

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | THURSDAY 10 | DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 29°C
Min: 19°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Karthigai 25
Tithi: Dashami/ Ekadashi
Star: Hastham/ Chithirai
Rahukalam:
1.30 pm to 3 pm
Yamagandam:
6 am to 7.30 am
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.03 am
Zohar: 12.05 pm
Asar: 3.16 pm
Maghrib: 5.42 pm
Isha: 6.57 pm
SUNSET TODAY 5.44 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.21 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 1.46 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 2.06 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+26,309)	(+337)
97,62,326	1,41,735

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,232)
TN: 7,94,020 11,836

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

6,89,45,814

DEATHS

15,70,416

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES 218

worldometers.info

I-T dept raids Chettinad group of Chennai; ₹7-cr cash recovered

New Delhi: The Income-Tax department on Wednesday conducted raids at multiple locations of Chennai-based Chettinad group in connection with a tax evasion probe, officials said. The department on its official Twitter handle said the action was being undertaken against a “prominent business group of Chennai having varied business activities.” “About 60 premises are being covered in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra,” an official said as he identified it as the Chettinad group. They said over ₹7 crore “unaccounted” cash has been recovered from “a key person” till now and the raids were still on. The about 100-year-old Chettinad group has interests in several businesses like construction, cement, power and others. — PTI

COUNTER

POINT



Too much of rajneeti!

Not enough data; wait for Indian vaccine to be longer

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

In a setback to two major pharma companies in the race for the vaccine for Coronavirus, the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) has not granted the Emergency Use Authorization permission (EAPU) to city-based Bharat Biotech and the Serum Institute of India (SII) for their respective vaccines, Covaxin and Covishield. The data submitted by both

● **Due to lack of data on Indian patients, the CDSCO subject expert committee, which met on Wednesday, found that the “data submitted of phase 1 and phase 2 trials was not sufficient”**

companies was found to be “insufficient” by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) of the DCGI in terms of data on the trials of Indian patients, according to sources. The panel sought additional data on the safety and efficacy of their proposed shots.

Due to lack of data on Indian patients, the CDSCO

subject expert committee, which met on Wednesday, found that the “data submitted of phase 1 and phase 2 trials was not sufficient”.

Bharat Biotech applied to DCGI for EUA on December 7 for Covaxin, developed indigenously by the firm in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research, while Pune-based

Serum Institute sought a nod for its Oxford vaccine, Covishield, on December 6.

The DCGI said that Covid-19 vaccine candidates should have “at least 50 per cent efficacy in phase III clinical trials” for it to be widely deployed. The DCGI rules of 2019 state that there must be at least 3,000 patients on whom the vaccine has to be tested before approval.

According to sources aware of the proceedings, “the data submitted by a company to CDSCO in order to get a EUA pertained to

data of overseas patients by a company for phase III human clinical trials”.

In case of another company, recruitment of all 26,000 volunteers is still not complete, sources said. Experts believe that the waiting period for EUA will take at least another month, if not more.

The application by the Indian arm of US pharmaceutical firm Pfizer was not taken up for deliberation on Wednesday as the company sought more time for making a presentation.

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Posters to have only photo of Rajinikanth



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Biden picks retired Army general to lead Pentagon

SPORT | 8

Injured Warner now out of first Test



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Centre’s draft an insult; will block capital, say farmers

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

Within hours of receiving the Union government’s draft proposals Wednesday to amend the new agriculture laws, the farmers’ unions categorically rejected it and threatened to intensify their agitation by blocking all entry points to the national capital if their demands were not immediately met. They also threatened to capture all toll plazas and hold “sit-in” protests across the country.

Terming the proposal as “vague” and an insult to farmers, Krantikari Kisan Union president Darshan Pal said: “We will block the Delhi-Jaipur highway and Delhi-Agra expressway and sit on dharna at all toll plazas on December 12... No tax to be paid on that day at any toll plaza... We will also gherao all district headquarters during our nationwide protest on December 14. We have asked the people to protest against every MP and MLA of the BJP.”

The farmers’ organisations have also threatened that they will boycott all Jio products and Reliance malls across the country. As the farmers’ agitation against the Centre’s three contentious laws completed a fortnight, the Centre Wednesday proposed to give a “written assurance” that the existing MSP regime for procurement will continue. ■ **PS**



Madhya Pradesh-based farmer leader Shiv Kumar Kakkaji, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) spokesperson Rakesh Tikiat, and other farmer leaders address media after a meeting regarding the Centre’s farm reform laws, near Singhu border in New Delhi, on Wednesday. — PTI

Shah may hold talks with unions again

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC 9

Even though talks between home minister Amit Shah and farmers remained inconclusive on Tuesday night, the senior minister in the Narendra Modi cabinet is likely to hold another round of discussions with the agitating farmers in the next few days in case the deadlock persists.

Sources claimed the home minister was keen on finding a way out of the impasse. Following a directive from Mr Shah the Agriculture Ministry had sent a fresh proposal to the farmers on Wednesday morning which

they rejected.

Mr Shah held a second round of meeting with agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Wednesday after the farmers threatened to further intensify the agitation. The Centre could send the unions another set of proposals ahead of the next round of meeting with the home minister.

So far the Centre has agreed to make major amendments in the farm bills related to assurance of Minimum Support Price and even continuation of the APMCs. However, farmers are adamant that Centre completely withdraw the three bills. ■ **PS**

Repeal of laws is critical, Oppn tells President

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

Opposition parties, led by the Congress and the NCP, on Wednesday met President Ramnath Kovind over the ongoing farmers’ agitation and demanded a repeal of the three farm laws.

The five-member delegation included former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPI’s D Raja and DMK leader T.K.S. Elangovan.

“We met the President and informed him of our view regarding the three farm laws,” Mr Gandhi told the media after the meeting.

“We have asked for their repeal. We informed the President that it is critical that they are taken back,” Mr Gandhi said/

He said the way the farm laws were passed in Parliament, “we feel it was an insult to farmers and that is why they are protesting in the cold weather against them”. ■ **PS**

Centre opens up public Wi-Fi networks

New Delhi, Dec. 9: In a bid to fuel broadband internet access across the country, the government on Wednesday approved setting up of public Wi-Fi networks through public data offices that will not involve any licence, fee or registration.

The public Wi-Fi Access Network Interface will be known as PM-WANI, and it promises to unleash a massive Wi-Fi revolution in the country.

The Union cabinet approved setting up of these Public Wi-Fi Networks with a framework involving multiple players – Public Data Office (PDO), Public Data Office Aggregators and app providers.

“No licence, no registration, and no fee would be applicable for the PDOs, which could be small shops or even common service centres,” commu-



Ravi Shankar Prasad

nications minister Ravi Shankar Prasad told reporters after the meeting of the cabinet.

PDOs will establish, maintain and operate Wi-Fi Access Points and deliver broadband services to subscribers, PDOAs will act as an aggregator of PDOs and perform the functions

relating to authorisation and accounting.

App provider will be responsible for developing application to register users and discover WANI compliant Wi-Fi hotspots in the nearby area and display the same within the app for accessing the internet service.

A central registry will maintain the details of app providers, PDOAs, and PDOs.

“To begin with, the central registry will be maintained by C-DoT,” an official release said.

No registration would be required for PDOs, while PDOAs and app providers will get themselves registered with the telecom department through the online registration portal without paying any fee. The registration will be granted within seven days of applying. — PTI

India drawn to anti-China games: Russia

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

The West, led by the United States, is trying to engage India in “anti-China games” through its Indo-Pacific strategies and is also trying to undermine Russia’s close and privileged ties with India, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov has

said, in unprecedented remarks that have highlighted both Moscow’s proximity with Beijing and a growing unease over the India-US strategic partnership.

Addressing the Russian International Affairs Council, Mr Lavrov said: “It (the West) is trying to restore the unipolar model of world order. ‘Poles’ like

Russia and China are unlikely to be subordinate to it. However, India is currently an object of the Western countries’ persistent, aggressive and devisive policy as they are trying to engage it in anti-China games by promoting Indo-Pacific strategies, the so-called ‘Quad’, while at the same time the West is attempting to undermine

our close partnership and privileged relations with India. This is the goal of the US’ very tough pressure on New Delhi.”

The Russian foreign minister added: “Rejecting the objective trends towards the formation of a multipolar world, the US-led West has launched a ‘game’. It has postponed Russia and

Seven of gang arrested for murder of Puzhal jail warden, 2 others in Vellore

DC CORRESPONDENT
VELLORE, DEC. 9

In a shocking incident, a gang murdered three persons, including a jail warden of Puzhal jail, in two different incidents in Vellore district late Tuesday night.

Seven people have been arrested in connection with the mur-

ders, police sources said.

The victims were identified as Kamesh of Tirumalaikodi in Ariyur and his friends from Murukeri in Ariyur Divakar and jail warden Thanigavel.

Police said the gang murdered Divakar and Thanigavel at GR Palayam in Ariyur and

then killed Kamesh near Sri Narayani college and school of nursing.

The bodies were sent to Government Vellore Medical College Hospital for post-mortem. Preliminary investigation revealed that there was enmity between the accused gang and Kamesh. ■ **PS**

2 terrorists killed in encounter in J&K’s Pulwama

Srinagar, Dec. 9: Two unidentified terrorists were killed in an encounter with security forces on Wednesday in Jammu and Kashmir’s Pulwama district, police said.

A civilian sustained injuries in the firefight, they added. Security forces launched a cordon and search operation in the Tikken area of Pulwama district in the early hours of the day on receiving information about the presence of terrorists there, a police official said.

He said the search operation turned into an encounter after the security forces were fired upon. Two ultras have been killed so far in the operation, the official said, adding a civilian also sustained injuries during the exchange of fire. — PTI

— DC

● **The debate for Big Debate goes on**

PAGE 4

In the evening the AIADMK cadres gathered at Kotagiri town near here to burn the effigy of Mr Raja again. Having come to know about this, the DMK cadres gathered in large numbers to stop the AIADMK cadres from going ahead with their protest plan, leading to clashes between the cadres. While the cops made valiant efforts to prevent any such law and order situation that may arise due to the volatile political atmosphere, the incident triggered tension in the hills.



AIADMK cadres in Ooty burnt the effigy of DMK MP A. Raja on Wednesday.


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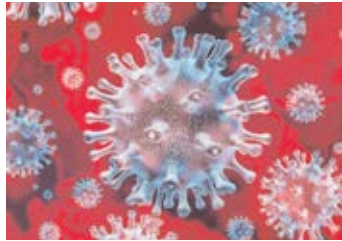
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SHORT TAKES



Pondy adds 30 more corona cases, tally reaches 37,339

Puducherry, Dec. 9: Puducherry recorded 30 new cases of coronavirus on Wednesday pushing the aggregate to 37,339, a top official of the Department of Health and Family Welfare said.

The toll remained 615 as no fresh deaths were reported.

Director of the Department of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said in a release that no fresh fatality was registered in any of the four regions of Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam.

He said 46 patients recovered and were discharged during the last 24 hours.

The fatality and recovery rates were 1.45 percent and 97.36 percent respectively.

As many as 4.25 lakh samples were tested so far and of them 3.84 lakh turned out to be negative.

Puducherry region accounted for 11 new cases out of the total 30 fresh cases followed by Karaikal and Mahe.

Yanam did not report any new case, the Director said.

Of the total 37,339 COVID-19 cases there were 370 active cases, 36,354 patients recovered and were discharged so far.

— PTI

Fishers of coastal districts go to sea

DC CORRESPONDENT KANYAKUMARI, DEC. 9

Fishermen started going for fishing in the coastal districts of Kanyakumari, Thoothukudi and Ramanathapuram as the warning for fishermen was withdrawn after cyclone Burevi threat.

Around 1,300 mechanised from the three fishing harbours of Colachel, Chinnamuttom and Thengapattinam have ventured for deep sea fishing from Kanyakumari district, according to a fisheries department official, who added that though the warning for fishermen was officially withdrawn only on December 8, many of the mechanised and country craft fishermen resumed their fishing operation two days earlier on Monday. Some of the mechanised fishing boats from Kanyakumari district ventured for deep sea fishing on the night of December 6 even it was raining heavily in the district, according to fisheries department sources.

In Thoothukudi all the 453 mechanised boats and more than 3,000 outboard engine-fitted country crafts and fibre boats and vallams went for fishing on Wednesday. Fishing activities in Ramanathapuram district too resumed on Wednesday.

8K students enrolled in IIT-M first ever online degree prog

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC. 9

The Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) is all set to admit 8,154 students in the first batch of its first-ever online BSc degree in programming and data science.

Prof. Bhaskar Ramamurthi, director, IIT-M said the institute was doing everything possible to give a great learning experience to the students. The courses are delivered through a state-of-the-art online portal. Students are given the opportunity to participate in live sessions to clarify their doubts. The exams are conducted in-person so that the academic

A total of 30,276 candidates had applied for the first qualifier process. They were given access to the first month online classes of the programme. A highly qualified content support team, specifically selected for this purpose, conducted nearly 400 hours of live sessions, to support the learning process.

rigour of the program is maintained," he said.

A total of 30,276 candidates had applied for the first qualifier process. They were given access to the first month online classes of the programme. A highly qualified content support team, specifically

selected for this purpose, conducted nearly 400 hours of live sessions, to support the learning process.

Only learners with a minimum required average assignment scores in all four courses were eligible to appear for the in-person invigilated qualifier exam. A total of 20,396 learners were eligible to write the qualifier examination, which was conducted on November 22.

These students can enrol for the foundational level courses, which will be offered from January 2021. The 8,154 students included 1,922 female candidates and 6,232 male candidates across India. Learners from various age groups

and educational backgrounds applied for the qualifier. As many as 1,593 learners were from arts, science and commerce background while 3,450 learners were from an engineering background.

IIT-M launched the new degree programme as part of the National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) programme. The specialisation of this degree, programming and data science, pervades almost every aspect of human endeavour today and therefore a learner qualified in this area can expect a significant increase in professional opportunities.

Cops lathicharge protesters

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUCHY, DEC. 9

The police lathicharged a section of people belonging to the V.O.C Peravai who agitated and allegedly started to attack the police personnel, during their agitation condemning Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami for recommending to the union government to unite all the 7 Pallar caste sub-communities and to rename them as Devendrakula Velalars.

The agitators staged a road roko on the busy railway junction road while another group raised slogans against the chief minister.

The police took into custody those who squatted on the road, blocking the vehicles. The cops asked the protesters to get into the police vehicle which led to a clash between them. It was also alleged that one of the arrested persons threw a liquor bottle at the police, in which the woman police suffered injuries.



Portion of road caves in at Nanganallur

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC. 9

A portion of the main road at Nanganallur in the city caved in on Wednesday morning as a result of blockage in the stormwater drainage system.

According to V. Rama Rao, a local resident, the

incident took place around 10.30 am during heavy traffic. However, none was injured. "The road was laid recently. The damaged portion is seen as a circle, almost three to four feet deep. The drainage water overflowed through it and spread across the road creating trouble to com-

muters.

However, the traffic was controlled by barricading the damaged portion. The PWD authorities reached the spot and repair work is under way," he said. The officials said that the road was damaged after pressure of water due to the blockage inside the manhole.

Don't post panchayat secys in their native places: SHRC

A. ARUL PALANI | DC CHENNAI, DEC. 9

The State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has recommended to the state government not to post secretaries of village panchayats in their native villages or native taluks as they can commit irregularities and refuse to issue certificates, house tax receipts of any welfare schemes.

In the petition, M. Madhu of Chinna Bellarampalli village in Krishnagiri district, submitted that his uncle Sippai Raman had pur-

chased 3 cents of land in Bellarampalli village in 1979 and later Madhu purchased 2 cents from him in 2010.

Venkatesan, who was then clerk of Chinna Bellarampalli panchayat, allegedly grabbed the land

using fake documents. Madhu filed a suit before the competent court and got a decree in favour of him in 2015.

Therefore, he is enjoying the property without any hindrance. But, D. Geetha, secretary, Bellarampalli village panchayat, the daughter-in-law of Venkatesan, refused to issue the house tax receipt to his property despite several requests due to previous enmity. Hence, he sent complaints to BDO, DRDA and district collector on this aspect. But, no action was taken.

The district collector

submitted a report stating that Geetha wantonly refused to issue the house tax receipt to the complainant and only after the interference of the SHRC and the district collector, Krishnagiri, she issued the house tax receipt to the complainant.

SHRC acting chairperson D. Jayachandran said Geetha violated human rights of Madhu and directed her to pay a compensation of Rs 50,000 to the complainant. The commission also recommended to the government to initiate disciplinary action against Geetha.



The Chennai corporation dismissed allegations that the death of Narasimhan, a 56-year-old man working as a driver, in Kodambakkam, was due to him falling into a pothole. The civic body commissioner said Narasimhan's death was due to a suspected heart attack and released CCTV footage to prove it. Soon after the incident, the pothole was fixed.

— DC

Posters to have only photo of Rajinikanth

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, DEC. 9

Posters put out by functionaries and members of the Rajini Makkal Mandram, which would be the base for the new party to be launched by actor Rajinikanth in 2021, should not have the names or portraits of any other leader other than Rajinikanth.

The actor himself gave this instruction, urging the Mandram's convener V M Sudhakar to issue a circular to that effect during a meeting he had at the Raghavendra Kalyana Mandapam in Chennai on Wednesday.

The mandapam, owned by Rajinikanth and has been the regular venue for the meetings of the actor's erstwhile fan club and then the mandram, is now being converted into a party office.

Since it is touted to be the headquarters of the new party that would be registered soon, the building is being renovated and refurbished.

Besides holding a meeting with Sudhakar and the two other top leaders of the party, Arjunamurthy Ra and Tamilaruvimian, at the mandapam, Rajinikanth also oversaw the renovation work and discussed the new layout of the office premises.

Discussions also revolved on the facilities to be made in the office like conference hall, cabins for top leaders and other infrastructure. Informally, the IT teams and others working on the foundation for the new party had been using the mandapam for a long time.

Rajinikanth and the leaders are said to have also discussed about the launch of the party like where it could be done and what are the arrangements to be made in order to make the proceedings of the function visible to a large audience and how to follow up the inauguration with other events.

The actor is expeditiously attending to such nitty-gritty related to the party formation mainly because



Actor Rajinikanth coming out of Raghavendra mandapam after discussing with party members. — DC

Police security, CCTV cameras in Poes Garden

Ever since Rajinikanth announced that he would start the party in January, the otherwise quiet street in the posh Poes Garden locality in which his house is located is seeing more footfalls with many people trying to meet the actor, apart from the media corps that is stationed outside the gates. Recently a group of people from rain-affected Thiruvallur had gone to the actor's house asking for flood relief. Sensing a

security risk, a posse of policemen had been assigned to the street to keep a watch over visitors. About a dozen police personnel, led by a sub-inspector, would man the post round the clock, it is said. Also the entire street is being brought under the benign vigil of CCTV cameras. Installation of the cameras through the stretch had begun and everyone would also be watched constantly

he had to leave for Hyderabad to take part in the shooting for his next celluloid venture, Annatha. So he plans to set in motion the party work before leaving for the film shoot, which would keep him occupied till he returns to Chennai for the launching himself in politics.

Sources also said that some renovations have been planned in the house of the actor. A small front portion of the house would be modified into a mini office for the actor to meet visitors. These activities have

suddenly given a bustle to Poes Garden akin to the days of former Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa, when most of the days there would be hectic activity with huge posse of policemen stationed there with vehicles, the roads barricaded, visitors screened and the media crew waiting on the streets.

Even now, the media crew make their attendance in the morning itself to keep a track on the activities though they are not allowed inside the compound of the house or the Raghavendra Kalyana Mandapam.

99-yr-old tyagi gets pension after 23-year battle

J. STALIN | DC CHENNAI, DEC. 9

A 99-year-old freedom fighter, who had been waging a battle with the Central and state governments to get his pension for nearly 23 years, finally won the war. Thanks to the timely intervention of Justice R.Suresh Kumar of the Madras high court, on whose efforts, the Tamil Nadu government has sanctioned the freedom fighters pension to him on December 5, 2020.

Gafoor, was a freedom fighter and he had been imprisoned for more than 6 months during the freedom struggle, at Burma in the year 1945 and thereafter in 1964, he had come to India to settle at the outskirts of Chennai in the place allotted by the state government for persons returned from Burma. Since, he could not trace the relevant documents pertaining to his jailing in Burma, and he was able to get the co-prisoner's certificate belatedly from two co-prisoners, who certified that he had been in jail during the freedom struggle in 1945 along with them, he made applications to the State and Central governments in 1997 under two separate schemes seeking freedom fighters pension. There were several rounds of cor-

Why no commission formed to look into cops' problems, asks HC

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC. 9

Observing that unless the welfare of the police force is looked into properly and their morale is kept up, it is very difficult to maintain law and order and detect and prevent the crimes, the Madras high court has sought an explanation from the Tamil Nadu government as to why its earlier order recommending forming of a commission headed by a retired judge of the high court to address the problems of the police force has not been fully complied with.

Posing 19 other queries relating to the welfare of the policemen, a division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and B.Pugalendhi directed the authorities to answer the



queries and also file a comparative statement of pay band to the police force in Tamil Nadu and the other states on or before December 17.

The bench was passing orders on a petition filed by Masilamani, which sought a direction to the authorities to increase the per capita income of the police force in our state and to fill the vacancies in the post of constable and sub-inspector of police and pay higher salary.

When the case came up for hearing before Justice R.Suresh Kumar, the state government initially stated that there were discrepancies in the application, par-

ticularly the period of imprisonment mentioned in the co-prisoners certificate, submitted by the petitioner. Therefore, his request was not considered. The judge then summoned the entire

Gafoor, was a freedom fighter and he had been imprisoned for more than 6 months during the freedom struggle, at Burma in the year 1945 and thereafter in 1964, he had come to India to settle at the outskirts of Chennai in the place allotted by the state government for persons returned from Burma

files pertaining to the petitioner. After perusing the entire files, the judge found that there was a typographical error crept in the certificate, where instead of March 1946, it has been typed as March 1945. Pointing out the same, the judge directed the state government to consider his application afresh. Accordingly, the state government considered his application and sanctioned the pension on December 5, 2020.

"At least the petitioner at his age of 99 is able to get the recognition from the state government that, he had been a freedom fighter and accordingly the said sanction has been given, and therefore he can enjoy the said benefit for the service he rendered to the nation", the judge added.

Carcasses of leopard, monkey found in well

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, DEC. 9

A leopard and a monkey were found dead inside a well in Kil-Kotagiri area near here on Wednesday. The carcass of a leopard was found in a similar incident in Masakal village limits near Kotagiri in mid-November.

Sources at the Kotagiri forest range said the carcass of a leopard was found floating along with the carcass of a monkey in a private tea estate in Kil-Kotagiri. The forest team which rushed to the spot found that the chain-link metal piece which is used to cover the well was misplaced and damaged which led to the conclusion that the leopard while trying to chase the monkey, which accidentally fell into the well while trying to escape, also plunged into the well. Both the animals eventually died inside the well. The forest team lifted the carcasses and arranged for an on-the-spot autopsy.

Request to engage Navy in search

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC. 9

The International Fishermen Development Trust (INFIDET) has urged the Centre and State government to order an aerial and naval search of the fisherman who had gone missing from a fishing boat in the deep sea off Kochi.

The Kanyakumari district based INFIDET said 12 fishermen had ventured into the sea in a mechanised boat (IND -TN-MM-5101) named "Jego" from Kochi harbour on the night of December 7. Four of them are from Kanyakumari district and the rest are from Nagapattinam and Cuddalore. One of the fishermen from Thuthur in Kanyakumari district, 69-year-old Sesayyan, was found missing in the morning of December 8 and the others in the boat had launched a search for him, the letter by INFIDET president P Justin Antony said.





"LEAVE THE LAND OF DEATH," TRANSLATED TARZAN. "LEAVE, OR SUFFER VENGEANCE FROM THE FEROCEST"—

SHORT TAKES

SCRAPPING LAWS
CRITICAL, OPPN
TELLS PRESIDENT

From Page 1

Using the new laws, the government wanted to hand over the farming sector to the "friends of the Prime Minister", but the farmers are fearless and would not back off and will continue with their peaceful agitation, he claimed.

Mr Pawar said that various political parties have requested Mr Kovind that these farm laws be repealed as they were not discussed with either stakeholders or had been vetoed by the select committee of Parliament.

CPI(M) general secretary Mr Yechury said: "We told the President that the three farm laws were passed undemocratically in Parliament and have sought their repeal."

The opposition delegation was limited to five because of the Covid-19 situation. "However, more than 20 political parties have extended their support to the ongoing farmers' struggle and asked for the repeal of the retrograde agri-laws and the Electricity Amendment Bill," the three Left Parties said in a statement.

The parties also submitted a memorandum to the President.

INDIA DRAWN TO
ANTI-CHINA
GAMES: RUSSIA

From Page 1

Observers point out that the remarks highlight Russia's unease with India's growing proximity and strong strategic ties with the United States, with whom Russia has had a sharply deteriorating relationship. It also highlights India's challenge in continuing to maintain excellent ties with both Russia and the US. India is also a member of the four-nation Quad, that also comprises Japan and Australia, apart from the US, a factor that Russia does not seem too comfortable with. Russia's adverse references to the phrase "rules-based order" that India uses regularly in its official statements are also being viewed by observers as a concern for New Delhi, since use of the phrase by New Delhi is usually seen as a veiled reference to China.

The remarks also highlight the strong ties between Russia and China at a time when India continues to be locked in a military face-off with China in the Ladakh sector, though the two Asian giants continue to be in talks to resolve the issue.

DRDO LABS 'TALK'
IN SUCCESSFUL
QUANTUM DEMO

New Delhi, Dec. 9: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Wednesday successfully demonstrated communication between its two labs using Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) technology, which is a "robust" way to share encryption keys, said an official statement.

In the QKD technology, encryption keys are sent as qubits in a fibre optic cable. Quantum computing uses qubits as basic resources, similar to how bits are used as basic resources in classical computing. The QKD is designed in a way that if an illegitimate entity tries to read the transmission, it will disturb the qubits — which are encoded on photons — and this will generate transmission errors, leading to legitimate end users being immediately informed.

"Secure communications are vital for defence and strategic agencies world over and distribution of encryption keys from time to time is an important requirement in this context... Quantum based communication offers a robust solution to sharing the keys securely," said an official statement. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the DRDO for successful demonstration of QKD-based communication between its two labs in Hyderabad, said the statement. "Quantum Communication using the time-bin QKD scheme was performed under realistic conditions. The setup also demonstrated the validation of detection of a third party trying to gain knowledge of the communication," the statement added

● **Quantum based communication offers a robust solution to sharing the keys securely, said an official statement.**



Police keep vigil as Karnataka farmers participate in a protest rally in Bengaluru on Wednesday to press for repeal of the Centres agri-laws. — PTI

Centre offers to make key
changes but farmers firm

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In a draft proposal sent to the 13 agitating farmers' unions, the Centre also assured the registration of all private mandis to strengthen Agricultural Produce

Market Committees (APMCs). After deliberating over the Centre's proposal, the farmers' leaders made it clear they will continue their agitation until all the three new farm laws are rolled back. The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) said the Narendra Modi government was "insincere and arrogant" about resolving their demands. In a statement, the AIKSCC said: "All farmers' organisations reiterate their demand to repeal three farm acts... Our protest will continue, and more farmers will join in... Our district level dharnas will start in all states."

With the farmers camping out at Delhi's busy border points, three of the Delhi-Haryana border points — Tikri, Jharoda and Dhansa — are closed for traffic. Besides the border areas of the capital, demonstrations are also being held at a ground allocated for the farmers' protests in Delhi's outskirts. At least five deaths were reported since the protests began.

The rejection of the Centre's proposal by the farmers' leaders came a day after their meeting with Union home minister Amit Shah failed to break the deadlock. Soon after the farmers rejected the proposal, agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar and commerce minister Piyush Goyal had a two-and-a-half hour meeting at Mr Shah's Delhi residence.

In its proposal, the Centre promised a written assurance for minimum support prices, allowing farmers to go to a court to resolve disputes instead of to a subdivisional magistrate and scrapping of the Electricity Amendment Bill. To allay their fears that big corporate groups will take over farmlands, the government said it can

New Delhi, Dec. 9: The AAP on Wednesday alleged that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's movement is still "restricted" and the main gate of his residence remains closed by the Delhi Police, which denied the charge.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which had on Tuesday alleged that the Delhi Police put Kejriwal under house arrest after he met farmers protesting against the Centre's agriculture reform laws at the city's Singhu border, again claimed that it was being done at the behest of Union minister Amit Shah.

The Delhi Police had rejected AAP's charge against it as "totally baseless". Addressing a press conference on Wednesday, AAP spokesperson Raghav Chadha said there is an atmosphere of "undeclared emergency" around the Chief Minister's residence.

"I am telling you with full responsibility that the movement of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is still restricted at the behest of the (Union) home minister. The main gate of the Chief Minister's residence is still closed," Chadha alleged.

— PTI

New Delhi, Dec. 9: "Come home only after we win this fight". His son's words to him as he left his village in Punjab for Delhi ring in Gurdev Singh's ears and give the 71-year-old the strength to carry on with the protest against the new farm laws — so what if he is still recovering from a knee replacement surgery.

The doughty sardar from Narpur village in Punjab's Jalandhar district is just one of the several elderly people camping at the Singur border for the last 13 days, determined to keep up the fight for a repeal of the Centre's three new farm laws.

It is getting colder by the day and they are hundreds of miles from home but

be clarified that no buyer can take loans against farmlands nor any such condition will be made to farmers.

The Centre assured the farmers that amendments will be made in the laws so

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Kejriwal still under
house arrest: AAP

New Delhi, Dec. 9: Caught between the Covid-19 pandemic and the agitation for their rights, farmers protesting against the Centre's new farm laws said the fear of contracting the disease is "not enough" to detract them from their fight.

Thousands of farmers camping at the Tikri borders are largely seen without the basic preventive measure against Covid-19 — protective masks. "The government has already tied a noose around our necks with these laws... we cannot afford to be afraid of Coronavirus," Gagandeep Singh, a farmer from Bhatinda in Punjab, said.

He has been protesting at the Delhi-Haryana border for the last 10 days. Demonstrating for 12 straight days, the farmers have been demanding that the three laws be revoked. Sporting a long white beard, Gurvasan Singh said he was not afraid of the disease that has already killed over 1.4 lakh people in the country.

"We are losing our rights. We do not have time to worry about Coronavirus," he said. According to Sachin Kumar from Delhi's Uttam Nagar, the government's refusal to hear the farmers' demands proved that it was creating the fear of the virus to shutdown the protest.

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Rajasthan PR poll results
mandate on farm bills: BJPDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

Hailing the Rajasthan local body polls results as "phenomenal," the BJP on Thursday claimed that the results are farmers' mandate for Modi government's farm reforms and also people's support for the party across the country.

In Congress ruled Rajasthan, the BJP won 353 of 636 zila parishads, 21 zila panchayats and 1,990 of 4,371 panchayat samitis, primarily in rural areas.

The party also cited its performance in the recently held local bodies polls in Hyderabad, Arunachal Pradesh and the Bihar Assembly polls to assert that the party and the Narendra Modi

● **THE BJP won 353 of 636 zila parishads, 21 zila panchayats and 1,990 of 4,371 panchayat samitis, primarily in rural areas.**

led central government has support in every region of the country.

BJP president J.P. Nadda said the saffron party's win in Rajasthan symbolises the trust the poor, farmers and labourers have in Modi's leadership, while senior party leader and Union minister Prakash Javadekar stressed that people, especially farmers, have given it a "decisive" victory.

He said all these polls were held after Parliament enacted three farm sector reform laws, which have drawn protest from a section of farmers,

especially from Punjab. Noting that the polls in Rajasthan were held primarily in rural areas, Javadekar said by opting for the BJP, voters reversed the trend of the state's ruling party winning most seats in the local polls in Rajasthan.

"This is a huge victory... This is farmers' mandate for farm reforms," said the Union minister.

When asked about Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's dig at the Union government alleging that "reform equals theft" for it, Javadekar took a jibe saying he does not want to respond to a "non-performing politician."

He said the Central government is holding talks with the protesting farmer union leaders with an open mind.

பெஸ்ட் டைபைன்ஸ் கார்ப்பரேசன் லிமிடெட்
89/2 பத்மாவதிபுரம், அவினாசி சாலை, திருப்பூர்-3.

நகை ஏல அறிவிப்பு

பெஸ்ட் டைபைன்ஸ் கார்ப்பரேசன் லிமிடெட்-ன் கீழ்க்கண்ட கிளைகளில் ஒரு வருடத்திற்கு மேல் காலாவதியான தங்க நகைகளின் பேரில் வாங்கிய கூலுக்கு காலகெடு முடிந்தும், பழிவு தயார் மூலம் ஏலஅறிவிப்பு அளித்ததால் அரசு மற்றும் வட்டி கூட்டு தவறிய மீட்டுக்கொள்ளாத நகைகள் **18.12.2020** அன்று காலை 10.00 மணிக்கு அடுத்தத கிளைகளில் ஏலம் விடப்படும்.

வ.எண்	கிளையின் பெயர் & முகவரி
1.	பி.என்.ஜோடு : 266, சிப்டு காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், முதல் தளம், பி.என்.ஜோடு, திருப்பூர்.
2.	அவிநாசி ஜோடு : 348/1, அண்ணாமலை காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், முதல் தளம், அவிநாசி ஜோடு, பெரியார்காலனி, திருப்பூர்.
3.	மாங்கலம் ஜோடு : 43/1, V.K.காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், முதல் தளம், பழக்குபேரன் பஸ்ஸ்டாப், மாங்கலம் ஜோடு, திருப்பூர்.
4.	கொங்கு மெயின் ஜோடு : No.207, முத்து பிளாஸ், தங்கம் மெழக்கல் எதிரில், ரங்கநாதபுரம், கொங்கு மெயின் ஜோடு, திருப்பூர்.
5.	தாராபுரம் ஜோடு : No.219-C, வடகம் காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், ராமபிரான் காலனி, புதூர் பிளீவு, தாராபுரம் ஜோடு, திருப்பூர்.
6.	ரங்கியாபாளையம் பிளீவு : No.40, கப்டுவடகம் காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், முதல் தளம், ரங்கியாபாளையம் பிளீவு, கங்கையே மெயின் ஜோடு, திருப்பூர்.
7.	மேயம்மாபாளையம் பிளீவு : No.5/1224, விஜயகுமார காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், மேயம்மாபாளையம் பிளீவு, பழனிச்சாமிநாதர், திருப்பூர்.
8.	வீரபாளையம் பிளீவு : No.4/559, வீரபாளையம் பிளீவு, பஸ்ஸ்டாப் ஜோடு, திருப்பூர்.
9.	சுருஷிபாளையம் : S.F.No.97 A and A Commercial Complex, H.தொண்டியாபாளையம், சாண்டிபாளையம் மெயின் ஜோடு, திருப்பூர்.
10.	உஷா திரிபுரம் : 224/1, தாராபுரம் ஜோடு, திருப்பூர்.
11.	பெரியாண்டியாபாளையம் : 21311 B/8, HRH நகர், பெரியாண்டியாபாளையம் பிளீவு, மாங்கலம் ஜோடு, திருப்பூர்.
12.	அவிநாசி : No.292, முதல்தளம், கிழக்கு ரத்தீதி, அவிநாசி.
13.	பல்லடம் : No.34.35 மேனன் காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், NGR ஜோடு, பல்லடம்.
14.	அன்னாபுரம் : 2/125, திருமலை காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், கோவை கார்னர், கோவாமுத்தூர் ஜோடு, அன்னாபுரம்.
15.	கலூர் : 1B, மாகாளியம்மன் கோவில் எதிரில், காளங்கல் ஜோடு, கலூர், கோவை.
16.	ராமநாதபுரம் : No.153/4-6, அம்மன் காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், முதல் தளம், ஜெம் ஹாஸ்பிட்டல் எதிரில், ராமநாதபுரம், கோவை.
17.	சாப்பாபா காலனி : No.124, தாங்கு ஜோடு, பெரியாசி கோளார் வீதி, வெள்ளையாபாளையம் PO, கோவை.
18.	திங்காத்தூர் : No.48, D.R.சீமட் சென்ட்ரல், காமராஜர் சாலை, உப்பிலியாபாளையம் PO, கோவை.
19.	கந்தராபுரம் : No.123, C/2 சக்ரம் வீதி, கந்தராபுரம், கோவை.
20.	பி.என்.புதூர் : No.191, மருதமலை ஜோடு, பாப்பநாயக்கன்புதூர், கோவை.
21.	கணபதி : No.2/6, பாரதியார் ஜோடு, அண்ணாநகர், கணபதி, கோவை.
22.	பீனமேடு : No.9, சாரா காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், முதல்தளம், ஆவாரம்பாளையம் ஜோடு, பீனமேடு, கோவை.
23.	சூழமலூர் : No.128, ஸ்ரீ ராம் பிஸ்மஸ், மேட்டுப்பாளையம் ஜோடு, சூழமலூர், கோவை.
24.	P.N.பாளையம் : No.9/10, ஆழ்வார் நாயர் காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், முதல்தளம், சூழமலூர் பாளையம் ஜோடு, P.N.பாளையம், கோவை.
25.	கவுண்டிப்பாளையம் : No.4/13, முதல்தளம், பூனியன் ஜோடு, கவுண்டிப்பாளையம், கோவை.
26.	குனிவிமுத்தூர் : No.189 C, V.R. காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், பாக்கோடு மெயின் ஜோடு, குனிவிமுத்தூர், கோவை.
27.	வீரபிஸ்வத்தூர் : No.1/1, தங்கமலை வீதி, வீரபிஸ்வத்தூர், சஜோடு.
28.	கல்கட்டி : No.309, முதல்தளம், S.K.C. ஜோடு, கீழ்க்கண்ட, சஜோடு.
29.	நாடாபுரம் : No.5, முதல்தளம், K.R.N. காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், காமராஜர் வீதி, வெள்ளையாபாளையம், சஜோடு.
30.	P.S.பாக்கர் : No.23/4, கச்சேரி வீதி, TPG பிளாசா, தாறுகா ஆயில் எதிரில், சஜோடு.
31.	பழையாபாளையம் : No.23/3, பாதி நகர், பழையாபாளையம் பிளீவு, பெருந்தூறு ஜோடு, சஜோடு.
32.	பள்ளிப்பாளையம் : No.24C, திருச்செங்கோடு மெயின் ஜோடு, பள்ளிப்பாளையம், சஜோடு.
33.	கொமாரப்பாளையம் : JKKS, ஐதம்புரன் காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், Shop.No.13,14, சேலம் மெயின் ஜோடு, கொமாரப்பாளையம்.
34.	பவானி : Shp.No.804, அத்தியூர் ஜோடு கார்னர், பவானி மெயின் ஜோடு, பவானி, சஜோடு.
35.	திருச்செங்கோடு : No.89/4, 89/5, முதல்தளம், AVS.காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், தெய்வக்குளம் வீதி, திருச்செங்கோடு.
36.	குக்கை : No.866, திருச்சி மெயின் ஜோடு, குக்கை, சேலம்.
37.	அம்மாபேட்டை : No.454/340, முதல்தளம், T.V.K.ஜோடு, காந்தி மண்டபம் அருகில், அம்மாபேட்டை, சேலம்.
38.	தாங்கபட்டி : No.233/2, S.A.P.காம்ப்ளக்ஸ், திருச்சி மெயின் ஜோடு, தாங்கபட்டி, சேலம்.
39.	அருகாபுரம் : No.25, ஏற்காடு மெயின் ஜோடு, சொன்னபுர் கார்னர், அருகாபுரம், சேலம்.
40.	பொள்ளாச்சி : No.127, முதல்தளம், பாஸ்காடு ஜோடு, பொள்ளாச்சி.
41.	பழனி : 334, காந்தி ஜோடு, பழனி, திண்டுக்கல்.

ஏலம் மறு அறிவிப்பு ஏலமின்றி ஏலத்தேற்கைய மறுநி வைக்கலோ அல்லது ஏலத்தை ரத்து செய்யலோ நிர்வாகத்திற்கு அதிகாரம் உண்டு என்பதை தெரிவித்துக் கொள்கிறோம். ஏலத்தில் பங்கு கொள்ள விருப்பமுள்ள வாங்கு-கையாளர்கள் தங்களுக்குடைய அல்லாத அட்டை (Kyc சமர்ப்பிக்க வேண்டும்) முன்னையபடி கொடுக்கைய கூ.25,000/- (BEST FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED) எனப் பெயரில் (DD) வரைவோலைபாக முன்தீர்மான செலுத்த வேண்டும். நகை ஏலத்தில் வெற்றி பெறாத நபர்ின் கையடி தொகையை அன்றைய தினமே திரும்பப் அளிக்கப்படும். ஏலத்தில் வெற்றி பெறும் நபர், மொத்த ஏலத்தொகையின் 5% அன்றைய தினமே செலுத்த வேண்டும் மீதித் தொகையை முற்றப் பணி நாட்களுக்குள் செலுத்தி நகை பெற்றுக் கொள்ள வேண்டும். மேற்படி நபர் குறிப்பிட்ட தேதிகளுக்கு பணம், செலுத்தப்படாவிடில் அதுவரை அவர் கையடித்தொகை EMD திரும்ப பெறாமல் போய்விடும் மற்றும் எந்த அறிவிப்பும் இன்றி ஏலத்தை மற்ொரு தேதியில் நடத்தப்படும். குறைந்தபட்ச நிர்வாகப்பேட்டை தொகை ஏலத்தில் கேட்கப்படாவிட்டால் ஏலத்தை இரத்து செய்துவிட்டு மண்டல அலுவலகம் அல்லது தலைமை அலுவலகத்தில் ஏலம் விடப்படும் எனத் தெரிவித்துக்கொள்ளப்படுகிறது.

ஏலத்தில் பங்கு எடுக்க வருவோரை அனுமதிக்கலோ, நிராகரிக்கலோ, நிர்வாகத்திற்கு அதிகாரம் உண்டு.

இயங்குபடம். நகை ஏலத்தாள் N. திபிகா. 209, 3-வது வீதி, கோவை-12.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
BUILDING ORGANIZATION
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, P.W.D.,
BUILDINGS (CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE) CIRCLE, SALEM - 7.
TENDER NOTICE
FORM OF CONTRACT: LUMP SUM
SHORT TERM TENDER NOTICE No.23/ 2020-2021 /SE/B/C&M/S/L/M, Dated 09.12.2020
For and on behalf of Government of Tamil Nadu Sealed tenders are called by the Superintending Engineer, P.W.D. Buildings (C&M) Circle, Salem-7 for the following works from the eligible Contractors registered in Public works Department of Government of Tamil Nadu, upto 3.00PM as per office clock on 30.12.2020. The tenders will be opened on 30.12.2020 at 3.30 PM by the Superintending Engineer in presence of the Tenderers or their authorized agents. The tender schedule can be downloaded at free of cost from the Govt. designated website viz: <http://www.tenders.in.gov.in>. The tender schedule can also be available in the Office of the Superintending Engineer, P.W.D. Buildings (C&M) Circle, Salem-7, from 17.12.2020 to 29.12.2020 upto 5.45pm.
Construction of school buildings for additional facilities including electrification in GHIS / GHSS under RMSA schemes 2020-2021 in Ariyalur District-1) Nagamangalam, Charampatti District - 2) Hasepuram, 3) Almarathupatti, 4) Palacode (Boys), 5) Palacode (Girls), 6) Pauparapatti, 7) Kaimangalam, 8) Elangir, Construction of New Building for Veterinary Dispensary Under H&A&R RDCE XXV/1 under the electrification in Dharmapuri District, 9) Vathimadai perur, 10) Maracali, 11) Parakkottai, 12) Dharmadurai.
The E.N.D. remittance and other details can also be available from the Government designated website (<http://www.tenders.in.gov.in>) and Office of the Superintending Engineer, P.W.D. Buildings (C&M) Circle, Salem-7. Any Changes in tender condition will also be published in website. www.tenders.in.gov.in.
DIPR / 4599 / TENDER / 2020
Superintending Engineer, P.W.D.,
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DECCAN Chronicle

10 DECEMBER 2020

Democracy and reforms: How much is too much?

Is there a connection between democracy and Niti Aayog? Or, not to put too fine a point on it, between India's democracy and the government's think tank on economic affairs that was created as the National Institute for Transforming India (Niti) by dismantling the Planning Commission, which had planned to achieve balanced development of the various regions to remove poverty. Probably not, if putative observations of the Niti Aayog CEO, Amitabh Kant, made recently, are to be taken at face value.

The transformation of India in the conception of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is the chairman of the think tank he created in January 2015 through a mere cabinet decision and not the constitutional route, is to be achieved, fundamentally through de-regulation in all fields of economic activity. This means taking away any role for the government through "hard reforms" that Mr Kant spoke of while addressing an event virtually on Tuesday.

The country's major news platforms quoted the Niti Aayog operational chief as saying that "tough reforms" were very difficult in the Indian context because there was "too much democracy" in the country. He also noted that the Modi government had shown the "political will" to drive hard reforms. He reeled off examples such as mining, agriculture and labour.

The political meaning of this is obvious — that the rules, regulations and the culture of debate, dissent and protest in a democracy will not yield "tough reforms" needed to deliver economic prosperity. This is a discredited notion and Mr Kant evidently ran for cover when the implication of his remarks was revealed to him. He flatly denied saying the words attributed to him though it is highly unlikely that all reputed media outlets would misquote him. The videos of his only underscore that his clarification and denials are to be regarded with a stiff dose of skepticism.

Mr Kant went to the extent of saying that India can compete with China only through "hard reforms" and not through holding seminars. Seminars imply discussion and debate. This China reference would also suggest that in the Niti Aayog CEO's scheme, debates are not the way to push "tough reforms", implying a failure of the well-known basis of democracy. Presumably, then, hard reforms can only be achieved through bulldozing, the way it is done in China, a totalitarian state where a single leader is all knowing and all-powerful.

Examples of so-called "hard reform" (even when they undervalue public welfare by privileging the market principle on an exclusive basis), pushed through the methods of democracy, have evidently eluded Mr Modi's most powerful economic bureaucrat. He could have recalled, for instance, that former Britain PM Margaret Thatcher battled and debated in Parliament and the media to get her way in scuttling welfare measures of an earlier era to set her country on a new path.

In fact, to make economic reforms non-sliding, acceptance by the widest sections of the people is a necessity, not a luxury, and the political principle of democracy provides for the most thorough means to install a new idea or practice. The present regime has failed to do just that, the most recent egregious example being the contentious agri-laws against which a storm is brewing. These were rammed through Parliament virtually without discussion — in an example of the "political will" shown by the regime.

The rise of Everest

Measured in 2005 by a Beijing survey to be 8,844 m, Mt Chomolungma (meaning mother goddess) was a harder climb from the Chinese side, but also shorter by a good four metres. It prompted mountaineers to rush over to Nepal to summit Sagarmatha (literally, top of the world) whose height was generally acknowledged to be 8,848 metres. It cost the Communist country no small amount of Everest tourism.

Following the 2015 earthquake in Nepal which left 9,000 dead, including some climbers, the country's survey department experts, fearing that the mountain had become shorter, called for a fresh taking of measurement. So far, Nepal had been following the findings of the 1954 Survey of India, which had put out the second figure. An American survey in 1999, however, had calculated Everest to be higher, at 8,850 metres. It added grist to speculations as to whether the young-fold mountain was still growing.

The speculators were correct. The two newest satellite aided surveys — Nepal's in 2019 and the one completed by China earlier this year — finally agree — the height of Everest is 8,848.86 metres — the mountain having grown by three feet or 86 centimetres. It is 164 years after Radhanath Sikdar used trigonometry and machines called theodolites to first calculate it on behalf of Sir George Everest to be 8,839 metres, making it the highest peak of the world.

It wasn't easy measuring the earth's tallest mountain this time either. Surveyors had to climb the mountain with a GPS receiver. A Nepali surveyor who stayed at the summit for two hours lost a toe to frostbite.

Now comes the key question — can this increase be attributed to rock, or is it merely icecap, as China once claimed? Yes and no, says Sridevi Jade, plate tectonics expert. The Himalayas stand on the boundary between the Indian and Eurasian plates. Jade calculates that the Indian plate is slipping under the Eurasian plate by about five centimetres a year. After accounting for erosion on the top, Everest is gaining about one centimetre every 10 years. So while the quake may have taken off centimetres, replicating Hillary and Norgay's feat just got harder.

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

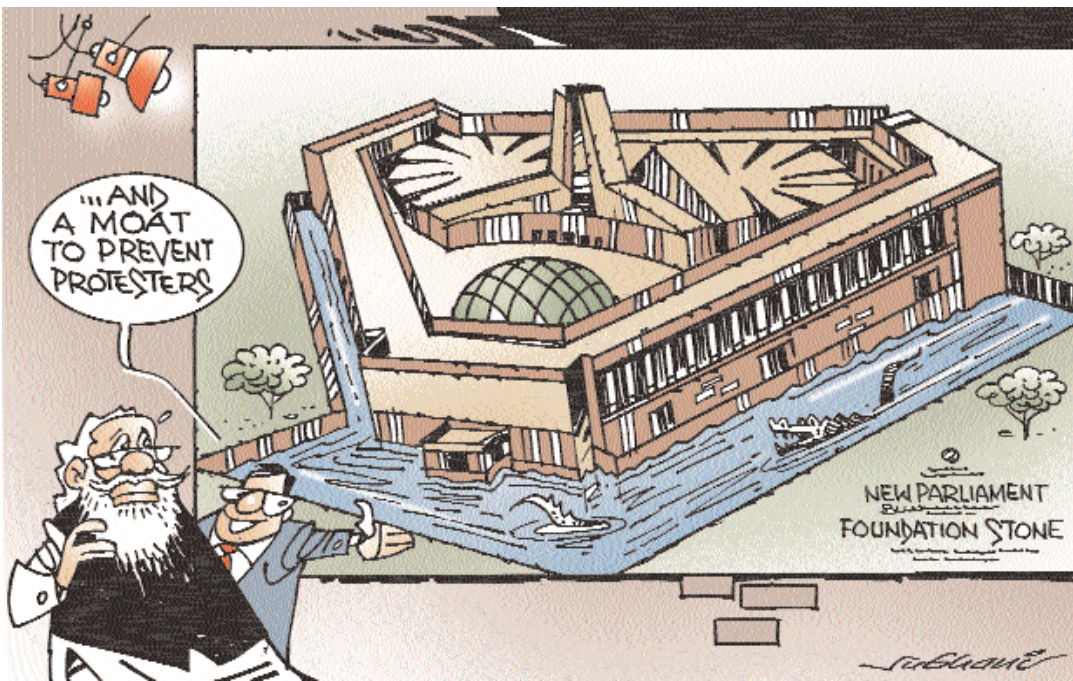
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Subhani



Boris' fumbling holds lessons for the world



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray
Reflections

An important lesson for the pandemic-stricken world to remember as challenge after challenge casts its shadow on Prime Minister Boris Johnson's beleaguered government in London is that no opinion — not even that of a suspected adversary — should be dismissed or derided at a time of grave international danger.

More of that later. Immediate attention focuses on another aspect of the coronavirus crisis which inspired Britain's Agri-born business minister, Alok Sharma, to exult grandiloquently: "In years to come, we will remember this moment as the day the United Kingdom led humanity's charge against this disease." He meant — as every British spokesman repeats ad nauseam — that the UK is the first country to agree to use the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19.

Not everyone is equally boastful. While the German ambassador reminded listeners that the vaccine represents collective European enterprise, the tiny oil-rich island kingdom of Bahrain quickly muscled into the limelight to share Britain's glory with its own agreement with Pfizer/BioNTech. Another critic with little stomach for bombast that might resound to applause in Mr Sharma's ancestral Uttar Pradesh sharply reminded him that this moment might also be remembered for "the UK having one of the worst death rates and the worst economic impact due to poor governance".

Going beyond the United Kingdom's 1.71 million Covid-19 cases and 61,014 deaths, he might have been speaking of the frantic last-minute parleys in Britain's pro-

tracted divorce negotiations with the European Union which suggest that the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, did not think things through when he played up to domestic separatists with his aggressive Brexit agenda. With time running out for the December 31 deadline, this week's last throw of the dice (as it's called) in the negotiations may be heading for a breakdown rather than a breakthrough. If so, it would be catastrophic for both parties who cannot escape their interdependence. While British waters are much richer in fish than the seas surrounding Europe, British trawlers make their money selling to the European nations.

As Mr Johnson continues to pander to the insular lobby by accusing the EU of riding roughshod over British sovereignty, Rachel Reeves, a senior member of the Labour Party's shadow cabinet, has warned that he "needs to deliver the deal he promised the British people". He can't ignore her for Brexit has exposed his reliance on Labour votes in the House of Commons. Neither can he ignore the new Cold War against China and Russia that US President Donald Trump had launched with vehement diatribes against the so-called "Wuhan virus" to woo American voters ahead of the presidential election.

With talk of Washington invoking the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act to blacklist the popular Chinese video app TikTok as "an unusual and extraordinary threat", Mr Johnson has taken up the cudgels for the United States like another British leader, Tony Blair, who kowtowed to George W. Bush and joined the American invasions of Iraq and

Afghanistan. That probably explains the sudden £16 billion increase in Britain's defence budget over the next four years, despite the pandemic's calamitous damage to the economy. Such gestures appease the Americans, as do accusations of the Kremlin trying to penetrate Britain's secret scientific research programmes and promises to reveal Russia's alleged covert interference in British politics.

Initially, Mr Johnson rejected pressure, American as well as from the rightists among his own Conservatives, to ban the Chinese technology company, Huawei, from any role in building the UK's 5G infrastructure. He has since done a volte face and now cites "sound technical reasons" for giving Huawei marching orders. But although Huawei is said to threaten British security and is excluded from the 5G network, Mr Johnson cannot be seriously concerned since the eviction will become effective only over seven years.

Neither this anomaly nor the ban itself seems to have attracted much public attention in Britain. The reason may be that people are genuinely horrified by China's oppression of the Uighurs, its tightening grip on Hong Kong, the military assertiveness in the South China Sea and muscle-flexing in Ladakh. But the Brexit controversy makes Britain vulnerable, and succumbing to American pressure at this juncture may compound London's depen-

Dr Hans Kluge, who heads the WHO's European operations, says that lockdowns are unnecessary if 95 per cent of the population wears masks. Sadly, many European and American leaders dismissed masks then as politically unacceptable.

dency on Washington. Instead of taking back control of his country's destiny — the publicly reiterated reason for leaving the EU in the first place — Mr Johnson might end up by moving closer to the old joke of Britain as the 51st state of the United States of America.

Obviously, the pandemic aggravates the impact of all other crises. Covid-19 might also have caused less suffering and spread less terror if a sane approach had been followed from the beginning. Dr Hans Kluge, who heads the World Health Organisation's European operations, says that lockdowns are unnecessary if 95 per cent of the population wears masks. This should have been far more widely and forcefully propagated when the pandemic was exploding across the world. Sadly, many European and American leaders dismissed masks then as politically unacceptable.

As Britain and the EU nations were going into lockdown, Dr George Fu Gao, director-general of the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, China's main public health body, corroborated Dr Kluge's view. Asked about the mistakes being made by other countries trying to control coronavirus, he replied that "the big mistake in the US and Europe, in my opinion, is that people aren't wearing masks".

That opinion should have been taken seriously even though China had already been cast as the adversary. According to independent observers, China's return to normality was largely the result of old-fashioned public health measures, with a heavy emphasis on test-and-trace and travel bans, vigorously enforced by mobilising the country's vast resources and, of course, invoking the state's coercive authority.

There's a lesson there for the rest of the suffering world.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

BRAVE HEARTS

It is quite heartening to note that many men and women of all ages have volunteered to receive the first injection of the newly invented preventive serum/ medicine though knowing full well that their act sometimes may prove risky to the extent of endangering their very lives or lead to other physical and health complications of long term nature. This voluntary offer of making themselves experimental objects is a high degree of bravery and sacrifice to be lauded by all others. The government should honour all such brave hearts in a suitable manner.

B.S. Jayaraman, Coimbatore

KERALA CIVIC POLLS

DESPITE THE rise in Covid-9 positive cases in recent weeks, political activities in Kerala has not come to a halt. A high voltage campaign in the run-up to the three phase local body elections in the state, rightly perceived as a curtain raiser to the assembly polls in May 2021 and the enthusiastic participation of voters in the first phase of local body polls which concluded on Tuesday suggests the importance both the parties across the political spectrum and the voters of the state attached to the local bodies. For the ruling Left front, it was a major electoral test since the case of a suspected gold smuggling with alleged links to Chief Minister's office surfaced a few months ago. One of the significant features of the Kerala local body polls is the large number of women candidates in the fray and political parties preference for young people over known political faces.

M.Jeyaram, Sholavandan

TWO SPORTING GREATS

TWO TWEETS by Indian sports persons in the last few days have won millions of hearts across the country. First, the long jump athlete Anju Bobby George, who must be a woman of extraordinary will power and courage as she made a startling revelation of having only one kidney since her birth, with which she reached the pinnacle of glory with a great resolve and determination in her long sporting career. Second, explosive Indian all-rounder Hardik Pandya, in a rare gesture, gifted his Man-of-the-Series trophy to India's new bowling sensation T. Natarajan in the just concluded T-20 series against Australia. A player needs a big heart to give away a trophy which he won to someone who equally deserves it.

Leher Sethi



Is pollution a greater pandemic than Covid?

As a parent, I dread Delhi winters, not just because of the cold, but because of the terrible pollution in the air. We live in the city with the worst air quality in the world. Air quality index is generally Moderate (101-200) between January and September, and then it drastically deteriorates to Very Poor (301-400), Severe (401-500) or Hazardous (500+) between October and December.

It amazes me how year after year, as the winter approaches, there is a huge outcry over pollution in the city and then it dies down its own natural death as the summer returns. There is no urgency to tackle this pandemic!

Although some of us are still getting used to wearing masks, to many of us with little children, this is nothing new because our kids have been wearing masks for the past couple of winters. In my son's Montessori pre-school, it was made compulsory for the little babies to wear masks to school. Back then, it felt like I was entering a science fiction film set every time I would go to school. Little did I know that it would become the new normal soon!

As per the current data, as on

November 28, 2020, there have been 1,35,906 deaths due to the coronavirus in India. Globally, there have been 1.45 million deaths. Now, compare this to the deaths caused due to pollution. In 2019, exposures to outdoor high average levels of PM 2.5 caused 9,80,000 deaths in India — nearly 60 per cent of all air pollution — attributable deaths. Globally, there were 4.14 million such deaths in 2019. Even if we were to double the coronavirus-related deaths, they would still amount to just about 27 per cent of the deaths caused due to air pollution in India. Then, why is this pandemic being ignored?

What will it take for the authorities and the government to wake up to its reality? Is it that the awareness of this epidemic is only with the educated and urbane few, that it will only become important once the vote bank of the poor make it an issue?

As per the State of Global Air 2020 report (SoGA 2020) released on October 21, a report published by the US-based think-tank, Health Effects Institute, there were at least 1,16,000 infant deaths due to air pollution recorded in India last year.

For the youngest infants, most deaths were related to complications

from low birth weight and premature birth — direct outcomes of mothers' exposure to air pollution during pregnancy. More than half of the infant deaths were due to PM2.5 in outdoor air and the rest were linked to household air pollution due to use of solid fuels such as charcoal, wood and animal dung for cooking, as per the study that claims to be the first-ever comprehensive analysis of air pollution's global impact on newborns. There is a growing body of evidence about the link between infant death and air pollution and several Indian and international studies have tried to explain it.

In 2019, India's population-weighted annual average concentration of PM 2.5 was recorded at 83.2 micrograms per cubic metre — seven times higher than the WHO's safe standards of 10 µg/m3 - and remained highest in the world. (The "population-weighted annual average concentration" is the average level of air pollution to which a country's population is exposed.)

As per the American Lung Association, children face special risks from air pollution because their lungs are growing and because they are so active and breathe in a great deal of air. Children's exposure to air

pollution is a special concern because their immune system is not fully developed when exposure begins.

Just like the arms and legs, the largest portion of a child's lungs will grow long after he or she is born. Eighty percent of alveoli develop after birth. Children have more respiratory infections than adults, which also seems to increase their susceptibility to air pollution.

Furthermore, children don't behave like adults, and their behaviour also affects their vulnerability. They are outside for longer periods and are usually more active when outdoors. Consequently, they inhale more polluted outdoor air. They are also closer to the earth, where the pollutants are higher.

As per a study titled "State of Global Air 2019", the average life of a South Asian child growing up in the current high levels of air pollution will be shortened by two-and-a-half years. This means that a child born today will die 2.5 years sooner, on average. That is a really scary prospect, and one that makes me want to leave this city, and country, along with my child. Doing a little bit of research on my own, here's what I found:

■Children are more at risk from the effects of pollution since they have faster breathing rates, and their lungs are still developing.

■Children exposed to high pollution are more likely to have reduced lung function as adults.

■Long term exposure to air pollution may cause asthma and other health risks, including cancer, in children.

■Air pollution is one of the leading threats to child health, accounting for almost one in 10 deaths in children under five years of age.

■Pregnant women exposed to air pollution can hinder the development of the brain and lead to cognitive problems later in the children.

As per the World Health Organisation, in Delhi, poor air quality irreversibly damages the lungs of 2.2 million or 50 per cent of all children. My child and your child could be part of that number! There is no way of sugarcating this; as a parent, I am afraid for my child.

If this is not a national emergency, then what is? Our children are the future, and the future is at stake here!

Leher Sethi is an entrepreneur and social activist

SHORT TAKES

INDIA'S WEAPONS PURCHASE FROM US AT \$3.4 BILLION

Washington, Dec. 9: India's weapons procurement from the United States jumped from a meagre \$6.2 million to a whopping \$3.4 billion in the final year of the Donald Trump's administration, according to official data.

As per the data released by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), the jump in the sale of American weapons to India comes at a time when sale of weapons from the US to other countries has dipped to \$50.8 billion in 2020 from \$55.7 billion in 2019.

In 2019, the sale of US weapons to foreign countries was \$55.7 billion. In 2017, it was \$41.9 billion, it said. Major buyers of American weapons in 2020 were India (\$3.4 billion up from \$6.2 million in fiscal year 2019), Morocco (\$4.5 billion up from \$12.4 million), Poland (\$4.7 billion up from \$673 million), Singapore (\$1.3 billion up from \$137 million), Taiwan (\$11.8 billion up from \$876 million), and the United Arab Emirates (\$3.6 billion up from \$1.1 billion), the data showed.

ETHIOPIA DENIES PROBES INTO TIGRAY CONFLICT

Nairobi, Dec. 9: Ethiopia's government is rejecting calls for independent investigations into the deadly conflict in its Tigray region, saying it "doesn't need a baby-sitter."

The declaration comes amid international calls for more transparency into the month-long fighting between Ethiopian forces and those of the fugitive Tigray regional government that is thought to have killed thousands, including civilians.

At least one large-scale massacre has been documented, and others are feared. Senior government official Redwan Hussein told reporters on Tuesday evening that Ethiopia will invite others for assistance only if it feels that "it failed to investigate."

UK body issues allergy warning for Pfizer jab

Caution was given after 2 NHS workers suffered allergic reactions

London, Dec. 9: Britain's medicines regulator on Wednesday issued a warning for people with "significant" history of allergic reactions to medicines, food or vaccines to not have the Pfizer/BioNTech jab, a day after the first set of patients were administered their first of two doses of the vaccine against Covid-19.

The warning comes after two National Health Service (NHS) workers experienced "anaphylactoid reaction" symptoms shortly after being injected, but are now said to be recovering well. NHS England said all its trusts involved with the mass vaccination programme have been informed and from Wednesday, all patients scheduled to receive the vaccine will be asked if they have a history of allergic reactions.

"As is common with new vaccines, the MHRA have advised on a precautionary basis that people with a significant history of allergic reactions do not receive this vaccination after two people with a history of significant allergic reactions responded adversely," said Professor Stephen Powis, medical director for the NHS in England.

An anaphylactoid reaction tends to involve a skin rash, breathlessness and sometimes a drop in blood pressure and both the NHS workers who experienced this are said to have a history of serious allergies and carry adrenaline pens around with them.

"We have been advised by MHRA [Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency] of two yellow card reports that may be associated with allergic reaction due to

Biden promises 100 mn vaccine shots in 100 days

Washington, Dec. 9: US President-elect Joe Biden has said that in the first 100 days of his administration, he would mandate everyone to wear a mask, ensure 100 million Covid-19 vaccinations and reopen the majority of schools as he assured Americans that his "crisis-tested" team of experts will deliver better healthcare and revive the economy.

The US is in the midst of a deadly pandemic that has infected almost 15 million Americans and killed 2,86,000. Globally, there are 68.2 million Covid-19 cases and the pandemic

has claimed more than 1.5 million lives.

Announcing his national health team, Biden asked the Trump administration to act now to purchase the doses it has negotiated with Pfizer and Moderna and to work swiftly to scale manufacturing for the US population and the world.

"This can be fixed. If it does, my team will be able to get at least 100 million vaccinations done in my first 100 days. Third, it should be a national priority to get our kids back into school and keep them in school," he said. — PTI

MERKEL BACKS TOUGHER VIRUS RESTRICTIONS

Berlin, Dec. 9: German Chancellor Angela Merkel advocated tougher restrictions on public life and pleaded with her compatriots to cut down on socializing as the country reported its highest single-day death toll of the Coronavirus pandemic on Wednesday. Germany is gradually moving toward a tighter lockdown, at least for a limited period after Christmas, as new virus cases remain stubbornly high — and are even beginning to creep higher — despite a partial shutdown that started on November 2. — AP

U.S. SANCTIONS HINDERING ACCESS TO VACCINE: IRAN

Tehran, Dec. 9: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that US sanctions are making it difficult for Iran to purchase medicine and health supplies from abroad, including Covid-19 vaccines needed to contain the worst outbreak in the Middle East.

President Donald Trump's administration has imposed crippling sanctions on Iran's banking sector and its vital oil and gas industry. — AP

Don orders vaccine priority for America

Washington, Dec. 9: US President Donald Trump has signed an executive order that prioritises Americans' access to Covid-19 vaccines before the US potentially begins helping other nations.

If necessary, Trump said, he is ready to invoke the Defence Production Act to ensure that Covid-19 vaccines first get to the

Americans.

The Defence Production Act allows a president to force private manufacturers to ramp up production and give the federal government priority on any orders it places. American companies, he said, were the first to produce a verifiably safe and effective vaccine. — PTI

administration of the Covid-19 BNT162b2 vaccine," Pfizer UK said in a statement. "As a precautionary measure, the MHRA has issued temporary guidance to the NHS while it conducts an investigation in order to fully

understand each case and its causes," it said. Dr June Raine, the head of the MHRA, told a joint select committee hearing on Tuesday that "real-time vigilance" will continue throughout the vaccine rollout process. — PTI

FINANCIAL Chronicle

THURSDAY | 10 DECEMBER 2020 | COIMBATORE

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	46,103.50 1.09
Nifty 50	13,392.95 0.28
S&P 500*	3,694.24 -0.22
Dollar (₹)	73.56 -0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.73 -0.57
Euro (₹)	89.24 -0.04
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,221▼118 0.23
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	48.75 -0.09
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.917 -0.022
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.944 0.031

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Honda suspends UK production amid ship delays



Carmaker Honda has temporarily halted production at its plant in England after shipping delays linked to the pandemic and preparations for Brexit left it with a shortage of parts. The company said it was forced to make the decision because transport-related delays left it short of parts. The factory relies on a just in time delivery system, in which parts arrive as they are needed for assembly and not stored locally.

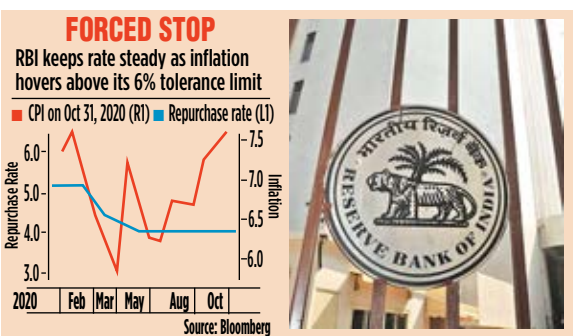
Centre for more focus on economic growth Govt may prod RBI for looser inflation target

SIDDHARTHA SINGH NOV. 9

The government is considering recommending a looser inflation target for the central bank, allowing it to focus more on economic growth despite price pressures, according to people familiar with the matter.

A consumer-price inflation band tracked by the Reserve Bank of India may be relaxed further from the current 2 per cent to 6 per cent range, said the people, who asked not to be identified citing rules. The government still needs to hold consultations with the central bank before finalising a new framework sometime next year.

The current mandate, set in 2016, requires the RBI to keep headline inflation at the 4 per cent midpoint of



its target range. The band—a broad range of 400 basis points within which the central bank has sanction to operate—is the widest in Asia, and only matched by Turkey and surpassed by Argentina.

The finance ministry is of the view that the RBI can't be saddled with a rigid inflation targeting framework, especially in situa-

tions when growth needs to be pushed, the people said.

A spokesperson for the finance ministry declined to comment, while the RBI didn't respond to an email seeking comment.

Economists like Bloomberg Economics' Abhishek Gupta have argued in the past that the headline inflation measure used now is too volatile and

the central bank should rather target core prices, which strips out oil and food costs. Food carries nearly 50 per cent weight in the CPI basket.

RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said Friday that a final call on what measure to target rests with the government and Parliament, although he doesn't see a situation where they will move away from tracking the CPI.

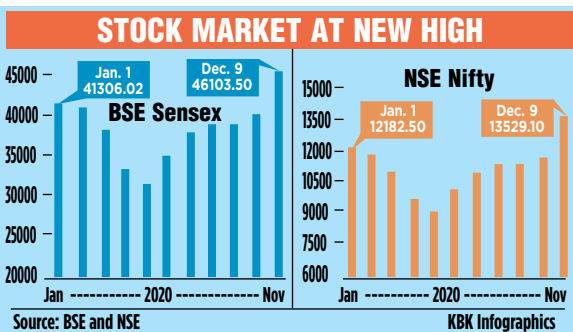
The RBI has previously faced criticism for largely overstating inflation, forecasts that were then used to underpin the MPC's hawkish policy stance in 2018. Currently, a spike in inflation has forced the central bank to pause interest-rate cuts despite the economy needing more stimulus after entering an unprecedented recession. — Bloomberg

Brokerages cautious as Sensex tops 46000-mark

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 9

As the market is scaling new highs everyday, top brokerages have cautioned investors to tread carefully as the market has reached an extreme zone.

The Sensex crossed the 46000-mark for the first time on Wednesday and closed at a new record high of 46,103.50, gaining 494.99 points. The Nifty-50 also closed at a new all-time high of 13,529.10, gaining



135.15 points. The rally was powered by

Rs 3,564.23 crore net buying by FPIs.

Guarav Garg, head of research, Capital Research Global said, "One has to notice that it is a narrow rally. As markets hit record high, investors may book some profits in long positions."

"Since we are in an uncharted territory, sky's the limit for our market; but in our sense, we have now reached the extreme zone, at least for the current vertical move," said Sameet Chavan, a chief analyst at Angel Broking.

Biden picks retired Army general to lead Pentagon

Trump: Hopeful of continuing as Prez

Washington, Dec. 9: US President-elect Joe Biden has announced retired Army general Lloyd J. Austin as his nomination for Defence Secretary. If confirmed by the Senate, 67-year-old Austin would be the first African-American to lead the Pentagon.

The nominee for the 28th Secretary of Defence comes with a distinguished record of military service spanning four decades. "General Austin shares my profound belief that our nation is at its strongest when we lead not only by the example of our power, but by the power of our example.

Throughout his lifetime of dedicated service — and in the many hours we've spent together in the White House Situation Room and with our troops overseas — General Austin has demonstrated exemplary leadership, character and command," Biden said while making the announcement on Tuesday.

"He is uniquely qualified to take on the challenges and crises we face in the current moment, and I look forward to once again working closely with him as a trusted partner to lead our military with dignity and resolve, revitalise our alliances in the face of global threats, and ensure the safety and security of the American people," the Democratic leader said. An accomplished, respected and trailblazing figure in the US military history, Austin retired from the Army in 2016 after over 40 years of service.

The first African-American to serve as Commander of US Central Command, Austin is a trusted and crisis-tested leader who has overseen some of the most complex and impactful operations in the history of the armed services — including serving as the chief

Days before the official certification of the November 3 US presidential elections in favour of his Democratic opponent Joe Biden, President Donald Trump claimed that he would continue to hold the position as he has won the elections.

Trump has been making unsubstantiated claims about widespread voter fraud and electoral malpractice in the presidential polls. State election officials and the media

have denied any such fraud.

Election officials have declared Biden as the President-elect as he received more than the required 270 of the 538 electoral college votes. The elections are officially scheduled to be certified next week. However, Trump is continuing his legal efforts to upend Biden's victory. He has allowed the official start of Biden's transition to power but has not yet conceded defeat. — PTI

U.S. TOP COURT REJECTS GOP BID TO HALT BIDEN'S PENNSYLVANIA WIN

Washington, Dec. 9 (AP) The Supreme Court has rejected Republicans' last-gasp bid to reverse Pennsylvania's certification of President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the electoral battleground.

The court without comment on Tuesday refused to call into question the certification process in Pennsylvania.

Governor Tom Wolf already has certified Biden's victory and the state's 20 electors are to meet on December 14 to cast their votes for Biden.

Biden won 306 electoral votes, so even if Pennsylvania's results had been in doubt, he still would have more than the 270 electoral votes needed to become president. — AP

architect of the effort to defeat ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and working closely with Biden to bring nearly 1,50,000 American military personnel home from Iraq, the transition said.

US President-elect Joe Biden has also selected Ohio Rep. Marcia Fudge as his housing and urban development secretary, according to three people familiar with the decision.

Fudge was first elected to Congress in 2008 to represent a district that includes Cleveland, and

had been considered a leading candidate for agriculture secretary in the Biden administration. Her intended nomination was confirmed on Tuesday by three people familiar with the decision who spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid preempting the president-elect's announcement.

She enjoys the strong backing of South Carolina Rep. Jim Clyburn, the No. 3 House Democrat who gave Biden a key nod of support in the primaries. — PTI

Mumbai housing sales up 135% since stamp duty cut

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 9

After the stamp duty cut, residential sales in Mumbai have more than doubled compared to last year.

The megapolis witnessed cumulative residential sales of 22,827 units after the stamp duty cut from September. The monthly run rate during September-November is approximately 135 per cent higher than the monthly average of 2019, as per the estimates of Knight Frank India.

The Maharashtra government had cut stamp duty on property registrations by 3 per cent for a period between September 1 and December 31, 2020. Additionally, most developers offered to absorb the remaining 2 per cent.

Mumbai started seeing month-on-month growth in residential sales since September. Sales grew 112 per cent in September compared to August, 42 per cent in October and 17 per cent in November over the previous month.

In November, residential sales also grew 67 per cent over the year-ago period. Mumbai recorded sales of 9,301 residential units and this was the highest ever registrations in November over the last nine years.

Even after the stamp duty cut, the state government's revenue collections from stamp duty have increased to Rs 232 crore in October and Rs 288 crore in November



November sales in last nine years (Mumbai)	
Month	Number of sale documents registered
Nov. 2012	4,247
Nov. 2013	3,859
Nov. 2014	5,001
Nov. 2015	4,221
Nov. 2016	3,838
Nov. 2017	6,230
Nov. 2018	5,190
Nov. 2019	5,574
Nov. 2020	9,301

Sales in units (Mumbai) in 2020	
Month (2020)	Units
November	9,301
October	7,929
September	5,597
August	2,642
July	2,662
June	1,839
May	207
April	-
March	3,798
February	5,927
January	6,150
TOTAL	46,052
Source: Department of registrations and stamps, Government of Maharashtra, Knight Frank Research	

against Rs 176 crore in August. This shows that the boost to housing sales

has more than compensated for lower duty.

"The demand momentum in this market is likely to continue till end of the year buoyed by the low stamp duty regime. As income streams are coming back to normal, we believe that more buyers will come to the market before the end of the financial year to make most of this opportune time to buy their dream homes," said Shishir Baijal, chairman and managing director, Knight Frank India.

Apart from stamp duty, sales in November were also augmented by the auspicious period of Diwali and reduction of home loan rate. Other measures by developers such as deferred payment plans, indirect discounts and offers to negotiate on the final price of the apartment have helped entice home-buyers.

"Reduced stamp duty for a limited period till December 31, 2020 has played the role of a catalyst. Many fence-sitters are taking the plunge as home loan rates too are at very low levels, making this a great time to buy a home in a metro like Mumbai," said Ram Raheja, director, S Raheja Realty.

SHORT TAKES

Ex Argentina coach
Sabella no more

Buenos Aires: Former coach Alejandro Sabella, who led the 2014 World Cup runner-up Argentina team, died on Tuesday at a clinic in Buenos Aires suffering from heart disease.

He was 66 years old. The former boss of Estudiantes de La Plata died at the Cardiovascular Institute of Buenos Aires, where he had been admitted on November 25 - the day soccer legend Diego Maradona died — after suffering an arrhythmia. The medical center said in a statement that Sabella was the victim of “secondary dilated heart disease and long-standing cardiotoxicity.” — AP

Ben Stokes' father
passes away at 65

Christchurch: England all-rounder Ben Stokes lost his father Ged, who died here on Tuesday after a year-long battle with brain cancer.

He was 65. Stokes is currently with the England team in South Africa for the limited over series. He had played all three T20Is and was rested for ODIs, which was cancelled on Monday after multiple cases of Covid-19 were detected in the bio-bubble. Ged, a former rugby player and coach, had been suffering from brain cancer for some time and Stokes was there in Christchurch for more than a month taking care of his ailing father. Stokes' famous “bent middle finger” gesture during the 2019 South Africa series was a tribute to his father's amputated finger. Ged had to remove a part of his finger in order to continue playing. — PTI

Champ Momota
returns to court

Tokyo: Japan's badminton world number one Kento Momota on Wednesday announced his long-awaited return to competition as he begins his bid for home glory at the Tokyo Olympics nearly a year after suffering serious injuries in a car crash. Momota will compete at the All-Japan national championships in Tokyo later this month before playing in the Thailand Open in January following a difficult year in which he feared his career might be over after fracturing an eye socket in the accident. “I'm nervous but I'm really looking forward to it,” said Momota. “I'm really looking forward to playing against the best international players after such a long time,” he added. Momota admitted his “spirit was almost broken” after undergoing surgery on his eye socket in February. — AFP

English return to
SL for Test tour

London: England will return to Sri Lanka for a rearranged two-Test cricket tour in January, 10 months after leaving the Asian country as the Coronavirus pandemic began to take hold. England's players will isolate for three days in Hambantota after arriving in Sri Lanka on Jan. 2, with the first Test starting Jan. 14 in Galle.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Big Bash League: Hobart Hurricanes vs Sydney Sixers from 1.45 pm on Sony Six

Lanka Premier League: Jaffna vs Colombo from 3 pm; Galle vs Kandy from 7.30 pm on Sony Six

FOOTBALL

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

Europa League: CSKA Sofia vs Roma from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 3; Dundalk vs Arsenal from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Napoli vs Real Sociedad from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 1; Sparta Prague vs AC Milan from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 1; Tottenham Hotspur vs Antwerp from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2; Wolfsburg vs Feyenoord from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Six; Leicester City vs AEK Athens from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 3

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Ronaldo bests Messi

Cristiano nets brace as Juve crush Barcelona 3-0

Barcelona, Dec. 9: Cristiano Ronaldo struck twice from the penalty spot to win his battle with rival Lionel Messi and guide Juventus to a 3-0 win over Barcelona on Tuesday, earning the Italians top spot in Champions League Group G.

The former Real Madrid striker and his Argentina counterpart traded Ballon d'Or wins for a decade between 2008-2017 and were figureheads for the duelling Spanish giants, but there was only one winner at the Camp Nou as they met for the first time since Ronaldo's departure for Juve in 2018. Juventus lost 2-0 at home against Barcelona in October without Ronaldo, sidelined with Covid-19, but were greatly improved and earned the first Champions League away win against Barcelona since Bayern Munich triumphed in 2013.

Both sides, tied on 15 points, were assured of qualification before kick-off, but Juve's three-goal victory handed them a superior head-to-head record.

Ronald Koeman, reeling from Barcelona's 2-1 defeat by promoted minnows Cadiz on Saturday in La Liga, reacted by making four changes but the hosts started badly.

It only took 13 minutes for Ronaldo to break the deadlock, slotting home from the penalty spot after the referee deemed Ronald Araujo's challenge on him a foul. Juve's did not relent and their pressure led to a second goal, Weston McKennie volleying home Juan Cuadrado's sweetly clipped cross in the 20th minute. — AFP

THE RESULTS

Juventus 3

(Ronaldo 13-pen, 52-pen, McKennie 20)

Barcelona 0

RB Leipzig 3

(Angelino 2, Haidara 13, Kluijvert 69)

Manchester United 2

(Fernandes 80-pen, Pogba 82)

Chelsea 1

(Jorginho 28-pen)

Krasnodar 1

(Cabella 24)

Borussia Dortmund 1

(Piszczek 68, Witsel 78)

Zenit Saint Petersburg 1

(Driussi 16)



Cristiano Ronaldo (right) of Juventus lines up a shot to score his team's third goal against Barcelona during their UEFA Champions League Group 'G' football match at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Tuesday. — AFP

Racist slur halts PSG game

Paris, Dec. 9: Manchester United were knocked out of the Champions League after a 3-2 defeat by RB Leipzig on Tuesday, while Paris Saint-Germain's qualification for the last 16 was overshadowed by a racism row involving a match official that caused their game against Istanbul Basaksehir to be suspended for 24 hours.

Requiring just a point to advance, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side fell behind to an Angelino goal inside two minutes in Germany. Amadou Haidara soon added a second and United were trailing 3-0 heading into the final quarter after a Justin Kluivert strike.

Bruno Fernandes's penalty and a deflected Paul Pogba header gave United a lifeline but Leipzig, who reached the semifinals last term, held on to move top of Group 'H' on 12 points.

Leipzig must wait until Wednesday to find out whether they finish first or second in the section, after the contest between last season's runners-up PSG and Turkish champions Basaksehir was interrupted with the score 0-0 in the 14th minute.



Kylian Mbappe (third from right) of PSG looks on after the game was suspended amid allegations of racism by one of the match officials during the UEFA Champions League Group 'H' football match against Istanbul Basaksehir at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris on Tuesday. — AFP

Players walked off in Paris amid allegations of racism by the fourth official, in an unprecedented incident in European football's elite club competition.

The row erupted after Basaksehir assistant coach Pierre Webo, the

former Cameroon international, was shown a red card during a fierce row on the touchline with staff from the Turkish club appearing to accuse the official of using a racist term.

Television microphones picked up a furious Webo

repeatedly asking why a racist term had been used to describe him.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he “strongly” condemned the incident, while UEFA announced it would open a “thorough investigation”. — AFP

Injured Warner
now out of Test

Sydney, Dec. 9: Australia's star opening batsman David Warner has been ruled out of the first Test against India, but will try to return for the blockbuster second instalment on Boxing Day. Cricket Australia said Wednesday.

Warner is recovering from a strained adductor muscle that forced him to limp out of Australia's second one-day international against India last month, after a knock of 83.

“I feel I have made great progress in a short amount of time and it's best for me to stay here in Sydney to continue working on getting back to full fitness,” Warner said.

“The injury feels a lot better, but I need to be able to satisfy in my own mind and to my team-mates that it is 100 percent ready for Test match conditions.

“That includes running between the wickets and being agile in the field. Right now I feel I am short of being able to play at peak fitness and another 10 days will make a difference,” he added.

The day-night first Test will begin in Adelaide on December 17, kicking off a four-match series.

It is not yet clear who will take Warner's place in Adelaide, but Cameron Green's century this week for Australia 'A' against a strong India 'A' attack — featuring Ravichandran Ashwin, Umesh Yadav and Mohammed Siraj — has put him in the running.

In contrast, Will Pucovski and Joe Burns, in line to form Australia's top order, both flopped in the warm-up match and Pucovski also had to leave the field with concussion symptoms after a delivery struck his helmet.

Burns was offered a



I feel I have made great progress in a short amount of time and it's best for me to stay here in Sydney to continue working on getting back to full fitness.

— **DAVID WARNER**
Australian star cricketer

chance at redemption Wednesday when he was one of four members of the Test squad named to play the day/night warm-up against India 'A' in Sydney from Friday.

“Joe Burns, Cameron Green, Sean Abbott and Mitchell Swepson will derive great benefit from playing high quality opposition against the pink ball in the final tour match,” Australia selector Trevor Hohns said.

Coach Justin Langer expressed confidence Warner would be back for the second Test.

“He has done an incredible job to get to where he is today and we hope to have a fully fit David Warner at his absolute best in Melbourne.”

When they last visited two years ago — when Warner and Steve Smith were serving a ban for ball-tampering — India triumphed 2-1 for their first Test series win in Australia. — AFP

INDIA'S BIGGEST BIKE RACING
WEEKEND TO BE HELD AT MMRT

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 9

Big grids, a massive card of 29 races and over 200 entries mark the first round of the MRF MMSC fmsci Indian National Motorcycle Racing Championship 2020 which gets underway at the MMRT, here on Friday, behind closed doors, and in what is the biggest domestic racing weekend in India.

Due to the pandemic and subsequent restrictions, the 2020 two-wheeler racing championship has been packed into two back-to-back weekends (Dec 11-13 and Dec 18-20) with competitions in 10 categories.

The National Championship comprises two Pro-Stock classes — the premier 301-400cc and 165cc — besides two Stock 165cc categories — Novice, which will have a grid of 40 riders, and Girls.

Also in the mix are two One-Make Championships organised by the MMSC — the Idemitsu Honda India Talent Cup (CBR 150cc and NSF 250R) and TVS One-Make Championship (RTR 310 Open, Novice, Girls and Media). MMSC have left no stone unturned in ensuring that not only all Covid-19 safety protocols are followed, but also to deal with the challenges posed by the unpredictable weather by providing grooved tyres also for the Pro-Stock categories.

Mumbai hammer Chennaiyin 2-1

Bambolim, Dec. 9: Mumbai City FC rallied to eke out a 2-1 win over Chennaiyin FC and record their fourth victory on the trot in the Indian Super League here on Wednesday.

Adam Le Fondre smashed in a 75th-minute winner after Hernan Santana (45th) had cancelled Jakub Sylvestr's first goal.

The Sergio Lobera's team maintained the top spot in the ISL table.

Chennaiyin FC had a perfect start and would

have been ahead in the second minute if it was not for Sylvestr missing a sitter. Rafael Crivellaro delivered a perfect corner which was flicked in by Enes Sipovic and found Sylvestr, who missed the target.

Mumbai were not at their best and took time to settle. But they did have their moments. The home side's best chance came in the 25th minute when Adam Le Fondre had a clear sight on goal, but his powerful drive from inside the box, was

straight at keeper Vishal Kaithi. The rebound fell to Bipin Singh, but he couldn't utilise the opportunity.

Chennaiyin were clearly the better side in the opening quarter creating numerous chances through Lallianzuala Chhangte, Sipovic and Crivellaro. The Chennai-based side took the lead in the 40th minute. Sylvestr scored probably the easiest goal of the season.

Chhangte deserved credit for his initial

spadework on the right before he played a low cross from the byline to find Sylvestr, who slotted it in.

Just when it looked like Chennaiyin would walk into the breather with a goal advantage, Mumbai's Santana had different plans. The Spaniard, who was unmarked at the far post, nodded in a Hugo Boumous' corner to restore parity post which they doubled the lead in the 75th minute through another set-piece. — PTI

KASHMIR INTO
SEMIFINALS

Kolkata, Dec. 9: Real Kashmir and United SC secured their second successive wins to seal semi final berths from their respective groups in the 123rd IFA Shield here on Wednesday.

Fresh from a 2-1 win over Peerless SC, the Snow Leopards were caught unawares by the aggressive brand of football by Aryan SC before they finally broke the deadlock with a Mason Robertson strike in the 72nd minute. — PTI

Kohli rues DRS
miss in last tie

Sydney, Dec. 9: Captain Virat Kohli wasn't happy that his team lost out on a perfect DRS call just because replay of the delivery bowled to Matthew Wade was shown on giant screen before the permissible limit of 15 seconds.

India lost the third T20 International by 12 runs and one of the reasons could be attributed to the fact that Wade, who could have been adjudged leg before off T Natarajan at a score of 50, got a lucky reprieve and added 30 more runs.

“That lbw was a strange one because we were still discussing whether the ball was going down and within the 15-second time, they showed the replay on the screen,” Kohli said.

“We decided to go for the review but the umpire said they have already shown the replay on the screen,” he said.

In fact had the review been taken, TV replays showed that the umpire would have been forced to reverse his decision.

“I had a chat with Rod (Tucker, the umpire) and said: ‘what do we do in this situation’ and he said ‘nothing can be done. It's a mistake from TV’,” Kohli narrated the incident.

He made it clear that the Indian team management had made its displeasure



That lbw was a strange one because we were still discussing whether the ball was going down and within the 15-second time, they showed the replay on the screen.

— **VIRAT KOHLI**
Indian cricket captain

clear with the authorities, saying a mistake of this magnitude in an international game is unacceptable.

“I thought from the management perspective, a message has to be passed that this can't be done at the highest level because in a very important game, it can be very costly.

“It was a little bit of a miss from the TV guys upstairs and I am sure it won't be repeated,” he further added. — PTI



Parthiv Patel

and even before he made his Ranji Trophy debut.

“The BCCI showed generous amount of confidence and faith in a 17-year-old boy to play for India. I have enormous gratitude towards them for guiding me and hand

New Delhi, Dec. 9: Parthiv Patel, one of the youngest to have played Test cricket for India at the age of 17, on Wednesday announced his retirement from all forms of the game, three month's short of his 36th birthday.

The baby-faced Parthiv, who made his Test debut under Sourav Ganguly, aged 17 years and 153 days, played 65 international games for the country, which included 25 Tests, 38 ODIs and two T20 Internationals.

“Today, I announce retirement from all forms of cricket and as I bring down curtains on this 18 year-old cricketing jour-

ney, I feel heavier with gratitude for many,” the 35-year-old Parthiv said in a statement on his official twitter and instagram account.

The left-handed batsman scored nearly 1700 runs (1696) across formats with 934 runs (6 half centuries) coming in the longest format.

In ODIs, he scored 736 runs with four half-centuries and a highest score of 95. He effected 72 dismissals in Tests, which include 62 catches and 10 stumpings.

Parthiv burst onto the scene in early 2002, when he was sent to England after having played for India A in South Africa

holding me in the formative years of my young career,” Parthiv further stated.

In fact, he played his first Ranji Trophy after he was dropped from the India squad in 2004 due to below-par glove work on tours of Australia and Pakistan.

He was thankful to all his captains and “especially Dada”, referring to BCCI president Sourav Ganguly.

Parthiv Patel called his first Test captain Sourav Ganguly a “leader in true sense” along with the legendary Anil Kumble and said their influence in his life went beyond the crick-eting arena.

“I would always hold Sourav Ganguly as a leader in true sense with his man management skills. Sourav and Anil Kumble were great leaders and they made me the kind of person I am,” Parthiv said.

“I still have the Test cap with my name wrongly printed ‘Partiv’ that Dada gave me. The victories at Headingley (2002) and Adelaide (2003-04) and the half-century opening the innings at Rawalpindi will be my favourite memories.”

He said that retirement was on his mind for the last one year and that the timing couldn't have been better. — PTI