DECCAN . Cle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA KARIMNAGAR | SATURDAY | 19 DECEMBER 2020



Rainfall: Nil Forecast: Partly cloudy.

Moderate rains likely. Max/Min temp. 30/18 ºC

COVID-19

CASES (+338)(+26,860)1,45,167 1,00,04,620

covid19india.org STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+551)(+1)TS: 2,80,195 1,506 (+458)(+1)

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

AP: 8,77,806



16,74,385 218

worldometers.info/

7,070

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana Tithi: Margasira Shuddha Panchami till 2.19 pm Star: Dhanistha till 7.14 pm Varjyam: 3.20 am to .51 am(Sundav) Durmuhurtam: 6.44 am to

Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am **HIJRI CALENDAR** Jamadi-ul-Aakhir 3, 1442 AH Fajar: 5.35 am

Zohar: 12.23 pm **Asar:** 4.10 pm Maghrib: 5.52 pm Isha: 7.06 pm **SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.40 AM** SUNSET TODAY 5.46 PM **MOONSET TODAY 10.25 PM MOONRISE TOMORROW 10.46 AM**



When will we get to see 'House Full' boards again?

SHORT TAKES

3rd Trinamul legislator quits

Kolkata: Following in the footsteps of Shubhendu Adhikari and Jitendra Tiwari, another heavyweight MLA, Silbhadra Datta, and former West Bengal textiles minister Shyamapada Mukherjee have guit the Trinamul Congress to join the BJP before the elections next year. Datta is the third legislator

to have snapped ties with Mamata Banerjee's party ahead of home minister Amit Shah's two-day visit to the state starting Saturday. Datta, who won as a Trinamul candidate from Barrackpore in North 24 Parganas in two terms, did not resign as MLA.

Kamra gets SC's

contempt notice

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday issued showcause notices to stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra and cartoonist Rachita Taneja on Friday for their alleged scandalous tweets against the apex court. A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, R.S. Reddy and M.R. Shah sought response from both in six weeks on the notices issued

in two separate cases. It, however, exempted them from personal appearances in the cases. "Issue notice returnable within six weeks. The contemnor-respondent not to appear in person," the bench said in its order.

Johar tells NCB

NATION 4

No drug at party,

HC's order 'disturbing'

Stays HC order on breakdown of constitutional machinery

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 18

The Supreme Court on Friday stayed the order issued by the AP High Court asking the Andhra Pradesh government whether there was breakdown of constitutional machinery in the state.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde observed that they had not seen any order issued like this by the AP High Court in any case and the apex court found it to be disturbing. Justice Bobde directed issue of notice and stay and ordered the registry to list the case after the Supreme Court vacation.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, arguing for the AP government, said that the power to examine whether constitutional machinery had broken down or not was vested with the executive and not with the judiciary.

It may be mentioned that a AP HC division bench led by Justice Rakesh Kumar had reject-ed an application filed by the AP government asking for recall of its October 1 to examine the breakdown of constitutional machinery in the state. The AP HC while hearing habeas corpus petitions on that day asked the state government's counsel to come prepared to assist the court to record the finding Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde observed that they had not seen any order issued like this by the Andhra Pradesh High Court in any case

 SOLICITOR GENERAL, arguing for the AP gov-ernment, said that the power to examine whether constitutional machinery had broken down or not was vested with the executive and not with the judiciary.

whether there was a constitutional breakdown in the state or not.

In response, the AP government had challenged the order, contending that it impinges on the doctrine of separation of powers. It is the President who is empowered to go into the question of break-down of constitutional machinery under Article 356 and not the judiciary.

The petition filed by advocate Mahfouz Nazki said that under the constitutional framework, it is not for the courts to decide as to whether there is a constitutional break-

down in a state or not. On Friday, the AP High Court adjourned the hearing on the issue following the Supreme Court stay

> Page 2: HC puts off hearing after SC's stay

KCR to sort out Dharani issue

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 18

Minister Chandra-shekar Rao has called for a high-level meeting on Satu-rday to take a call on registration of non-agriculture properties in view of the High Court order.

A division bench of the Telangana High Court on Thursday had directed the state government to delete all references to caste and social categories, Aadhaar numbers of family members from the user manual for nonagriculture properties and in application forms for the Property Tax Identification Number. Against this backdrop, the Chief Minister will

take stock of the situation with officials from revenue, law and registration departments at Pragathi Bhavan.

According to the Chief Minister's Office, the order copy of the High Court order was yet to be received by the govern-

The CMO said Chandrashekar Rao would discuss whether to file an appeal against the court orders or prepare guidelines in acco-rdance with the court's directive.

WORLD 5

Pence takes vaccine, **Trump sparks confusion**

SPORTS 8

Ashwin bowls India back into game



Vol. 20 No. 203 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES | ₹6.00

CJI finds AP Defending farm laws, PM says talk of ending MSP biggest lie

Claims Oppn parties are envious of him getting credit for farm reforms

DC CORRESPONDENTS NEW DELHI/BHOPAL, DEC. 18

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a scathing attack on the Opposition for "peddling lies" to mislead farmers on the new agricultural reform laws, which have triggered which have triggered nationwide protests, and said he was ready "with folded hands" to "discuss every issue" with the farmers and allay their

Addressing a *Kisan* Sammelan (farmers' conference) at Raisen, Madhya Pradesh, via video-conferencing on Friday, the PM claimed the measures were discussed by every government over the past two decades, and that the talk about Minimum Support Price (MSP) ending with the new laws "is the biggest lie ever".

These laws were not brought in overnight. In the past 22 years, every government, every state has discussed these in detail. Farmers' groups, agricultural experts, economists, scientists and progressive farmers have called for reforms. Parties opposing these laws today promised these reforms in their manifestos," Mr Modi said.

"If anyone has any con-cerns, then with our heads bowed and our hands folded, with humility, we are willing to discuss with them and assuage their

fears," he added.
"The (Opposition) parties are pained today. They are asking themselves how Modi could achieve what they couldn't do in all this time. They are worried Modi will get credit. My reply to them is — you keep the credit. I don't want credit. I only want farmers' lives to improve. Stop misleading the farm-

The PM has in most of



to explain that the laws brought by his govern-ment are for the farmers' good. But on Friday, he addressed the farmers directly as part of his gov-ernment's big outreach amid protests on the highways near Delhi by thousands of farmers. A number of senior ministers are part of this outreach.

Emphasising the need for reforms, Mr Modi said Indian farmers should not lag behind the world in facilities. "Today I want to expose

those who have absolutely no care or genuine concern for you annadaata (farmers). I want to caution all those who are being misled, instigated in the name of these farm laws," he

Centre hopeful of solution to farm law row by Dec. 31 SANJAY KAW | DC agency, Mr Tomar reitering a solution," he said. ated that the new laws

NEW DELHI, DEC. 18

the farmers' unions and the Centre locked in an impasse, agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Friday said the government was hopeful of resolving the farmers' agitation over the three new farm laws before the new year and was continuing its informal dialogue with various groups to defuse the crisis.

With negotiations between

Speaking to a news

were beneficial for farmers and the government was ready to give a written assurance that the minimum support price (MSP) and mandi system will

continue.
"We have been constantly holding discussions with farmers' unions. Overall, our effort is to reach a solution thro-ugh dialogue with them. We are still open for talks. I hope through dialogue we

Despite the government's repeated assurances that the new laws were for the benefit of farmers, thousands of farmers from

Punjab and Haryana have

been protesting at Delhi's

borders for over three weeks. Several protesting leaders have even threatened to step up the agitation and have said they are pre pared to celebrate Republic Day next year with a tractor rally on

3 injured as cricket tiff leads to firing

DC CORRESPONDENT ADILABAD, DEC.18

A petty quarrel between boys while playing cricket took a serious turn and resulted in a MIM leader opening fire in Tatiguda Colony here on Friday.

Police said that after the children began quarrelling, their parents came out. Suddenly Farooq Ahmed, MIM leader and former Adilabad municipal vice-chairman, opened fire with his licensed Syed Zameer and Syed Mouthesin received bullet injuries and Syed Mannan, 52, father of 16year-old Mouthesin, sustained head injury. Videos posted on Facebook showed that Ahmed had opened fire from close range.

Ahmed also used a sharp weapon in the attack. News doing the rounds is that the incident was not accidental but stemmed from an old enmity between the TRS and the MIM. Ahmed was subse-

 POLICE SAID that after the children began quarrelling, their parents came out. Suddenly Farooq Ahmed, MIM leader, opened fire with his licensed revolver.

accidental but stemmed from an old enmity between the TRS and the MIM.

quently arrested. Adilabad Two Town police booked Ahmed under Section 307 IPC and Section 27/30 of Indian Arms Act.Police also set up picketing to maintain peace in the colony.

NEWS DOING the rounds is that the incident was not

media along with Two Town circle inspector P. Srinivas, Adilabad OSD Rajesh Chandra said on receipt of information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. The injured

persons were shifted to

RIMS Hospital. He said as Mouthesin's condition was critical he was shifted to Hyderabad. They said Ahmed has been arrested. Adilabad Zilla Parishad

chairman Rathod Janardhan and MLA Jogu Rama-nna visited the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences and interacted with the victims. Ahmed had contested as

a councillor and lost to a TRS candidate. Ahmed's wife was elected as councillor in the last municipal

RIPPLE | EFFECT | Even after unlock, people fail to cope with lifestyle changes; psychiatrist consultations on rise

Covid-19 fear triggers cases of mental illness

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 18

Months of 'unlocking' the lockdown has not brought down anxiety, adjustment disorders and chronic loneliness in a section of people who still fear that they could contract Covid-19.

Anxiety and adjustment disorders are being noted in all age groups, doctors said. People are having problems coping with the change in lifestyle, continuing to stay together and dealing with online ses-

sions. Out-patient departments of city hospitals have seen a 20-per cent increase of people with mental health problems. Online consultation has seen an increase

by 45 per cent. The most common com-

plaint is fear of the disease, anxiety in those who suffered from Covid-19, stigma suffered by family, inability to cope with loss of a family member, financial constraints and staying together which caused recurrent clashes between family members. Take the case

Sangeetha (name changed), a working woman, who is finding it difficult to deal with the demands of family members. Work from home is difficult for her as each family member is dependent on Sangeetha and no one is willing to share household chores. This led to

constant fights. Fed up, Sangeetha took an overdose of sleeping pills. At the hospital, she narrated her dilemma of interpersonal and anxiety their productivity.

Bright kids find eClasses tough

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 18

Coping with online education is turning out to be a challenge not only for teachers but also students even as examinations, especially the Class 10 and 12 Boards, are approaching. Those who are academically inclined are also complaining of inability to keep up with the

problems. Those working

from home are not able to

concentrate on work as

there are many distur-

bances and this is affecting

facing challenges in online tests and find that the exam papers are tough.

Teachers are suffering from stress as they are constantly working and attending school meetings online. The work has stretched to 12 hours.

There are also complaints of online pranks by students, which many of the teachers are not

Dr Charan Tej, psychiatrist at KIMS Hospital, said

adjustment disorders were

being seen in people as

they are not able to function like before.

trol. Students who are not from the school are logging into online sessions. The major complaint is of the number of absentees. Schools state that their efficacy is down by 50 percent in their assessment to understand the impact of online classes

■ Page 2: Students miss face-to-face interaction

"For the first three months of lockdown, it was an emergency but now fatigue is setting in.

Productivity has seen a

decline. These are leading

population as they are downgrading themselves which is not right," Dr Charan Tej said. Many of them are trying to reassert themselves

leading to unhealthy behaviour in online co-

working groups.
Those who have recovered from Covid-19 are also suffering from anxiety as they are scared that they will contract the infection again. They are not venturing out and are keeping to themselves, leading to chronic loneliness.

They have suffered from the stigma of the disease; they are not being accepted after recovery which is causing stress.

Dr Jyotirmayi H, consulpsychiatrist at ental Hospitals, Continental

health problems are being seen online as people continue to be scared. There is one section of people who are not worried but another section which is very scared. They are scared of the second wave and its impact. They fear re-infection. Post-Covid coping mechanisms are compromised and they require therapeutic and medical assistance. Those who have lost fam-

ily members to the disease are not able to return to their routine. To add to this is the compromised state of financial resources. Those who have lost jobs or closed business establishments are under severe financial constraints and that is leading to anxiety.

4 cruise boats

for Hvd lakes

Hyderabad: Two cruise boats have been acquired for the Hussainsagar which will be launched soon, minister for tourism and youth affairs V. Srinivas Goud said on Friday. Two boats have been

acquired for Durgam Cheru and they will also be launched soon. The launch of the boats had been withheld due to the fall in tourist traffic amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The government

is gearing up to see more tourists visiting the state next year and is working out packages and adding attractions to cater to them.

Students miss face-to-face class

From Page 1 Dr Preeti Swaroop, senior psychiatrist, said, "The fear of not excelling like they were the last few years is unsettling them. Face-toface interaction is something that they are missing and that is also causing loss of interest in studies. This is leading to disorders, low self-esteem and anger. Parents are reaching out to doctors as an obedient child is behaving badly which is

causing worry.' While schools want to reopen, fear of the disease is making them continue with online classes.

HC puts off hearing after stay

From Page 1 When the High Court division bench comprising justice Rakesh Kumar and Justice Umadevi continued the hearing on the issue earlier in the day, government pleader Y.N. Vivekananda said that the government had appealed in the Supreme Court.

When the court resumed the hearing in the afternoon, Justice Kumar asked about the development in the apex court. Vivekananda informed that the Supreme Court had issued a stay order. Based on this, the judge adjourned the hearing on the issue of constitutional breakdown.

WOMAN DIES BY SUICIDE WITH LOVER

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, DEC. 18

A married woman and her lover were found dead in an agricultural well Nakkalapalli village in Khila Warangal mandal in Warangal Urban district on Friday. They reportedly committed suicide by tying up their hands and legs and jumping into the well.

The first inkling that anything was amiss came when villagers noticed a two-wheeler, two mobile phones near the agricultural well. They immediately informed the Mamnoor police who went to the scene, inspected the well and retrieved the bodies with the help of swimmers.

The deceased were identified as Manne Sai Kumar, 23, a resident of Nakkalapalli village and K. Ashwini, 21, a resident of Koyyada village of Siddipet

According to the police, Manne Sai is pursuing B.Tech second year in New Delhi, Ashwini was studying degree course in local college in the Siddipet district. They were in a relationship since their intermediate, and proposed their marriage to their par-

However, Ashwini's parents did not accept them and forcibly married her to another man on August 6 this year. Unable to tolerate the developments, they decided to commit suicide and met at Warangal on Thursday. Ashwini came from Koyyada to Nakkalapally and they were suspected to have jumped in the well at midnight. Her parents registered a complaint in Siddipet police station stating that their daughter was missing,

said police.
Police identified the bodies with the help of Aadhar and Pan cards found on the location and informed their par-

Mamnoor Inspector, S. Raju said the bodies were retrieved from the well and shifted for autopsy in MGM Hospital. A suspicious death was registered under Section 174 of

POLICE SAID Manne Sai is pursuing B.Tech second year in New Delhi, Ashwini was studying degree course in local college in the Siddipet district. They were in a relationship since their intermediate, and proposed their marriage to their parents.

Loan apps' threat turns ugly

Apps label borrower as defaulter in social circle for non-payment of loan

NAVEEN KUMAR I DC

Desperate citizens who, during the lockdown, opted for 'get quick cash' schemes from moneylending mobile apps and are unable to repay the money are facing mental harassment from the

agents.
At least three persons have committed suicide, unable to bear the harassment and humiliaton meted out by the 'collection agents'

The rules drawn up by the lenders allow them to access their borrowers' contact data from the mobile phones. They can message every one on the contact list and brand the borrower a 'fraud' or 'defaulter', police said, while booking cases of abetment to suicide against the companies. It is not clear if the borrowers read the terms, or understood the implications.

Thursday, Mounika, 24, a newly-recruited agricultural extension officer Siddipet, ended her life a lending company branded her a defaulter in messages sent with her photo and name to her contacts and on social media.

Finance minister Harish Rao visited Mounika's family and said that he would direct the police to initiate action against app-based finance firms as per the laws for exploiting those vulnerable. "Several apps claiming to be instant loan enablers are reaching out to people, especially to the specific, digitally educated youngsters with smallscale jobs with high interest rates. The application seeks permission access to the user's location, contacts and storage at the time of installing it even before availing the loan,' police sources said.

Six more cases of suicide are suspected to be linked humiliation, though they have not been

Harassed by recovery agents, techie ends life

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 18

software former employee died by suicide his residence in Rajendranagar on Friday after allegedly being harassed by operators of

an online loan app.

The deceased, identified Sunil, a native of Guntur, lost his job at a software company a few months ago and the firm allegedly refused to pay him two months salary that was due to him.

"He lost his job during the lockdown and has been facing financial hardships ever since. He started availing of micropersonal loans of between ₹2,000 and ₹10,000 through several online apps," said G. Suresh, Rajendranagar inspector.

linked with default of these micro-loans. Speaking about the

police action, Prakash Reddy, the Shamshabad deputy commissioner of police, said one should not answer calls from agents and must report the numbers to the police.

"We will be taking action them Section 306 (abetmet to suicide) of the IPC and will also be charging the call centres running this business," said a police official, with regard to the companies outing the borrowers in their social circles. City police officials appealed to the public not to instal the loan-based application, or borrow from them. Police in an advisory said that all apps offering micro loans appear to be built upon one software development kit, which is suspected to be provided by a foreign

He allegedly kept availing fresh loans from different mobile applications to pay his lenders. "After availing loans from about 40 such apps, he failed to repay the loans. The representatives of these apps accessed his phone contacts and rang up his friends and family to step up pressure on him to pay up," said Prakash Reddy, deputy commissioner of police, Shamshabad,

amount that Sunil availed as loans. Police have gathered details on the apps and their representatives and have also sought help from the cybercrime cell to take the investigation forward. "We will be

adding that the police are

yet to determine the total

call centres making repeated calls to harass the lenders," added the According to the police, Sunil could be the third

person who has ended his life in the face of harassment by companies looking to recover their loans. A police advisory said that Eddu Sravan Yadav, 23, from Narsapur in Medak district and Kirni Mounika, Siddipet are known to have taken their own lives

in separate incidents in

the last one month. The police advisory said that calling up friends and relatives is a violation of Information Technology Act. All the apps have uncanny commonality in their methods. the police said.

investigating all those applications and also be

Police says loan apps are illegal

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 18

The police has issued an advisory stating that most loan apps were fraudulent and not sanctioned by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). At least 60 such apps available in Google Play Store.

Police said three persons had ended their lives. unable to bear the harassment by personnel from the companies running these apps in the last one month. "People should not accept terms and conditions of any loan app. They should be more cautious as all the phone con-

tacts, photos, locations and memory will be compromised by these money lenders and can be used to harass or blackmail later. The money lenders might threaten stating that a criminal case would be registered against you. Contact police in such

cases," the police said.
"The hosting of these applications also violates certain conditions laid by Google App store. Google can be asked to take these down. Almost all of them have similar privacy policies which gather almost every bit of data available on a user's phone," the advisory said.

HARASSMENT MAY TRIGGER DEPRESSION

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 18

A person who suffers from severe humiliation could experience major states and severe anxiety such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

In cases where their social circle is being accessed, such as in the case of operators from quick loan app companies, their personal space is encroached upon. This makes them feel alienated and naked in their weakness, psychologists said.

Meena Hariharan, professor in health psychology at the University of Hyderabad, said that the mental health of people is already weak due to the Covid-19 related lockdown and the many adjustments that were required to be made. Experiencing such things can be an easy trigger, Prof. Hariharan

"It becomes a question of an individual's self esteem and values. When someone is causing a dent on these, the mental status become very unstable. When their social life is targeted, with all of their contacts accessed there is no way one can rectify his or her image. For any self-respecting person, if the image is damaged beyond repair, he or she can be shat-tered," said Prof. Hariharan, who is president of the Association

of Health Psychologists. She said, "We should encourage people to love themselves and only then, regardless of what be, one can be at peace.

After ruckus, OU to shut hostels

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 18

Following tresspassing on the campus, the Osmania University administration has decided to shut all its hostels and disconnect water and power supply. The orders were

issued on Friday.
This follows the manhandling law student Yadav Suresh Wednesday night, which is being stated as one of the reasons for the decision to shut the hostels. The university has also

noticed that a few people in the guise of students occupied hostel rooms. Due to this there was a law and order prob-lem in the campus recently. Academic activity has stopped on the campus from March onwards but a few had occupied hostel rooms. The university has now decided to completely shut down the hostels. If the students do not leave there will be police and legal action taken against them according to the order issued by university officials.

CBI: Transstroy in biggest loan fraud

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 18

The CBI has registered bank fraud case to the tune of ₹7,926.01 crore on Friday, the biggest so far in India, against the Hyderabad-based Transstroy India Ltd of former MP Rayapati Sambasiva Rao.

The CBI booked Transs-troy's CMD Cherukuri Sridhar, additional directors Sambasiva Rao and Akkineni Satish, among others on a complaint filed by Canara Bank.

Searches were conducted at the premises of Transtroy and the accused at Hyderabad and Guntur, which led to recovery of incriminating documents, the CBI stated.

"It was alleged that the private firm based at Hyderabad and its directors had availed credit facilities on multiple banking arrangements. It was further alleged that the accused had involved in falsification/fabrication of books of accounts, fudging of stock statements, tampering of balance sheets, round tripping of funds etc," the

The accused misappropriated bank funds and allegedly diverted the loan amount sanctioned by the banks and caused loss of approximately ₹7,926.01 crore to Canara Bank and other member banks. The account had become a non-performing asset and the fraud was reported.

According to the CBI, diamantaire Nirav Modi had allegedly siphoned off ₹6,000 crore while his uncle Mehul Choksi had swindled ₹7,080.86 crore.

The CBI said it had car ried out simultaneous searches on the premises of the former TDP MP at his native place in Guntur district and in Hyderabad in connection with a bank fraud case booked against him, wherein he was charged for allegedly siphoning around ₹3,822 crore.

Special teams from New Delhi with support from their colleagues in the regional offices in Telangana state and Andhra Pradesh conducted the searches in Guntur and Hyderabad, the CBI said

Telangana BJP president Bandi Sanjay and the newly elected BJP corporators take an oath promis-

ing to work honestly for the citizens at Bhagya Laxmi temple at Charminar in Hyderabad on Friday.

Bandi says TRS MLAs in touch to jump ship

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 18

that Chief Alleging Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao was trying to lure BJP corporators, BJP state president Bandi Sanjay on Friday warned him that if he went ahead with such a devious plot, the BJP would open the floodgates for TRS legislators, many of whom were already in touch with him. Sanjay, along with MLA

T. Raja Singh and 46 corvisited the Bhagyalakshmi temple at Charminar and offered special puja. Later, he administered pledge to the corporators to contribute oped, he said the BJP was committed to develop Old corporators to contribute to development in all possible ways while always being available to the pub-

Sanjay said that BJP's aim was to work for a Hyderabad free from TRS and MIM. Speaking to the media, he said that Hyderabad was called Bhagyanagar because of Goddess Bhagyalakshmi. He said that the people of Bhagyanagar gave them a great opportunity to develop the city and serve the people. Asking the Old City people to realise why their areas were not devel-

He slammed MIM chief told him not to consider the Old City as his personal domain. BJP has penetrated into it and they would score an encore in the next Assembly elections, he said.

Repeating that Chandrashekar Rao would go to jail, the BJP leader wanted to know why, despite holding the GHMC elections in a hurry, he has not conducted elections to the posts of Mayor and deputy Mayor.

Macca Masjid gates reopen

department. The depart-

ment has imposed restric-

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 18

All gates of Macca Masjid were opened on Friday at the instance of local MLAs Mumtaz Ahmed Khan and Ahmed Pasha Quadri. The gates were closed down about eight

months ago when the Covid-19 related lockdown was imposed in March. The masjid comes under

tions on aftendance at prayers during the lockdown which continued even after the lockdown was lifted. The department has restricted the worshippers to 100 even for Juma prayers. Speaking to the media, Ahmed Pasha Quadri said

masjid

the main gate was closed before the lockdown for renovation but this was also opened on Friday. Mumtaz Khan said there

was a delay in reconstruction of the cistern for ablution. He clarified that the contractor has started the renovation work of the cistern without keeping in mind of leakage and it was being redesigned. He said the the direct management of the minorities welfare gates on Friday. He said work of constructing lavatories was under progress.

Farmers decry forcible takeover of their land for proposed Pharma City

PAUL | DC

Farmers belonging to villages in Yacharam, Kadthal and Kandukur mandals of Ranga Reddy district are worried ever since the government began "forcing" them to hand over their land for the proposed Pharma City. Speaking to Deccan

Chronicle, Panga Maniamma, a farmer, said her would family consume poison if the government goes ahead with the takeover.

s "In my 22 acres I produce all kinds of vegeta-bles and sell them in Hyderabad. It is our only source of livelihood."

Kundarapu Narayana Yadhav from Talipati vil-lage said, "More than one lakh people who are dependent on agriculture will be affected in 18 villages because of Pharma

We are three brothers and we together cultivate crops in our four acres.

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 18

Minister Chandrashekar Rao invit-Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the ground-breaking ceremony of Pharma City has drawn flak from farmers belonging to almost 18 villages in Ranga Reddy dis-

is the CM's assertion that 11,000 acres of land had been acquired and shortly the remaining land would be acquired.

What has infuriated them

Those protesting under the banner of Pharma City Vyathireka Porata Committee told reporters on Friday that in his bid to build the world's largest

Pharma companies will not only deprive us of livelihood but will also pollute environment. This is our ancestral property. pharmaceutical city, the state government has We have brought the critisounded the death-knell of Yacharam, Kadthal and Kandukur mandals in whose 19,333 acres of land the project is coming up.

PROTESTERS URGE MODI NOT TO ATTEND FETE

Committee office-bearers Dr D. Narasimha Reddy and Saraswathi Kavula said, "The Chief Minister has been telling lies. The villagers have not sold their land. We are united on this issue and we will not surrender our

Saraswathi Kavula said, 'Not only farmers but all people staying in the area are openly opposing the project. Despite such a determined stand taken by us, the government is trying to bulldoze its way.

What are we be supposed

Anusuya of Kurmidda village stated, "My three

sons and I are into agricul-

to do after that?'

cal nature of the project to the notice of the Union Government. We urge Modi not to come for the ground-breaking ceremony respecting the sentiments of the people. Dr Narasimha Reddy

said, "There are too many red category industries in Telangana state, and this government is inviting most of them in blatant violation of environmen-Already, pollution levels

tal laws. are high in the state. It has become easy for corporate houses to establish units and pollute the atmosphere in the state. The government seems unconcerned about the wellbeing of the people.'

ture. The crops that I sow are like my children. Now, they want to take over our lands, which is nothing

₹2 crore collected as fine for violating mask norms

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD. DEC, 18

Those who did not wear masks paid a total of ₹2.26 in penalties in Cyberabad and Rachakonda police

commissionerates.
While the Cyberabad police commissionerate booked 5,620 cases, 17,022 violators were booked in the Rachakonda police limits from May 11 to December 15, police data revealed. The Rachakonda police booked 4.408 cases in the Malkajgiri Zone, 9,891 in LB Nagar and 2,723 in the Bhongir zone.

The use of computer vision and deep-learning techniques linked to surveillance cameras and implementing artifical intelligence (AI) to track

EXPLAINING HOW the system worked, officials said that after identifying violators in a particular area, the staff at the Command and Control Centre would pass on the information to either a Rakshak or a Blue Colt police patrol team, who would track down the down the 'mask on' rule

violations was first done by the police since May 8. According to police sources, AI was used to identify and book the violators. "The tech was used to use surveillance cameras to track down those not wearing masks and alert mobile patrols in the local area to trace such

lating the rule were booked under Section 51(b) Management Act, which was amended in view of the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic," an official said. Apart from ensuring that they wore masks, a fine of ₹1,000 was imposed on them.

Explaining how the system worked, officials said that after identifying violators in a particular area, the staff at the Command and Control Centre would pass on the information to either a Rakshak or a Blue Colt police patrol team, who would track down the person. "Those people not wearing masks in public are violating the fundamental right (right to life and health) of other citizens," police said.

WILL PROBE ALL IRREGULARITIES OF TRS: BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 18

BJP general secretary Tarun Chugh called Minister Chief Chandrashehar Rao 'Raja Babu' and said that the TRS was like a HUF (Hindu Undivided Family). He said there would be a full-fledged inquiry into the corrupt

dealings of TRS leaders. Chugh, the in-charge Telangana BJP affairs, was received on his maiden visit to the city by party state chief Bandi Sanjay, MP D Arvind, former MP Vivek Venkataswamy

and others. Chugh conducted a review with key leaders and informed them that he will conduct regular

superintendent

Moulana Abdul Quadeer

persons. Those caught vio-

Centre biased towards irrigation in TS: Errabelli

DECCAN CHRONICLE | KARIMNAGAR | SATURDAY | 19 DECEMBER 2020

Claims Central govt ignored Niti Aayog's recommendation

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC WARANGAL, DEC 18

Despite repeated requests from the Chief Minister and Telangana MPs, the BJP-led Central Government has not sanctioned a single rupee for the Mission Bhagiratha. The Niti Aayog had also recommended funding for the mission but the Centre ignored it, said minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Water supply, Errabelli Dayakar Rao.

He pointed out that funds of ₹883 crore were sanctioned to Gujarat, and criticised the Centre for its biased approach.

ERRABELLI ALSO criticised the Centre for not providing funds to the

"Mission Bhagiratha scheme which aims to pro-"Mission vide safe drinking water to each and every household in the state has become a model for other states in the hold drinking water. However, the centre failed to cooperate with the state," he said. country to provide house-

Errabelli also criticised the Centre for not providing funds to the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP). Time and again, the Centre had appreciated several projects implemented in Telangana, but never came forward to allocate funds.

The minister who inaugurated the monitoring cell of the water grid at Bhee-maram here on Friday said that Mission Bhagiratha is now supplying protected drinking water to house-holds in 99 per cent villages in the State.
Although the estimated

cost of the water grid project was ₹46,000 crore, the state government had saved nearly ₹8,000 crore, the minister added.

Mission Bhagiratha is a

replication of the Siddipet Comprehensive Drinking Water Scheme conceived and implemented by KCR as the MLA of Siddipet about two decades ago, Errabelli

"Due to the sincere efforts of the State Government in implementing Bhagiratha, fluorosis cases also have come down significantly in Nalgonda the minister

Later, the minister who inspected Dharmasagar filter beds, said that efforts are on to supply drinking water every day from February and 24X7 from March.

Minister slams Bandi for comments on CM

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, DEC. 18

Minister for Panchayat Raj, Errabelli Dayakar Rao issues warning against BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar for his comments against Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao at the Bhagyalakshmi temple in the old city.

Addressing a media conference in Warangal on Friday, Dayakar Rao said that Bandi Sanjay is trying to create a religious strife in Hyderabad, which has been peaceful like Ganga-

Jamuni Tahzeeb until now. He pointed out that Bandi Sanjay made no contributions either towards the formation of the Telangana state or towards its develop-

"If you really have the

guts, bring the state's share of water from the Centre. Did you bring funds to Mission Bhagiratha and Mission Kakatiya? Did you bring money for the Kaleshwaram project? Can you tell me what you did or what you brought from the Centre to the state?" he questioned BJP state president.

"Speaking against a leader like Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao does not bring you on par with him. He fought and brought Telangana state. He was even prepared to die for it. The BJP, which is not speaking about the farmers' agitation at Delhi, is just talking about Hyderabad and the Chief

Minister to create a hype in the media," he added. Speaking about the GHMC elections he said that due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the elections had to be preponed. "There are still two months left for the mayoral election. Why is the BJP bothered now?" he

sought to know. He warned Bandi Sanjay that if he continued such behaviour, he would be ousted by the same people

of Karimnagar who elected

Addressing the delayed land registration through Dharani portal, Rao said the issue would be resolved within a week. "We have brought in the new revenue law just for the people who are already appreciating it," he said.

Warangal's water plants under scanner

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, DEC. 18

A suprise raid was conducted by Mahbubabad District Additional Collector Abhilasha Abhinav on unauthorised water plants in Thorrur town

Abhilasha found 13 water plants running without complying with the rules and regulations and without proper permissions. Their licenses

OPPN UNHAPPY WITH TRS RULE

Khammam officials

undergo RT-PCR tests

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC

Two MLAs of Telugu Desam and Congress expressed their discontent over the two years of TRS rule in Telangana

At the same time, the ruling party MLAs claimed to be fulfilling their promises.

MLA Aswaraopet Macha Nageswara Rao said that TRS govern-ment completed the two years with just just with

DC CORRESPONDENT

The officials and local

body representatives in

Khammam district have undergone RT-PCR tests

after Minister for Trans-

port P. Ajay Kumar test-

ed positive for Covid-19.
Collector R.V. Karnan,
MROs of Raghunathapalem and Khammam
Urban mandals and vari-

ous party functionaries have taken RT-PCR tests.

5 ARRESTED FOR

LOOTING BANK

DC CORRESPONDENT KARIMNAGAR, DEC. 18

The Karimnagar police

on Friday nabbed five pe-

rsons who allegedly tried

to break into an SBI bank in Uturu. Officials recovered a sword, an iron rod, a bag and two

motor bikes from the possession of Dulam Sampath, 45, Dulam Raju 19, Balasani Ajay,

Rakesh, 20, residents of Peddapalli district and

Vennapusala Rakesh Reddy, 20, resident of the Jangaon district.

DC CORRESPONDENT ADILABAD, DEC.18

Rich tributes were paid to

senior Lambada leader

Banoth Jalam Singh, 77,

who died of ill health.

Jalam Singh's funeral was performed in Narnoor

mandal headquarters on

Leaders of Lambada co-

mmunity bid a tearful fa-

rewell to the departed le-

ader who died while und-

ergoing treatment in Niz-

Thursday.

and Madishetty

Lambada leader

passes away at 77

have were seized and also fined ₹80,000.

The inspections were carried out after local water plant owners approached the Human Rights Commission and the disadministration alleging that they were suffering despite follow-ing the permits from the

government and running the water plants as per the regulations because of the plants being set up without any permits.

MAN DROWNS **IN SEETAVAGU RIVULET**

DC CORRESPONDENT KOTHAGUDEM, DEC. 18

A 45-year-old Chekkala Venkanna drowned in Seetavagu, a stream in Parnasala in Dummugu-dem mandal on Friday. Venkanna, who went to Parnasala along with his family from family Mahabubabad mandal, descended on the rivulet for bath. He drowned in the stream and search

After testing negative, they decided to be

observe self-quarantine

The media persons who

met the minister also got tested. Chairman of Sta-

Uma, Valaraju and K Krishna tested negative.

120 WOOLLEN

GIVEN TO NEEDY

DC CORRESPONDENT

Adilabad Municipal chairman Jogu Premender distributed 120 wo-

ollen blankets provided by Hyderabad-based NGO Peace Forum, with

the support of one P. Sadu Sunder in the Kha-

napur colony in the Adi-

aging trustee of the NGO was present at the event.

amabad on Wednesday

A large number of Lambadas and political

leaders attended the

funeral and paid last rites.

recalled Jalam Singh's contributions to the empowerment of the com-

munity and the tireless

social work for the com-

munity till his last breath.

In the past, Banoth Jalam

Singh also served

Narnoor ZPTC.

AT the funeral, leaders

labad town on Friday. Dayanad Haliga, man-

ADILABAD, DEC.18

BLANKETS

for a few days.

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TUNE IN TO ZEE CAFÉ AND & PICTURES

19TH DEC'20 ONWARDS

SHORT TAKES **PM'S VARANASI OFFICE LISTED FOR** 'SALE' ONLINE

Varanasi (UP), Dec. 18: Four people have been arrested for allegedly posting an online advertisement listing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Varanasi office for "sale", police said on Friday.

The accused had taken a picture of the "Jansampark Kaaryalay (public relations office)" of Modi, who represents Varanasi in the Lok Sabha, and put it "up for sale" on OLX website, they said.

The office is located in the Jawahar Nagar locality of the city, and it falls under the Bhelupur police station limits, Varanasi Superintendent of Police (SSP) Amit Pathak said. "Yesterday, it came to our notice that the Prime Minister's office here has been put up on sale on OLX website. An FIR was immediately lodged at the Bhelupur police station, and the matter is being investigated," Pathak

"Four people involved in the case have been taken in custody," the SSP said, adding that the person who took the picture and put it on the website is among them. The accused are being questioned, and further legal proceedings are being carried out, he said

SHIV SENA MAY OPPOSE PM'S PET PROJECTS IN MAHA

PRASAD PATIL | DC MUMBAI, DEC. 18

The Shiv Sena, rattled by the Bombay High Court's stay on the construction of Metro car shed at salt pan land in Mumbai, is preparing for direct confrontation with the Union government led by the

The HC stayed the Metro car shed work after the Centre's salt pan department challenged the state's decision in the court. Now, as part of its strategy to take on its erstwhile alliance partner head-on, the Uddhav Thackeray-led party has decided to oppose the proposed port in Palghar district. The ₹65,000 crore project was approved by the Narendra Modi government in

February this year.
The Maharashtra government is also considering moving the Metro car shed to a site earmarked for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project — another pet project of

The locals are opposing the Vadhvan port project, which is initiative, in Palghar district. According to reports, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray met groups opposing the Vadhvan port as well Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train project — another pet project of PM Modi — and assured them that he will not allow any project against the wishes of

SC NOTICE TO KAMRA, TANEJA IN **CONTEMPT CASES**

New Delhi, Dec. 18: The Supreme Court issued showcause notices to stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra and cartoonist Rachita Taneja on Friday for their alleged scandalous tweets against the apex

A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, R.S. Reddy and M.R. Shah sought response from both in six weeks on the notices issued in two separate cases. It. however, exempted them from personal appear-

Issue notice returnable within six weeks. The contemnor respondent not to appear in person, the bench said in its

Taneja.

orders noted that Attorney General K.K. Venugopal has given his consent to initiate contempt proceedings against both the comic artists in sepa-

Venugopal had granted consent for initiation of criminal contempt proceedings against Kamra, saying the comedian's tweets were in "bad taste" and it was time that people understand that attacking the apex court brazenly would attract

punishment. The attorney general had also given consent to initiate criminal contempt proceedings against Taneja, stating that the caricatures posted by her on social media were intended to denigrate the Supreme Court and lower its authority in the eyes of the

Dissent in Bengal BJP over TMC exodus

Babul Supriyo, Agnimitra Paul are up in arms against the TMC deserters' overnight induction to BJP

RAJIB CHOWDHURI I DC KOLKATA, DEC. 18

The sudden trend among heavyweights deserting Trinamul Congress to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of the Assembly election in West Bengal has triggered strong dissent within the saffron party in the state.
Prominent BJP leaders

like Babul Supriyo, Agnimitra Paul and even state president Dilip Ghosh are up in arms against the TMC desert ers' overnight induction to their party without any assessment of their

They have started voicing their displeasure openly after Jitendra Tiwari, Pandabeshwar MLA and former Asansol Mayor, left the TMC on Thursday.

Referring to Tiwari, Supriyo, Asansol MP and Union minister, wrote on Facebook, "What my Top Bosses decide is a different thing but I will try my very best with all my might & honesty to ensure that NO #TMC leader who tormented, tortured (both physically & mentally) my grass root level BJP colleagues in Asansol, don't get an entry in BJP!!"

Paul, the state BJP women wing chief, said,

BJP LEADERS started voicing their displeasure openly after Jitendra Tiwari left the TMC on Thursday.

Tiwari felt that he could not do his welfare work for money for projects were returned. Where were these thoughts in him? These came to his mind four months before the Assembly elections. He opposed Supriyo. Moreover the people of Asansol do not like him. Many told me to ensure he does not come to our party

Ghosh, the Midnapore

BJP MP. said. "There is a tiff between Supriyo and Tiwari because when Tiwari was the Asansol Mayor and TMC district president, he did not allow work Supriyo in his Lok Sabha constituency. Bricks were hurled on Supriyo on the road. So Tiwari was his rival there. Now when

ral for Supriyo to voice his complaint against him." Tiwari, however, claimed that he had no plan to join

he shows a prospect to join the BJP, it is natu-

On Barrackpore MLA Silbhadra Datta's prospect Ghosh observed, "Quiting the TMC and joining the BJP are two different issues. We have seen that many leaders left the TMC earlier. That does not mean all of them came to the BJP or they were roped into our party." In Bankura, a group of

BJP workers came out on road and organised a demonstration near their party office after former state textiles minister Shyamapada Mukherjee quit the TMC on Thursday evening and hailed his exparty colleague Shubhendu Adhikari as

his leader with a hope to join the BJP. They made it clear that Mukherjee should not be allowed to join the BJP.

AMID GROWING REBELLION IN TMC, **SHAH ON TWO-DAY VISIT TO BENGAL**

Kolkata, Dec. 18: Home Minister Amit Shah will in Kolkata on Friday night on a two-day visit to Bengal and take stock of the BJP's affairs and activities in the districts, ahead of 2021

Assembly elections. According to a press statement issued by BJP national media in-charge, Anil Baluni, Shah will participate in various programmes and functions during the weekend.

'In the wake of ensuing

Assembly elections, Amit Shah will also hold strategic and preparatory meet-

Shah will be putting up at a hotel in Newtown after arriving in Kolkata around 11 PM, another BJP leader said.

Shah will also review election management work during a meeting with central ministers from West Bengal, organisation secretaries, zonal observers and BJP state general sec-

Mobile phones now have longer reach than missiles, says Rajnath

DC CORRESPONDENT With agency inputs NEW DELHI, DEC. 18

Defence Minister Rajnath impact of social lia on conflicts media on between nations, on Friday said the reach of the mobile phone now is bigger than that of a mis-

Addressing the annual Military Literature Festival here, Singh warned that different kinds of security threats may emerge in the future. This event is important from another point of view, he said through video conference.

"As times change, the nature of threats and wars is also changing. In the future, other security-related issues may come before us.'

He added that conflicts are gradually becoming comprehensive in the manner never imagined

Possibly alluding to the power of social media and mobile apps, he said, Today the range (marak Kshamta) of a mobile has crossed even the reach of a missile, he said. He added that the enemy can now reach people even without crossing any borders, and urged everyone to play the role of a sol-

We should remain alive Actual Control, India has

DAGGERS OUT IN

KERALA'S CONG,

DC CORRESPONDENT

The Congress-led UDF

which expected to do

well riding on the anti-

government sentiments,

ended up with a disap-

In the political affairs

committee meeting held a day after the results

were announced, the leadership drew flak for

its failure to cash in on

the favourable political

Quite understandably,

daggers are out in BJP

as well. At least two fac-

tions in the party have

demanded the removal

of state president K.

DC CORRESPONDENT

After four months of

wait, Congress president

Sonia Gandhi will be

meeting with a core group of letter writers.

The meeting is scheduled

to be held on Saturday

morning at the official

residence of Sonia Gandhi Ten Janpath. Insiders claim that

apart from five or six

members from the letter

writers camp there will

also be General Secretary

Rajasthan

Organisation

Venugopal,

NEW DELHI, DEC. 18

conditions.

Surendran.

pointing performance.

BJP UNITS



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh handovers Border Surveillance System (BOSS) to Chief of Army Staff General M.M. Naravane, during the DRDO awards function, in New Delhi on Friday.

to these dangers and save ourselves from wrong and misleading information and save others too, and festivals like this can play a key role in this, he said, urging literary figures to make use of their talent to the full for this. The defence minister did not specifically refer to

But in recent months, since the standoff between the two sides began at the Line of banned several Chinese mobile apps, citing concerns related to national security and privacy. These included the popular TikTok and WeChat

apps. Meanwhile, a satisfactory resolution on the ground to the situation in Ladakh deployed between Chinese and Indian troops still remains elusive despite several rounds of talks at the diplomatic and military

level in the past several

Nevertheless, India and China on Friday decided "continue to work towards ensuring complete disengagement in all friction points along the LAC in the Western Sector at the earliest" and noted that the 7th and 8th rounds of Senior Commanders meetings held recently "had also contributed to ensuring stability on the

CONDUCT FIRE SAFE AUDIT IN COVID HOSPS: SC

New Delhi, Dec. 18: The Supreme Court on Friday directed all the states to carry out fire safety audit of dedicated Covid-19 hospitals across the country to prevent fire incidents in medical institutions.

The apex court also directed dedicated Covid-19 hospitals to take a no objection certificate (NOC) from the fire department within four weeks and said that failure to do so will invite punitive action.

A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan said that those hospitals, whose fire NOC has expired, will have to get it renewed within four

The top court said that all the states will follow Covid-19 guidelines, Covid-19 guidelines, including on wearing of face mask and adherence measures, and the standard operating procedure issued by the competent authority.

The SC had earlier taken cognisance of a fire incident in a designated Covid-19 hospital in Gujarat's Rajkot in which several patients

COVID VACCINE IS VOLUNTARY,

SHASHI BHUSHAN | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 18

India on Friday regis tered a landmark achievement in its fight against the Covid-19 when total recoveries in the country crossed crucial peak of 95 lakh. Union health ministry, meanwhile, said that get-ting vaccinated for Covid-19 will be voluntary, while emphasising that the vaccine introduced in India will be as effective as any vaccine developed by other coun-

The Union health ministry listed a series of frequently asked questions (FAQs) on Covid-19 vaccine. Replying to a question whether it is mandatory to take the vaccine, the health ministry said that vaccination for Covid-19 is voluntary, however, it is advisable to receive the complete schedule of Covid-19 vaccine for protecting oneself against this disease and also to limit the spread of this disease.

constrained to speak out

in the open. Some have

gone ahead and said that

the time for introspection

is over and now its time

In August this year, 23 leaders of the party had

written to Congress presi-

demanding sweeping changes in the function-

include former union

minister Ghulam Nabi

Azad, Anand Sharma,

Tharoor, Veerappa Moily,

Manish Tewari among

Sibal.

Sonia

ing of the party. The letter

Kapil

for action.

Failed political players misleading farmers, says Naqvi

Slamming Opposition leaders for their stance against the new farm laws, Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi has alleged that "failed political players" who have been rejected repeatedly by the people are acting under their "depression of defeat" and "misleading" the farmers.

The minority affairs minister also lashed out at Opposition leaders Rahul Gandhi and Arvind Kejriwal, alleging that the Congress leader was "posing" as a farmers' leader despite knowing little about farming, while the Delhi Chief Minister was "karne mein zero, dharne mein hero (zero in work, but hero in sit-ins)"

Farmers throughout the country are satisfied that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has worked for their empowerment and interests after coming to power, Naqvi said.

The farmers' issue involves Minimum Support Price (MSP), kisaan mandis and protection of farmers' land and the government has given a 100 per cent guarantee on the three fronts, he said.

Naqvi asserted that neither the MSP will go, nor the mandis and there was no threat to farmers' lands. The "Modi bashing brigade" instead of talking about issues of farmers, has started abusing Modi, he said, adding that questions arose with the entry of these "traditional Modi bashers"

On farmers' issues, the government has always believed in talks not 'takraav' (confrontation), Naqvi asserted.

"The government moved forward to resolve the issue through talks. When farmers were also satisfied that what the government was saying was logical and genuine, those people who were indulging in criminal con-spiracy thought their game was going awry and they started misleading people,"

The whole matter is one of "criminal conspiracy ka sandook aur kisano ke kandhe par bandook (a box of crim-

NAQVI LASHES out at Rahul Gandhi and Arvind Kejriwal, alleging that the Congress leader was 'posing' as a farmers' leader despite knowing little about farming, while the Delhi Chief Minister was 'karne mein zero, dharne mein hero (zero in work, but hero in sit-ins)'.

inal conspiracy and firing from farmers' shoulders)", Naqvi said, hitting out at the Opposition parties demanding a repeal of the farm laws.

Farmers have also understood that the issues have been solved and neither the farmers nor the country has any doubts about the honof Modi, Naqvi

claimed. Attacking the Congress-led Opposition, the minister alleged that "failed political players" are "misleading

"These failed political players who have been rejected repeatedly by the people are acting under their depression of defeat. Farmers are genuine people, we respect them, there is no problem," Naqvi

"This (farmers) movement has been going on for long and the BJP was born out of a movement, so we respect it. That is why no force was used and the farmers were facilitated here. Rahul Gandhi does not know much about farming, but is posing as a leader of the farmers." he said.

The Opposition has been accusing the government of working for the interests of corporates by bringing the legislations, a charge denied by the government that has maintained that the laws will be beneficial for farmers in every way.

A delegation of opposition parties including Rahul Gandhi, Sharad Pawar and Left leaders had last week met President Ram Nath Kovind seeking repeal of the three farm laws against which thousands of farmers have been protesting on various borders of the national capital.

order passed in a plea against

Similar order was passed by the bench in the plea against

The top court in its two rate cases.

CBI confirms Hathras gangrape, murder

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, New Delhi, Dec. 18: The CBI on Friday filed a chargesheet against the Blame game has begun four men accused of the in the Kerala units of gangrape and murder of a 19-year-old Dalit woman in a village in Congress-led UDF and BJP following the defeat in local body elections.

Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh, officials said. After nearly two months of probe, the agency concluded in its final report that the accused — Sandeep, Ravi, Luv Kush and Ramu — allegedly gangraped and murdered the woman when she had gone to the fields to collect fodder on September

14 in her village Bhulgarhi, they said. In its findings submitted before the competent court in Hathras, the agency has slapped Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections pertaining to rape, murder and gan-

Gehlot and the senior

leader Kamal Nath who

played the role of a medi-

ator between the leader-

ship and the group of 23

After the demise of sen-

ior leader Ahmed Patel

who was the go between

the leadership and the let-

ter writers the role is

now taken up by Kamal

Rahul Gandhi and his

Gandhi are also expected

to be at the meeting.

and General ry of Uttar

Priyanka

letter writers.

Nath.

sister

Secretary

Pradesh

sections pertaining to rape, murder, gangrape apart from those under the SC/ST Act against the four accused.

grape apart from those under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act against the four accused men from the village, they said. The maximum sentence in the above charges is capital punishment.

The agency has based its findings on the dying statement of the woman in which she is understood to have named the accused, besides scientific and forensic evidence collected by the CBI and statements of witnesses and the victim's family members recorded by it. The findings submitted

INTERNAL | TIFF 23 leaders had written to Sonia demanding changes in the party

Sonia to meet 'letter writers' today

the president again has

Randeep Singh Surjewala said, "party will soon start the procedure to

elect a new party presi-

dent. 99.9% including me

want Rahul Gandhi to be

elected as Party presi-

Congress is downplaying

the entire exercise and is

just calling it a meeting

with senior leaders as

there will also be leaders

who are not signatories to

Interestingly,

gained momentum.

General

dent.

approaching the demand in August this year to make Rahul Gandhi Several issues

the

Secretary

by the CBI have left red faced the top officials of Uttar Pradesh Police who had claimed that no evidence of rape was found in forensic tests.

Uttar Pradesh's additional director general (law and order) Prashant Kumar had said, "The report of the FSL has come. It says clearly that samples did not contain semen. It makes clear that there was no rape or

gangrape".
The ADG had also claimed that the woman in her statement to police "did not mention rape but talked about "maar-peet (beating) on-ly". An embarrassed UP government had to hand after the incident triggered massive public out $egin{array}{lll} {
m rage} & {
m and} & {
m a} & {
m political} \ {
m slugfest.} & -{\it PTI} \end{array}$

expected to find mention

in the meeting regarding

the functioning of the

especially the

party especially the demand for an active and

assumes significance as

the Congress has been

facing electoral debacles

not only in state Assembly elections and

by-elections but also in

come out in the open and

have said that there is no

remedy available within

local body elections.

Several

visible leadership.

The meeting

Odisha 'love jihad' victim rescued

SAHOO | DC BHBANESWAR, DEC. 18

Odisha police on Thursday night rescued a 21-year-old woman of Jajpur district who was allegedly kidnapped by a youth around two weeks ago from Cuttack. The girl's family members had alleged it was a case of 'Love Jihad'.

In a telephonic conversation between the young woman and her mother that came to fore earlier in the day, the young woman was heard informing her mothtured and kept by the abductors at a hotel near beach in

Also, the young woman said she will be taken to a Masjid at Sutahat in Cuttack for solemnisation marriage with the abductor in accordance with Islamic

According to reports, the

young woman had gone to VN College, Jajpur Road on December 5 for obtaining her migration certificate. Later in the evening, she went missing while her mobile phone was found to be switched off.

As per the complaint lodged by the young woman's family members, one Shaik Abdul Sehmat Khan alias Bobby of Choramuhan village under Dharmasala police limits abducted her.

Khan was earlier forcing the girl to have a love affair with him and change her religion. As the girl refused to do so, Khan threatened to kidnap her.

On Thursday, the police had arrested Shaikh Abdul Hamid Khan, father of Shaikh Abdul Sehmat Khan, for his alleged involvement in the abduction and threatening the parents of the girl to kill them.

As the internal elections of the party are Chief Minister Ashok the party hence they are the letter that was written

leaders have

SHORT TAKES

15 KIDS KILLED IN AFGHANISTAN BOMB BLAST

Ghazni, Dec. 18: At least 15 children were killed when a motorbike laden with explosives blew up near a religious gathering in eastern Afghani stan on Friday, officials said.

The children had gathered at a home in Ghazni province to recite *Quran* verses, a regular activity on the Islamic holy day of Friday, when the blast happened. "Unfortunately, as a result of this incident 15 people, all children, were mar-tyred," said Wahedullah Jumazada, spokesman for the province's governor.

Ghazni police confirmed the blast and that all victims were children. Twenty other people, including some children, were

Interior ministry spokesman Tariq Arian earlier said the group had gathered in Gilan district to recite the Quran.

SUPER CYCLONE YASA FLATTENS VILLAGES IN FIJI

Suva, Fiji, Dec. 18: Super cyclone Yasa flattened entire villages as it tore through Fiji, aid agencies said on Friday, with a baby among two con firmed deaths and rescue workers racing to the worst-hit com-

Yasa made landfall at the Pacific Island nation late Thursday as a top-of-the-scale Category Five cyclone, lashing Fiji's second-largest island, Vanua Levu.

The storm triggered floods, landslides and blackouts before moving out to sea early Friday, where it rapidly weakened to a Category Three system.

Zalim Hussein of Savusavu, a small town of a few thousand people on Vanua Levu, said he feared for his life sheltering at home in the dark as screeching winds ripped apart houses around him.

'I could hear roofs of neighbouring houses flying, trees falling and branches breaking outside and big waves crushing on the shore," he said.

UN SAYS 'DEEPLY TROUBLED' OVER THAI DETENTIONS

Geneva, Dec. 18: The UN human rights body expressed Friday over detentions of alarm on Thailand's democracy activists, including a minor of 16 years, under royal defamation laws.

We are deeply troubled by the move by Thai authorities to charge at least 35 protesters in recent weeks, including a 16year old student protester, under Article 112 — the lese majeste provision of Thailand's criminal code," the UN Human Rights Committee said in a statement.

The activists are facing charges for headlining recent demonstrations demanding reforms to the monarchy and more scrutiny of the roval family's financial arrangements. The kingdom's lese majeste laws shield the super wealthy King Maha Vajiralongkorn and the royal family from criticism.
"The offence carries sen-

tences of between three and 15 years' imprisonment for defaming, insulting or threatening the country's royal family," the committee's spokeswoman, Ravina Shamdasani said.

MEGHAN SETTLES CASE OVER ARCHIE PHOTOS

London, Dec. 18: Meghan Markle has settled a claim against a news agency which took photographs of her and her young son Archie in a Canadian park, the High Court in London was told on Friday.

The Duchess of Sussex brought privacy and data protection claims against the Splash News and Picture Agency in March over the

long-lens photographs. A lawyer for the American former television actress, who married Prince Harry in 2018. said Splash UK went into administration after the claim was issued and served. Judge Matthew Nicklin told the hearing: "In light of the administration, the parties have agreed to settle the claim against

The administrators of Splash UK have undertaken that, should the entity come out of administration, Splash UK will not take any photographs of the duke and duchess or their son in the future." The photographs were taken on January 20 this year, showing Markle walking with Archie in a baby sling, and her two dogs, in Horth Hill Regional Park on Vancouver Island.

Pence gets Covid jab on live TV, Trump sparks confusion

Don jumps gun on FDA, says Moderna vaccine 'overwhelmingly approved'

The US vice president received a Covid-19 vaccine shot live on television on Friday in a public display designed to boost national confidence in the drug even as President Donald Trump sparked confusion over approval for a second anti-Covid drug.
"Building confidence in

the vaccine is what brings us here this morning," VP Mike Pence said after being injected at the White House, quipping: "I didn't feel a thing." Pence, his wife Karen and the lead public health official in the country, Surgeon General Jerome Adams, were all given the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in the annex to the White House.

Signalling the importance given to the event, top infectious diseases
Anthony Fauci and
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention director Robert Redfield were also in the room.

The notable absence was Trump himself. He has sent mixed messages about the seriousness of Covid-19 throughout the crisis, even as the US death toll topped 3,00,000 this month.

However, he has been keen to take credit for the historic speed of vaccine development. Early Friday he tweeted that a second drug made by Moderna had been "overwhelmingly approved" and that "distribution to start immediately." This sparked some confusion — while an confusion — while an advisory panel recom-mended emergency use approval for Moderna's vaccine on Thursday, the Food and Drug Administration has yet to give the final verdict allowing distribution expected later Friday.

US President-elect Joe Biden's incoming White House senior advisor, congressman Cedric Richmond, has tested positive for Covid-19 after having open-air "interactions" with Biden, the transition team said on Thursday

Richmond traveled independently to the state of Georgia to campaign Tuesday with Biden for a pair of Democrats in tight on Friday that the UN

mass abduction claimed

by Boko Haram experi-

enced their first full day of

freedom on Friday after a nearly week-long ordeal.

But relief at their sur-

vival mingled with con-

cern that many others

could still be captive, and

the circumstances of their

release remained unclear.

Looking dirty, worn-out

and distraught, and most

of them without shoes, the

boys were brought to the

governor's office in Katsina, the capital of

Katsina state in north-

into the hall for the recep-

tion by state governor



Covas pose for photographs holding doses of the CoronaVac vaccine against Covid-19 next to a container unloaded from a cargo plane that arrived from China at Guarulhos International Airport in Guarulhos, Sao Paulo state, Brazil, on Friday. Brazil on Thursday recorded more than 1,000 deaths from Covid-19 over a 24-hour period for the first

Macron rides out virus, fever at Versailles retreat

the days before testing

Critics say that's a bad

example for compatriots

advised to keep their gatherings to six people.

Macron is suffering from

fever, cough and fatigue,

officials with the presi-

dency said on Friday.

They wouldn't provide details of his treatment.

He is staying at the presi-

positive on Thursday.

Paris, Dec. 18: As French President Emmanuel Macron rides out the Coronavirus in a presidential retreat at Versailles, French doctors dential are warning families who are heading for the holidays to remain cautious because of an uptick in infections — especially at the dinner table.

While Macron routinely wears a mask and adheres to social distancing rules, he hosted or took part in multiple group meals in

runoff elections against

Health Organisation said

his team said.

freed in Nigeria

dential residence of La Lanterne in the former royal city of Versailles. Macron's positive test

health agency's programme to help get Covidincumbent Republican senators.
Biden, 78, tested negative 19 vaccines to all countries in need, whether rich or for Covid-19 on Thursday, poor, has gained access to nearly 2 billion doses of The head of the World "promising" vac-

cine candidates. WHO Director-General next year."

Kidnapped boys **US warships to be 'more**

comes as French health authorities are again seeing a rise in infections and warning of more as French families prepare to get together for Christmas and New Year festivities.

France reported another 18,254 new infections on Thursday and its death toll is just under 60,000. France's Pasteur Institute released a study on Friday suggesting that times at home and in public are a major source of contamination.

Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the agreements mean that some 190 countries and economies taking part in the COVAX initiative will have access to vaccines "during the first half of next year." -AFP/AP

LOCKDOWN LOOMS OVER CHRISTMAS IN BETHLEHEM

Ramallah (West Bank), Dec. 18: The Palestinian prime minister announced a two-week lockdown in the West Bank that appears certain to curtail Christmas celebrations in the town of Jesus' birth.

Prime Minister Moha mmad Shtayyeh said that with a Coronavirus outbreak raging, there will be a nighttime curfew from 7 pm to 6 am throughout the West Bank.

On Fridays and Saturdays, the local weekend, the lockdown will be around the clock. The restrictions, which are to be in effect through January 2, will greatly restrict travel throughout the West Bank. Most businesses, with the exception of pharmacies and bakeries, will be forced to close during the curfews, Shtavveh said.

Biden backs son Hunter after tax probe revealed

Washington, Dec. 18: US President-elect Joe Biden has expressed full confidence in his son Hunter, a frequent target of Republican attacks, after it was revealed last week that he was under a federal tax investigation.

During his unsuccessful re-election campaign, President Donald Trump launched repeated accu-sations against Hunter and said the Bidens were a "corrupt" family and a "criminal enterprise. "We have great confidence in our son," Biden said, sitting next to his wife Jill, in an interview "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert," which aired Thursday on CBS.

'I am not concerned about any accusations that have been made against him. It used to get to me. I think it's kind of foul play but... as long as he's good, we're good," he said in his first full remarks on the issue since the tax probe

became public.

Trump and his allies have regularly assailed Hunter for his business dealings in Ukraine and

From 2014 to 2019, while his father was vice president, Hunter, a lawyer and lobbyist, served on the board of Burisma, a Ukrainian gas company.

Trump has accused Biden of seeking the removal of Ukraine's top prosecutor to protect Burisma — and his son from a corruption investi-

Hunter, 50, now an artist based in Los Angeles, has admitted to displaying "poor judgment" in some of his business dealings, but denied any wrongdo-

BIDEN NAMES 1st NATIVE AMERICAN TO CABINET

Washington, Dec. 18: US President-elect Joe Biden unveiled his environment team on Thursday, choosing congress-woman Deb Haaland to serve as the first Native American interior secretary and Jennifer Granholm, a former Michigan governor, as energy sec retary.

He also nominated Michael Regan, a North Carolina environmental regulator who is Black and brokered the nation's largest coal ash cleanup, to be administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The choices fit with Biden's much-publicised pledge to form the most diverse White House cabinet in history.

"This brilliant, tested, trailblasing team will be ready on day one to confront the existential threat of climate change with a unified national response rooted in science and equity," Biden said in a statement.

Colbert asked Biden if there was anything he could "sincerely" thank Trump for accomplishing during his time in the White House.

After a short pause Biden responded: "There are some things... Getting the vaccine moving has been positive, but by and large, he has been a president who's decided that the way he succeeds is by dividing us." -AFP

Human error behind oil spill in Mauritius

Japanese operator of a bulk carrier that struck a coral reef and caused an extensive oil spill off the coast of Mauritius said Friday that the accident occurred after the ship shifted its course two miles (3.2 kilometers) closer to shore than planned so its crewmembers could get cellphone

Mitsui O.S.K. Lines said its investigation showed the accident was caused by human error, including inadequate nautical charts, navigation systems and risk awareness, and a lack of supervision and safety monitoring. The company said the tanker's nautical chart provided little information about depth and other necessary information.

Crewmembers on duty also failed to conduct safety checks visually or by radar, it said. The captain and crewmembers were also using their cellphones while on duty, the company said. It said it will invest about 500 million yen (\$4.8 million) to provide electronic nautical charts, training to strengthen safety culture

THE COMPANY apologised for the damage and in September offered 1 billion yen (\$9 million) to fund environmental projects and support the local fishing community in Mauritius.

enhance safety.

The environmental disaster began July 25 when the ship MV Wakashio strayed off course and struck a coral reef a mile (1.6 kilometers) offshore. After being pounded by heavy surf for nearly two weeks, the ship's hull cracked and on Aug. 6 began leaking fuel into a lagoon, polluting a protected wetlands area and a bird and wildlife sanctu-

ary.
The company apologised for the damage and in September offered 1 billion yen (\$9 million) to fund environmental projects and support the local fishing community in Mauritius. More than 1,000 tons of oil spilled into the coastal waters.

About 3,000 tons that remained on the ship was pumped into barges before the Wakashio broke in two several days

western Nigeria, after released late Thursday. One boy broke down in tears as he was being led

Katsina, Dec. 18: Exhausted and dishevelled, several hundred Nigerian schoolboys seized in a Bello Masari. An official took a handkerchief and wiped the tears.

"Ĩ am happy, very happy that I will see my father, mother and junior brothers," said another, 14-year-old Ibrahim Sani, smiling but looking tired.

Hajia Bilikis, a mother who been waiting anxiously with other parents, spoke of her exultation when she caught sight of her boy, Abdullahi Abdu-Rasaq, 15.

'I'm so excited... I have to cry, the cry of joy when I saw him," she said.

Governor Masari said the youngsters had been traumatised by what they

"You suffered physically, mentally and psychologically, but let me assure you that we suffered more and your parents suffered more." -AFP assertive' against China Washington, Dec.18: The US military warned on Thursday its warships would be "more Dec.18: assertive" in responding to violations of interna-

tional law, citing in particular Beijing, which has expansionist ambitions in the South China Sea. In a document setting objectives for the US Navy, Marines and Coast Guard for the coming years, the Pentagon stressed that several countries, notably Russia and China, "are contesting the balance of power

in key regions and seeking to undermine the existing world order."
"Our globally deployed naval forces interact with Chinese and Russian war-ships and aircraft daily," the document said, noting their "growing aggressiveness" and calling Donald Trump's administration on Friday announced it had imposed export controls on China's biggest chipmaker, SMIC, restricting its access to US technol-

U.S. PRESIDENT

ogy over its alleged ties to the Chinese military. China "the most pressing, long-term threat." strategic

The latest incident between the US and China naval forces took place in late August, when Beijing said it had driven an American warship from the disputed Paracel archipelago.

The Asian power claims almost all of the islands of the South China Sea, territorial claims disput-

the region including Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei. To counter China, the ships to the region more

frequently to carry out what it calls "freedom of navigation" operations. To maintain strategic advantage over Chinese Navy whose "battle force has more than tripled in size in only two decades," the US Navy plans to modernize with smaller, more agile and

even remotely piloted

ships. US ships will also "accept calculated tactical risks and adopt a more day-to-day operations,' the statement said. For Navy Rear Admiral Jay Bynum that means being "more responsive, more

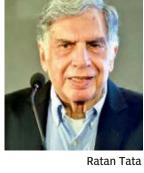
INNOVATION | HONOUR | Virtual ceremony will be attended by senior officials from Israel, India, UAE on Dec. 21

Israeli peace, sustainability award for Ratan Tata

industrialist Ratan Tata will be honoured by the Indo-Israel Chambers of Commerce for promoting innovation that supports sustainability and peace in the region, including with the Palestinians.

The chairman emeritus of the Tata group will be honoured with 'Global Visionary of Sustainable award during the launch of the Federation of Indo-Israel Chamber of Commerce's international chapter in Dubai on December 21.

will be attended by senior officials from Israel, India and UAE. "Tata has done a lot for India-Israel ties. He has generously contributed towards promotports sustainability and has been a promoter of peace in the region, including with the Palestinians. He has visited Israel a few times which has been extremely beneficial in promoting ties between the two coun tries. He very well deserves this honour," Raviv Byron, President of Israel-India Chamber of



Commerce, said. The 82-year-old industrialist and philanthropist is the recipient of two of

India's highest civilian Vibhushan and Padma Bhushan . The opening of the Federation of Indo-Chamber Commerce's international chapter in Dubai is the first such initiative aiming at tapping business opportunities together in other countries, and developing trilateral col-

This is expected to pave the way for several other such international chapfor the bilateral Chamber in other parts of the world, Byron noted. "There is a large presence

of Indian diaspora in the UAE and Bahrain which includes top professionals who are well established and respected. Given the close ties between Israel and India, we can definitely work together to develop a framework for trilateral cooperation in the Gulf", he added. ' The Tata Group has invested millions of dol-

lars in Tel Aviv University's (TAU) Technology Innovation Momentum Fund. As the lead investor in the fund. Tatas have the right of first opportunity to negotiate licence agreement on areas that have been defined as start-up promoting activities like automotive, point of care for medical

devices, cleantech, etc. In 2018, TAU and Tata Trusts announced the launching of the Indian Centre for Agri & Allied Tech (I-CAT) that would facilitate bringing Israeli know-how and innovation to the farmers of the state of Andhra Pradesh, initially, and was to be later extended to all the other parts of India.

The initiative, supported by the Government of Andhra Pradesh, includes creating an advanced R&D centre, as well as

agricultural experts in villages and farms — aiming to overcome various technological, agronomic and economic barriers, and promote sustainable agriculture and food secu-

During his visit to Israel in 2013, Tata had signed an agreement with Israel Aerospace Industry (IAI) to jointly develop, manufacture and support a wide range of defence and aerospace products including missiles, UAVs, radars, electronic warfare security systems. — PTI

Chronicle

19 DECEMBER 2020

Kerala: Big triumph for LDF, Cong rudderless

he brilliant show put up by the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kerala in the elections to the local bodies is sure to offer the ruling front a solid base to prepare for the state Assembly elections hardly four months away while raising the bar higher for the Opposition, United Democratic Front (UDF), to win the race. The LDF has won 11 of the 14 district panchayat councils, 108 of the 152 block panchayats (the state has 140 assembly seats), 42 of the 86 municipalities and five of the six municipal corporations. Among the gram panchayats, the leftists won 514 of the 941, leaving 375 to the UDF and 23 to the National Democratic Alliance (BJP).

That the LDF has improved its own tally of 2015 local bodies elections when it was in the Opposition indicates that it faces little anti-incumbency threat in a state which alternates its ruling dispensation in every election without fail ever since 1977. While the Pinarayi Vijayan government's creditable performance in fighting virus attacks, first by Nipah in 2018 and by the coronavirus

This image, coupled with the failure of central investigation agencies to come up with a credible case against people associated with the government vis-avis gold smuggling, has helped the LDF

in 2020, its successful handling of two successive floods in 2018 and 2019, its focus on improving infrastructure especially **This image, coupled** in education and healthcare, its determined efforts to push through mega projects which includes the natural gas pipeline and the national highway project gave it the image of a government that works, its focus on welfare measures, which includes the construction of 2.5 lakh homes for the poor, the timely distribution of enhanced welfare pensions for the elderly and food kits during the pandemic, Covid-19, convinced the people that it is a government that cares

This image, coupled with the failure of the central investigation agencies to come up with a credible case against people associated with the government vis-a-vis gold smuggling, has helped the LDF keep its head above water. The smart political manoeuvring with which it got a section of the Kerala Congress which held sway in central Kerala to its side has paid rich dividends for the LDF while denting the prospects of the UDF of which the regional party was a major part for the last 50 years.

The Congress, which leads the UDF, has party machinery that covers the

entire spectrum, starting from the booths but a rudderless leadership squandered them all away, thinking that the relentless and one-sided media scrutiny of the government will carry the day for them. The UDF, which recorded a spectacular victory in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections on the back of the entry of then Congress president Rahul Gandhi from Wayanad constituency and the Sabarimala issue which put the LDF in a dock, was a house divided this time. It would take enormous efforts on the part of the leadership to put it in order and take on the resurgent LDF if it were to keep its hope of returning to power. As for the NDA, its hopes replacing the Congress after decimating it lie shattered with the poor showing, especially in the capital Thiruvananthapuram. The party needs to cover a lot of ground before it gains a critical mass to emerge a major force in the state politics.

'Punishing' a state

Thile it is not yet clear what elements attacked the car convoy of BJP president J. P. Nadda at Diamond Harbour near Kolkata recently one theory points the finger at hooligans sponsored by the ruling Trinamul Congress and the other says it is an internal BJP job to discredit the Mamata Banerjee government as an excuse for punitive action — the Union government brought the hammer down on three IPS officers of the West Bengal cadre. Their services have been compulsorily requisitioned by the Union home ministry

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee has responded with fury. She has threatened to take recourse to legal action. Ordinarily, the Centre requests a state to release a particular officer when there is special need since an officer of the IAS or the IPS is assigned to a state on being selected.

There may be scope for emergency procedures if a particular officer is badly needed with the Centre. But here the Union home ministry is forcing three IPS officers out of the state in one go. Is this dictatorial? Is it a "colourable" exercise of power, as the CM has observed? How the judiciary deals with the issue will be keenly watched if Ms Banerjee goes to court. It will be a precedent-setting order and will have a bearing on the broader question of Centre-state

rally of then BJP party chief Amit Shah in Kolkata. The police commissioner was relieved of his charge by the Election Commission and subsequently asked by the state to report to the Centre. The officer who replaced him was also changed, along with three other IPS officers. These were not decisions of the Union home ministry as in the present instance, but of the EC. And yet it

is the bulk nature of transfers, which makes these cases look like punishment. Political antagonism between the Centre and a particular state government has probably not gone in this direction before and it is not a good sign for federalism, "cooperative" or otherwise, although Prime Minister has made renewed avowals of cooperative federalism.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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"If our hands bent both wavs There'd be lines marked on

We'd call them life, fate and fortune Predicting ruin and rack.

With our palms already foretelling It'd be a sort of heads and tails And palmists would be confounded knowing which fortune

— From Come, Say 'Come' by Bachchoo

Researching Wikipedia on the origins of toxic words

dle days, my friend, idle days in terms of worldly commerce, but busy as a woodpecker tapping Lithe imagined computer keys of a tree-trunk. And as random questions occur, sometimes pertaining to work. Sometimes thoughtful wanderings from questions about how one dodges British tax by registering companies in Nassau, to the origins of phrases one has used and never stopped to etymologise.

Praise be to Ahura Mazda for inspiring the founders and conspirators of Wikipedia. And yes, I do contribute small sums to their coffers now and then. We must all will their incredibly comprehensive and by-

and-large-accurate encyclopaedia(e) as the world has never known, to continue — till time and ingenuity - till time and ingenuity replace the ethereal store of knowledge with some other scientifically invented miracle.

Subhani

As schools reopen, try

to bridge digital divide

Rukmini Banerji

used for monitoring and

ASER 2020, the 2018 sam-

ple was used as the frame.

To rely on numbers, the

sampling process must be scientific and rigorous. Despite the Covid-19 chal-

lenges, ASER even in this

difficult year remains

based on a meticulous

sampling process.
Timing-wise, September seemed the right time to

do the ASER 2020 survey.

Many schools have sum-

mer holidays in April-

May-June-July. This year, July and August was used by state governments to

plan and implement their

September, school sys

tems across India had set-tled into providing what-

ever support they could to

ASER 2020 Wave 1 was

anchored around a set of

interconnected questions. These included: what

resources did families

have, who in the family

was able to help children,

opportunities did chil-

dren receive and what

were children able to do

with respect to learning.

Many of these questions

were designed not only to

explore how families dealt

with the Covid crisis on

the education front, but

also to provide inputs into

thinking about opportuni-

ties that could be lever-

aged beyond the crisis.

Close to 120,000 house-

Approximately 58 per cent

households were reached,

of which 75.8 per cent

completed the survey.

Thus, the ASER 2020

Wave 1 survey obtained

information for about

Here are some of the

highlights. First, the availability of ASER 2018

data allowed comparisons

to be made. For example,

the proportion of house-

holds who own televisions

or motorised vehicles

remained similar from 2018 to 2020, but a sharp

60,000 children.

were sampled.

holds

their students.

response.

cross-checking.

y January 2021,

have been clos-

ed for almost

300 days. Even

when school systems reopen, it will take time for parents to feel comfort-

able in sending children daily to school. The longer

schools stay shut and the

more uncertain we are

about the next steps, concern grows about the impact and implications

of what looks like a year-

Starting 2005, every year

in mid-January India sees the release of the Annual

Status of Education Rep-

ort (ASER). From 2005 to

2014, the ASER report tracked the status of schooling and provided estimates of basic reading and arithmetic skills. Af-

ter 2014, the nationwide

ASER report is done

every other year and in

the gap year we look in

depth at a specific age

ASER 2019 dealt with the

4-8 age group. The year

2020 would have seen the

report. But given the

Covid crisis, it was appro-

priate to change the focus

and timing of ASER to explore what children

were doing while the

There are several key

features of the ASER arch

itecture that are worth highlighting. ASER has

always been a rural sur-

vey with information col-

lected from households.

The children's sample is

representative at the district and state levels.

During Covid-19, where

the only way to reach fam-

ilies was through phone

calls, and it was essential

to maintain the represen-

tativeness of the sample.

Luckily, as part of the

usual ASER process, phone numbers are col-

lected from each surveyed

household. In a normal

vear, this information is

schools were closed.

For example, ASER 2017 focused on the

country-wide

long closure.

The digital divide

existing divisions

increase in smartphone ownership is visible across states. Nationally,

in 2018, 29.6 per cent fami-lies whose children went

to government schools

owned smartphones. This

number rose to 56.4 per cent by 2018. For families who send their children to

private schools, the figure

in 2018 was 49.9 per cent,

which increased to 74.2

per cent in 2020. A signifi-

cant rise in access to

smartphones in rural fam-

ilies is a striking feature

Overall, households reported that about 75 per

cent children get some

help at home in terms of

learning support, and

despite the crisis, close to

30 per cent children con-

tinued to attend paid

tuition classes. Obviously, in families where parents have more education,

they are able to help chil-

dren more. However, even

in families where both

parents have less than five years of schooling,

close to 25 per cent par-

ents help children. Significant help in low

comes from siblings (in households where both

parents have not even

studied up to Class 5, 23.2

per cent children get help

from older brothers and

In the reference week

before the survey in

September, about a third

of all children reported

receiving learning mate-

rials and activities from

their school. 67 per cent

families whose children

go to government schools

and 87 per cent of those

whose children go to pri-

vate schools reported receiving materials via

WhatsApp. Interestingly,

31.8 per cent of govern-

ment school children's

families also added that

materials came via visits

(either to the school by

parents or by teachers to

Interestingly, 80 per cent

of all children in the sam-

ple had textbooks of their

current grade. This num-

ber was slightly higher for

the child's home).

sisters.)

of the last two years.

is layered on to

in our society

The triviality of what I resort to Wiki for will or may, gentle reader, prompt you to judge me harshly. Today it occurred to me that I had never investigated the origins of the phrase "oopsy daisy"! I am now fairly knowledgeable about the meanings of certain nursery rhymes such as Humpty Dumpty which wasn't an egg as mistakenly portrayed by cartoonists, but a cannon in the service of His Majesty's artillery. I also proudly know that ring-a-ring-a-roses is about the plague that swept Britain and nothing to do with neck lace of blossoms as I had imagined when we played holding hands and forming a ring, at the age of three in the joyous hours of infant birthday

And now Wikipedia corrects my lifelong notions and says the phrase is "Whoopsy Daisy". There are several notes on the origin of the phrase, and they contradict each other and still leave the attribution of alarm, at an accidental slip, or as an encouragement to a child as you fling it into the air, mysterious. The appearance of this Daisy, presumably a girl and not a flower, doesn't figure in the

explanations. Ând in my idle researches I find that there are places where Wikipedia doesn't fear to tread. It very bravely, if casually, tells the literal meaning of the "F" word while incorporating the various expressions which use the single syllable without in any sense invoking its literal meaning. It is, as Bagwash Shri Ragwort noted in one of his rambles, used to express dismissal, disdain, disappointment and other "d"s, not to mention the moods and utterances whose descriptions begin with other letters of the alphabet.

And so, with other words which we, in our graciously inoffensive era, shorten to their first letters. And in that context, after a few minutes of research in these idle hours, I have discovered, gentle reader, that Wikipedia gives us definitions and connotations of very many common Hindi or Urdu swear words, including those which the victims of the

mothers/sisters"

anyway — Ed) abuse may object to as "going on

One stereotype for us Parsis is that

we punctuate our sentences with the MC and BC words. I sincerely protest that my family and their acquaintances never fell into the particular linguistic habit, but a friend in college was universally known as Adi "MC" Manekshaw. He would freely

use the expletives and was famous for his expression of surprise or disbelief, which was "Good Lord MC!" — (the mouth-filling words not just The intriguing word, which I grew up hearing in the Parsi and wider

Indian community, was "saala". The word literally means brother-in-law, and of course can mean that the speaker had carnal relations with the sister of the one to whom the word is directed. That could be provoking and insulting, but in my hearing, it was often used as an endearment. How in such discourse has its negativity turned into its opposite? (All answers to this newspaper's letters page! — fd. Sub-editors: Delete this line, we have enough unprintable nonsense stimulated by his columns

And wandering outside the possible remit of Wikipedia, I have taken to wondering whether the Parsi surname Siganporia, based on an associ-

TUBGOUTE

WINTER SESSION

The reason for scrapping the Winter Session of Parliament has not gone down well with the public (Covid not a good reason to scrap Winter Session, DC, Dec. 18). The same politicians were going on road shows in Bihar and Hvderabad for poll campaigns. Now, it is suspicious that they are citing Covid.

government school chil-

dren. State governments

across India made extensive efforts to deliver text-

books to children, and

this statistic is testament

Asked about where chil-

dren were learning at home during the refer-ence week, 70 per cent

families said their chil-

dren did some learning

activities in that week.

While a majority of these

activities were with tradi-

tional materials like text-

books and worksheets,

fewer children (usually

below 20 per cent) accessed learning pro-

grammes on television,

Five major takeaways

from this year's ASER

exercise: First, the situa-

tion is likely to remain fluid for some months.

With the clear inequities

in our society, it is essen-

tial to track who is getting

what opportunities and to

assess what kind of learn-

ing loss is experienced. Second, ASER 2020 gives

clear evidence of parental

engagement and willing-

ness to support children's

learning. This family support must be leveraged by

the school system in a sys-

tematic way. Third, tradi-

tional teaching-learning

methods should be com-

newer ways of reaching/learning. Fourth, in-

depth assessments of

"what works and how" is

needed to improve digital

content and delivery for

the future. Just because

families have devices and

connectivity doesn't auto-

matically mean learning

is happening effectively.

Finally, the digital divide

is layered on to existing

divisions in our society.

Mechanisms to reach and

teach children who are on

the dark side of the divide

must be worked out so

their educational disad-

vantage can be ameliorat-

ASER 2020 completed

first wave

September. It's likely that

a follow-up wave may be planned later in the cur-

rent school year to track

how children's learning

Rukmini Banerii is the

CEO of Pratham Education Foundation

journeys are progressing.

ed over time.

radio or online.

these endeavours.

Dr Mohammed Abdul Mujeeb Siddiqui Hyderabad

SATELLITE LAUNCH

Isro's consistent achievements come as a pleasant surprise to a nation where people are fed up with negative news like agitations, crimes, hate speeches, political challenges, etc (PSLV places comm satellite in orbit after perfect launch, DC, Dec. 18). ISRO's efficiency, team work and planning are an inspiration for political parties, governments and various institutions to resolve the burning issues the country is facing

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao Hyderabad

COVID VACCINE

Thanks to doctors for enlightening us about taking Covid vaccine. The government should ensure that all phases of tests are cleared and that there are no side effects. Dr Gawande has rightly said it is a risk versus benefit situation and depends on immunity of people.

Ausaf Butool

50 YEARS AGO IN **Probe into Shastri's** death rejected

NEW DELHI, Dec. 18. The Government today rejected the demand for a probe into former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's death in Tashkent five years ago. The demand for setting up a commission of enquiry was made in the Rajya Sabha by Opposition Members of Congress(O), BKD, Jana Sangh and SSP while seeking clarifications on government statement relating to Shastri's death laid on the table of the two Houses of

Parliament in the morning.
Minister of State for Home
Affairs R.N. Mirdha said that no facts had come to light which called for an enquiry and that there was no question of any doubt in this case.

ation with place, as with Adenwalla and Billimoria, should really be "Singaporia". It is easy to see how the eastern tongue twists the sound of "x" or "ks" into "sk", as in the transformation of Alexander to Sikander, or as boys in school would say "I'll aks my bro"!

And so with the word signal, again in English two consonants "g" and "n" thrown together and rendered very often by the general Indian public as "singal". Which is why I suspect, as there is no place in Gujarat called Siganpor, that the surname derives from some ancestor who pursued the opium trade, banking or some such in the far

eastern colony. Again, in idle intellectual mode, I wonder why my grandmother demonised the vegetable which we call "brinjal" and Europeans refer to as aubergine or eggplant, by characterising anyone who fell ill with the phrase "vengna khaddha", meaning 'ate brinjals". In my short and happy life, I have never known the veg-

etable to be toxic or poisonous. Where are the Parsi etymologists and phraseological historians when you need them? Come back, all is



FINANCIAL Chronicle

KARIMNAGAR | SATURDAY | 19 DECEMBER 2020

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	46,960.69	0.15
Nifty 50	13,760.55	0.14
S&P 500*	3,699.28	-0.62
Dollar (₹)	73.56	0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.31	0.66
Euro (₹)	90.10	-0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,644▲21	0.042
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	52.17	0.67
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.959	0.007
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.926	-0.004
* As of 8:30 PM IST		

India Inc's FY21 FDI outflow at \$12.25 billion

Indian firms have committed overseas investments worth \$12.25 billion between April and November this year. Of this actual outflow would be \$6.35-2.97 bn through equity and \$3.38 bn in loan commitments. The rest, \$5.90 bn, would be in guarantees. Main investors are OVL (\$1852 million), JSW Steel (\$865 mn), Haldia Petro-chem (\$599 mn), HCL Tech (\$587 mn), M&M (\$551 mn) and Adani Properties (\$391 mn), Care Ratings said.

No cane price cut; Goyal asks mills to be efficient



Food minister Pivush Goval said the government cannot reduce the fair and remunerative price (FRP), the minimum price at which sugar mills buy cane from farmers, and asked the industry to be efficient, profitable and diversify product portfolio with less dependency on the central subsidy. Addressing Isma, Goyal said the central subsidy of Rs 3,500 crore for exports will help in liquidating surplus sugar stocks.

Bank credit rises 5.73%, deposits move up 11.34%

Bank credit grew by 5.73 per cent to Rs 105.04 lakh crore while deposits increased by 11.34 per cent to Rs 145.92 lakh crore in the fortnight ended Dec. 4, RBI data showed. In the fortnight ended Dec. 6, 2019, bank credit had stood at Rs 99.35 lakh crore and deposits at Rs 131.06 lakh crore. In the previous fortnight ended Nov. 20, credit grew by 5.82 per cent to Rs 104.34 lakh crore and deposits by 10.89 per cent.

Forex reserves down by \$778 mn to \$578.56 bn

The country's foreign exchange reserves declined by \$778 million to \$578.568 billion in the week to Dec. 11, RBI data showed. In the previous week. the reserves had touched a lifetime high of \$579.346 bn after increasing by \$4.525 bn. Foreign currency assets dropped by \$1.042 bn to \$536.344 bn. The gold reserves rose by \$284 mn to \$36.012 bn. The SDRs with IMF dipped



■ Instructed to clear goods fast, credit drawback in 3 days

Customs asked to behave

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 18

In a major relief to exporters and importers, customs officials have been asked to credit duty drawback to the exporter in three days. They have also been asked to reduce unnecessary delays and arbitrary practices during the custom clearance of imported goods.

The Action Plan of CBIC 2020- 21 directs officials that at least 90 per cent of the duty drawback should be credited within three days. Further, the refund may be deposited into the customer account in T+2

government's instruction to further reduce the timeline for crediting at least 90 per cent of the duty drawback claims to the exporters from seven days to three days, will definitely help



improve the cash flow of various industry players involved in exporting goods out of India, especially in these Covid times when a large number of businesses are still facing liquidity crunch," said Abhishek Jain, tax part-

ner, EY. Moreover all the remaining duty drawback claims should be positively disposed of by March 31, 2021 and while doing so the target of disposing of draw-

back in seven days should be achieved, said Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).

A major cause of worry

for importers has been the delay in clearances. Exports, after a positive growth in September, once again started de-growing

in October and November. Delays in the clearance of goods at the customs department have been one among the various reasons for this. "Most of the

imports from Free Trade economies have receiving queries and were getting delayed for days as well as months," said the Federation of Indian Indian Exporters Association.
The customs officials have now been advised to

ensure judicious application of Carotar 2020, which are rules pertaining to country of origin, without causing disruption to the supply chain. They were also advised to review the function of customs ports to ensure that unnecessary delays and arbitrary prac tices are not being resorted to during custom clearance of goods.
The CBIC observed that

importers are often asked to directly seek clarifica-tions of the exporting country on country of origin verifications. "Officers under your charge may also be sensitised to ensure that enquiry on origin of only where there are sufficient grounds to suspect origin of a good, or where the same has been identified as a risk by the Risk Management They should be suitably supervised to ensure that unnecessary queries are not raised on account of goods origin," said CBIC. "In order to resolve

imported goods is initiated

industry concerns around the Carotar 2020, CBIC has instructions to ensure that queries under the said rules are issued only when sufficient grounds to question the origin of goods are present. This is a smart move on the part of the government and will be much appreciated by the industry, as this, while preventing revenue leakage, will ensure that the shipments unnecessary delayed at customs ports,

Sensex hits 47000 in opening trade



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 18

The Sensex breached the 47000-mark for the first time ever on Friday in opening trade, led by gains in the IT sector stocks post-Accenture's strong first quarter per-formance and US Federal Reserve's decision to keep rates unchanged.

The unrelenting bull run is now seen taking the benchmark index closer to 50000 points, the target

set by some brokerages.
The index opened at 47026 as against the previous close at 46,890.34. But it closed below 47000 at 46,960.69, up 70 points or 0.15 per cent, as the market turned volatile post the big opening move and touched a low of 46,630.31.

The Nifty-50 also closed at a new all-time high of 13,760.55, gaining 0.14 per cent. or 19.85 points.

Recently BNP Paribas set a target of 50500 for 2021, earlier Morgan Stanley had said that the Sensex would cross 50000 by December 2021. Who knows it may come

even earlier by March 2021, going by the pace of index movement.

At the same time risks are increasing as the foreign money pouring into the equity market is large-

short-term which could fly out on monetary policy tightening by global central banks like the US Fed.

Large-scale foreign buy-ing continued, with Rs 2,720.95 crore net purchase reported by the exchanges on Friday.

"The Fed's decision to keep rates unchanged will help FIIs to maintain a positive view on emerging markets like India, said Vinod Nair, head of research, Geoiit Financial

Strong first quarter FY21 performance by IT major Accenture led to a rally in Indian IT stocks.

The BSE IT index gained 1.70 per cent, led by gains for Infosys (2.64 per cent), Wipro (1.89 per cent), HCL Technologies (1.32 per cent) and and

TCS (0.87 per cent).
"Accenture's Q1 performance and guidance came in well ahead of expectations largely due continued demand in outsourcing and recovery in the consulting business," said Emkay Global Financial Services. "A broad-based demand recovery and sustained healthy growth momentum in revenue/ order booking of the outsourcing business augur well for Indian IT peers.

Logistics' competitiveness gap may cost \$500 bn by 2030

SANGEETHA G

CHENNAI, DEC. 18

With the supply chain inefficiencies remaining high, the competitiveness gap of the Indian logistics sector is expected to go up from \$180 billion to \$500 billion in 2030.

The logistics cost in India stands at 14 per cent of GDP, compared to the global average of about 8 per cent, creating a competitiveness gap of \$180 billion and this could increase to \$500 billion by 2030, finds a report by global management consultancy Arthur D. Little.

India's supply chain and logistics sector is valued at \$215 billion and is growing at a CAGR of 10.5 per cent. It is marred by an unbalanced logistics modal mix, high indirect costs, poor infrastructure,

fragmented networks and lack of technology adoption. The pandemfurther accentuated supply chain weaknesses.

Indirect logistics costs in India

are four times the average of those in developed countries. The main reasons are excessive layers in distribution channels and inventory mismanagement. Inadequate demand forecasting due to lack of technology adoption leads to inventory mismanagement. It also leads to high inventory carrying costs, which include costs for holding and storing unsold goods. These costs alone amount to 15-25 per cent of inventory costs or \$120 to \$180 billion.

Transportation by road is at the root of the unwarranted logistics costs. Transportation represents

about 40 per cent of logistics costs, and heavy dependence on the road networks, combined with poor transportation infrastructure makes transportation costs balloon. India's rail and sea network are highly under-utilised due to

lack of supporting infrastructure Failing to address India's competitiveness gap of \$180 billion could expand it to \$500 billion by 2030. Greenfield manufacturing will not be viable because high logistics costs are a barrier to entry. High logistics costs will continue to impede local manufacturing and reduce demand for Indian products in the global markets.

"To bridge the current competi-

tiveness gap of \$180 billion, India needs to halve logistics cost from 14 per cent of GDP to 7 per cent,

said Barnik Chitran Maitra, managing partner of Arthur D. Little India and South Asia.

The study finds that India will have to optimise the logistics modal mix to global benchmarks, with roads constituting 25-30 per cent, railways comprising 50-55 per cent and waterways accounting for 20-25 per cent of transportation modes. It will have to reduce indirect or "hidden" costs to 20-25 per cent through efficient inventory management and monitoring. In addition, turnaround time should be optimised to 700-800 km per day, with the target of increasing truck trips by 50 per cent. The throughput of the road network has to be raised with better quality roads and a higher proportion national highways in the road network.

World's richest banker Kotak made \$16 bn after a brush with death

SUVASHREE GHOSH & ANTO ANTONY

If it weren't for a cricket killed him, Uday Kotak probably wouldn't be the world's richest banker.

A ball that hit him in the

head and led to an emergency surgery pushed a 20-year-old Kotak to abandon his dream of becoming a professional player. After a brief stint at the family's cotton-trading business, he went on to pursue his MBA at the prestigious Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Bajaj Institute of Management Studies in Mumbai before starting out in finance in 1985 at the age of 26.

Kotak, now 61, has a fortune estimated at around \$16 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

While India has been grappling with a shadowlending crisis, his Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd has been able to rise through the crowd, gaining investors' trust by starting to slow lending to riskier sectors more than two years ago and keeping good corporate governance. When the coronavirus pandemic added to the industry's woes by eroding borrowers' ability to repay the firm was one of the first to raise capital to fortify its balance sheet, helping boost investors' confidence.

The strategy paid off: Kotak Mahindra Bank shares are up 17 per cent



this year, the most among Indian peers, and Kotak just gained an extension to his chief executive officer term for another three vears. A representative at the firm didn't respond to requests for comment.

'As far as I'm concerned, becoming the world's richest banker is only a proxy for Uday being one of the world's smartest bankers," said Anand Mahindra, the chairman of Mahindra Group in Mumbai, whose tie-up with Kotak back in 1986 led to the firm's name. "More importantly, he's understood that what makes a bank sustainable and durable is not just smart strategies but unassailable governance.

Kotak's company stands out in a country where lenders have some of the worst bad-loan ratios in the world. While its badloan ratio has risen in 2020, it ranked as the second lowest among peers, with its capital-adequacy score being the highest. The nation's second-largest lender by market value reported an unexpected 27 per cent profit surge in the September

The firm got another boost last month, when the central bank proposed increasing the ownership limit for founders, effectively reducing the risk that Kotak will be forced to dilute his 26 per cent stake in the lender as pre-viously demanded by the Reserve Bank of India.

Kotak, a native of Gujarat, set up an investment company in 1985 with a Rs 30 lakh (\$41,000) loan from family and friends and partnered with Mahindra the following year. The firm, which started off discounting bills, later expanded its loan portfolio, got into brokering, investment banking, insurance and mutual funds. It converted into a lender in 2003 after getting the

RBI's nod. He has been Kotak Mahindra Bank's CEO since its beginning and gained more control of it in 2006 by ending a part-nership of more than a decade with Goldman Sachs Group Inc. Kotak rose through the ranks by keeping strong underwriting practices and avoiding lending to riskier sectors, focusing instead on expanding collateral-backed loans for farm equipment, mortgages and vehicles, according to Deepak Jasani, head of retail research at HDFC Securities Ltd. While the RBI just

approved the extension of investors are starting to wonder what will happen after he hands over the

Unlike many familyowned enterprises in India, Kotak has avoided enrolling family members into the lender's board or at top executive positions. That helped maintain investors' and depositors' confidence in a country where the lack of corporate governance and transparency has already brought down three banks and pushed two shadow lenders to bankruptcy in

less than two years.
"It's been all Uday," said Ananth Narayan, a former banker and now an associate professor of finance at the S.P. Jain Institute of Management & Research in Mumbai. "There are a lot of good people under him, but frankly, they are all over-Anybody who has to step into Uday's shoes has a tough job because he is an institution by himself.'

Europe, US top markets for Indian IT contractors



Mumbai, Dec 18: The United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, the United States and South Africa are among the top countries attracting and retaining high-skilled Indian workers in the contracting marketplace, says a survey.

The survey titled 'Global Demand for Indian IT Contractors' has been done by contractor hiring platform Techfynder that a majority of companies from these regions on the platform have shown an interest in hiring for core domains that include cloud, cyber and digitisation.
The findings are based

on the survey of 52,000 contractors from across country January and December 2020, to find out the trends in the contractual job marketplace in India. Due to the pandemic,

businesses are going online to offer their products and services, has which further increased the demand for IT contractors in roles such as software engineers, senior java developers, cyber security engineers, data scientists, web developers, and UI/UX designers, it noted.

As per the survey, the

Ireland, Netherlands, the US, and South Africa are the top five countries attracting and retaining a highly skilled Indian workforce. Further, it said since

March this year there was a staggering 610 per cent growth in job postings for IT contractors across the Philippines, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Canada, Kenya and Brazil. The information tech-

nology sector tops the charts with 48 per cent hiring of the contractual workforce. It is followed by insurance (18 per cent), banking and finance (16 per cent), telecommunications (12 per cent) and pharmaceuticals (6 per cent), the survey said.

"The IT contractual job market has always seen good traction. However, the growth for contractors in India has only been exemplified during the pandemic, which massively impacted the global job market

"Gradually, companies in India, and around the world are making a shift in talent acquisition and embracing contractual hiring. As a result, there is a rising demand for our services." Founder and CEO Praveen Madire said. —PTI

WITH EQUIFAX FOR STAFF VERIFICATION DC CORRESPONDENT

TS DEET TIES UP

HYDERABAD, DEC. 18

Digital Employment Exchange of Telanga na (DEET) has official ly collaborated with consumer credit rating agency Equifax to streamline the process of employment verifica-

tion.
"This strategic collaboration, through the introduction of new digital services on DEET app, will open gates for swift employment & ID verification for employees, easing out the tedious process of hiring," DEET said in an official release.

The current system of employee verification takes upto 10 days. With this collaboration, DEET and Equifax aim at enhancing the employment ecosystem in Telangana and make the process of recruitment and verification instant.

Equifax Analytics is the only significant employer-contributed employment data repository in the country, enabling instant employment verification.

Speaking on the collaboration, IT minister K.T. Rama Rao said, "I see this collaboration of DEET and Equifax as another stepping stone by the government towards Techfynder brighter future for the employment sector.'

Copper tops \$8,000 as Goldman points to commodities super-cycle

Dec. 18: Copper topped \$8,000 a tonne for the first time in more than seven vears, with Goldman Sachs Group Inc and BlackRock Inc pointing to the start of a new long-term bull market as supply lags an expected demand boom. The market is witnessing

the sharpest rally in more than a decade, with China's appetite for commodities and supply snags early on in the Covid-19 pandemic lifting copper about 80 per cent from its March lows. Expectations for a deficit.

the weaker dollar, and its role in green technology have also fuelled gains. Some banks and investors are now drawing comparisons to the spike in the early 2000s, when a jump in Chinese orders ushered in the last super-cycle for commodities.

"You have all the tell-tale signs of a super-cycle," Jeff

Currie, head of commodities research at Goldman Sachs, told Bloomberg TV. He cited metals hitting multiyear highs, the weaker dollar, crude oil reaching \$50, and rising global liquidity. Copper spiked to \$8,028 a

tonne, the highest price since 2013, on Thursday, on London Exchange. Most other metals also gained, with aluminum rising 0.5 per cent.



Singapore iron ore futures pushed above \$160 a tonne, hitting the highest level since trading began in

Goldman pointed to the start of a positive feedback loop between commodities, the dollar and emergingmarket growth that has driven past structural bull markets. At the centre is strong, synchronized, policy-driven demand focused on wealth redistribution and renewables and, with commodity supply-side spending outside of renew-ables still at very low levels, this demand growth should keep markets tight for the foreseeable future, it said in a December 17

BlackRock expects copper to hit new all-time highs in the upswing of the cycle, Evy Hambro, the firm's global head of thematic investing, said.

China's success at containing the pandemic and optimism about global economic growth next year is fuelling gains across industrial commodities from iron ore to oil. It's been a remarkable turnaround for copper, which fell more than 50 per cent from a record high in 2011, trading below \$5,000 a tonne during a slump in 2015-16 and again earlier this year.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Rooney's son Kai signs for Man U

London: Wayne Rooney's son Kai has followed in his father's footsteps by signing for Manchester United. United's record goalscorer posted a picture on social media of the 11-year-old, the oldest of Rooney's four sons, signing a contract at his father's former club. Rooney accompanied the image with the caption: "Proud day. Kai signing for @manchesterunited. Keep up the hard

work son. Rooney, 38, now in interim charge of Championship club Derby, joined United from Everton in 2004 as a teenager. The former England striker had a glittering 13-year career at Old Trafford, scoring 253 times in 559 appearances and breaking Bobby Charlton's longstanding goals record in January 2017. — *AFP*

NBA keeps coach challenge rule

New York: The NBA is keeping the replay rule allowing coaches one challenge of certain officiating decisions per game, the league said Thursday. The coach's challenge was introduced last season on a one-year trial basis. The league said Thursday that the board of governors had approved a recommendation from the competition committee to retain the challenge going forward. "Our coaches were receptive to the pilot version of the Coach's Challenge, increasing usage and becoming more comfort-

able with the concept and strategic aspects as the season progressed," Byron Spruell, **NBA President of League** Operations, said in a statement. During the 2019-20 season, NBA head coaches challenged

633 calls in the regular season and 67 in the playoffs. - AFP

Smith gears up for Alvarez bout

Los Angeles: Britain's Callum Smith will be out to prove that size does matter on Saturday when he defends his World Boxing Association super-middleweight crown against pound-for-pound king Saul 'Canelo" Alvarez in Texas. The unbeaten Smith (27-0, 19 knockouts) will take sizeable height and reach advantages into the ring at the Alamodome in San Antonio against the naturally smaller Alvarez (53-1-2, 36 KOs). Alvarez, who has not fought since he jumped up to light-heavyweight to score an 11th round knockout of Sergey Kovalev in November 2019, starts as favourite for Saturday's bout where he will once again move up in class.

difference between the two men - Smith is 6ft 3in, Alvarez 5ft 8in — was plain to see.—AFP **Aniket scores as**

The 30-year-old Mexican super-

star faced off against Smith this

week where the striking height

Jamshedpur win Vasco: NorthEast United FC slumped to their first defeat in the ongoing Indian Super League as they went down 0-1

to Jamshedpur FC, here on Friday Aniket Jadhav's strike (53rs minute) was the difference between the two sides in

what was the 500th game of T. P. Rehnesh also pulled off a

terrific penalty save in the sec-ond-half to keep Jamshedpur's unbeaten streak against NorthEast intact.

Both sides were unable to break the deadlock in the first half as they managed to cancel out each other's threat. As a result, no shots on target were

Live on



Australia vs India; First Test — Dav Three from 9.30 am on Sony Ten 1, 3, Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Crystal Palace vs Liverpool from 6 pm; Southampton vs Manchester City from 8.30 pm; Everton vs Arsena from 11 pm; Newcastle vs Fulham from 1.30 am (Sunday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Indian Super League: Goa vs Chennaiyin from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Italian League: Fiorentina vs Verona from 7.30 pm; Sampdoria vs Crotone from 10.30 pm; Parma vs Juventus from 1.15 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

Fight Night: Leon Edwards vs Khamzat Chimaev and other bouts from 5.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

ASHVIN ON FIRE Man U ride on Rashford's brace

Spinner takes four to tie Aussies in knots on Day 2

Adelaide, Dec. 18: Ravi Ashwin bagged four wick-ets as a dominant India held a 62-run lead at stumps on day two of the Adelaide day-night Test after Australian captain Tim Paine ran out of batting partners.

Paine was left stranded on 73 not out when the Australian innings ended at 191 to trail India's 244

by 53 runs. Ashwin had figures of 4-55 while Umesh Yadav took 3-40.

At stumps, India in their second innings were one down for nine with Mayank Agarwal on five nightwatchman Jasprit Bumrah yet to score. The under-pressure Prithvi Shaw, who was out for a duck in the first innings, was bowled by Pat Cummins for four.

Fifteen wickets fell on the day which started when Cummins and when Cummins and Mitchell Starc took just 25 deliveries to knock off the final four India batsmen.

Australia in turn struggled to make headway as Bumrah, Ashwin and Yadav worked their way through the batting order.

Even with India spilling five chances, they never allowed Australia to settle apart from a determined Paine who plugged on to his eighth half century, aided in part by being dropped by Agarwal on 26.

It was Paine's only misstep and he brought up his 50 off 68 deliveries with an assured cut to the boundary.

As his confidence grew he produced a reverse sweep to move into the 60s with a four off Ashwin. After Australia took 28

balls to get their first runs on the board, Jasprit Bumrah stepped up to remove Matthew Wade and the out-of-form Joe Burns for eight each before dinner.

Ravichandran Ashwin's spin captured the wickets of Steve Smith, Travis Head and debutant Cameron Green between dinner and tea.



Ravichandran Ashwin (second from left) of India celebrates with teammates after dismissing Australia's Steve Smith during their second day of the first Test in Adelaide on Friday.

SCORECARD

India 1st Innings: (overnight 233 for 6): Saha c Paine b Starc 9, Ashwin c Paine b Cummins 15, Yadav c Wade b Starc 6, Bumrah not out 4, Shami c Head b Cummins 0. Extras (B-2, LB-8, NB-7, WD-1) 18. Total (all out in 93.1

FoW: 1-0, 2-3, 3-100, 4-188, 5-196, 6-206, 7-233, 8-235, 9-240, 10-244. Bowling: Starc 21-5-53-4, Hazlewood 20-6-47-1, Cummins 21.1-7-48-3, Green 9-2-15-0, Nathan Lyon 21-2-68-1, Marnus Labuschagne 1-0-3-0.

Australia 1st Innings: Wade Ibw b Bumrah 8, Burns Ibw b Bumrah 8, Labuschagne Ibw b Yadav 47, Smith c Rahane b Ashwin 1, Head c&b Ashwin 7, Green c Kohli b Ashwin 11, Paine not out 73, Cummins c Rahane b Yadav O, Starc run out 15, Lyon c Kohli b Ashwin 10, Hazlewood c Pujara b Yadav 8. Extras (LB-3) 3. **Total (all out in 72.1 overs) 191. FoW:** 1-16, 2-29, 3-45, 4-65, 5-79, 6-111, 7-111, 8-139, 9-167, 10-191. Bowling: Yadav 16.1-5-40-3, Bumrah 21-7-52-2, Shami 17-4-41-0, Ashwin 18-3-55-4.

India 2nd Innings: Prithvi b Cummins 4, Mayank not out 5, Bumrah not out 0. Total (for 1 wicket in 6 overs) 9.

Bowling: Starc 3-1-3-0, Cummins 3-2-6-1.

NUMBERS GAME

R. ASHWIN'S BEST BOWLING IN AUSTRALIA: Ravichandran Ashwin recorded the best bowling performance in Australia by taking four for 55 off 18 overs. It was only second time when this off-spinner took four wickets in an innings in Australia. His previous best in Australia was four for 105 off 19 overs at Sydney in January 2015. The 34-year old's best bowling against Australia is seven for 103 at Chennai in February 2013.

Ravichandran Ashwin also became the third highest wicket taker for India against Australia in Tests after Anil Kumble (111 wickets in 38 innings of 20 Tests) and Harbhajan Singh (95 wickets in 35 innings of 18 Tests). He took 81 wickets at an average of 31.00 in 29 innings of 16 Tests by end of the Australian first innings.

Steven Smith made just one run off 29 balls in 45 minutes. It was his fourth single in 132 innings of 74 Tests.His previous slowest single was against England at Lord's in July 18,2013, off 14 balls in 19 muinutes.

Tim Paine's unbeaten 73 was fifth half century in 31 innings of 20 Tests as skipper. Overall, it was his eighth fifty in 51 innings of 32 Tests.

- S. PERVEZ QAISER

Kingdom), Dec. 18:Manchester United mount-

ed yet another rescue mission on Thursday, beating Sheffield United 3-2 to maintain their perfect away record in the Premier League this season.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's Jekyll-and-Hyde team now have 18 points from six matches on the road — coming from behind to win each one of them.

Two goals from Marcus Rashford and an Anthony Martial strike lifted United to sixth in the table, five points behind leaders Liverpool with a game in But Sheffield United are

staring into the abyss with just one point to their name, Chris Wilder's side have fewer points after their first 13 games of a league season than any other team in English topflight history.
The visitors outclassed

Sheffield United for long periods at Bramall Lane but faced a nervy final few minutes before celebrating their 10th consecutive away victory in the league. Sheffield United started brightly as Manchester United struggled to find

THE RESULTS

Manchester United (Rashford 26, 51, Martial 33) **Sheffield United** (McGoldrick 5, 87)

Aston Villa Burnley

their rhythm and it was no surprise when they scored just their sixth league goal of the season in the fifth minute.

United appeared to be in cruise control but McGoldrick headed home from a corner in the 87th minute to make life uncomfortable and Henderson had to dive to his right to keep out a powerful shot by substitute Lys Mousset. But the visitors clung on for the win. Meanwhile, Aston Villa

squandered multiple chances as they were held to a frustrating 0-0 draw by battling

Thursday.
The hosts dominated without being at their best but were thwarted by the Clarets, who climbed out of the Premier League relega

Roma rout Torino in Italian league

Milan, Dec. 18: Roma moved level on points with champions Juventus in third place in Italian League on Thursday with a 3-1 win over 10-man Torino.

Torino had a mountain to climb after Wilfried Singo was sent off after 14 min-utes in Rome following two yellow cards in seven min-

Roma followed on from their 5-1 win over Bologna last weekend and are level on 24 points with Juventus. After Singo's dismissal

the hosts piled on the pressure and it paid off with Mkhitaryan opening the scoring after 27 minutes in the Stadio Olimpico. Torino goalkeeper Vanja

Milinkovic-Savic

pushed out a Gianluca Mancini long-range effort, but Leonardo Spinazzola sent the ball back with Mkhitaryan's follow-up hitting the post and bounc ing into the net.

Jordan Veretout converted a penalty before the break after a foul on Edin Dzeko.

Simone Edera rattled the woodwork for Torino after an hour but the visitors hopes diminished when Lorenzo Pellegrini added a third after 68 minutes.

Torino captain Andrea Belotti pulled a goal back after 73 minutes with substitute Federico Bonazzoli sending the ball wide minutes later.

SYDNEY TEST Kiwis down Pak STILL ON CARD, **ASSERTS CA**

Melbourne, Dec. 18: Cricket Australia Friday asserted that the third Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India is not threatened by a fresh Covid-19 outbreak in Sydney even though the situation is being

closely monitored. CA officials were put on alert after the number of cases in the northern beaches outbreak in Sydney reached 28 on Friday. The third Test at the SCG is on January 7.

'There's been lots of discussion and meetings of our medical experts, but this is the reason why throughout the summer we've had our players in bubbles in the hub," CA's interim chief executive Nick Hockley said.

On whether the SCG Test was in doubt, Hockley said: "I don't think so — this is the verv reason why we have the hubs in place...'

Auckland, Dec. 18: New Zealand cruised to five-wicket win over

Pakistan in the first Twentv20 international at Auckland's Eden Park on Friday. The Black Caps ended on 156 for five with

seven balls to spare after losing the toss and being set a target of 154. Tim Seifert top-scored for the hosts with 57, while debutant paceman

Jacob Duffy took four Pakistan never recovered from a slow start, despite a fighting 42

from stand-in captain Shadab Khan. Haris Rauf was the tourists' best bowler,

taking three for 29. Pakistan had a rocky preparation for the match when 10 of their touring party tested positive for Covid-19 during quarantine after arriving in New Zealand.

Zealand were coming off a 2-0 series win over the West Indies and playing in home conditions. Man of the match

Duffy made a sensational start, dismissing Abdullah opener Shafique for a duck in his first over.

He then claimed the scalps of Mohammad Rizwan and Mohammad Hafeez in his second over. Khan tried to rescue his side's innings, smashing 42 from 32 balls before Duffy coaxed a top edge to Sodhi.

The second and third T20s will be played in Hamilton and Napier on Sunday and Tuesday.

Brief scores: Pakistan 153/9 in 20 overs (Shadab Khan Jacob Duffy 4/33) lost to New Zealand 156/5 in 18.5 overs (Tim Seifert 57; Haris Rauf

BIG SQUADS TO FIGHT RURRUF **FATIGUE: IAN**

London, Dec. 18: Former Australia captain Ian Chappell believes teams such as India will need increasingly large squads to help them combat "bubble fatigue" as they press ahead with extensive touring schedules amid the Coronavirus pandemic. Leading Indian players have been in a series of bio-secure bubbles since September, initially while taking part in an IPL moved to the United Arab Emirates on health grounds.

Travelling to Australia. they again underwent quarantine ahead of the ongoing Test series.

"I have never experienced anything like this, and I am not surprised some players have started to talk about bubble fatigue. If you look at what India have got coming up, they are going to need a huge squad of players," Chappell said.

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Russia hails no ban on a

Stanislav

expressed

Dec. Olympic Russia's Committee on Thursday expressed its satisfaction the Court of Arbitration for Sport's decision not to ban the country's athletes from participating in the Olympics.

Sport's highest court on Thursday barred Russia from the international stage for two years including the rearranged Tokyo Olympics and Beijing Winter Games, but halved a four-year ban for systemic doping imposed by the WADA.

The country will also miss out on the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Speaking to reporters blasted as "unacceptable" on Thursday, the Russian CAS's decision to ban

The court decided not to accept the theses that demanded. course, this is a significant precedent," he added

Olympic

Russia.

president Pozdnyakov

satisfaction that CAS had

not "collectively" banned

Russia's athletes, who will still be able to partic-

ipate under a neutral flag

if they prove no connection to doping.

ing head of the country's

anti-doping agency RUSADA, said: "Today's

results are a victory for

However Pozdnyakov

Mikhail Bukhanov, act-

Russia's high-ranking officials, including the Committee's country's president Vladimir Putin, from country's attending the Games. Russia has been roiled

by the doping saga for the past four years, after the former head of Moscow's anti-doping laboratory Grigory Rodchenkov blew the whistle over state-backed doping at the country's 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

Russia considers the resulting ban to be legally indefensible and Putin has slammed the decision as "politically motivated". On Thursday Russian news agency RIA Novosti cited Sports Minister Oleg Matytsin as saying that he "regret-

ted" the ban on Russian officials at the Games.
The President of the Russian Swimming Federation, Salnikov, said he expected

"an even worse scenario" The United States Anti-Doping Agency condemned the Court of Arbitration for Sport's decision to halve Russia's doping ban on Thursday as a "tragedy" for the global fight against drug cheats, slamming the ruling as a "weak and loop-

hole-riddled out-come. USADA chief executive Travis Tygart said the CAS decision represented a "significant loss" for the WADA and clean ath-

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