out impressive lessons in how to make adjustments after a particularly poor IPL outing. Those Indian cricketers who seemed heroic match winners at times in the same IPL were found wanting when it came to chipping in for the national team cause.

A run of seven years without a trophy from any rated global event like the World Cups in the 50 overs and T20 formats or the Champions Trophy is a telling comment on Team India's record. The skipper Kohli's inability to inspire his team in the manner of Mahendra Singh Dhoni is clear even if he remains his team's pre-eminent performer, averaging an unprecedented 50+ in all three formats. Impressive as the comeback win in Canberra was, Team India's performances have been generally dissatisfactory. Fans must begin to appreciate that occasions arise for true celebrations when India performs as a combination in a team sport.

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KAUSHIK MITTER  
Editor

K. SUDHAKAR  
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DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

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



## Keeping Big Biz out of banks not a good idea

Sanjeev Ahluwalia

It's curious how resistance to any big change, invariably, comes from the "progressives" within a political system.

Farmers in Punjab and Haryana — the "gold standard" of agricultural productivity in India — are up in arms over the government's hurried attempts to liberalise the marketing of agricultural produce, allowing farmers to sell to anyone they wish. So why are the farmers outraged?

They say that they never asked for this "gift", so why was it being imposed on them? They suspect that it is a move to allow the "backdoor" entry of "corporates" enabling them to get control over the agricultural sector. Never mind that nothing is envisaged to stop farmers who are happy to sell to "Ardhthia" cartels in Central government-regulated mandis (markets) to continue to do so. Conspiracy theories, once born, acquire a life of their own.

In a similar vein, otherwise forward-looking Indian economists of the "left liberal" American tradition condemn the recommendation by a working group of the Reserve Bank last month that industrialists should be allowed to own banks, albeit with suitable checks, to create a "Chinese wall" (bad name this one!) around the banking operations of such business groups, to avoid "connected or mutual" lending.

Never mind that the only "unconnected" lending in Indian banking is when a middle-class woman goes to a bank for a loan to buy a house or a scooter! For all other personal or business lending, the bank must know and trust the borrower. How else do you explain the constant socialising that rotund banking types engage in? Networking has always been

the traditional "oil" in the banking sector, and "connections" matter.

So why are economists of repute up in arms despite these ground realities. They say that "big business" cannot be "trusted" to play with a straight bat and would bend the rules to favour lending and, more important, soft-soap defaults, by borrowers connected to them.

Pause here for a fact check. The ₹10 trillion-plus non-performing loans, even before the Covid-19 pandemic, are not the result of happenstance. Much of this is "directed" lending to unworthy "favoured" business borrowers. These came to light when growth stalled, pulling out the plug from various ponzi schemes in real estate and the stock market. Stiffer asset classification rules from the RBI also helped to unearth the scams. Publicly-owned banks are the most affected, though poor governance and low managerial propriety standards were visible in some private banks as well.

Formalising the reality of this "jugalbandi" by letting big business own banks transparently, rather than remain the unseen puppeteer, can only help reduce the existing systemic risk rather than increase it. Private banks should grow their asset share to equal that of public banks (which is now 70 per cent) while boosting credit levels to equal the GDP, up from 60 per cent today. Timely and forceful intervention by the RBI against delinquent management — private or public — as in the recent case of the Lakshmi Vilas Bank, is the way to go, to contain the rot, not to pull up the drawbridge against industry ownership in banks.

Consider the oldest, iconic Indian "brand" — the Tatas. Do we envisage a Tata, a Godrej, a Bajaj

or a Mahindra managed bank being less sound than the "diversified ownership" private banks in operation today? Look at the "newbie" business brands — Jio for instance. Does Mukesh Ambani need to own a bank to get access to credit or to nudge its flow? What if N.R. Narayana Murthy or Azim Premji were to float banks. What could possibly compel them to damage their international stature and credit rating by committing irregularities in their banking operations?

We have moved well beyond the stymied sources for wealth creation which existed in 1949, when the Banking Regulation Act was framed. Regulatory systems and public expectations have evolved. Even the 2013 guidelines, liberalising the entry of private banks, did not specifically bar big business from owning banks. Forty per cent of the capital of the best private banks is held by international investors. The gains from retaining a healthy and "sustainable" asset profile and international governance standards far outweigh the domestic "benefits" from bending licensing norms for dodgy loans.

Left-leaning consumer activists raise the spectre of "concentration of wealth" and "higher inequality" if business is let in through the banking door. These fears are overblown. Increasing the number of well-capitalised private banks will induce competition and dilute the concentration of economic power. The way to reduce inequality is not by preventing billionaires from becoming richer, but by improving

public services, creating decent jobs and enhancing the incomes of the poor.

Globalisation, corporatisation and industrialisation do tend to concentrate surpluses at the top. But they also expand the economic pie. Walking away from these pervasive global trends is not an option if growth is to be preserved. Pushing it to the high single digits, requires extensive liberalisation — cutting through the post-1991 residual red tape and "re-liberalisation" — hacking through the new accumulation since then with a motorised saw.

The key to manage big corporates is to have strong community-based governments with heightened accountability to the people, so that "cozy deals" and "crony capitalism" — a much larger generic problem beyond banking — are exposed and the guilty brought to book.

Are we there yet? Possibly not. Can we get there. Yes, we can. But not by stepping into Emperor Xi's boots and undermining the public profile of big business — just to keep them in respectful submission. The Chinese regulators, last month, torpedoed the giant \$35 billion IPO of the Ant Group in Shanghai and Hong Kong to rein in the "outsipoken" Jack Ma (shades pf Rahul Bajaj?), who criticised the government publicly.

Efficient banking is a key "commanding height" of the Indian economy. Accountability of banks to their creditors and minority shareholders needs to be strengthened. The RBI recognises that. But to shun the financial heft and managerial excellence of big bank services is like marching into the future with one hand permanently tied behind our back — ideologically pure, possibly. But irresponsibly courageous and blindly devotional to the blunt governance strategies of an earlier era.

The writer is adviser, Observer Research Foundation

### LETTERS

#### LISTEN TO FARMERS

It has become a norm for the Centre to make laws and bulldoze them through ordinances (*Farmers threaten nationwide protest, DC, Dec. 3*). How can the Centre be so heartless when thousands of farmers are on the road airing their problems with the new farm laws in this bitter winter?

P.J. David  
Hyderabad

#### VOTER TURNOUT

The voting turnout in the GHMC elections has made it clear that people are very angry with political parties raking up religious sentiments and have become aware of the importance of their vote. Now, all parties must take stock and review the performance of the last four years in their respective wards keeping in view the ground realities and commit to work for real progress and prosperity.

Dastagir Nawaz  
Hyderabad

By not casting their vote, people forfeit the right to complain against authorities for any injustice and allow other voters to make decisions for them. Blaming politicians is foolishness.

S. Nageswara Rao  
Hyderabad

#### VACCINE SHOTS

It is not ethical to force anyone to volunteer (*Docs reluctant to be part of dry run, DC, Dec. 3*). Why don't our politicians who are always ready to serve the citizens volunteer? This isn't an election manifesto to approve in haste. We could lose hundreds of thousands of healthcare workers.

Dr Syed Ataulah Hussaini  
Secunderabad

### 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

#### Scuffle in UN panel meet

UNITED NATIONS, DEC. 3 Pandemonious scenes and near physical scuffles between delegates marked the United Nations General Assembly's Social and Humanitarian Committee yesterday during its futile attempt to begin discussions on appointing a High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The disorderly scenes at the morning meeting led to its abrupt suspension and thereafter there was physical scuffling involving Saudi ambassador Baroodi, French counsellor Paulini and an unidentified Uruguayan.

James Ball



## Why 'immunity passports' can be problematic

A few months ago it wasn't certain we would find a Covid-19 vaccine. Now, we have three, with potentially more on the way — and the rollout of the Pfizer jab due to begin in Britain next week. It's an extraordinary achievement for the research community, our best hope of restoring normal life and a huge relief after a year of disappointments. But the UK government should beware of geeks bearing gifts. To get herd immunity, it has to persuade 60 to 90 per cent of people to get vaccinated.

You can see Boris Johnson's problem. If he makes vaccination voluntary, we may never hit the target we need for herd immunity. It's not just anti-vaxxers. Some people who are usually amenable to vaccines will worry about a "rushed" new one — and fear the speed of its development means corners were cut. Others may not wish to take the vaccine offered by the government if they believe one of the others on the market, or on the way, will be more effective. The Oxford/AstraZeneca, with its 70 per cent effectiveness rate, is so last season, darling. Everyone's going 95 per cent gene-based Moderna this year. (Or they would if it was on

offer!) People holding out for a vaccine of choice could cause delays. So what to do?

Enter Nadhim Zahawi, a Tory MP who was set to rebel over this week's tier vote until he was given the new job of minister for vaccine delivery. He's a Cameron-era MP who came of political age when the "nudge unit" was at large, thinking of ways to change behaviour without passing laws. He has started floating the idea of cinemas, pubs and other venues creating a system by which people can socialise in ways the tier system would not normally allow — if they can prove they've had the vaccine.

This opens the door to a system where the government uses vaccination to decide in what ways citizens are allowed to be involved in which parts of society. The Prime Minister has tried to give his reassurance that making vaccines compulsory is "not the way we do things in this country". But if airlines, pubs and cinemas make them compulsory at the government's suggestion, that's presumably okay.

The first problem with this should be glaringly obvious: someone would have to provide verifiable information

of who had been vaccinated. That would need to be the government, likely via the NHS. Dido Harding has floated the prospect that her white-elephant £12 billion NHS Test and Trace app could be used for this purpose, which would mean transforming an app every Brit was assured would protect their privacy and anonymity into a health passport they might have to show before ordering a beer.

The Prime Minister, in typical amiable-buffoon mode, seems quite keen on framing immunity certificates as "freedom passes", as innocuous as pensioners' bus passes. If a piece of paper will let you go to a bar, visit the theatre or go to a football match, how could it be anything but a good thing — says the logic that ignores that before the coronavirus, people could do all of these without having to show their government-issued papers.

When David Blunkett proposed identity cards back in 2004, Boris Johnson said he'd rather eat one than show it when requested. He quoted 1964 US Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater to the effect that "extremism in defence of liberty is no vice". Now he seems to have ambled

into becoming a vocal advocate of an even more intrusive form of ID card, one that shares not only our identity but also our health information. It would be the cornerstone of a new biosecurity state.

Modern technology makes casual state intrusion into our daily lives easier than ever. But it doesn't change the rights and wrongs of any of it. Even if you care not one iota about civil liberties, you can still see the dangers in what's being proposed here. For one, there is an uncomfortable precedent in requiring people to prove their health or vaccination status before they can access public life. At what point should that stop? No access to schools for unvaccinated pupils? Routine tests for flu before getting the Tube? Why not an app showing a verified set of your latest STD results before you can have a government-sanctioned fling?

The final, grim truth of "immunity passports" is they're not even all that likely to work — not least because they are the absolute confirmation of what the most fervent anti-vaccination protesters have always warned about. If the government suddenly tries to make vaccines a condition of public

life, that plays into every conspiracy theory about mass vaccination now spreading like wildfire online. It is generally not a good idea for anyone to prove such people "right", especially not on such a vital issue. The more extreme fringes of the anti-vax movements warn vaccines would contain the mark of the devil, or some surveillance chip.

Tying vaccination into a government-run tracking app, and making it a requirement of engaging in public, risks turning a movement of dangerous cranks into this generation's civil liberties freedom fighters. Worse still, it risks radicalising people currently unsure about a vaccine into being absolutely sure they don't want one.

We must sympathise with the government, which faces a huge challenge, and one prone to frustrations. It could be that developing the vaccine is the easy part compared with persuading enough people to actually take it. But that's the job ministers have signed up for, and they owe the public better than making up poorly thought-through policy live on air.

By arrangement with the Spectator



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	44,632.65	0.03
Nifty 50	13,133.90	0.15
S&P 500*	3,678.77	0.27
Dollar (₹)	73.91	-0.13
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.05	-0.54
Euro (₹)	89.46	-0.57
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,887▲481	0.98
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	48.36	0.11
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.932	0.011
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.938	-0.008

## Chhattisgarh accepts Centre's GST option

Chattisgarh has accepted the Centre's borrowing proposal and will get Rs 3,109 crore through the special window to meet GST revenue shortfall. With this, 27 states and three union territories have accepted the Centre's borrowing plan, leaving only Jharkhand which is yet to decide. Govt. of Chhattisgarh has communicated its acceptance of option-1 to meet the revenue shortfall arising out of GST implementation, MoF said.

## Ultratech to spend over ₹5,400 cr on capacity addition



UltraTech Cement, India's largest cement maker, announced a Rs 5,477-crore investment to add 12.8 million tonnes capacity, taking its overall output to over 136 mt per annum. The company said its board in a meeting approved capacity expansion plan with a mix of brown-field and green-field expansion. "The additional capacity will be created in the fast-growing markets of the eastern, central and northern regions," the firm said.

## Standard Life Aberdeen sells HDFC Life stake

UK-based Standard Life Aberdeen said it has sold 1.37 per cent stake in HDFC Life Insurance Company for Rs 1,703.2 crore. Standard Life (Mauritius Holdings), a subsidiary of Standard Life Aberdeen, sold 27,772,684 shares of HDFC Life at an average price of Rs 619.14, receiving about Rs 17,032 million (172 million pounds), net of taxes and expenses, the company said in a filing to the London Stock Exchange.

## Tata Power arm CGPL repays ₹1,550 cr loans

Tata Power said its subsidiary CGPL, which runs the Mundra ultra mega project, has repaid Rs 1,550 crore of bank loans. Coastal Gujarat Power Ltd (CGPL) repaid the amount on December 2, Tata Power said in a BSE filing. "With this repayment and the earlier repayment of Rs 2,600 crore of bank loans made in October 2020, the entire bank loans of CGPL aggregating Rs 4,150 crore have been fully repaid.



## RBI halts card, digital expansion HDFC Bank told to freeze new plans

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, DEC. 3

After several incidents of outages in digital services of HDFC Bank in the last two years, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has temporarily barred the lender from new digital banking launches and issuing new credit cards besides asking the bank's board to examine the lapses and fix accountability. The restrictions do not affect the bank's existing customers.

The private lender's managing director and chief executive officer Sashi Jagdishan on Thursday assured clients that "there is no reason to worry" and that they "can continue to transact with the bank without any concern."

The apex bank's order came on Wednesday, days after the last instance of service outage across its digital banking channels, including internet banking, mobile banking and other payments. The outage, which happened on November 21, had severely inconvenienced customers and was the third major outage faced by the country's largest private lender in a span of two years.

"The RBI has advised the bank to temporarily stop all launches of the digital business generating activities planned under its programme—Digital 2.0 (to be launched) and other proposed business generating IT applications, and sourcing of new credit card customers," the bank



informed the stock exchanges in a filing. HDFC Bank is the largest issuer of credit cards and has 1.49 crore customers as of September this year while it has 3.38 crore debit card-holders.

Started in 2018-19, Digital 2.0 is part of the bank's elaborate strategy to transform itself into a bank of the future. It comprises improving customer experience, using analytics to power customer interactions and developing new applications; empowering virtual banking offerings and bringing in innovation to shape up customer preferences. Under Digital 2.0 partnerships are planned with technology companies and fintech players to improve services.

"We had two outages, one in Nov 2018 and second one in Dec. 2019. We have taken help of external expertise, understood what needs to be done further and have substantially implemented the inputs to strengthen our IT infrastructure and systems. Unexpectedly another incident happened on Nov 21, 2020 and the pri-

mary reason for the same is the power outage in our Primary Data Centre. We are working on war footing to strengthen this area also now," said Jagdishan in his message to the bank's customers.

"Some of our strategic digital initiatives to improve the front end digital experience, improve digital origination, straight through processing, next generation of mobile and internet banking, APIs based banking on the edge etc would now be readied and launched post the approval and clearance from the regulator," he added.

HDFC Bank shares plunged to a low of Rs 1,374.25 on the BSE before closing at Rs 1,377.05, down 2.13 per cent. The bank's promoter HDFC Ltd's shares also fell 0.95 per cent to close at Rs 2253.90. Shares of its main rival, State Bank of India and its subsidiary SBI Cards and Payment Services, gained 3.87 per cent and 5.31 per cent, respectively.

(With inputs from Ravi Ranjan Prasad)

## Rabi sowing moving at a buoyant pace

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

Rabi crop sowing at the end of November is higher than the levels of last year and the average acreage of the past five years. Estimates show total acreage under rabi crop in the current season would be higher than last year's.

Sowing of the winter crop has already covered 348 lakh hectares as of November 27. This is 4 per cent more than the sowing in the previous season till the end of November and 2 per cent above the average of the past five years, finds Crisil Research. In 2019-20, a total of 662 lakh hectares were under rabi cultivation.

Timely kharif harvest has also ensured that rabi sowing started as per schedule. Last year, kharif harvest was delayed and hence Rabi sowing got delayed. The higher acreage till November is supported by the low base of last year. But last year, sow-



strong note," said Ajay Kedia, MD, Kedia Commodities.

As per the farm ministry data released last week, rabi oilseeds acreage was at 6.16 million hectares, up from 5.87 million hectares, due to higher sowing of groundnut. Further, farmers have sowed mustard over 5.7 million hectares in 2020-21 rabi season, up 6.6 per cent from the previous year. Rabi chana have been sown across 6.94 million hectares, compared to 6.08 million hectares a year ago.

Jeera sowing, too, is expected to be higher in terms of acreage this rabi season.

Overall, a bountiful monsoon has brought cheer to the farmers, with a record output expected in the kharif season. With reservoirs filled to the brim, output is expected to be bountiful in the rabi season as well. This will increase the purchasing power in the hands of the farmers and increase rural demand.

## NCLT nod for R-Infratel plan; lenders may get ₹4,400 cr

Mumbai, Dec. 3: The National Company Law Tribunal on Thursday approved a resolution plan of Reliance Infratel following which the lenders may get around Rs 4,400 crore and Reliance Jio may pick up the assets of the debt-ridden telecom infrastructure company, according to sources.

Reliance Jio through its subsidiary placed bids to acquire the assets of Reliance Communications' fully owned subsidiary Reliance Infratel and the same have been approved by the tribunal as part of the resolution plan, a source aware of the development said.

"The lenders will get around Rs 4,400 crore from Reliance Digital Platform, a group company of Reliance Jio and the successful resolution applicant," the source said.

Under the approved resolution plan, RCom and its subsidiary Reliance Telecom Infrastructure Ltd will go to UV Asset Reconstruction Company, while the tower unit Reliance Infratel will go to Jio for a total consideration of Rs 20,000-23,000 crore to be paid over a period of seven years.

Reliance Infratel has around 43,000 towers and 1,72,000 route kilometres of fibre. The Resolution Plan was approved by 100 per cent votes of the committee of creditors. —PTI

## Self-made women make up a third of India's wealthiest

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

As many as 31 self-made women have made it to the list of 100 Indian wealthy women. Of the 31 self-made women in the Kotak Wealth Hurun-Leading Wealthy Women List 2020, six are professionals and 25 are entrepreneurs.

With a wealth of Rs 36,600 crore, 67-year-old Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw of Biocon is the richest self-made woman and occupies the second place in the list of the wealthiest women. Out of the 13 women from the pharmaceuticals industry, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw is also the only self-made woman from the sector. Radha Vembu of Zoho with a wealth of Rs 11,590 crore is the second richest self-made woman and fifth among India's richest women.

Arista Network's Jay-



Roshni Nadar: Wealthiest of All

shree Ullal, with a wealth of Rs 10,220 crore, is the richest professional manager. Indra Nooyi of Pepsico too has figured in the list.

There are six startup founders and of them Falguni Nayar of Nykaa and Divya Gokulnath of Byju's have registered a wealth of Rs 5,410 crore and Rs 3,490 crore respectively and have built their companies into unicorns. The 100 richest women have a cumulative wealth of Rs 2,72,540 crore. With a wealth of Rs 54,850

crore, Roshni Nadar Malhotra, chairperson of HCL Technologies, is the wealthiest woman on the list. Among the 100, 38 have wealth of Rs 1,000 crore and more.

With four entrants, Apollo Hospitals Enterprise produced the most number of women leaders on the list, followed by Godrej Group which contributed three entrants to the list.

"The women on the Kotak Wealth Hurun-Leading Wealthy Women 2020 List are the most successful women business leaders in India. Their stories deserve to be shared and studied. What is it that makes them successful? How did they do it? I hope this list can inspire more women to become entrepreneurs, run businesses or lead companies," said Anas Rahman Junaid, manager director and chief researcher, Hurun India.

## SC asks Franklin to consult investors

New Delhi, Dec. 3: The Supreme Court on Thursday asked Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund to initiate steps within one week for calling a meeting of unit-holders to seek their consent for closure of the six mutual fund schemes and said there will be no redemption of units by investors till further orders.

The top court also agreed to hear an appeal filed by Franklin Templeton against the Karnataka High Court order, which stopped the fund house

from winding up its debt fund schemes without prior investor consent.

A bench of Justices S. Abdul Nazeer and Sanjiv Khanna observed that the issue is big and people wanted a refund.

It said that without prejudice to the rights of any party, trustees are allowed to call a meeting of unit-holders to seek their consent for approval and in this regard steps be taken within one week.

Advocate Pratap Vengopal, appearing for the Sebi, submitted that the

regulator has no role in the winding up process but had written to RBI in this regard.

The bench posted the matter for further hearing next week and directed that all cross appeals be placed on record.

On October 24, the Karnataka High Court had said that the decision of the Franklin Templeton Trustee Services Private Limited to wind up six schemes cannot be implemented unless the consent of the unit holders is obtained. —PTI

## Flipkart to hive off PhonePe

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

Flipkart will partially hive off its digital payment platform PhonePe, valued at \$5.5 billion. After the partial spin-off, Flipkart will have an 87 per cent stake in the digital payments services company, while Walmart will keep 10 per cent direct stake and Tiger Global and other Flipkart investors will have a 3 per cent stake.

On its part, PhonePe will raise \$700 million of capital in two months.

However, the spin-off provides PhonePe an opportunity to constitute a new board of directors focused on supporting its development. The new board will have veterans from the

BFSI sector, apart from representatives of Walmart and PhonePe.

PhonePe will also create a tailor-made equity incentive or ESOP programme for its employees. The employees who earlier were owning Flipkart's ESOPs will have PhonePe's ESOPs.

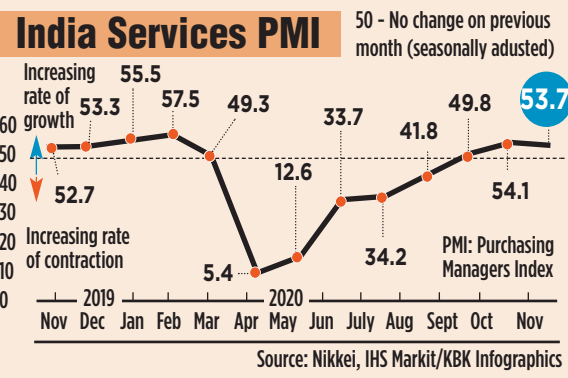
PhonePe will also have the freedom to independently raise funds. It has raised less than \$1 billion from its parent company and its investors till now.

Recognizing the momentum that has been achieved, as well as PhonePe's significant growth potential, Flipkart's board determined that this was the right time to partially spin-off PhonePe so it can access

dedicated capital to fund its long-term ambitions over the next three to four years, the company said in a release.

In a couple of months' time PhonePe will be raising \$700 million in primary capital in two tranches from existing Flipkart investors led by Walmart. The company will be valued \$5.5 billion.

In four years, PhonePe has crossed the 250 million registered user milestone with over 100 million monthly active users generating nearly one billion digital payment transactions in October 2020. Walmart sees value in spinning off PhonePe from Flipkart as the two companies have become large in their respective areas.



## BMW 2 SERIES GRAN COUPE FOR ₹42.30 LAKH



MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, DEC. 3

BMW on Thursday introduced the BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe in a new limited-run variant that will go on sale from Dec. 7. The car will compete with the yet-to-be launched Mercedes A-class limousine and the Audi A3.

The locally produced BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe Black Shadow edition is limited to 24 units and priced at Rs 42.30 lakh.

## Man who started out with ₹1,500 leaves behind a ₹1,500-cr empire Spice King started his journey in a tonga

New Delhi, Dec. 3: School-dropout Mahashay Dharampal Gulati, famously known as 'MDH Dadaji' for repeated appearance in his spice brand's television ads—who passed away on Thursday morning at the age of 97—started his spices business journey at a nondescript shack in Delhi's Karol Bagh after selling his tonga, and went on, at the age of 94, to becoming the highest-paid CEO in the country's FMCG sector.

Gulati, also known as the Spice King, was born in Sialkot—now in Pakistan—on March 27, 1923, and moved to India after Partition and set up his business in Delhi. His father had a spice

shop in Sialkot, called 'Mahashian Di Hatti' (MDH), but the outlet was popularly known as 'Deggi Mirch Wale'.

His family left behind everything during Partition to come and settle in Delhi. Gulati, who dropped out of school in 1933 after class 5, dabbled in many odd jobs, including woodwork and working in soap, fabric and rice factories.

He arrived in Delhi in September 1947 with Rs 1,500 in hand, mentions a bio-sketch of him on MDH's portal.

He used the money to buy a tonga (horse cart) for Rs 650 and drove it from New Delhi Railway Station to Qutab Road and Karol Bagh to Bara Hindu Rao



Dharampal Gulati

for a few days.

He sold his carriage in October 1948 to restart his ancestral business, opening a small shop at Ajmal Khan Road, Karol Bagh.

He never looked back.

As the business grew, he himself appeared on television commercials endorsing Deggi Mirch, Chat

Masala, and Chana Masala, among the most famous products from the MDH stable, which has over 50 products.

Over the years, the MDH Dadaji, or Mahashay as he was popularly known, became a household name.

His father Mahashay Chunnulal Gulati founded MDH Spices in 1919, and Dharampal would later turn it into a Rs 1,500-crore empire.

The company was officially established in 1959 when Gulati bought land in Delhi's Kirti Nagar and set up a production unit.

Starting with manually ground spices, MDH soon switched over to automatic machines to meet the fast-growing demand for spices.

Today, huge volumes of spices are manufactured and packed by modern machines and sold throughout India and abroad by the company through a network of over 1,000 stockists and over four lakh retail dealers.

Gulati, who took home Rs 21 crore salary in 2017, was said to donate nearly 90 per cent of it to charity through his Mahashay Chunnulal Lal Charitable Trust. The Trust operates a 250-bed hospital in Delhi, along with a mobile hospital for slum-dwellers as well as four schools.

Gulati established more than 20 schools. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2019. —PTI

## FRESHTOHME EXPANDS FTH DAILY SERVICES

Mumbai, Dec. 3: FreshToHome, which sells fresh fish and meat online, said it has expanded its daily delivery service, FTH Daily, which delivers milk, groceries, fruit, vegetables, and daily essentials, in Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune. There is no minimum order and the delivery is free, the firm said.

## ITC HOTELS LAUNCHES '100% BACK' OFFER

Chennai, Dec. 3: ITC Hotels has launched '100 per cent Back' offer, which will provide guests hotel credits that can be used against various services. The offer allows guests to book at any of the ITC Hotels and Welcomhotel, and redeem the hotel credits for food and beverage, spa treatments, etc.



## SHORT TAKES

## Messi fined for tribute to Diego

**Barcelona:** Lionel Messi was fined 600 euros (\$720) for taking his jersey off to pay tribute to Diego Maradona, the Spanish football federation said. The federation's competitions committee fined the Argentine player for his actions after scoring in Barcelona's 4-0 win over Osasuna in the Spanish league on Sunday. After a strike from outside the box, Messi took off Barcelona's blue-and-burgundy to reveal the red-and-black of Maradona's jersey from his stint at Newell's Old Boys. Messi then blew a kiss with both hands to the sky as he looked upward. After the game, Messi posted a photo of his tribute alongside an older image of Maradona in the same shirt, adding the message Farewell, Diego in Spanish. Maradona died last week at the age of 60. The federation also refused to void the yellow card that was shown to Messi for taking off his jersey, and fined Barcelona 180 euros (\$216). — *AP*

## 48 NBA players test Covid positive

**Los Angeles:** The NBA announced Wednesday that 48 players have tested positive for the Covid-19, a dramatic increase over the zero positive tests reported during last season's quarantine bubble in Florida. The league said the positive tests are the result of 546 tests carried out between November 24-30 as the NBA gets set to begin preseason games in nine days. The zero positive tests were from the beginning of last season's quarantine bubble to the end of the season in mid-October. One team, the Golden State Warriors, has already delayed the beginning of their individual workouts by a day this week because of players testing positive. This was the initial round of tests for players as they returned to their teams ahead of the start of individual workouts on Tuesday. — *AFP*

## Grosjean's fiery crash to be probed

**Paris:** An investigation has been opened into Formula One driver Romain Grosjean's horrifying crash at the Bahrain Grand Prix, governing body FIA said Thursday. The FIA said it could take up to eight weeks before the conclusions are made public. Grosjean was discharged from a military hospital in Bahrain on Wednesday. "The investigation into the Grosjean incident will look at all areas including competitor safety devices such as the helmet, HANS (a head restraint device), safety harness, protective clothing, survival cell, headrest, in-car extinguisher system and the Halo," the FIA said in a statement. "Analysis will also include chassis integrity and the safety barrier performance," it added. — *AP*

## Sneha retains one-shot lead

**Noida:** Amateur Sneha Singh retained a one-shot lead over the field with an even par 72 in the seventh leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour here on Thursday. Sneha had a roller-coaster front nine with three birdies on first, fourth and eighth and dropped shots on second and sixth, as she turned in one-under 35. On the back nine, she missed a couple of birdie chances, dropped a shot on Par-4 12th and closed with six pars for a round of 72. One shot behind Sneha is Siddhi Kapoor, whose sole win on the Hero WPGT was in her rookie year in 2016, when she won the 14th leg at the Delhi Golf Club. Siddhi rode on her fine start which saw her get to three-under in the first six holes. — *PTI*

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**Australia vs India:** First T20 from 1.40 pm on Sony Six, Ten 1, HD

**South Africa vs England:** First ODI from 4.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

## WWE

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

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## Back to slam-bang!

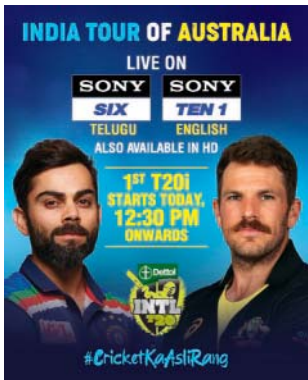
## India look to pose tougher challenge to Aussies in T20s

**Canberra, Dec. 3:** Short of resources in ODIs, India will have enough options to choose from to pose a stiffer challenge to Australia when the two sides clash in a three-match T20 series beginning here on Friday.

The 1-2 ODI series loss reaffirmed that India have a lot of work to do in the 50-over format but they possess a much more balanced squad in the shortest format.

The presence of Washington Sundar, Deepak Chahar and T Natarajan, who did well on his ODI debut on Wednesday, lends much-needed balance to the bowling department.

With Hardik Pandya not bowling regularly, India had only one specialist all-rounder in Ravindra Jadeja in the one-dayers.



Natarajan could also make his T20 debut on Friday having shown enough promise in his maiden international appearance.

Unlike the SCG, the Manuka Oval surface had enough for both the spinners and pacers. It will be interesting to see who opens up the bowling alongside Jasprit Bumrah with the toss-up being between Mohammad Shami and Deepak Chahar.

In batting, K L Rahul is expected to go back to his preferred opening slot alongside Shikhar Dhawan.

Australia, after naming the same squad for ODIs as well as T20s, would be backing themselves to beat India after a clinical display over the last one week. David Warner is unavailable due to a groin injury and it remains to be seen if Marnus Labuschagne comes alongside Finch on Friday. — *PTI*

## MORGAN FOR USE OF SIGNALS FROM BALCONY

**Cape Town, Dec. 3:** England one-day captain Eoin Morgan said on Thursday that he would continue to make use of signals from the team balcony.

Television coverage during the third Twenty20 international against South Africa at Newlands in Cape Town on Tuesday captured images of numbers and letters being displayed by video analyst Nathan Leamon.

"There's been no real signals," said Morgan.

"There has always been constant communication, verbal or physical, from the change room to us the field to help improve my decisions as captain and Jos Buttler's decisions as vice-captain," the English skipper and the World Cup winner added. — *AFP*



Virat Kohli (left) shares a light moment with his teammates in this file photo.

## NUMBERS GAME

## INDIA-AUSTRALIA IN T20 INTERNATIONALS

Team	M	W	L	T	N/R
Success%					
India	134	83	44	3	4
Australia	128	68	55	2	3

## HIGHEST INNINGS TOTALS:

**India:** 202-4 in 19.4 overs at Rajkot in 2013

**Australia:** 201-7 in 20 overs at Rajkot in 2013

## LOWEST INNINGS TOTALS:

**India:** 74 in 17.3 overs at Melbourne in 2008

**Australia:** 86 in 16.2 overs at Dhaka in 2014

## HIGHEST INDIVIDUAL SCORES:

**India:** 90\* Virat Kohli at Adelaide in 2016

**Australia:** 124\* Shane Watson at Sydney in 2016

## BEST BOWLING IN AN INNINGS:

**India:** 4-11 Ravichandran Ashwin at Dhaka in 2014

**Australia:** 4-21 Behrendorff at Guwahati in 2017

## FOR THE RECORD:

● In Twenty20 International matches between the two countries it is 11-8 in favour of India although Australia won the previous series 2-0 in India.

● Virat Kohli who has scored 24 fifties in 76 innings needs one more fifty to equal Rohit Sharma's record of the most fifties scored in Twenty20 Internationals. Rohit Sharma has scored four hundreds and 21 fifties in 100 innings.

● Aaron Finch who has smashed 96 sixes in 64 innings needs four more to become the first Australian and sixth batsman overall to complete a century of sixes in Twenty20 internationals.

— *S.PERVEZ KAISER*

## Aussie Cameron in awe of India's 'quality' spin attack

**Canberra, Dec. 3:** Young Australian all-rounder Cameron Green is in awe of the Indian team's "quality" spin attack and feels no amount of research work can prepare one for the on-field experience.

The prodigiously talented Green made his international debut in the third ODI against India. Although Australia lost the fixture by 13 runs, the rookie gained crucial match experience in the middle.

"Their spinners, I haven't faced quality like that," Green was quoted as saying by *cricket.com.au*.

Chasing 303 for victory, the 21-year-old came in at number five and hit a boundary and a six before a superb catch by

**Their (Indian) spinners, I haven't faced quality like that. Jadeja is a beautiful bowler who knows exactly what he's trying to do: Spin some away from you and dart one back in.**

— **CAMERON GREEN**  
Australian player



Ravindra Jadeja ended his debut innings on 21.

"Jadeja is a beautiful bowler who knows exactly what he's trying to do: Spin some away from you and dart one back in," Green added.

"You can do as much research and watch as much footage as you want to get an understanding how they bowl. But it's a different beast out in the

middle. I will take a lot out of it," Green said, referring to Kuldeep Yadav and Co.

"Bowling to Virat you can just see there is a step up in how good of a cricketer they are," Green said.

"I tried to bowl a bumper to Virat Kohli and he was onto it so quick," the Australian allrounder added further added.

— *PTI*

## WILLIAMSON GIVES KIWIS A FLYING START

**Hamilton, Dec. 3:** The West Indies delight at winning the toss on a lush green wicket turned to frustration as New Zealand were rarely troubled in posting 243 for two on day one of the first Test in Hamilton on Thursday.

Kane Williamson, despite being troubled with cramp late in the day, produced a masterful innings to be unbeaten on 97 at stumps with Ross Taylor on 31.

Williamson featured in a 154-run stand with Tom Latham for the second wicket before Latham was bowled for 86.

After the start of play was delayed two hours by rain, the Windies were delighted to win the toss with an emerald wicket that potentially offered untold demons for their pace attack.

But after Gabriel bowled Will Young early for five, the tourists found they did not getting the assistance they expected from the wicket.

Chase also saw flaws in the visitors' attack which they failed to rectify.

It appeared to be a case of not doing thorough homework as Latham said the pitch was not unusual for New Zealand.

Williamson, who will resume on Friday requiring just three runs to register his 22nd Test century.

— *AFP*

## BRIEF SCORES

**Day 1: New Zealand 243/2 in 78 overs (T. Latham 86, Kane Williamson 97, Kemar Roach 1/53) vs West Indies.**

## BCCI set to add two teams in IPL

**New Delhi, Dec. 3:** The BCCI will hold its Annual General Meeting on December 24 to discuss the induction of two new IPL franchises besides the appointment of India's ICC representative and three new national selectors.

Also on the agenda is the election of a new vice-president. As per norm, the BCCI has sent a 23-point agenda to all affiliated units 21 days prior to the holding of the AGM.

The most significant point is seeking approval for two new teams to make it a 10-team IPL.

It is understood that the Adani Group and Sanjeev Goenka's RPG (owners of the Rising Pune Supergiants) are interested in owning new teams with one franchise surely from Ahmedabad.

Another important point will be BCCI's representative to the ICC and the Asian Cricket Council. It is expected that secretary Jay Shah will be the BCCI representative in the global committees.

Appointment of three new selectors, along with a chairman of selectors, is also on cards given that Cricket Committees and Standing Committees are part of the agenda.

"Selection committee is a part of cricket committee plus the technical committee also needs to be formed. They are all statutory sub committees," a senior BCCI source said.

The all-important Umpires' sub-committee will also be formed and matters related to the National Cricket Academy will also come up for deliberation.

The agenda also includes discussion on India's

## AGM AGENDA

- Election of Vice President
- Election of 2 representatives of General Body in IPL Governing Council
- Adoption of Annual Budget FY 20-21
- Adoption of Ombudsmen and Ethics Officer
- Adoption of Cricket Committees and Standing Committees as mentioned in Rules 26 and 25 (Constitution) respectively
- Appointment of Umpires Committee in Rule 27.
- Appointment of representative/representatives in ICC and/or similar committees.
- Approval of two new teams to the IPL.
- Discussion on BCCI's stand on inclusion of cricket in Los Angeles Olympic Games in 2028.
- To update ICC Matters
- To update on NCA matters.
- To update on ICC T20 World Cup 2021 to be held in India.
- To update on India's FTP Program.

Future Tours Program for 2021, preparation with regards to organisation of next year's T20 World Cup (includes the ICC tax issue) and inclusion of cricket in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

On the administrative front, one of the primary points on the agenda is election of new vice president, a position which has been left vacant after Mahim Verma's resignation.

It is expected that the choice would be unanimous.

Also, two representatives from the governing body will get a seat in the IPL governing council.

— *PTI*

## Krishna dazzles as ATK edge Odisha

**Fatorda, Dec. 3:** An injury-time winner from Roy Krishna helped ATK Mohun Bagan secure a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Odisha FC in an Indian Super League fixture here on Thursday.

Krishna (90+5'), netted his third goal in as many games to ensure the Mariners climbed to the top of the ISL table.

The first half proved to be a cagey affair but both sides failed to grab their chances and take the lead.

ATKMB dominated the early exchanges and constantly raided the opposition box. However, Odisha did well to close down the spaces and keep things tight at the back.

Despite the dominance displayed by Habas' side early on, it was Odisha who missed a great opportunity to go ahead after the break.

A well-worked set-piece routine during the 38th minute saw Cole Alexander whip in a dangerous cross into the box.

Jacob Tratt, unmarked, got to the end of it but failed to get his header on target.

Despite the miss, Odisha FC kept knocking on the door only for ATKMB's defense to thwart the danger.

The result ensured Odisha FC's winless run continued.

— *PTI*

## BENGALURU, CHENNAIYIN TO RENEW RIVALRY

**Bambolim, Dec. 3:** Bengaluru FC will look for their first win of the season when they take on southern rivals Chennaiyin FC in an Indian Super League match at the GMC Athletic Stadium here on Friday.

Both the teams have played twice so far, with BFC winless following consecutive stalemates, while CFC registering a victory and draw.

The fixture between Chennaiyin and Bengaluru has become a huge rivalry since BFC entered the ISL fold in 2017. The final that season was a closely contested affair that CFC won 3-2 on Bengaluru's turf to lift a second ISL title.

In the head-to-head battle, both the clubs have won three apiece with one draw being played out last season.

It promises to be yet another intense contest, as the likes of Anirudh Thapa, Rafael Crivellaro and Lallianzuala Chhangte aiming to make it two wins out of three.

— *PTI*

## Ronaldo rocks; PSG, Barca win

**Paris, Dec. 3:** Neymar's brace helped Paris Saint-Germain to a vital 3-1 win over Manchester United on Wednesday that took the French club to within touching distance of the Champions League Last 16, while Borussia Dortmund secured their qualification for the next round and Olivier Giroud scored all four goals in Chelsea's 4-0 thumping of Sevilla.

PSG could have been on the brink of elimination from Group 'H' with a defeat at Old Trafford but Neymar put last season's runners-up ahead in the sixth minute and the world's most expensive player sealed their victory in stoppage time.

In between, Marcus Rashford's shot went in off Danilo Pereira to bring United level in the first half

THE RESULTS			
Juventus (Chiesa 21, Ronaldo 57, Morata 66)	3	PSG (Neymar 6, 90+1, Marquinhos 69)	3
Dynamo Kiev	0	Manchester United (Rashford 32)	1
Barcelona (Antoine Griezmann 14, Martin Braithwaite 20, Ousmane Dembele 28-pen)	3	Borussia Dortmund (Guerreiro 44)	1
Ferencváros	0	Lazio (Immobile 67-pen)	1
Chelsea (Giroud 8, 54, 74, 83-pen)	4	RB Leipzig (Poulsen 26, Mukiele 43, Olmo 66, Sorloth 90+2)	4
Sevilla	0	Basaksehir Istanbul (Kahveci 45+3, 72, 85)	3

but Marquinhos prodded the French champions back in the 69th minute post which Neymar netted one more goal to send United packing.

There is a three-way tie on nine points at the top of the group with RB Leipzig right in contention after Alexander Sorloth scored in injury time to give them

a 4-3 victory at Istanbul Basaksehir.

Meanwhile, history was made in Turin as France's Stephanie Frappart became the first woman to referee a men's Champions League game when Juventus beat Dynamo Kiev 3-0.

The game was also notable for Cristiano Ronaldo scoring his 750th career goal, his record-extending 132nd in the Champions League.

Federico Chiesa and Alvaro Morata also scored for Juve, who had already qualified from Group 'G' before the game, along with Barcelona.

The Catalans kept up their perfect record and stayed on course to win the group by beating Ferencváros 3-0 in Budapest without the rested Lionel Messi. — *AFP*



Cristiano Ronaldo (right) of Juventus outruns Dynamo Kiev's Tomasz Kedziora (left) and Denys Popov during their UEFA Champions League Group 'G' match at the Juventus stadium in Turin on Wednesday.

— *AFP*