

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | SUNDAY 29 | NOVEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 30°C
Min: 25°C
Rainfall: 1.8 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvati: Karthigai 14
Tithi: Chaturtashi/ Pournami
Star: Krithigai
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.57 am
Zohar: 12 noon
Asar: 3.13 pm
Maghrib: 5.39 pm
Isha: 6.54 pm

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+41,465)	(+482)
93,92,689	1,36,720

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+ 1,430)
TN: 779,046 11,694

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

6,23,29,847

DEATHS

14,55,028

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
218

worldometers.info

Central teams coming to TN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 28

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an ex-gratia of ₹2 lakh each to the families of those who lost their lives in the ravages of Cyclone Nivar and ₹50,000 to those who were injured from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund. The tweet from the @PMOIndia handle also said that the Prime Minister had discussed with the Chief Minister about the situation in the wake of cyclone and heavy rainfall in parts of the state. Conveying the Prime Minister condolences and prayers for quick recovery of the injured, it said that central teams were being sent to Tamil Nadu to assist in rescue and relief work. Another 7-member central team, headed by Additional Secretary in the Union Home Ministry, Ashutosh Agnihotri, is visiting Tamil Nadu on November 30 to hold discussions with the Chief Secretary and also visit the cyclone affected places in Chennai, Cuddalore and other parts of the State. The team, comprising officers from various Union Ministries, would also pay a visit to Puducherry to make on the spot assessments of the damages caused by the cyclone and heavy rains. A report would be submitted to the Centre, based on which relief would be given to the State.

COUNTER POINT



Don't take them seriously. The polls in Punjab and Haryana are far away!

Covid-19 caseload in India climbs to 93,51,109

New Delhi, Nov. 28: India's Covid-19 tally of cases climbed to 93.51 lakh with 41,322 new infections being reported in a day, while 87,59,969 people have recovered so far pushing the national recovery rate to 93.68 per cent, according to the Union health ministry data updated on Saturday. The total coronavirus cases increased to 93,51,109 and the death toll climbed to 1,36,200 with the virus claiming 485 more lives, the data updated at 8 am showed. After showing an upward trend for three days in a row,

the active Covid-19 caseload decreased to 4,54,940, remaining below 5 lakh for the 18th consecutive day. It comprises 4.87 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated. The Covid-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.46 per cent. India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5. It went past 50 lakh on September 16, 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, and surpassed 90 lakh on November 20. — PTI



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Rajini to meet mandram district functionaries tomorrow



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Modi says vaccine is for our neighbourhood too

■ PM visits manufacturing units in Pune, Ahmedabad, Hyd

Ahmedabad/Hyderabad/Pune, Nov. 28: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday visited Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Pune to review the development and manufacturing process of coronavirus vaccines at facilities in these cities.

Mr Modi visited the Zydus Biotech Park in Ahmedabad, Bharat Biotech in Hyderabad and Serum Institute of India in Pune.

"The scientists expressed joy that the Prime Minister met them face to face in order to boost their morale and help accelerate their efforts at this critical juncture in the vaccine development journey," an official statement said.

"The Prime Minister expressed pride in the fact that India's indigenous vaccine development has progressed at such a rapid pace so far. He spoke on how India is following sound principles of science in the entire journey of vaccine development, while also asking for suggestions to make the vaccine distribution process better," it said. The statement said Modi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being briefed during a visit to the Bharat Biotech facility to review the development of indigenous Covid-19 vaccine candidate Covaxin, on the outskirts of Hyderabad, on Saturday. — PTI

stressed that India considers vaccines as not only vital to good health but also as a global good, and it is India's duty to assist other countries, including the nations in our neighbourhood, in the collective fight against the virus.

"He (Modi) asked the scientists to express their free and frank opinion on how the country could further improve its regulatory process. The scientists

also presented an overview of how they are also developing various new and repurposed drugs to better fight Covid-19," it said.

Mr Modi began by visiting pharma major Zydus Cadila's manufacturing facility near Ahmedabad. Wearing a PPE kit, he reviewed the vaccine development process at the company's research centre, located over 20 km from Ahmedabad. ■ P4

CM: STATE SPENT ₹7,525 CR TO CONTAIN COVID

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 28

Coronavirus infection has come under control and the death rate has been very low in the state, thanks to the consistent efforts made by the government that had already spent ₹7,525.7 crore in managing the pandemic, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said on Saturday.

However, it would take more time for normalcy to return to the state, he said while addressing district collectors at a meeting to review the Covid-19 situation and to decide on the continuation of the lockdown that otherwise comes to an end by this month. Making an announcement on the opening of 200 mini clinics all over the State by December 15, he said the clinics would be manned by a doctor, a nurse and a medical assistant. ■ P3

India deploys Navy's Marine commandos in Pangong lake

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

India has deployed marine commandos (MARCOS) from the Indian Navy in the Pangong lake area which is one of the flash points with China in Eastern Ladakh.

MARCOS will also get new boats to carry out operations in the lake along with the existing infrastructure there.

Indian Air Force's Garud and Indian Army's Para Special Forces have already been operating in the Ladakh.

Indian Air Force's Garud Special Forces are deployed at the strategically crucial heights along with their shoulder-fired air defence systems Igla to

take on aircraft violating Indian air space. The special forces manned by Tibetan migrants Special Frontier Force had also taken part in the pre-emptive occupation of strategic heights in the southern banks of Pangong Tso in August.

India has deployed MARCOS in Ladakh at a time when there is a virtual deadlock between India and China to disengage

from the seven months military stand-off in the eastern Ladakh. There has been no progress on the proposals of disengagement which were discussed during eighth round of corps commanders meeting.

There has also been no discussion on date of next meeting.

India's position has been that it was China which had first moved its troops at the LAC and China will have to be first to withdraw from these positions. India has told China that it will talk about all flash points and not just about south bank of Pangong Tso where Indian army occupied strategic heights in August in a surprise move.

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES



'India most depressed country' tag leaves HC shocked

Chennai: Expressing shock over India standing top among the most depressed country in the world, the Madras high court has said it is the primary duty of the governments to concentrate on the mental health of the people by having sufficient number of psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health workers and hospitals and other required infrastructures. ■ P2

Modi, Imran to skip SCO summit tomorrow

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced on Saturday that Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu would chair the 19th meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government to be hosted by India in virtual format on Monday while Pakistan will be represented by its Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs. The



M. Venkaiah Naidu

other six SCO member-nations— Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan—will be represented by their prime ministers,

MEA added.

It may be recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had just attended the SCO Council of Heads of State meeting in virtual format earlier this month on November 10 that had been chaired by Russian President Vladimir Putin. The meeting had also been attended by other leaders including Chinese President Xi Jinping and Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan. Some of the media reports suggest PM

Modi may be visiting his Lok Sabha constituency Varanasi on Monday.

"It will be the first time that a summit-level meeting will be held under India's chairmanship, since it gained full-membership of the organization in 2017. This Summit is held annually at the level of Prime Ministers of SCO and deals primarily with the trade and economic agenda of the organisation," the MEA statement added.

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

It is the duty of the international community to safeguard the decisions of the Nuremberg Tribunal as per the norms of international law, and attempts to forget or undermine them are detrimental to global security, Russian deputy chief of mission (DCM) in New Delhi Roman Babushkin has said.

Speaking at a webinar organised by the Russian Centre of Science and Culture (RCSC) in New

Delhi earlier this week to mark the "75th Anniversary of the Nuremberg Trials" in 1945, he said Russia highly appreciated India's co-sponsorship of the Russia-proposed UN General Assembly (GA) annual resolution against glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other contemporary forms of racism.

The Tribunal had tried the then leadership of Nazi Germany for its war crimes.

Russia had earlier this year celebrated the 75th

● **The Nuremberg Tribunal pronounced its assessments of those acts, and developed the criteria of a crime against humanity, which defined very concept of genocide and laid the foundation for the 1948 UN Genocide Convention**

anniversary of the victory of the erstwhile Soviet Union over Nazi Germany in 1945. A staggering 27 million Soviet citizens died heroically defending their country from the Nazis. It is hailed by the Russians as the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 that began when Hitler invaded the Soviet



Doval meets defence brass of Lanka, Maldives

Colombo, Nov. 28:

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on Saturday called on Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and had a "productive" discussion with him on the ways to diversify and deepen the bilateral relationship.

Mr Doval arrived here on Friday for a trilateral maritime dialogue among India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. He took part in the dialogue, held after 6 years, along with Sri Lankan defence secretary Major-Gen. (retd.) Kamal Gunaratne and Maldivian defence minister Mariya Didi on Saturday.

The high-level trilateral meeting is designed to initiate collective action on maritime security including maritime domain awareness, legal regimes, train in search and rescue, maritime pollution response, information sharing, curbing piracy drugs arms and contraband trafficking in the Indian Ocean region.

This is Mr Doval's second official visit to Sri Lanka this year. — PTI

Farmers refuse to take Delhi grounds, stay put on border



Farmers gathered at the Singhu border as part of their 'Delhi Chalo' protest against Centre's new farm laws, in New Delhi, on Saturday. — PTI

in one ground as earlier the Delhi Police had demanded nine grounds to be made temporary prisons for the protesting farmers. So we have decided to protest from border as most of the farmers are still coming from Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to join the movement," said Sukhbir Panwar, a farmer from Fatehabad district in Haryana.

Around 400 to 500 farmers who had come to Nirankari ground on Friday were seen shouting slogans, singing songs and carrying flags in reds, greens and blues. Slogans such as 'Narendra Modi Kisan Virodhi' and 'Inquilab Zindabad' could be heard while farmers

were also seen dancing to drumbeats and the strains of "Hum Honge Kaamyab" at Nirankari ground.

Meanwhile, a few groups of farmers from Uttar Pradesh gathered at the Ghazipur border to join the call against the Centre's new agri laws on Saturday evening.

"Around 200 farmers arrived at UP Gate (Ghazipur border) underpass. The protesting farmers have parked their vehicles in line at the designated spot to avoid any inconvenience to the public and ensure a smooth flow of traffic. The farmers have decided to sit here for the night," said Jasmeet Singh, deputy commissioner of police, East district. ■ P4

10-yr jail for conversion for marriage in UP

Lucknow, Nov. 28: The Uttar Pradesh ordinance aimed at curbing forcible or fraudulent religious conversions including those for the sake of marriage has got the assent of Governor Anandiben Patel with the new law providing for a jail term of up to 10 years for violations.

The law, which has been published in the UP gazette, comes into force at once, an official spokesperson said on Saturday. The ordinance was promulgated by the Governor on Friday with immediate effect.

Under the law which

deals with different categories of offences, a marriage will be declared "null and void" if the conversion of a woman is solely for that purpose, and those wishing to change their religion after marriage need to apply to the district magistrate.

The Yogi Adityanath government had on Tuesday approved the draft of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, which also curbs religious conversions only for the sake of marriage, dubbed by BJP leaders as "love jihad". — PTI

China rushes defence min to Kathmandu

Kathmandu, Nov. 28: Chinese defence minister Gen. Wei Fenghe will visit Nepal on Sunday and meet the country's top leadership, the foreign ministry here announced on Saturday.

During his one-day working visit, Gen. Wei, also a state councillor, will pay a courtesy call on President Bidhya Devi Bhandari and Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli. He will also meet Chief of Army Staff General of

Nepal Army Purna Chandra Thapa.

The announcement comes a day after India's foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla wrapped up his maiden two-day visit to Nepal.

Gen. Wei's visit also comes amidst an ongoing political rift in the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) that resurfaced following a meeting between Prime Minister Oli and his rival Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'. — PTI

For Russians, spirit of Nuremberg is key to global security

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

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anniversary of the victory of the erstwhile Soviet Union over Nazi Germany in 1945. A staggering 27 million Soviet citizens died heroically defending their country from the Nazis. It is hailed by the Russians as the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 that began when Hitler invaded the Soviet

Union in June, 1941, and ending when Soviet troops entered Berlin in May, 1945, heralding the defeat of Hitler's Third Reich.

The Russian DCM said, "We were happy to welcome Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in Moscow this June who came to participate in the events dedi-

cated to the Victory in the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) and to lead the Indian Armed Forces 3-services contingent for the historic Red Square parade.

"Atrocities against Soviet civilians were elevated to the rank of state policy by the Nazis. The Soviet Union suffered immense, irreparable losses, and among the millions of casualties, the majority was either soldiers who died as prisoners of war or civilians who were fiercely, mercilessly killed. We remember cities that laid

in ruins, villages burnt to the ground, brutal mass killings in occupied territories and concentration camps, including elderly people, women and children.

"Such crimes have no statute of limitations. The Nuremberg Tribunal pronounced its assessments of those acts, and developed the criteria of a crime against humanity, which defined the very concept of genocide and laid the foundation for the 1948 UN Genocide Convention," he said.

SHORT TAKES

DGCA orders action on 'pushback' at Chennai airport

T. SUDHEESH | DC CHENNAI, NOV. 28

The aviation regulator, Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), has asked the Air India authorities to take appropriate action into the 'pushback' incident that took place at Chennai international airport earlier this month.

S.P.Singh, assistant director, air safety, DGCA, told DC that the airline was asked to take action based on the reports published in *Deccan Chronicle*.

The incident took place on November 4 while the Chennai-Madurai flight was taking off. Following this, the airline had served show cause notices to two ground staff. Despite the notice, the airline refused to make the action taken report (ATR) public. According to Ms. Chelvi Aruljothi, deputy manager (PR), they will not make ATR public as it is an "internal matter". Contrary to the airline's version, the DGCA has asked them to take appropriate action against the 'erring' employees.

The aircraft was pushed back after a Madurai-bound passenger failed to get onboard though his luggage was loaded in the fight. Pushback is an airport procedure to push the aircraft backward away from an airport gate by external power; that is pushback tractors or aviation tugs.

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'India most depressed country' tag leaves HC shocked

J. STALIN | DC CHENNAI, NOV. 28

Expressing shock over India standing top among the most depressed country in the world, the Madras high court has said it is the primary duty of the governments to concentrate on the mental health of the people by having sufficient number of psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health workers and hospitals and other required infrastructures.

A division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and B.Pugalendhi made the observation while passing interim orders on a public interest litigation filed by K.R. Raja, which sought a direction to the authorities to set up a medical wing either in Tiruchy central prison or Madurai central prison exclusively to provide mental healthcare facilities to the prisoners with mental illness and with round-the-clock availability of treatment by psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, psychiatrist social workers, mental health nurses and other para medical staff like Institute of Mental Health set up in a Central Prison as per section 103 and other relevant provisions of the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017, in accordance with law.

Writing the order for the bench, Justice N.Kirubakaran said, "It is shocking to note that India is the most depressed country in the world". According to the World Health Organisation, it is stated that over 90 million Indians, viz., 7.5 per cent of

■ 'Primary duty of governments is to focus on mental health of people'



the country's population, are suffering from some form of mental illness. China and USA stand in Nos.2 and 3. In India, every 7th person suffers from some form of mental illness. Mental illness is considered as a leading contributor to disease burden and morbidity worldwide and may even result in suicide if left untreated, the bench added.

The bench said all psychological problems were treatable, curable and preventable, provided we identify the illness early and initiate the treatment quickly coupled with appropriate rehabilitation. But unfortunately the prevalence of mental illness has doubled in the past 10 years because of the facts that lack of awareness and knowledge about the illness, inadequate human resources (less number of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and nurses), inadequate treatment facilities, long distance to travel to get the treatment, high cost of treatment, and stigma. All these factors contribute to the non-compli-

ance of mental health services even for the middle class families which result in a treatable illness becoming untreatable and curable illness becoming incurable, the bench added.

The bench said though the government, understanding the mental health problems, passed an Act called "The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017", no sufficient awareness programmes have been conducted. The taboo/social stigma attached to the persons with mental illness prevents the people to take proper treatment. Therefore, it was required to dispel the stigma attached to the mental illness or taking treatment under a psychiatrist or counseling with a psychologist by anti-stigma awareness plans. The people should be sensitized that mental disorder was like any other normal disease which was required to be treated, failing which, dangerous consequences would follow, the bench added.

The bench expanded the scope of the writ petition to give comprehensive directions to the Central Government, Medical Council of India and the state government to identify the patients at the earliest by diagnosing the disease to give proper treatment by improving the infrastructures, like, establishment of hospitals, increasing the number of psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatrist social workers and allocation of more funds towards mental health including the conduct of regular surveys.

Court raises 22 queries, wants response from govt by Dec. 9

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, NOV. 28

Suo motu impleading various authorities as parties to a Public Interest Litigation, the Madras high court has posed 22 queries relating to mental healthcare services, to be answered by them by December 9, 2020.

Passing interim orders on the PIL filed by K.R.Raja and expanding the scope of the writ petition, a division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and B.Pugalendhi suo motu impleaded the Union ministry of family and health welfare, Union ministry of finance, Medical Council of India, University Grants Commission, National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences and Indian Psychiatric Society as party respondents in the petition and ordered notice to them.

THE QUERIES ARE :

1) Is it a fact that one in seven persons of India's population is suffering from mental illness as stated by WHO?

2) Whether any survey is being conducted by the government or government hospitals/health organizations regarding the men-

tal health of the India's population regularly?

3) When such survey was conducted lastly?

4) What are all the leading mental disorders among the people?

5) Whether sufficient number of mental hospitals are available in India?

6) If not, why not the Central government/State governments establish one mental hospital in each district or in each zone of every State?

7) Why not the respondents increase the number of institutes offering psychiatry/psychology in higher studies?

8) Why not the Central government establishes premier institutes like National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru, in each zone of the country, namely North, East, West and Central?

9) Is it a fact that only 50 Million Rupees have been spent for the mental healthcare in 2019?

10) Why not the Central government increases the allocation of funds towards mental health, especially, when one in seven persons of the population of the country is stated to be suffering from mental illness?

11) What is the required strength of psychiatrists, psychologists and/or psycho health workers in India?

12) Why not the governments sensitize the people about the mental illness and remove the taboo/stigma in the minds of the general public about the persons with mental illness and also the treatment for mental illness through Audio-Video programmes by conducting awareness camps?

13) Why not the data for coordinated action be collected by the Central government and the state government in the interest of the people suffering from mental illness?

14) Why not the governments have one department for Psychiatry in each district headquarters hospital and have at least one Psychiatrist in each Taluk level hospital?

15) Why not Central government engage the services of Foreign Psychologists to teach and train medical students?

16) What steps government has taken to establish the rehabilitation services?

17) What are the incentives given for starting the rehabilitation services?

18) What steps government has taken to promote community based rehabilitation?

19) Do we have sufficient rehabilitation professionals to manage rehabilitation homes?

20) What is the government budget for rehabilitation?

21) What is the status of insurance coverage of mental illness?

22) What are the steps taken to promote school mental health and community based mental health services?

Stagnation continues in city

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, NOV. 28

Although it has been three days since the cyclone Nivar passed over the Tamil Nadu coast, the city residents continue to fight water stagnation as the drainage system has been blocked in many areas. Syndicate Enclave flat



complex area at Sengeni Amman Koil Street, Maduvinkarai, Guindy, (zone 12, ward 174) near

Guindy (in pic above), where as many as 150 residents reside, was inundated by drainage water

derailing normal life. The corporation team reached the spot only on Saturday. The dewatering works are still underway there.

Ramkumar Singaram, a resident, said the situation unfolded after a nearby stormwater storing tank overflowed due to the downpour. "We were contacting all authorities for

the last three days. Finally, the corporation authorities sent a team. They are at work to dewater the area", he said.

In another incident at Karpagambal Nagar II Street near GP Nagar at Ramapuram, drainage water stagnation has disrupted normal life. Selvaraj, another resi-

dent, said that the water level is still going up though they tried to dry up the road even as the stormwater drainage system lies broken. "We have informed the corporation authorities. None of them have turned up for dewatering works. The residents here cannot pass through the road as waist-

deep water recurs', he said.

However, GCC officials said that they were working on the complaints to clear the water stagnated areas. Meghanath Reddy, deputy commissioner (works) said they had cleared 56 out of 58 areas affected by water stagnation.



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SHORT TAKES

DMK, others speak for farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 28

Leaders of eight opposition political parties across the country, including the DMK, urged the Centre to address the concerns of the protesting farmers and also provide them a larger space like the Ram Lila Maidan to assemble and express themselves.

In a joint statement, the leaders said the Centre should also make necessary arrangements for the stay and food of the thousands of farmers who had reached the national capital of Delhi braving severe repression, heavy water cannoning, road blocks, police barricades and digging up the national highways.

"We salute their determination and courage in this massive protest demanding the withdrawal of the retrograde anti-kisan agri laws," the leaders said, reiterating their own opposition to the new agri laws that threatened India's food security, abolish minimum support price and destroy Indian agriculture.

The leaders who had signed the statement are: T R Baalu (DMK), Sharad Pawar (NCP), Sitaram Yechury (CPM), D Raja (CP), Manoj Jha (RJD), Dipankar Bhattacharya (CPI-ML), Debrabrt Biswas (AIFB) and Manoj Bhattacharya (RSP).

IMD: Low pressure area to intensify into depression, rain

Chennai, Nov. 28: A low pressure area over south Andaman Sea and adjoining Bay of Bengal was "very likely" to concentrate into a depression in the next 48 hours and intensify further before moving towards the Tamil Nadu coast, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Saturday.

Under its influence, various parts in southern states were likely to receive heavy to extremely heavy rainfall starting Dec. 1, the IMD said in release.

"A low pressure area has formed over South Andaman Sea and adjoining areas of Southeast Bay of Bengal & east Equatorial Indian Ocean (on) November 28.

"It is very likely to concentrate into a Depression during next 48 hours and intensify further thereafter", it said.

It is very likely to move west-northwestwards and reach the south Tamil Nadu coast on December 2.

The weather office forecast heavy to very heavy rainfall at a few places with isolated extremely heavy falls as "very likely over" south Tamil Nadu and south Kerala on December 2. Further, isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall was likely over these regions on December 1 and 3.



The Maha Deepam, which will be lit at 6 pm on Sunday, being carried to the top of Annamalaiyar hills, Tiruvannamalai, on Saturday. — K. Senthil Nathan

No corona cases detected in flood relief camps

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 28

No coronavirus positive cases were detected in the flood relief camps, where the tests were conducted on those who took refuge there, Health Minister C Vijayabaskar said on Saturday.

In the 1400 camps set up in 16 districts, 1,31,000 people were tested, he said while addressing the media after dedicating a special ward of 120 beds to

treat Covid-19 patients with comorbidities at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (RGGGH).

Answering a question, he said there was no second wave of coronavirus spread in the state though it was happening in many parts of the world.

Asked about the vaccine for Covid-19, the Minister said that once it arrived it would be administered to all people free of cost.

Talking about the RGGGH, he said that it had 1500 beds exclusively marked for Covid cases and that 27,752 persons had been treated there for the infection.

Though there had been a decline in the number of cases, Vijayabaskar called upon the people not to be complacent about it and urged them to take precautionary measures like wearing facemasks and also maintaining social distance.

SI nabs mobile snatcher after a chase; video goes viral

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 28

A police sub inspector was lauded for his swift action after the video of him nabbing two men accused of stealing mobile phones after a chase has gone viral on social media.

Greater Chennai police commissioner Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal on Saturday appreciated Sub Inspector Antlin Ramesh for chasing and nabbing a bike-borne mobile snatcher.

Tweeting a CCTV video of Antlin Ramesh catching the thief, Aggarwal said: "It's not a scene from any movie. But the real-life hero SI Antlin

Ramesh single-handedly chases and catches a mobile snatcher riding a stolen bike. Follow up led to arrest of three more accused and recovery of 11 snatched/stolen mobiles.

On Friday morning, the A. Antlin Ramesh, 35, attached to the Cyber Crime Cell, Madhavaram was on his way to the station. While he was riding his bike, he spotted a bike-borne duo, whose bike did not have any number plate and the lid of the fuel tank was broken open and closed with a plastic cover.

Suspecting that they were riding a stolen bike, the sub-inspector attempted to overtake them, but

the duo sped away on seeing him. The SI chased them.

While one thief managed to run away, the other tried to escape on the bike. Ramesh dumped his bike and caught hold of the escaping thief and also fell in the process. Nevertheless, he regained balance and held on to the snatcher.

Police said the SI had nabbed Arun, 20. Based on his confession, three of his associates -- Mukesh, Vignesh and Naveen, who were staying in a lodge in the city were secured.

Also, 11 mobile phones which they had snatched in various parts of Chennai over the last two days were recovered.

Continue efforts to control pandemic: Palaniswami

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 28

All district collectors have been asked to continue their efforts to bring down the number of daily positive cases further by appropriately designing the strategy to contain the disease locally through aggressive, intensive and focused testing followed by isolation of persons affected by Covid-19 for treatment.

In a letter to the collectors, reiterating the instructions given by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami at the video conference meeting with them, Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam said that the number of positive cases was slowly coming down due to the concerted efforts taken by the health department and district administration.

'While appreciating the efforts taken by the district administration' he told the Collectors not to scale down testing. The districts of Chennai, Coimbatore, Salem, Thiruvallur, Chengleput, Erode and Kancheepuram would require special and sustained efforts to bring the positivity rate below 2 per cent, he said.

Other districts with positivity rate above 3% should scale up the testing in a focused manner in the affected areas and the overall death rate (Case Fatality Rate) has to be brought down steadily.

All districts should aim at zero death rate by adopting the best treatment protocol and Collectors were advised to focus on post Covid management by creating awareness among the pub-

₹1,983 crore spent for corona medical expenses'

From P1

Talking about the funds spent on Covid-19 management, he said ₹1,983 crore went for medical expenses and ₹5,389 crore towards relief and listed the various efforts made by the government since the outbreak of the Coronavirus.

He said 5,22,530 fever camps had been held all over the State, benefitting 2,79,36,147 people, and 11,46,363 persons were detected to have fever in the camps.

So far, 7,77,616 persons had been found to be infected by Coronavirus and of them 7,54,826 had recovered and 11,109 undergoing treatment with the death rate standing at 1.5 per cent, the Chief Minister said.

The state topped in Covid-19 testing with the

highest number of laboratories - 220 in total with 67 run by the government and 153 by private organizations - and 1.18 crore RT-PCR tests had been taken, 76 per cent of them in the government labs, he said. Even now 7000 tests are being taken daily.

On the medical infrastructure established by the government, he said 1,41,527 beds were made available in Covid hospitals and special camps, 37,714 beds with oxygen facility, 7,697 in ICUs and 6517 with ventilator support. Besides 15,000 medical professionals were appointed by the government to take care of Coronavirus patients.

Besides, adequate quantities of medicines were procured by the government and provided to the patients, particularly life-

saving drugs like Tocilizumab, Remdesvir and Enoxaparin, he said. Also the government procured protective gear like N 95 masks, three layered masks, PPE kits etc.

The Chief Minister also went down memory lane, giving details about the various relief measures taken by the government like providing essentials free of cost and Rs 1000 cash to card holders. Cash payment to those in the unorganized sector, free food through Amma canteens, bank loans to three lakh women SHGs for starting enterprises were some of the other things that he mentioned.

He said that now mobile Amma canteens were catering to the poor in Chennai and that three vehicles were being operated for the purpose.

Individuals not using mask, the owner of the marriage hall and the parties who are organizing the marriages but not observing SOP should be penalized if needed to enforce strict discipline, he said.

In shopping malls, work places, factories and shops, the accountability should be fixed on the owners, he said. "Strict enforcement of SOP is required in these places through close monitoring," he said adding that if such measures were not taken, all the gains obtained so far will get vitiated.

lic on the health complications that arise after recovery, he said.

If necessary, pamphlets, leaflets etc. can be used to create awareness among the public, he said, adding that in recent time there were serious lapses in maintaining of social distance and compliance to wearing of masks was less than 30 per cent.

"In many public places, including markets, shopping malls, marriage halls, Social and religious gatherings, the COVID etiquettes and Standard Operating Procedures are

Antique idol seized by TN idol wing police

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 28

The Tamil Nadu Idol wing police on Saturday recovered an antique statue allegedly stolen from a temple and arrested two persons near Mamallapuram.

According to the sources, Based on a tip-off, the Idol Wing police stopped two men near Mamallapuram on the East Coast Road on Saturday morning. The officials seized one antique idol of Boodevi from the possession of R.Velkumar (38) and

Officials seized one antique idol from the possession of R.Velkumar (38) and S.Selvam (38) of Chengalpet district

S.Selvam (38) of Chengalpet district. The duo, however, did not possess documents for the idol. The idol wing police seized the antique piece. The suspects have been booked by the officials. a further probe is on to ascertain where the idols had been stolen from.



The seized idol

CM to inaugurate world summit

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 28

Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami will inaugurate the three-day UEF World Summit and trade expo, organised by UEF Chamber of Commerce from December 4

The fourth edition of the summit, with the theme 'Imagine - Impact - Inspire', will be a virtual event, bringing together 80 eminent speakers from 30 countries and over 6000 delegates.

Novel dark thriller from debutant

ANDHAGHAARAM - REVIEW

ANUPAMA
SUBRAMANIAN

CAST: Arjun Das, Vinod Kishan, Pooja Ramachandran, Kumar Natrajan

DIRECTION: Vignarajan

RATING: ** ¼ - 2.75

Andhaghaaram means an intense form of darkness and in debutant Vignarajan's film it plays a major role. In a sense, the supernatural suspense thriller is stacked with multilayered dark stories that are connected through weird paranormal occurrences.

The film opens with a collage of black and white sequences, where we see people indulging in baffling activities. Cut to color visuals, Dr Indran (Kumar Natrajan), a well-known psy-



chiatrist is shot at by one of his patients. Though he survives, he loses his voice.

Then there's this blind Selvam (Vinod Kishan) who works in a government library. He also practices his late dad's profession of acting as a 'medium' (one who communicates between spirits of the dead and living human beings) as he is in urgent need of money. Pooja (Pooja Ramachandran) is a teacher for the blind.

We then meet Vinod (Arjun Das) a depressed cricket coach for kids, who is haunted everyday by an unknown caller. He has a nagging girlfriend (Misha Goshal). As the link between these characters and the mystery behind them are disentangled, the narrative sucks us inside this murky tale.

Arjun Das in a complex role does his part with a lot of conviction and shines throughout. His strong screen

FILM REVIEW

presence and baritone voice comes handy to bring out the aggressiveness and vulnerability effortlessly.

Vinod Kishan is equally impressive with his realistic feat. Kumar Natrajan and Pooja deliver their best. Misha Goshal is adequate.

Vignarajan's style of narration of a complex plot structure is commendable. However, there is a problem with the packaging and one wonders if the convoluted theme would be understood by all. And the climax reveal is slightly disappointing. Clocking at 2 hr 45 min, the film drags in many places and the pace suffers.

On the technical front, the film is aided well by Pradeep Kumar's superb music. Edwin Sakay's brilliant cinematography is on par with international standards. The sound designer and art director also deserve special mention.

YEN PEYAR
ANANDHAN - REVIEWANUPAMA
SUBRAMANIAN

CAST: Santhosh Prathap, Athulya Ravi

DIRECTION: Sridhar Venkatesan

RATING: **1/4 Two and a quarter

Sridhar Venkatesan, one of the six filmmakers who wielded the megaphone for horror genre 6 Adhiyayam, has turned

independent with Yen Peyar Anandhan, which has an interesting concept. After garnering a few awards at international film fests, YPA has finally hit the big screens.

The movie begins with a preface where we see a small boy and his sister who are forced to beg on the streets and how they are tortured by a criminal when the former tried to hold a national flag on Independence Day.

Later it is learnt that this is a short film Adimai Suthanthiram made by an aspiring filmmaker Sath-

ya (Santhosh Prathap), which was screened at Cannes Film Fest. Sathya is all set to launch his first feature film with a big actor, which according to him is a commercial masala movie. On the first day of shoot, an unidentified person kidnaps Sathya. Who kidnapped him and what are his demands?

Though Santhosh Prathap's character looks akin to that of his role in Kathai Thirai Kathai Vasanam Iyakkam, thankfully, the similarity ends there. The story takes a different route. The actor is con-

finned to a chair for the most part and he performs what is expected of him. Athulya Ravi as his wife has an insignificant role.

The entire film takes place in 24 hours but the back and forth narration with scenes abruptly ending is confusing. When the kidnappers take Sathya to their hideout, we see the walls displayed with posters of several films from different languages, which partly reveals the identity of the men. One of them is named Marlon Brando and yet another one - a masked man puts

an array of questions to a clueless Sathya. He preaches what's a good and bad cinema. When the kidnapper's actual intentions are disclosed, we are reminded of Seethakathi, where the demarcation between stage plays and mainstream cinema was explored, YPA throws light on 'theru koothu'. The director conveys a message that cinema is a value system and not merely entertainment. But it is in the execution he errs. However, his earnest attempt should be appreciated.



SHORT TAKES

NAGA, ASSAM
ENGAGE IN UGLY
BORDER SPATMANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, NOV. 28

After Mizoram row, the inter-state border conflict has erupted between Assam and Nagaland with local organisations of Assam imposing an indefinite economic blockade thereby halting all economic activities between Assam and Nagaland at Mariani in Jorhat district.

Tension had started at the inter-state border since November 10 following the construction of a temporary structure allegedly by Mokokchung district administration within the Dissoi Valley Reserve Forest under Mariani range of Jorhat Forest Division of Assam. The problem aggravated with the Mokokchung district administration posting armed Nagaland policemen at the site.

In response the Assam Police on November 11 also deployed its personnel in temporary camps near the place where Nagaland policemen were camping in order to prevent any further encroachment by Nagaland.

The local students organisation — the All Tai Ahom Students Union (ATASU), which opposed the move to what they called encroachment of Assam's land by the neighbouring state of Nagaland, has launched a movement since November 10 which was suspended for three days on assurance of the administration to resolve the issue.

K'TAKA CM'S
AIDE ATTEMPTS
'SUICIDE'

Bengaluru, Nov. 28: Karnataka Chief Minister B. S. Yediyurappa's political secretary and relative N. R. Santosh who was hospitalised following alleged suicide attempt, is 'stable and cheerful', and may be discharged in a day or two, doctors treating him said on Saturday.

According to sources, Santosh is said to have attempted suicide by consuming sleeping pills on Friday night.

On finding him unconscious at his Dollars Colony residence here, family members have rushed him to Ramaiah Memorial Hospital.

Santhosh (31) was brought at about 8.30 pm with an alleged history of consumption of sleeping tablets at around 7 pm, the Hospital President Dr Naresh Shetty said in a statement.

Noting that on admission he was drowsy, the doctor said appropriate treatment was administered immediately and all investigations were carried out.

RAJINI TO MEET
MANDRAM SECYS
TOMORROWDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 28

Rajinikanth will be meeting Rajini Makkal Mandram district functionaries on Monday morning at the marriage hall in Kodambakkam, according to reliable sources. It is said the actor is likely to take a decision on his political plunge.

Rajinikanth had said a month back that he would consult the office-bearers of Rajini Makkal Mandram and announce at an appropriate time whether he would enter politics or not. He also said he had been advised against entering politics by his doctors during this pandemic as he had undergone a kidney transplant.

SIT TO PROBE
DEATH OF 5-YR
OLD IN ODISHAAKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 28

The Odisha government, under pressure from the Opposition and facing large-scale public outrage over the soft-peddling the investigation into the murder of five-year-old girl, on Saturday agreed to institute a probe by a court-monitored five-member Special Investigation Team (SIT), on Saturday.

The SIT will be headed by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Arun Bothra, who had cracked the 2018 Patnagarh parcel bomb case in which a newly-wed couple and their grandmother were killed, parliamentary affairs minister Bikram Kesari Arukha said.

UP 'love jihad' law gets Gov. nod

Jail term up to 10 years and fine of ₹50K for those violating its clauses

Lucknow, Nov. 28: The Uttar Pradesh ordinance aimed at curbing forcible or fraudulent religious conversions including those for the sake of marriage has got the assent of state Governor Anandiben Patel with the new law providing for a jail term of up to 10 years for any violations.

The law, which has been published in the UP gazette, comes into force at once, an official spokesperson said on Saturday. The ordinance was promulgated by the Governor on Friday with immediate effect.

Under the law which deals with different categories of offences, a marriage will be declared "null and void" if the conversion of a woman is solely for that purpose,

and those wishing to change their religion after marriage need to apply to the district magistrate.

The Yogi Adityanath government on Tuesday approved the draft of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, which also curbs religious conversions only for the sake of marriage, dubbed by BJP leaders as 'love jihad'.

"The way in which religious conversions are done using deceit, lies, force and dishonesty is heart wrenching, and it was necessary to have a law in this regard," Cabinet minister and UP government spokesperson Sidharth Nath Singh had said.

Conversion for the alleged purpose of marriage is, however, only one aspect of the ordinance.

The new law was opposed by the opposition Samajwadi Party.

Hours after the governor's nod, SP president Akhilesh Yadav said his party will oppose the Bill when it comes up in the state Legislature for passage.

"The Samajwadi Party is not in favour of any such law. We will oppose it (when it comes up in the assembly)," the former chief minister told a press conference.

The new law also has a provision under which if someone returns to their original religion, it shall not be deemed a conversion.

The onus to prove that the conversion has not been done forcibly will lie

on the person accused of the act and the convert, it said.

In cases of violations of the law, the ordinance stipulates that the court shall grant appropriate compensation payable by the accused to the victim of conversion which may extend to a maximum of ₹5 lakh in addition to the fine.

The ordinance mainly envisages that no person shall convert, either directly or indirectly from one religion to another by use or practice of misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means or by marriage nor shall any person abet, convince or conspire such conversion.

Minister Sidharth Nath Singh on Tuesday told

reporters that the punishment under the new law is a jail term from one to five years, and a fine of ₹15,000.

But if the woman involved is a minor or belongs to a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe, the jail term would range from three to 10 years, he said.

But if the woman involved is a minor or belongs to a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe, the jail term would range from three to 10 years, he said. The fine would increase to Rs 25,000.

"In the case of mass conversions, the punishment is from three years to 10 years and a fine of Rs 50,000 on the organisations which indulge in it," he added. —PTI

VACCINE IS FOR
NEIGHBOURS
TOO, SAYS PM

From Page 1

The Prime Minister was extensively briefed about the vaccine work at the plant by the company officials. He was briefed about the vaccine production procedure. He interacted with scientists and vaccine developers, an official said.

"Visited the Zydus Biotech Park in Ahmedabad to know more about the indigenous DNA-based vaccine being developed by Zydus Cadila. I compliment the team behind this effort for their work. Government of India is actively working with them to support them in this journey," Mr Modi tweeted after the visit.

Mr Modi, who landed at Ahmedabad at 9.10 am, spent over an hour at the plant, later, after landing at Hakimpet Air Force station near Hyderabad around 1 pm and proceeded to pharma major Bharat Biotech's vaccine manufacturing facility at Genome Valley, located around 20 km from the air station, by road.

At the facility, he reviewed the progress of Covaxin, a vaccine candidate being developed by the company. He also interacted with Bharat Biotech chairman and managing director Krishna Ella, scientists and senior management.

"At the Bharat Biotech facility in Hyderabad, was briefed about their indigenous Covid-19 vaccine. Congratulated the scientists for their progress in the trials so far. Their team is closely working with ICMR to facilitate speedy progress," Mr Modi tweeted after his hour-long visit there.

At 3.20 pm, Mr Modi took off for Pune, where he landed at 4.30 pm on the last leg of his three-city vaccine work review visit.

At the Serum Institute of India, Mr Modi reviewed the progress of the 'Covishield' vaccine being made there.

He interacted with scientists at the Serum Institute and had a walk-about of the facility, taking stock of vaccine development work being carried out there.

Serum Institute of India has partnered with global pharma giant AstraZeneca and Oxford University for the vaccine. —PTI

India records 4%
lesser Covid casesDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

With 41,322 new cases in the last 24 hours, the country's Covid-19 patient count climbed to 93,51,109, while 87,59,969 people have recovered so far for a national recovery rate to 93.68 per cent. The Coronavirus death toll stood at 1,36,200 with the virus claiming 485 more lives.

After showing an upward trend for three

days in a row, the active Covid-19 caseload decreased to 4,54,940, remaining below the five-lakh mark for the 18th consecutive day. It comprises 4.87 per cent of the total caseload. The case fatality rate stands at 1.46 per cent, the ministry data showed.

The Union health ministry statement said that 76.55 per cent of the new recovered cases were concentrated in 10 states and Union Territories.



Bharatiya Kisan Union members attempt to cross a barricade at Ghazipur border to enter Delhi, during their Delhi Chalo protest against the Centres new farm laws, in New Delhi, on Saturday.

— PTI

Centre ready for farm talks: Shah
Cong hits out at Modi govt
over 'Delhi Chalo' march

New Delhi/Chandigarh, Nov. 28: With many roads and entry points blocked, Union Home Minister Amit Shah appealed to the farmers to shift to the Burari ground and said the Centre is ready to hold discussions with them as soon as they move to the designated place.

He said a delegation of the farmers has been invited for discussion on December 3, adding now that some of their unions have demanded that talks be held immediately, the central government is ready to do so as soon as the protestors shift to the ground in Burari.

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh termed Shah's offer to hold discussions at the earliest as the best in the interest of the farming community and the nation at large. He urged the farmers to accept the appeal and shift to the designated place for their protest.

After a restive Friday that saw police using teargas shells, water cannons and multi-layer barriers to block the protesters and some farmers pelting stones and breaking barricades in their determination to push through as part of their 'Delhi Chalo' march, it was a quieter Saturday.

But the tension persisted with restless crowds milling around the city's edges and beyond and settling down from another night out in the cold with no clear roadmap for their agitation either.

New Delhi, Nov. 28: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday alleged that a soldier was pitted against an old farmer due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'arrogance'.

The Congress also said it would have been better if the prime minister talked to the protesting farmers instead of getting "himself photographed in corporate offices". "This is a very sad photo. Our slogan was 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan', but today a soldier is standing against the farmer due to PM Modi's arrogance. This is very dangerous," he said in a tweet in Hindi along with the picture of a soldier showing a baton to an old farmer.

Farmers from Punjab and Haryana continued their protests against the new farm laws, with many of them blocking traffic on the national highway after the police stopped them from their 'Chalo Delhi' march.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala accused Modi of getting pictures clicked in corporate offices while farmers are protesting on Delhi roads. "Wish the PM talks to farmers on the road instead of flying in the aircraft," he said in a tweet, after Modi visited a company in Ahmedabad which is engaged in the Covid-19 vaccine research.

Another spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi

claimed whoever protests against the Modi government is "deemed a terrorist".

"Poor farmers from Punjab pointing out genuine grievances have been labelled khalistani. Why doesn't Modi come out and address the Annadata however, only demands of them during elections," he tweeted.

Party leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also tweeted similar pictures of farmers being prevented by the police from marching towards Delhi, where they wish to hold a protest against the new farm laws. She said it is right if the government frames laws against farmers, but it is wrong when farmers wish to make their voice heard in Delhi. —PTI

FARMERS REFUSE TO ENTER DELHI, STAY PUT ON BORDER

From Page 1

"We had come here to join the protest against the new farm bill but the police had stopped us here. We are protesting peacefully which is evident through our vehicles which have been parked on a site given to us by police so that traffic is not disrupted. We have decided to sit here

tonight and rest further course of action will be decided tomorrow after discussion with each other," said Ram Kishan Malik, a farmer from Muzaffarnagar. The traffic movement was also closed on both carriageways at both the borders. Till Saturday evening farmers from Uttar Pradesh also

started to gather at Ghaziabad-Delhi border.

"Tikri border is closed for traffic movement. Available open borders to Haryana are -- Jharoda, Dhansa, Daurala, Jhatikara, Badusari, Kapashera, Rajokri NH 8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam vihar and Dundahera border," police said. —PTI

GOOD NEWS

Over 35L could not submit their documents due to pandemic

EPFO extends deadline for pensioners

New Delhi, Nov. 28: Retirement fund body EPFO has extended the deadline for submission of life certificates by pensioners till February 28, a move which would benefit over 35 lakh persons who could not submit the document by November due to Coronavirus pandemic.

The pensioners who could not submit their life certificates till November 30 deadline, would get pension every month till February. "In view of the

ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the vulnerability of elderly population to Coronavirus, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has extended the time limit up to 28th February 2021 for submission of Life Certificate (Jeevan Pramaan Patra-JPP) in respect of the Pensioners drawing pension under EPS 1995 (Employees' Pension Scheme-1995) and whose Life certificate is due in

● **THE PENSIONERS** who could not submit their life certificates till November 30 deadline, would get pension every month till February.

● **PRESENTLY, A PENSIONER** can submit JPP anytime during the year up to 30th November, which is valid for a period of one year from the date of issue. All such pensioners can submit life certificates till February 28, 2021.

any month till February 28, 2021," a labour ministry statement said.

Presently, a pensioner can submit JPP anytime during the year up to 30th November, which is valid

Vaccine: SII to
seek emergency
use licensure

New Delhi, Nov. 28: Vaccine major Serum Institute of India (SII) on Saturday said it is in the process of applying for an emergency use licensure for the AstraZeneca-Oxford's Covid-19 vaccine candidate in India in the next two weeks.

Addressing a virtual press conference on the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the company's Pune facility, Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla said: "We discussed the plan, the implementation plan which will happen only after the emergency use licensure, that is granted based on the data that will have to be submitted. We are in the process of submitting that officially to the drug controller of India."

When asked if the company has applied for the emergency authorisation, Mr Poonawalla said: "We are in the process of applying in next two weeks for an emergency use licensure."

The vaccine will be distributed initially in India and then the company will look at Covax countries, which are mainly in Africa, he added.

Serum Institute of India (SII) is conducting clinical trials of AstraZeneca-Oxford's Covid-19 vaccine candidate in India.

Mr Poonawalla also said it was a special day for the company with the Prime Minister visiting them to

go into details on the manufacturing status not only its plants in Pune but on various partnerships and the impact the vaccine industry is going to have to India and the globe.

Mr Poonawalla said, "Worldwide everybody is now dependent and is looking forward to the vaccines coming out in large volumes and at affordable price from India as everybody already knows that more than 50 to 60 per cent of all vaccines are made in India."

With the Aatmanirbhar Bharat vision in mind, Serum Institute has built the largest pandemic level facility in Pune in its sister campus at Manjri and that was showcased also to the Prime Minister, he added.

Emphasising the importance of the visit, Bharat Biotech said the Prime Minister's visit to the company's manufacturing facility in Genome Valley in Hyderabad further reinforces its commitment towards scientific discovery and solving public health issues.

"The Prime Minister's visit serves as a great inspiration to our team, and further reinforces our commitment towards scientific discovery, solving public health issues, and the nation's fight against Covid-19," Bharat Biotech said in a statement. —PTI

India, Nepal put
'sour' ties back
on friendly trackSRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

With India declaring it is "Nepal's foremost friend and development partner", bilateral ties are once again firmly back on track following the successful two-day visit of foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla to Kathmandu this week.

Sources said recently that both sides "noted the special relations between India and Nepal, and the importance of respecting each other's sensitivities", adding that the two sides "shared their perspectives on boundary matters and discussed ways to take it forward under the appropriate bilateral mechanisms".

The visit comes even as China — much to India's concern and dismay — has extended its influence in the Himalayan nation enormously in the past few years especially after the Nepalese Communists assumed office.

It may be recalled that ties between India and its Himalayan neighbour had soured in the summer months this year after Nepal went ahead and unveiled a new map that showed portions of territory in India's Uttarakhand state.

—Limpiyadhura, Kalapani and Lipu Lekh — as part of Nepal.

New Delhi had objected to that move. But much water has flowed under the proverbial bridge in the past few months. The ice had initially been broken in August after Nepalese Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli had called up Prime Minister Narendra

Modi then to wish him on the occasion of India's 74th Independence Day, with both leaders "expressing mutual solidarity" and agreeing to strengthen cooperation.

Foreign Secretary Mr. Shringla said in Kathmandu during his just-concluded visit that culminated on Friday that "aside from our common civilisational inheritance, India's relationship with Nepal rests on four pillars — development cooperation; stronger connectivity; expanded infrastructure and economic projects; easier and enhanced access to educational opportunities in India for the young people of Nepal". He had also declared that "underlying all of these is a steadfast principle: we will work to Nepal's priorities".

The Foreign Secretary also "assured the people of Nepal that, once a vaccine is rolled out, meeting Nepal's requirements would be a priority for us". He had added, "Given our genetic profiles, what works for India is likely to work for Nepal as well. Together we will recover from the pandemic and together we will protect our people."

During his two-day visit, Mr Shringla had called on Nepalese PM Oli, which included a one-on-one meeting, and had also called on the Nepalese President and the Foreign Minister, apart from holding talks with the Foreign Secretary of Nepal. Nepalese PM Oli had also conveyed Nepal's desire to build on the momentum in the bilateral relationship and enhance the level of bilateral engagement.

stopped in respect of 35 lakh pensioners who could not submit JPP during November 2020, the ministry added.

Multiple modes for submission of JPPs including 3.65 lakh Common Service Centres (CSCs), branches of pension disbursing banks, 1.36 lakh post offices, postal network of 1.90 lakh postmen and Grameen Dak Sevaks under the Department of Post can be availed by pensioners.

—PTI

IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN,
U.S. RESTORE
MONASTERY

Peshawar, Nov. 28: Pakistan and the US have jointly completed restoration work at the Takht-i-Bahi Buddhist monastery in northwest Pakistan under the \$230,000 cultural preservation project.

US Consul General Gregory Macris virtually participated in the closing ceremony of the project at the monastery in Mardan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.

"The US mission in Pakistan is committed to working with local partners to support conservation and preservation of sites of great cultural significance across Pakistan," said Macris. The Humanitarian and Facilitation Organisation (HAFO) received a US grant to execute the two-phase project at Takht-i-Bahi.

OLI SUBMITS
SEPARATE
DOCUMENT

Kathmandu, Nov. 28: Nepal's protracted political crisis deepened on Saturday after embattled Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli rejected Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda's" accusations that he was running the government without consulting the party, and instead blamed his rival for non-cooperation in handling the party's affairs.

In the much-awaited Central Secretariat meeting of the ruling Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) on Saturday, Prime Minister Oli submitted a separate 38-page political document in response to the allegations made by party's executive chairman "Prachanda".

Oli was responding to the allegations made against him by "Prachanda" in his 19-page political paper presented at the Secretariat meeting on November 18. In his report, Prachanda had accused Oli of running the government without consulting the party, failing to abide by the party's due procedures and engaging in corruption.

Oli dismissed the allegations levelled against him by "Prachanda" while submitting the separate report, according to a senior Standing Committee member of the party.

FUTURE OF WALES
GANDHI'S STATUE
IN QUESTION

London, Nov. 28: There is a question mark over the future of a statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Wales after an official Welsh government review into Britain's colonial and slave trading history drew up a list of memorials that require a rethink. "The Slave Trade and the British Empire: An Audit of Commemoration in Wales" report released this week also shortlists the commemoration of Britain's war-time Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Robert Clive, referred to as Clive of India for his role in establishing Britain's colonial hold in India, as "persons of interest" to move to a second stage of the review process.

Wales has a bronze sculpture of Gandhi at Cardiff Bay, unveiled in 2017 to mark the 148th birth anniversary of the leader of the Indian national movement.

In the audit, he has been classified under Category E of persons of interest who "require examination as having been highlighted by campaigners".

INDIAN MAN ON
TOURIST VISA
MISSING IN UAE

Dubai, Nov. 28: An Indian man, who reached the UAE on a tourist visa to seek a job, has been missing since November 9, a media report has said.

Amrithalingam Samayamuthu, 46, a father of four from the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, had come over to take up a job in the UAE, the *Gulf News* reported on Friday. Samayamuthu's nephew Durai Maniraja, who is a fisherman in Ras Al Khaimah, said his uncle came with three people from Tamil Nadu on November 8.

"They stayed in an accommodation in Hor Al Anz. His roommates said the next morning he went to the workplace. After he came back, they went for work at night," Durai said. He said Samayamuthu was upset as he would be alone in the room and also wanted to go.

"But the others told him not to. There was no news about him later is what they told us," Durai said. Samayamuthu had not called home as he did not have a UAE SIM card. His brother-in-law Kannan Nagorankani, said he approached the Al Muraqqabat Police Station to file a complaint.



This picture taken with a fisheye lens on Friday shows coworking rooms of the capsule hotel Anshin Oyado Shinjuku, Tokyo, which has been renovated into a coworking space without the upper and lower partitions of the capsule. Facing unprecedented challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the capsule hotel renovated an entire floor to be used as a coworking space, offering office necessities such as high speed internet required for telework and web conferencing, including computer hardware and other computing devices. — AFP

Germany hits mn cases as Russia
links up with India on vaccine

Berlin, Nov. 28: Germany, once a beacon of hope in Europe's Coronavirus nightmare, logged more than one million cases on Friday, while Russia asked India to help mass produce its controversial Sputnik vaccine.

Although the virus spread is slowing thanks to weeks of tough restrictions, Europe remains at the heart of the pandemic, recording more cases than the United States in the past week.

The pandemic is spreading fastest in Asia and Latin America, and is up by a worrying 113 percent over the week in Mexico.

Until recently, Germany's relative success in containing the virus had offered some sense of hope, with authorities putting in place some precautions that still allowed life to carry on almost as normal. However, its measured approach has failed during the second wave, endangering the health of Europe's biggest economy and weighing on the mood as the northern hemisphere heads into the winter holidays.

Germany's Robert Koch Institute recorded more than 22,000 new daily cases on Friday, pushing the overall total beyond the one-million mark.

The number of Covid-19 patients in intensive care has soared from around 360 in early October to more than 3,500 last week.

Most countries hope to ease their virus rules for Christmas and New Year. — AFP

Paris, Nov. 28: Coronavirus deaths topped 400,000 Saturday in Europe, the world's second worst-hit region, as parts of the continent began to reopen shops for the holiday season. But across the Atlantic fearful US shoppers turned to online outlets for a massive Black Friday sale, while densely populated Los Angeles county announced a ban on gatherings of people under a new "safer-at-home order".

Persistent high case

numbers loom over governments' hopes to ease their virus rules for Christmas and New Year.

Europe on Saturday crossed a grim barrier, registering 400,649 deaths. Stores began lifting their shutters in France on Saturday, while Poland's shopping centres will also reopen. "I'd rather avoid the internet, I'm going to buy things in the shops. They need it," said Anne Dubois, one of the first customers applauded through the doors by staff at

Paris' vast Galeries Lafayette department store.

"Whether or not there's people here, at least we've got our daily life getting back to normal," said 36-year-old Aurelie, a manager in the L'Oreal section at Galeries Lafayette.

Belgium will allow shops to reopen from December 1, but keep the current semi-lockdown in place possibly until mid-January. The move mirrors similar easing in Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. — AFP

Scientists to detect
single virus particles

Tokyo, Nov. 28: Scientists have developed a new method for identifying single virus particles based on changes in electrical current when they pass through ultrasmall pores, an advance which they claim may lead to new rapid Covid-19 tests.

The study, published in *ACS Sensors*, demonstrated a new system for identifying single virus particles using an algorithm trained to detect changes in the current passing across silicon nanopores. According to the scientists, the work may lead to fast and accurate screening tests for diseases like Covid-19 and influenza.

In the new method, the scientists said a layer of the compound silicon nitride just 50 nanometres (nm) thick has tiny nanopores added.

The motion of the ions can be monitored by the current they generate, and when a viral particle enters a nanopore, it blocks some of the ions from passing through, leading to a transient dip in current. — PTI

CONGRESSMAN
TESTS POSITIVE
FOR VIRUS

Miami, Nov. 28: South Florida Congressman-elect Carlos Gimenez has tested positive for Coronavirus, his campaign announced Friday.

The former Miami-Dade County mayor and his wife, Lourdes, tested positive Thursday for Covid-19 after having mild symptoms, according to a statement. They said they're self-isolating at home, in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. — AP

India, Lanka, Maldives to bolster
maritime security cooperation

Colombo, Nov. 28: Top security officials of India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives on Saturday agreed to further strengthen cooperation and ensure peace for common benefit as they took stock of the current maritime security environment in the region during the high-level trilateral dialogue which was held here after a gap of six years. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval took part in the dialogue along with Sri Lankan Defence Secretary Major Gen (Retd.) Kamal Gunaratne

and Maldivian Defence Minister Mariya Didi. Sri Lanka hosted the fourth National Security Adviser-level trilateral meeting on maritime security cooperation with India and the Maldives.

It took place after six years — the last one was held in New Delhi in 2014. According to a joint statement issued by Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence, the three countries — recognising the significance of the forum for promoting meaningful cooperation in the Indian Ocean

Region on common issues pertaining to maritime security — took stock of the current maritime security environment in the region.

They discussed mutual cooperation in the areas of Maritime Domain Awareness, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, Joint Exercises, Capacity Building, Maritime Security and Threats, Marine Pollution, and Maritime Underwater Heritage, it said. They agreed to further strengthen cooperation in dealing with these chal-

lenges, to ensure peace and security in the region for common benefit, the joint statement said.

The three countries also exchanged views on common security threats and agreed to broad base cooperation by expanding the scope to improve intelligence sharing and include issues like terrorism, radicalisation, extremism, drugs, arms and human trafficking, money laundering, cyber security and effect of climate change on maritime environment, it said. — PTI

DETERIORATING | CONDITION

PM invites singer to contribute to protected areas expansion initiative

Imran lauds Cher efforts to relocate elephant

Islamabad, Nov. 28: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday appreciated efforts of US celebrity singer Cher to relocate Kaavan, dubbed as the world's loneliest elephant, from a Pakistani zoo to Cambodia for better conditions. Cher, who called on the Prime Minister in Islamabad, has been campaigning for retiring Kaavan, the country's only Asian elephant, to an elephant sanctuary. The story of Kaavan, who is 35 years old, attracted world attention after reports went viral about the deteri-

orating condition of the zoo in Islamabad where the elephant was kept.

Khan "thanked Cher for her campaign and role in this regard," according to his office. He said that "it was indeed a happy moment for all of us that after giving joy and happiness to the people of Islamabad and Pakistan for about 35 years, Kaavan will now be able to retire with other elephants in a specialised sanctuary in Cambodia."

The Prime Minister also invited the singer to participate and contribute tow-

ards the government's initiative for the expansion of protected areas, to which she agreed.

Cher also tweeted about her meeting with Khan. "Just Came From Meeting To Thank Prime Minister Imran Khan For Making It Possible For Me To Take Kaavan To Cambodia," she said. The Pakistan government on Monday issued a permit to transfer the elephant and sources said Kaavan will be flown to Cambodia on November 29.

The elephant was already handed over to experts who

● **PRESIDENT ARIF Alvi** attended a function at the Marghar Zoo in Islamabad to mark the handing over of the elephant to experts to finalise its shifting to Cambodia.

were dealing with its transfer. President Arif Alvi along with his wife Samina attended a function on November 24 at the Marghar Zoo in Islamabad to mark the handing over of the elephant to

experts to finalise the last part of the preparations to shift it to Cambodia, his office said in a statement.

The experts have trained Kaavan to enter a large metal crate that will be used to transport it to the airport. They have also noted that Kaavan was responding well to music and singing. Kaavan is being relocated to a wildlife sanctuary in Cambodia on the orders of the Islamabad High Court in the context of providing proper care and natural environment. The elephant, popular among children

and adults, was born in 1985 in Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan government presented it to the then President of Pakistan.

In 1990, an elephant Sahli was brought from Bangladesh and stayed with Kaavan until his death in 2012. Animal rights activists campaigned for its release and their efforts got a boost with the Islamabad High Court's decision on May 21, ordering immediate relocation of all animals of the zoo, including Kaavan to some suitable wildlife sanctuaries. — PTI

Court rejects Don
Pennsylvania suit

Observes voters, not lawyers choose Prez

Washington, Nov. 28: In a fresh setback to US President Donald Trump's efforts to reverse the November 3 presidential election result in the battleground state of Pennsylvania, a court has dismissed a lawsuit filed by his team, observing that "voters, not lawyers choose the president." The judgement came four days after Pennsylvania certified Trump's Democratic rival Joe Biden as the winner in the state which has 20 electoral college votes.

Trump, a Republican, has refused to accept defeat in the November 3 presidential election, and told reporters on Thursday that it would be "hard" to concede to Biden, a Democrat. The President has said that he would leave the White House if the Electoral College declares Biden as the winner, but made clear he is not prepared to "concede" the election. He has launched a slew of lawsuits in key states, but has not provided any evidence to back his claims of electoral fraud. Many of the lawsuits have been dismissed by courts. The three-judge panel of the 3rd US Circuit Court of Appeals on Friday upheld a previous ruling that dismissed the Trump campaign's request for an injunction in the case in Pennsylvania to challenge the election results and slammed the lawsuit. "Free, fair elections are the lifeblood of our democracy. Charges of unfairness are serious, but calling an election unfair does not make it so. Charges require specific allegations and then proof. We have neither here," Judge Stephanos Bibas said in his order.

"The campaign cannot win this lawsuit," said Bibas, who was appointed by Trump. He authored the order along with two other judges on the bench, Chief Circuit Judge Brooks Smith and Judge Michael Chagares, who were appointed by former Republican president George W. Bush. Trump has refused to concede the November 3 election to Biden and has

Biden to represent
best in us: Harris

Washington, Nov. 28: Joe Biden will be a president who represents the best of America, his deputy and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris has said, asserting that he is a leader the world will respect. Lavishing praise on the 78-year-old US President-elect, Harris on Friday said that Biden will be a president for all Americans.

"Know that" Biden "will be a president who represents the best in us. A leader the world will respect and our children can look up to," Harris said in a tweet.

Harris, 56, the daughter of an Indian immigrant from Chennai, has created history by becoming the first Black American woman to be elected as the

country's Vice President. While Indian-origin politicians have been elected as heads of the state in various parts of the world in the last several decades, from Mauritius to Fiji, Harris as the vice president of the United States would be the most powerful politician ever.

Biden, in a series of tweets, called for unity in the country. "This is our moment — ours together — to write a newer, bolder, more compassionate chapter in the life of our nation," Biden said in a tweet. "Each of us has a responsibility in our own lives to do what we can to slow the virus. Every decision we make matters. Every decision we make can save a life."

— PTI

GUANTANAMO:
SOME MAY BE
RELEASED

Washington, Nov. 28: The oldest prisoner at the Guantanamo Bay detention centre went to his latest review board hearing with a degree of hope, something that has been scarce during his 16 years locked up without charges at the US base in Cuba.

Saifullah Paracha, a 73-year-old Pakistani with diabetes and a heart condition, had two things going for him that he didn't have at previous hearings: A favourable legal development and the election of Joe Biden. President Donald Trump had effectively ended the Obama administration's practice of reviewing the cases of men held at Guantanamo and releasing them if imprisonment was no longer deemed necessary. — AP

US curbs on Russian, Chinese
firms for Iran missile supportKILLING OF SCIENTIST: KHAMENEI
CALLS FOR 'DEFINITIVE PUNISHMENT'

Tehran, Nov. 28: Iran's supreme leader on Saturday called for the "definitive punishment" of those behind the killing of a scientist linked to Tehran's disbanded military nuclear programme, a slaying the Islamic Republic has blamed on Israel.

Israel, long suspected of killing scientists a decade ago amid tensions over Tehran's nuclear programme, has yet to comment on the killing Friday of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh. However, the attack bore the hallmarks of a carefully planned, military-style ambush.

The slaying threatens to renew tensions between the US and Iran in the waning days of President Donald Trump's term, just as President-elect Joe Biden has suggested his administration could return to Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers

from which Trump earlier withdrew.

The Pentagon announced early Saturday that it sent the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier back into the Mideast.

In a statement, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called Fakhrizadeh "the country's prominent and distinguished nuclear and defensive scientist."

Khamenei said Iran's first priority after the killing was the "definitive punishment of the perpetrators and those who ordered it."

He did not elaborate. Speaking to a meeting of his government's Coronavirus task force earlier Saturday, President Hassan Rouhani blamed Israel for the killing. Rouhani said that Fakhrizadeh's death would not stop its nuclear programme, something Khamenei said as well. — AP

PARADIP PORT TRUST
e-TENDER CALL NOTICE
Name of the Work: "Special repair to the Residential Qrs. (Type-IR, IIR, FHC Qrs.) at Nuabazar area for the year 2020-21". Estimated Cost: ₹82,55,070.19. Last date & time of submission of Bid: 14.12.2020 at 17.15hrs. For details please refer our website: <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>. Executive Engineer Roads & Building Division PPT/PR/324/2020-21 Dt.27/11/2020

DECCAN Chronicle

29 NOVEMBER 2020



Sanjeev Ahluwalia

Off the beaten track

Different, and same: Pandemic musings

Big calamities induce great change. The Fukushima disaster 2011 in Japan left behind 16,000 dead and the haunting image of the Emperor Akihito, kneeling before aged victims— a never before, mutely humane gesture expressing remorse and reassurance.

April 2020, India. A possible 10 million emigrant workers abandon locked down cities. Some walk to distant villages with their family in tow and their meagre possessions on their heads — a replay of the post-Partition mass exchange of the dispossessed in 1947 — except this is just one-way.

Media reports kindle public sympathy. Yogi Adityanath mobilises hundreds of buses to ferry “his” people home to Uttar Pradesh. Their cousins from Bihar are left to brave the searing summer heat and exhaustion — some die on the way.

November 2020, New Delhi, Mumbai — lockdowns are long over but most people now carry documents to prove residence, drown themselves in vitamins and track the apps for movement restrictions. The worst is over. The Covid monster is dying. But the fear is palpable of being dragged under by its distended death spasms.

The ongoing pandemic’s most telling debris — other than heightened neurosis and germaphobia — are the ubiquitous masks. Masks everywhere in a macabre caricature of a Venetian Carnival — except here masks are the vehicle to scurry home not strut the streets and party.

Product design lags horribly. The masks either keep pollution out or the deadly spiked pathogens. You must choose between the two — a senseless game of Russian roulette. Pollution choked lungs gasp for air through impermeable medical grade masks. But there are eyes watching everywhere now.

Furtively, you avert your face, tug downwards and gulp in the air quickly, lest someone fingers you for violating the Covid regulations. Some are complicit out of propriety; others to escape the Rs 2,000 fine.

Sitting next to a stranger on a bus, in an aircraft or even in a waiting room is so off-putting that it makes you shun all human contact and become a mole. Voluntary social distancing is not going away anytime soon.

For the well-off, excluding others from physical proximity, unless they are suitably bathed and clad, was always the norm. South Asians smarten up before they go to beg for relief for a Bahubali (big man). It is not just hotels and the military, which enforce daily dress and hygiene inspections. Privileged homes also follow this rule, requiring house help to change into “clean uniforms” before going about their work.

It all goes back to the Raj, when *mem-sahibs* would drill the women of the “coolie lines” — people not like them — on the basics of hygiene, partly, to forestall the spread of classless contagion to the “main house”.

Hawking or spitting is second nature to South Asians. An early morning ritual which requires the most labored exertions to eject yesterday’s detritus from around our gullets, in a fluid heave by contracting the stomach and gagging ferociously. Sensible Europeans brush their teeth post dinner. Asians must do it early in the morning, before eating anything, or lose their meal.

Touching and feeling anything and everything is second nature. It could be a door frame, the back of a chair or even the person ahead of oneself in a queue. Does “connecting” physically create a human chain of reassurance circling the Globe?

With masks obscuring the face, all-American, blindingly white teeth and a now-it’s-on, now-it’s-off toothy smiles are yesterday’s asset — dentists, beware of your declining profits. Today it is the eyes which are once again the windows to a person’s soul.

And don’t forget how voice and audio have eaten into video’s share as the principal tool for business and social communication, to access knowledge, music, shows or catch-up on current affairs because pod casts allow you to “multitask” — the holy grail of the 2020s, also known by the less flattering epithet of “shared attention” — as by a mother of quintuplets.

Personal vehicles, insanely popular in South Asia because of poor public transport, soar in appeal. They extend the bubble of “safe social isolation” to the street. The purveyors of the virtues of “shared mobility” need to come up with very rigorous sanitisation options before people go back to Uber and Ola. One option is drive through UV sanitizers — giant versions of the smaller ones for home use, to disinfect mobiles and parcels, now available at between ₹2,000 to ₹10,000 apiece.

Accessing doctors is, at once convenient and yet dreadfully stressful. Letting a doctor look down your gullet online whilst lying in your bed is sheer luxury, as is ordering medicines like pizza. The bad old days of heaving yourself to a hospital or a clinic for a doctor’s appointment or to get a medical test done, are now mere memories, except for the truly ill, who now need generous insurance policies and “connections” for non-Covid medical help.

Dying at home was once a preferred eventuality for the aged. Today they are denied even this final dignity. Doctors hesitate to certify the cause of death. Even the dead must pass by a hospital to be stamped as “non-Covid” before being cremated or buried. Some say, the movers and shakers, who know how to live and die comfortably, get certificates prepared in advance, just to avoid the detour. Kafka rules now more than ever.

The writer is adviser, Observer Research Foundation

Subhani



At best, farm laws pass reform buck to big biz



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya’s View

As I saw thousands of farmers being tear-gassed and drenched by water cannons, and the mass of lathi wielding policemen and barbed wire barricades put up to prevent farmers coming to Delhi to protest against the recent farm bills, I was reminded of Tulsidas’ remarkably insightful lines in the *Ramcharitmanas*: *Nahin kou asa janama jaga mahin, prabhuta pai jahi mada nahin*: Never was a creature born in this world, whom power did not intoxicate. How else can one explain the arrogant manner in which the BJP government has handled the entire project of farm reforms? It is a classic case of hubris derailing even a well-intentioned attempt of change.

Firstly, it was the manner in which the three agricultural bills were passed in Parliament last September. This is a government with an overwhelming majority in the Lok Sabha, and a manageable preponderance in the Rajya Sabha. It is in a position on a simple numerical basis to get its legislative agenda through. Why then were these bills passed in a tearing hurry, without a structured discussion, through a voice vote, and without sending the bills for wider consultations and thorough consideration to the select committee?

Let us accept, too, that there is a need to replace the stranglehold of middlemen in agricultural trade and do away with the APMC Act. However, if the farmers are protesting the move it is not

because they have shrunken craniums that prevent them from realising what is good for them. The question is not that agricultural commerce needs to be opened up, but what is going to replace it. The government says that removing unproductive middlemen and allowing farmers to sell to whomsoever they want is good for farmers. It will open the way for corporate India to buy from farmers, enhance business investment in the agricultural sector, facilitate healthy price competition and thereby increase farmer remuneration.

The fact of the matter is that, while this sounds great in theory, marginal and small farmers with less than five hectares of land account for 86 per cent of total farmers in India. No attempt has been made, as part of preparatory steps leading up to this reform legislation, to aggregate them or to encourage cooperatives. They have been given the freedom to sell outside the APMC, but given their indigent and scattered status, are without the power to negotiate the best deal for themselves.

It is true that there are only some 7,000 APMC mandis across the country, and farmers can theoretically sell to anyone they wish to. In fact, some states like Bihar, Kerala and Manipur have scrapped the APMC Act. But has the condition of the small and marginal farmers really improved in these states? The truth is that the old system — which does need reform — guaranteed to most farmers through the MSP, a mini-

mum floor price for their hard earned produce. The much maligned middlemen or adhatitis provide a support system to farmers for transporting their produce and selling it; they also are a part of a familiar socio-economic eco system available to farmers in times of need, such as a temporary loan for marriage ceremonies or child education. Now the assurance of the old system is being removed, and there is no explicit guarantee in the law for MSP.

Reforms, although necessary, need to be prepared for and properly transitioned. Suppose, the government made a peremptory announcement that henceforth everybody will travel in New Delhi only by public transport. The step can be justified as a ‘reform’ because it will save fuel, encourage savings, and reduce pollution. But the ordinary person will ask the basic question: is the existing public transport infrastructure good enough to meet this increased demand? If the answer is no, then people will protest.

The guarantee of MSP has led farmers, especially in Punjab and Haryana, but also elsewhere, to grow crops, such as paddy, even when government godowns are unable to efficiently store the grains, and rats consume a great deal of it. But why are farmers growing paddy in Punjab and other states? It is suc-

cessive governments that have for vote bank politics guaranteed them free water and free electricity. Now that they have utilised this largesse to cultivate paddy, the government suddenly has a change of heart and says it will not buy, and wants corporate India to step in. A businessman, who is given certain inputs for production free, and encouraged to make a particular product which the government guarantees it will buy at remunerative prices, will change his production line to respond to such a situation. Suppose, after he has done so, the government says that its decision was wasteful, and it will not guarantee purchase, would not the businessman feel he has been cheated?

The agricultural sector is crying out for greater investment. The government feels that these farm bills will facilitate this but by the corporate sector. However, has the government come out with the requisite tax incentives and fiscal policies that will encourage such investment? Besides, there is a point beyond which governments — both at the centre and in the states — cannot abdicate their own responsibility. Systemic investments in modernising the food supply chain should have been made in much greater measure by governments. The buck is now being passed on to the private sector, on the uncertain premise that they will do what successive governments did not.

We need agricultural reform. But it must be done through consultation with the stakeholders and systematically prepared for. Teargassing farmers and intimidating them is not the answer.

The writer, an author and a former diplomat, is in politics

The government feels that these farm bills will facilitate investment by the corporate sector. However, has the government come out with the requisite tax incentives and fiscal policies that will encourage such investment?

self waiting for the ministerial berth promised to him by the BJP as reward for bringing down the Congress government.

Ahmed Patel’s untimely demise is undoubtedly a blow for the Congress but it is a personal setback for former Rajasthan deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot who had led a rebellion against the Ashok Gehlot government earlier this year but backed off subsequently. The Congress leadership had then set up a three-member committee, comprising Patel, K.C. Venugopal and Ajay Maken to hear out Mr Pilot’s grievances and find an alternate role for him. This was in July but the panel has yet to submit its report. With Patel’s departure, it is highly unlikely that Mr Venugopal and Mr Maken will be in a rush to send in their recommendations. As it is, Mr Venugopal and Mr Maken were depending on the more senior and experienced Patel to find an amicable solution to the Gehlot-Pilot rivalry. This is certainly not good news for Mr Pilot who has

been waiting to be rehabilitated for the past five months.

Soon after BJP Rajya Sabha MP and Amit Shah confidant Bhupendra Yadav was given charge of the poll campaign for the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, he immediately got down to business. He has set up shop in Hyderabad and has been approaching local Congress leaders for induction into the BJP. Realising that the Congress is on a weak wicket, Yadav and his team has been sending out feelers to the rival party’s leaders, even going to the extent of calling on them at their homes. This is the same pattern adopted by the BJP in West Bengal as the saffron party is determined to expand its footprint in the East and South. Unlike Trinamul chief Mamata Banerjee who is putting up a tough fight in West Bengal, there is no one in the Congress to counter the BJP’s expansionism.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

LETTERS

BIG RELIEF FOR KANGANA

The verdict given by the Bombay high court declaring the demolition of the bungalow of actress Kangana Ranaut as unlawful is a hit on the head of Maharashtra government who took a blatantly prejudicial stand against the actress for speaking boldly against some of the grey areas found in the nexus between politicians of Mumbai and Bollywood personalities. The main thrust of her revelations was how laws are bent many times and broken a few times to please some favoured persons in the tinsel world of Mumbai by politicians in power. Besides, Kangana’s open support to BJP some of its policies at national level may have irked the Maharashtra Government to the extent of avenging the actress by demolishing a portion of her bungalow.

Marudamalaiyan, Coimbatore

FARMERS’ PROTEST

FOR A month farmers of Punjab have conducted rail roko and had to lift it as it is boomeranging on their economy. Now amidst Covid threat and severe winter, a section of farmers are on Delhi chalo campaign against Centre’s new farm laws. No other Congress-ruled state farmers are agitating and all over the country, farmers are not as vociferous as Punjab farmers. This agitation has blessings from Congress leaders like Rahul, Amarinder and Hooda, who want the agitation must go on at any cost. Already, Punjab government has made its own farm laws, disregarding Centre’s laws and hence the onus to convince the farmers to drop agitation solely rests with captain Amarinder. Centre may not yield to pressure tactics of Congress-sponsored Punjab farmers agitation.

Parthasarathy Mandadi, Tirupati

ORGAN DONATION

TAMIL NADU health minister C. Vijayabaskar’s remark that the government is considering giving priority in jobs in public sector to those who donate organs is laudable. This will surely increase the organ donations in the state, which has bagged the national award for organ donation, and save many lives. Tamil Nadu under the leadership of Edappadi K.Palaniswami is really doing well. It works silently, but vigorously to make various sections of the society happy.

S. Ramakrishnasaye, Chennai

HIDDEN AGENDA

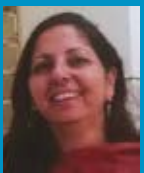
THE DESIRE / suggestion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for “One Nation, One Election” does not seem to be feasible in the immediate future and a lot of ‘spade work’ has to be done by the election commission and other government authorities/ departments to list out the pros and cons. His suggestion of preparing a single voters list is also a cumbersome affair which needs a lot of staff but is a good idea to prevent misuse/ fraud and elimination of fictitious voters. His statement that elections at different times in different states would affect development work cannot be accepted. It seems that the BJP is having a secret agenda and wants to make use of its popularity prevailing at present to bring the whole of India in its control, especially the southern states.

M.C. Vijay Shankar, Chennai

Mail your letters to editor@deccanmail.com

Anita Katyal

Political Gup-Shup



Despite defeat, Rahul vac was on track; Patel’s unenviable role

Over the past few days, there have been numerous accounts of how Ahmed Patel managed affairs in Congress president Sonia Gandhi’s office as her political secretary. Among the various responsibilities entrusted to the late leader was to keep his boss out of the line of fire. It was left to him to tactfully handle delicate situations. A phone call from Patel generally meant he was ringing to convey some bad news. This happened with senior Haryana leader Birender Singh (now with the BJP) when he was getting ready to leave for the Rashtrapati Bhavan to be sworn in as a minister in the Manmohan Singh government in 2013. Minutes before Mr Singh stepped out, he got a call from Patel. When Mr Singh heard who the caller was, he realised he would not be joining the Union Cabinet. “I knew immediately I was out... because Ahmed Patel would not be calling to congratulate me,” says Mr Singh whenever he recounts this story. This was not the first or the last time that Mr Patel was called upon to perform

such an unpleasant task. But he handled it tactfully, breaking the news in his inimitable gentle style. His general refrain was, “*Sorry yaar, tumhara kaam nahin hua. Dekho, agli baar shayad kuch ho payega.*”

Thanks to the enthusiastic response RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav got at his election rallies, Rahul Gandhi was convinced that their alliance was all set to form the next government in Bihar. In fact, he was so confident that he took a break in the midst of the election campaign and went off for a short holiday to Shimla at his sister, Priyanka’s house. The Nehru-Gandhi scion had even planned to go on a desert safari to Jaisalmer before the declaration of the Bihar poll results. However, these plans came unstuck because Rahul Gandhi was denied permission by the security agencies as Prime Minister Narendra Modi was due to visit the forward areas and spend his Diwali with the jawans. This was just as well as the Bihar poll results proved to be a real letdown

for the Rahul-Tejashwi duo. However, this did not stop Rahul Gandhi from proceeding on vacation to Goa later with Sonia Gandhi.

Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has put the proverbial cat among the pigeons with his recent announcement that he is in no hurry to expand his Cabinet. This has obviously come as a rude shock for former ministers Tulsil Silawat and Govind Rajput who had to resign their posts in October as they had failed to get elected as MLAs in the stipulated six months following their induction into the Cabinet. Both Silawat and Rajput are Jyotiraditya Scindia loyalists from the Congress along with 20 other MLAs which led to the downfall of the Kamal Nath government. The two were hoping to get back their ministries after they were re-elected in the recent Madhya Pradesh bypolls. They are naturally depending on Mr Scindia to push their case but their mentor is him-

self waiting for the ministerial berth promised to him by the BJP as reward for bringing down the Congress government.

Ahmed Patel’s untimely demise is undoubtedly a blow for the Congress but it is a personal setback for former Rajasthan deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot who had led a rebellion against the Ashok Gehlot government earlier this year but backed off subsequently. The Congress leadership had then set up a three-member committee, comprising Patel, K.C. Venugopal and Ajay Maken to hear out Mr Pilot’s grievances and find an alternate role for him. This was in July but the panel has yet to submit its report. With Patel’s departure, it is highly unlikely that Mr Venugopal and Mr Maken will be in a rush to send in their recommendations. As it is, Mr Venugopal and Mr Maken were depending on the more senior and experienced Patel to find an amicable solution to the Gehlot-Pilot rivalry. This is certainly not good news for Mr Pilot who has

In Santa’s mailbag, a peek into kids’ Covid worries

JOHN LEICESTER

Jim, from Taiwan, slipped a face mask inside the greeting card he sent to Santa and marked “I (heart) u.” Alina, 5, asked in her Santa letter written with an adult’s help that he please use the front door when he drops in, because the back door is reserved for Grandma and Grandpa to minimise their risk of contamination. And spilling out her heavy little heart to “Dear Father Christmas,” 10-year-old Lola wrote that she is wishing “that my aunt never has cancer again and that this virus no longer exists.”

“My mother is a caregiver and sometimes I am scared for her,” Lola explained, signing off her handwritten letter with, “Take care of yourself Father Christmas, and of the Elves.”

The emotional toll wrought by the pandemic is jumping off pages in the deluge of “Dear Santa” letters now pouring into a post office in southwest France that sorts and responds to his mail from around the world.

Arriving by the tens of thousands, the letters, notes and cards — some mere scribbles, other elaborate labours of love in collared pens — are revealing windows into the tender minds of their young authors, and of adult Santa fans also asking for respite and happiness, at the tail end of a year of sickness and tumult.

Like this letter from young Zoe, who limited her requests to a music player and amusement park tickets because “this year has been very different from others because of Covid-19.”

“That’s why I am not ask-



Envelopes (above) addressed to “Pere Noel” — Father Christmas in French — decorated with love hearts, stickers and glitter, are displayed by postal workers in Libourne, southwest France. A postal worker (right) dressed as Santa, reads letters.

— AP

ing you for many thing(s) to avoid infection,” Zoe wrote, signing off with “Merci!” and a heart.

In theory, and often in practice, any letter addressed “Pere Noel” — French for Father Christmas — and slipped into any post box around the world is likely to wend its way to the sorting office in France’s Bordeaux region that has been handling his mail since 1962. Toiling out of sight among vineyards, his secretariat of workers (who call themselves “elves”) spends the months of November and

December slicing open envelopes decorated with hearts, stickers and collars, and spreading Santa magic by responding on his behalf.

From the first letters opened at the secretariat from Nov. 12, it quickly became apparent how the pandemic is weighing on children, says the chief elf, Jamila Hajji. Along with the usual pleas for toys and gadgets were also requests for vaccines, for visits from grandparents, for life to return to the way it was. One letter in three mentions the pandemic in



some way, Hajji says.

“The kids have been very affected by Covid, more than we think. They are very worried. And what they want most of all, apart from presents, is really to be able to have a normal life, the end of Covid, a vaccine,” she says.

“The letters to Father Christmas are a sort of release for them. All this year, they have been in

lockdowns, they have been deprived of school, deprived of their grandpas and grandmas. Their parents have been occupied by the health crisis and whatnot. So we, of course, can tell that the children are putting into words everything they have felt during this period.”

“We are like elf therapists,” she adds.

Replying to 12,000 letters per day, the team of 60

elves sets aside some that move them or catch the eye. Lola’s is among those that have stood out so far, with its heartfelt confession to Santa that “this year more than the others, I need magic and to believe in you.” The elves say their sense is that children are confiding worries that they may not have shared with parents.

Emma Barron, a psychiatrist specialising in the mental health of children and adolescents at the Robert Debré paediatric hospital in Paris, says landmark dates, including birthdays and holidays like Christmas, provide structure in childhood. Amid the pandemic’s uncertainty, the Dec. 25 anchor of Christmas is particularly important to kids this year.

“Children are quite surprising in that they can adapt to many things,” Barron says. “But rhythms, rituals and things like that are an integral part of children’s mental stability.”

As the letters flood in, it’s also clear that this goes beyond childhood. Santa is proving a beacon to adults, too, with some writing to him for the first time since they were kids.

One asked for “a pandemic of love.” A 77-year-old lamented that “lockdown is no fun! I live alone.” A grandparent asked Santa to “say ‘Hi’ to my two grandkids that I won’t be able to see this year because of the health situation.”

“Your mission will be hard this year,” wrote Anne-Marie, another adult suppliant. “You will need to sprinkle stars across the entire world, to calm everyone and revive our childhood souls, so we can dream, at last, and let go.”

— AP

Rapid Covid tests give lifeline for London orchestra

STUART MCDILL

Maxine Kwok, a violinist in London’s oldest symphony orchestra, is delighted that rehearsals have resumed thanks to a rapid, lab-free Covid-19 test that gives the musicians the confidence to work together again.

“It was so difficult not to play for months,” Kwok, a member of the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO), said after being tested. “But the moment that we were able to have this kind of testing at this regularity, meaning we could just come back to work and feel comfortable and safe, really made a huge difference for us,” Mr Kwok told *Reuters*.

“I was so thrilled. I can’t describe it really,” she added ahead of a rehearsal attended by around 40 musicians, all masked and still observing social distancing rules.

Once a month, the musicians provide a phlegm sample by spitting into a small pot which is tested in groups, called bubbles, by Imperial College London spin-off DNANudge with their cartridge-based technology that gives a result in just over an hour. “The bubble test is really relevant when you’ve got organisations that work together and they need to get back to work,” said Professor Chris Toumazou, chief executive of DNANudge, outside the LSO rehearsal studio in east London.

“For example the London Symphony Orchestra, key to the arts industry, they need to rehearse together.

▶ **ONCE A month**, the musicians provide a phlegm sample by spitting into a small pot which is tested in groups, called bubbles, by Imperial College London spin-off DNANudge with their cartridge-based technology that gives a result in just over an hour.

▶ **TESTING MORE** than one phlegm sample at a time significantly increases testing capacity

Just having one bubble test or a couple of bubble tests for the entire orchestra means they can be tested on the day of rehearsals,” he said.

Testing more than one phlegm sample at a time significantly increases testing capacity, maximising the number of people who can be tested over a given period while using fewer testing resources.

“... to know that you start every four weeks with a clean group, everyone negative, is a huge confidence to everyone in the organisation,” said Kathryn McDowell, the LSO’s Managing Director, adding that other “mitigating measures” such as masks and social distancing also remained important.

DNANudge is providing Britain’s national health service with nearly six million rapid Covid-19 test kits at a not-for-profit cost price but it’s also making them available to people without symptoms seeking reassurance on whether they could be infectious, including key workers and travellers.

— *Reuters*

Explainer: Will Covid-19 vaccines protect us?

KATE KELLAND

The frontrunners in the Covid-19 vaccine race have emerged with different success rates for their shots in clinical trials, but what does that mean for the global fight against the pandemic?

US drugmakers Pfizer-BioNtech and Moderna have each said their coronavirus vaccines have an efficacy rate of around 95% and a Russian project touted 92% efficacy for its Sputnik V vaccine.

Britain’s AstraZeneca announced an average efficacy rate of 70%, still well above the 50% rate that US regulators have said they want to see before approving a Covid-19 vaccine for use.

WHAT ARE EFFICACY NUMBERS?

If a vaccine has an efficacy of, say, 80%, it means that if 100 people who have not previously been infected by the coronavirus are given the vaccine, on average 80 of them will not get the disease that the virus causes: Covid-19. These rates relate to vaccines administered and monitored in controlled circumstances, such as clinical trials.

DOES THAT MEAN AN INDIVIDUAL’S PROTECTION LEVEL IS THE SAME?

No. A person immunised with a vaccine that has, say, 80% efficacy is very likely to be protected from getting

the disease with symptoms, especially severe ones.

They are also very likely to be protected from asymptomatic disease - but this, depending on the vaccine, may be less certain.

Even with 95% efficacy, there is no absolute guarantee of protection for any particular individual.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN THE REAL WORLD?

There is a difference between efficacy rates obtained in clinical trials and effectiveness — the real-world protection rate of a vaccine when it is rolled out. “Efficacy says: ‘Does it work?’.” Effectiveness says: ‘Can it be applied? Can you carry

the efficacy to the people?’,” said Marcel Tanner, an epidemiologist and president of Switzerland’s Academies of Arts and Sciences.

In the real world, a vaccine’s effectiveness can be influenced by multiple, unpredictable factors including, for example: the rate of spread of a virus; how many, or few, people adhere to the optimum dosing schedule and timetable; how individuals’ immune systems respond; whether the vaccine was stored at the correct temperature; whether people know, or don’t know, if they’ve been exposed before.

Generally, a vaccine’s real-world effectiveness tends to be slightly lower than its efficacy.

WILL THESE VACCINES STOP THE Covid-19?

Experts say this is unlikely. More realistic, they say, is that we will have to live alongside the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Evidence so far suggests that Covid-19 vaccines developed by Pfizer-BioNtech, Moderna and AstraZeneca will help stop people developing the disease. Only AstraZeneca’s data, so far, shows signs that its shot may also help prevent transmission of the virus.

“Protection against illness has a value for an individual,” said Penny Ward, a visiting professor in pharmaceutical medicine at King’s College London. She added, however, that vac-

cines that do not prevent transmission will not halt the pandemic.

“Until the vaccination and other measures result in the virus being close to elimination in any particular country, and worldwide, there will still be a need for distancing, masks and hand washing to reduce transmission further than will be achieved by the vaccine alone,” said Stephen Evans, a professor of pharmacoepidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

“(A) vaccine is no good until people are vaccinated, and even then, it will not result in a situation where all other protective measures can be immediately abandoned.” — *Reuters*



Britain’s chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak gestures, during a visit to Imperial clinic research facility at Hammersmith Hospital, where he met staff and was instructed on research techniques, to mark the announcement of his Spending Review in London.

— AP

For Big Tech, Joe Biden brings a new era but no ease in scrutiny

MARCY GORDON

The Obama-Biden administration was a charmed era for America’s tech companies — a moment when they were lionised as innovators, hailed as job creators and largely left alone.

Now Joe Biden is coming back, this time as president. But times have changed. The halcyon days of an adoring Washington are unlikely to return when Biden takes the oath of office in January, with mounting legislative and regulatory challenges to the industry — including stronger enforcement of antitrust laws — nearly certain to outlast the tenure of President Donald Trump.

“The techlash is in full force,” said Eric Goldman, a law professor at Santa Clara University and co-director of its High Tech Law Institute.

In the years since Barack Obama and Biden left the White House, the tech industry’s political fortunes have flipped. Facebook, Google, Amazon and Apple have come under scrutiny from Congress, federal regulators, state attorneys general and European authorities. Twitter has found itself in frequent run-ins with lawmakers over its policies for moderating content on its platform. And compa-



nies have seen their political support in Congress erode.

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle champion stronger oversight of the industry, arguing its massive market power is out of control, crushing smaller competitors and endangering consumers’ privacy. They say the companies hide behind a legal shield to allow false information to flourish on their social media networks or to entrench bias.

In steps Biden, who may aim to take a bite out of the dominance of Big Tech and may welcome an opportunity to work with the opposing side to curb the power of a common adversary.

As a presidential contender, Biden said the breakup of big tech companies should be considered.

Dismantling the tech giants is “something we should take a really hard look at,” he told The Associated Press in an interview. He said he wants to see quickly crimped the social media companies’ long-held legal protections for speech on their platforms. And he singled out Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg for scorn, calling him “a real problem.”

The Biden administration is also expected to press forward with the Trump Justice Department’s new antitrust lawsuit against Google, though its shape likely could be changed.

But if Biden decides to pursue major legislation to overhaul the laws governing tech competition, he’ll have to navigate a tricky congressional and political landscape.

▶ **IN THE years** since Barack Obama and Biden left the White House, the tech industry’s political fortunes have flipped. Facebook, Google, Amazon and Apple have come under scrutiny from Congress, federal regulators, state attorneys general and European authorities. As a presidential contender, Biden said the breakup of big tech companies should be considered.

Democratic lawmakers in the House, after a sweeping investigation by a Judiciary Committee panel, called last month for Congress to rein in Big Tech, possibly forcing the giants to break up their businesses while making it harder for them to acquire others and imposing new rules to safeguard competition.

Those kinds of mandated breakups through a legislative overhaul would be a radical step for Congress to take and could be a bridge too far for most Republicans.

Though it hasn’t been settled, Biden faces the possibility of becoming the first Democrat in modern history to take office without his party controlling Congress. Republicans would retain control of the Senate by winning one of two runoff

elections in Georgia in January. Democrats have already won the House.

Republican control of the Senate would force Biden to curb his ambitions and pursue a different legislative agenda, one rooted in bipartisanship. Legislation on the tech industry could be one area of possible agreement.

“Biden’s strength as a senator was exactly trying to broker those kinds of deals,” noted Santa Clara University’s Goldman.

But what may emerge in the end is a heavy reliance on executive power through more vigorous enforcement of existing antitrust laws, said Jerry Ellig, a former government official and professor at George Washington University’s Regulatory Studies Centre. Republican lawmakers are likely to hang together in opposing fundamental changes to the tech industry, which also could affect smaller companies, while Democrats could be pulled in different directions.

The Justice Department’s landmark suit last month accused Google of abusing its dominance in online search and advertising to boost profits — the government’s most significant attempt to protect competition since its groundbreaking case against Microsoft over 20 years ago.

— AP

British bike maker pedals on, with Brexit deal up in the air

JILL LAWLESS

The team at Brompton Bicycle Ltd. thought they were prepared for Brexit.

Bosses at the British firm, which exports hand-made folding bikes to 47 countries, looked at the uncertainty swirling around the UK’s decision to leave the European Union and started stockpiling parts.

Yet with just over a month to go until Britain makes a sharp economic break with the EU, Brompton faces uncertainty about supplies and unexpected new competition from China, all amid a global pandemic. Its experience is evidence that Brexit is set to be bumpy, even for businesses that have tried to get ready.

“We’d built up this fantastic stock for the worst-case Brexit scenario,” said Brompton chief executive Will Butler-Adams.

Then the coronavirus pandemic struck. Orders dried up as stores closed during the spring lockdown, only to surge once it was lifted.

“We struggled to get the parts back in again,” Butler-Adams said. “So we’ve had to eat into our Brexit stock, which has saved us in many respects. But it now means, having been prudent and got it all organized three years ago,

▶ **BROMPTON IS** just one of thousands of British companies bracing for huge changes on Jan. 1, when Britain leaves the economic structures of the 27-nation bloc.

we’re now sitting here with a month to go and we’ve got no Brexit stock and we’re facing Brexit.”

Brompton is just one of thousands of British companies bracing for huge changes on Jan. 1, when Britain leaves the economic structures of the 27-nation bloc. The U.K. split from the EU politically early this year, but remained part of the bloc’s economic embrace during an 11-month transition as the two sides tried to negotiate a new free-trade deal to take effect Jan. 1.

But months of tense and often testy negotiations have not resolved differences on fishing rights, fair-competition rules and how to settle future disputes. Intense talks must produce either a breakthrough or a final breakdown in coming days. If there is no deal, New Year’s Day will bring tariffs and other barriers to U.K.-EU trade. The burden will fall most heavily on Britain, which does almost half its trade with the EU.

Things will be smoother with a deal, which would remove quotas and tariffs on goods,

though businesses still face new obstacles and red tape. Brexit means millions of customs declarations to be filled in, thousands of new border staff to check shipments, and construction of vast parking lots for trucks as a new border is built after decades of seamless trade.

Trade expert David Henig of the European Centre for International Political Economy said Jan. 1 marks “the biggest one-day change in trading relations that any country since 1945 will have experienced.”

“This is going from a permissive regime, where more or less we can trade anything with the EU that we like, to a permission-based one where we have to check for everything that we want to trade - whether that’s goods or services - whether we’re allowed to do it,” he said.

Supporters of Brexit say any short-term pain will be worth it, because, freed from EU rules, the U.K. can set its own priorities and forge new trading relationships around the world.

But most economists say the economy will suffer. Britain’s independent Office for Budget Responsibility says a no-deal Brexit will wipe 2% off U.K. GDP in 2021, on top of the pandemic damage.

— AP

SHORT TAKES

Hamilton takes Bahrain GP pole

Manama: Lewis Hamilton claimed pole position at this weekend's Bahrain Formula One Grand Prix on Saturday after posting a new track record lap.

The newly-crowned world champion finished ahead of Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas and Red Bull's Max Verstappen with a blistering time of one minute, 27.264 seconds at the Bahrain International Circuit.

The pole was Briton Hamilton's 10th of 15 races run so far this season, and a record-extending 98th of his career.

Verstappen's Red Bull team-mate Alex Albon finished fourth, just over a second back, in a qualifying session that saw the likes of Charles Leclerc and Sebastian Vettel fail to make the top 10 places. — *AFP*

Jehan pips Mick for F2 podium

Bahrain: Rising Indian racer Jehan Daruvala earned his maiden Formula 2 podium after pipping championship leader Mick Schumacher in a gripping battle for the third place at the Bahrain Grand Prix support race, here.

Starting eighth on the grid, Jehan gained two places and stayed sixth for a few laps. However, in Lap 5, he lost two places and was forced off the circuit.

Jehan soon overtook multiple race winner Robert Shwartzman to move up to fifth. Race leader Schumacher then took his mandatory pit stop.

Jehan's blistering pace after his own pitstop meant that Schumacher emerged from the pits behind the Indian, who was now running third. — *PTI*

Reds frustrated by VAR, Brighton

Brighton: Liverpool were frustrated by VAR as Pascal Gross's controversial late penalty rescued a dramatic 1-1 draw for Brighton on Saturday. Jurgen Klopp's side took the lead through Diogo Jota's second half strike after Brighton's Neal Maupay had missed a penalty in the first half. But Liverpool were stunned in stoppage-time when Andrew Robertson's challenge on Danny Welbeck was ruled a penalty after Stuart Attwell overturned his initial decision.

Gross converted from the spot, leaving Klopp sarcastically applauding the officials at the end of a disappointing week for Liverpool after their shock Champions League defeat at home to Atalanta. Liverpool went back to the top of the table as a result of their draw, but the champions are just one point ahead of previous leaders Tottenham. — *AFP*

Vijay CC to meet Trotters in SF

Chennai: Vijay CC will take on Globe Trotters SC in the semifinal of the TNCA first division league from December 7. The two-day match will be held at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium. Jolly Rovers CC will meet Young Stars in the second semis from December 9. The final will also be played at the MAC.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Australia vs India: 2nd ODI from 9.10 am on Sony Six, Ten 1, HD

South Africa vs England: Second T20 from 6 pm on Star Sports 1

FORMULA ONE

Bahrain Grand Prix: Main race from 7.35 pm on Star Sports Select 2

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Southampton vs Manchester United from 7.30 pm; Chelsea vs Tottenham Hotspur from 10 pm; Arsenal vs Wolverhampton Wanderers from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1

Indian Super League: Jamshedpur vs Odisha from 4.50 pm; Chennaiyin vs Kerala Blasters from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Italian League: Lazio vs Udinese from 5 pm; Milan vs Fiorentina from 7.30 pm; Cagliari vs Spezia from 10.30 pm; Napoli vs Roma from 1.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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TIME TO PONDER

With no Plan 'B' in place, India need their 'A' game to save ODI series

Sydney, Nov. 28: India's battered bowling unit will have little time to regroup and limited resources at its disposal in a desperate bid to perform a redemption act and save the ODI series against a turbo-charged Australia in the second game here on Sunday.

It wasn't just about the margin of defeat — by 66 runs — but the manner in which the home team exposed India's vacant cupboard of all-rounders that will give Virat Kohli and Ravi Shastri numerous points to ponder.

Hardik Pandya's 76-ball-90 was at best a good innings but just like the Champions Trophy final in 2017, the sparkling knock was never going to help India win the contest.

Adding insult to injury the was Pandya's frank admission that he is not bowling anytime soon and even if he rolls his arm over, it is likely to be in 20-over World Cups.

So with no back-up all-rounders or a plan B in place, India will have to execute their plan A perfectly.

That leaves Kohli with bowlers who can't bat and a top-order where none can bowl. Kohli did bowl an over or two but that is history as far as the skipper is concerned.

With Australia's top three — captain Aaron Finch, David Warner and Steve Smith — hitting the straps right away, Jasprit Bumrah and company will have no option but to pick up the pieces and give a better account of themselves on a strip that promises to be a belter.

It is highly unlikely that India's combination will change unless both Yuzvendra Chahal and Navdeep Saini are declared unfit.

The duo collectively conceded 172 runs in 20 overs between them and the wiry wrist-spinner did leave the field after sustaining an on-field injury just after the completion



India captain Virat Kohli (right) talks with teammates before the start of their one-day international match against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday. — *AFP*

of his spell.

Saini, on the other hand, has back spasms and Thangarasu Natarajan has been inducted in the 50-over squad as a cover.

In case they are ruled out, Shardul Thakur, with decent batting abilities could replace Saini and Kuldeep Yadav's inclusion will be a forced change.

For Australia, it is possible that highly-rated all-rounder Cameron Green will be rewarded with an ODI cap as Marcus Stoinis picked up a side strain during the first game.

— *PTI*

HOLDING SAYS INDIA MISSING DHONI'S SKILL

New Delhi, Nov. 28: West Indies fast bowling great Michael Holding feels that despite a star-studded batting line-up, the Indian team is missing the "skill and character" that the peerless Mahendra Singh Dhoni used to display during big run chases.

The Indian team looked completely out of sorts as a unit in the opening ODI against Australia.

After a listless bowling display that helped the home side reach 374 for 6, the Men in Blue crumbled under pressure, slumping to a 66-run defeat. "It was always going to be difficult for India to chase that down. One thing India will struggle with is the loss of Mahendra Singh Dhoni," Holding said in a chat show *'Holding Nothing Back'*.

The 66-year-old further said that India missed the composure and control of Dhoni, who retired from international cricket in August this year.

"Dhoni comes in to this Indian batting order halfway down and he usually takes control while chasing. India have chased so well in the past with MS Dhoni in the team." — *PTI*

BAIRSTOW TAKES ENGLAND HOME IN OPENING T20

Cape Town, Nov. 28: Jonny Bairstow brought England home with an unbeaten 86 from 48 balls against South Africa to win the first Twenty20 by five wickets on Friday.

Bairstow won it with back-to-back boundaries, a four and then a big six over wide long-on, to take England to 183-5 and past South Africa's 179-6 with four balls to spare.

England was behind the game through most of their chase despite Bairstow's boundary hitting until the 17th over, when Bairstow and captain Eoin Morgan plundered 28 off left-arm seamer Beuran Hendricks. The game was the first international cricket fixture in South Africa since the coronavirus outbreak. — *AP*

Brief scores: S. Africa 179/6 in 20 overs (F. Du Plessis 58, H. Van der Dussen 37; S. Curran 3-28) lost to England 183/5 in 19.2 overs (J. Bairstow 86 not out, B. Stokes 37; G. Linde 2-20).

Not just another game: Laszlo on Kerala clash

NEHA SURANA | DC CHENNAI, NOV. 28

Chennaiyin FC coach Csaba Laszlo said their Sunday showdown against southern rivals Kerala Blasters is an important fixture and they have to show extra desire to collect three points. "This is a derby game, not just another game. The fans are not in the stadium, but we know how much this means to them watching at home. We will give our best, continue to enjoy our football and hopefully collect all three points," said the Hungarian.

Laszlo said Chennaiyin know their opponents well. "We have to try and control the game. Kerala have a good team and their coach (Kibu Vicuna) is spending his second year in India and he knows Indian football well. He's new and so is the team," Laszlo said.



CFC coach Csaba Laszlo.

While Kerala are looking for their first win of the season, Chennaiyin would look to continue their brilliant start. "Sometimes the best training sessions are the games. This could be a great advantage for Kerala. If you look at the recovery time, we had a little bit more but we will also face less time for recovery in the coming games. The most important thing is how we balance it out," Laszlo said.

The Chennaiyin coach who used all his seven foreigners in the opening game against Jamshedpur assured that everyone in

the team will be given a chance to play. "I am happy how they are working and training. The foreigners are adapting well. I see there is good chemistry in the team. This season is going to be long and everybody will be given a chance."

Laszlo spoke highly of the Indian players. "I think Indian players can decide a game and it is also important who comes off the bench. For example, when we took Deepak Tangri and Rafael Crivellaro out, we had the possibility to bring quality players like Germanpreet and Thapa. Thapa took over the role from Rafael and he did a very good job," he said.

"I have an eye on the Indian talent because they are the future. If you want to have a good league and a good national team, you need to develop them," he said.

Lack of transparency shows Indian cricket in poor light



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

The thrashing handed out by Australia in the first ODI holds out ominous portents for the Indian team on this tour. Virat Kohli and Co were outplayed comprehensively in every department of the game.

While the team is struggling Down Under, controversy over Rohit Sharma's injury has been further stoked with last week's developments. This has significant ramifications for Indian cricket and must be addressed.

On the eve of the first ODI, skipper Virat Kohli

opened up on Rohit's absence in Australia, saying there was "lack of clarity" on how the matter had been handled.

According to Kohli, before the selection committee meeting, he was informed by mail about Rohit's hamstring injury suffered during the Indian Premier League, and that he would be unavailable for the Australia tour.

Statements were then also made by Shastri and BCCI President Sourav Ganguly, advising Rohit from taking undue risks.

After that, however, Rohit played in the play-

offs for Mumbai Indians and led his team to a fifth title, scoring a valuable half-century in the final.

In the press conference before the first ODI, Kohli spoke about his surprise at not seeing Rohit travelling with the team to Australia subsequently.

"We thought he would be on the flight with us, we had no information why he wasn't," said the Indian captain.

Intriguingly, wicket-keeper Wriddhiman Saha, also recovering from an injury during the IPL, was on the flight.

"It definitely would have been helpful if they (Rohit and Ishant) would have been here to do the rehab like Saha," said captain Kohli.

After the IPL, Rohit had returned to India and went to the NCA in Bangalore

for treatment and rehab. When asked about the stellar batsman's fitness around this time, BCCI president Ganguly said he was "70 per cent fit."

A few days later, in an interview to PTI, Rohit said his hamstring was fine, that he wanted to get it nice and strong and could be in Australia for the Test series.

Meanwhile, in Australia Shastri said that if Rohit and Ishant were not on the flight in the next 4-5 days, they might not be able to play the Tests as they'd be spending time in quarantine instead of playing practice matches to prove fitness and form.

Following Kohli's press conference before the first match, the BCCI went hurriedly into damage control, putting out an urgent press release (around midnight IST!) Thursday, to

clarify matters around Rohit and Ishant, but making it even more confusing instead.

On Ishant, the BCCI said while he had recovered completely from the side strain suffered before the IPL began, he's still building up his workload for full Test fitness and would miss the series versus Australia.

On Rohit there was a quirky twist, the BCCI saying he had come back to India from UAE to be with his ailing father, after which he had gone to the NCA for rehab and that he would be next assessed on December 11 if he can travel to Australia for the Test.

Technically, Rohit will miss the first two Tests (starting December 17 and December 26) even if he is cleared to travel December 11 itself since Australia's

Covid rules demand a 14-day quarantine period.

The core question, however, is: If Rohit wasn't fit, why was his name added to the Test squad, and if he was named in the squad, why isn't he in Australia?

The twists and turns in this story show how major constituents in the Indian cricket establishment (and here we are talking about the BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, selectors, chief coach, NCA headed by Rahul Dravid) pulling in different directions at different times.

Lack of transparency, ham-handedness in tackling such problems, with glaring hints of internecine strife show up Indian cricket in very poor light, never mind how rich and powerful it may be.

That said, one can't absolve Rohit and Kohli either from confounding

Hyderabad FC, BFC split points

Margao, Nov. 28: Hyderabad FC settled for their second successive draw, a stalemate, in the Indian Super League, splitting points with Bengaluru FC here on Saturday.

Getting four points from two outings is best start in the league for Hyderabad.

However, it was a frustrating evening for Bengaluru FC, who are yet to taste a win this season.

The two sides showed attacking intent from the word go and BFC had their first attempt as early as the fifth minute. Ashique Kuruniyan tried his luck from a distance but his effort took a deflection before being collected by Hyderabad custodian Subrata Paul.

This turned out to be the only attempt at goal in the first session.

Hyderabad's adamant defending frustrated Bengaluru, who struggled to take the ball up to their

attacking trio of Sunil Chhetri, Kristian Opseth and Udanta Singh. Trying to find an alternative, Bengaluru engaged in long-range shots, which proved futile.

Going forward, Hyderabad were the better side in the first half. The men in yellow nearly took the lead in the 25th minute from a Lluís Sastre set-piece. Bengaluru keeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu denied Aridane Santana's header with a full-stretch save to keep the scores level.

Hyderabad pushed Bengaluru deep in their territory with Halicharan Narzary, Joel Chianese and Santana making regular inroads.

However, the visitors suffered a blow before the break as their foreigners — Chianese and Sastre limped off the pitch with Yasir and Sharma replacing the duo. — *PTI*



Hyderabad FC's Aridane Santana (left) attempts a header against Bengaluru FC in an ISL match in Fatorda. — *ISL*