

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | WEDNESDAY 9 | DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 28°C
Min: 21°C
Rainfall: 2 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Karthigai 24
Tithi: Navami/ Dashami
Star: Uthiram/ Hastham
Rahukalam:
12 noon to 1.30 pm
Yamagandam:
7.30 am to 9 am
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.03 am
Zohar: 12.05 pm
Asar: 3.16 pm
Maghrib: 5.42 pm
Isha: 6.57 pm
SUNSET TODAY 5.43 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.20 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 12.50 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 1.23 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+27,962)	(+348)
97,31,876	1,41,344

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,236)
TN: 7,92,788 11,822

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

6,82,66,536

DEATHS

15,56,925

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES 218

worldometers.info

Army Chief Gen Naravane leaves for UAE, Saudi Arabia
PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, DEC. 8

In a strategically significant move, Chief of Army Staff Gen. M.M. Naravane left Tuesday on a six-day visit to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The Army said the visit was “historic” as it is the first time an Indian Army Chief will visit the two Middle Eastern nations. ■ **P4**

Another judge blocks Trump's TikTok ban; app still in limbo

Washington: A federal judge has blocked President Donald Trump's attempts to ban TikTok, the latest legal defeat for the administration as it tries to wrest the popular app from its Chinese owners.

COUNTER POINT



Hike prices as much as you want... people are busy with farmers!

Ambani hints at 5G rollout next year; calls for policy changes

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 8

Leading telecom companies on Tuesday said they have set their sights firm on the 5G services and some are likely to launch it soon.

Reliance Jio Infocomm chairman Mukesh Ambani hinted at rolling out 5G telecom services in the second half of 2021 and said policy steps are needed to accelerate its early rollout.



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Panel can address media reports: HC



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Boris to head to Brussels to break post-Brexit deadlock

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Kohli hints at missing third warm-up match



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■ **Farmers insist on repeal of statutes; today's talks deferred**

Shah says laws to stay; talks fail

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 8

Union home minister Amit Shah's meeting with representatives of farmers' unions on Tuesday remained inconclusive as the government categorically stated that the new farm laws will not be repealed. The proposed meeting of the farmer unions with the government on Wednesday at Vigyan Bhawan has also been deferred.

The meeting with 13 farmers' unions was convened by Mr Shah to break the deadlock over the three farm laws on a day when the growers had called for a nationwide strike supported by political parties. Farmers' leaders remained adamant on their stand and made it clear that they will call off their agitation only after their demands are fully met.

This was the first time that Mr Shah met farmers' leaders to discuss their concerns and demands. The meeting lasted over two-and-a-half hours.

At the meeting, Mr Shah proposed written assurances on amendments on minimum support price and Agriculture Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs). The new proposals will be given to farm unions on Wednesday.

“The sixth round of talks between farmer leaders and the government scheduled for Wednesday has been canceled,” All India Kisan Sabha general secretary Hannan Mollah said after the meeting. Mr Mollah said the government will instead send a proposal for the consideration of the farmers.

The meeting between Mr Shah and the leaders of the protesting farmers on Tuesday got delayed owing to a confusion over the venue of the meeting.

The meeting was scheduled to begin at 7 pm but it commenced after 8 pm as some of the union leaders were not ready to hold the meeting at the minister's residence. ■ **P4**



Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson along with farmers protests against the Centre's farm reform laws near Ghazipur border, in New Delhi, on Tuesday.

AAP claims Kejriwal under house arrest, cops deny it

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, DEC 8

High-voltage political drama was witnessed outside Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence on Tuesday where AAP leaders alleged that they were not being allowed to meet the party supremo as he had been placed under “house arrest” by the Delhi Police since he met with the protesting farmers at the Delhi-Haryana border.

“I had planned that today I would go to the border not as CM but as a common man to express my solidarity with the farmers. I think they came to know about my plan and they did not let me go,” Mr Kejriwal later said in an address to party workers at his residence.

The Delhi Police, however, denied the charge. ■ **P4**

Oppn misleading people on farm issues, says BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 8

Calling the opposition parties support to the ‘Bharat Bandh’ called by some farmers unions as “hypocritical,” the BJP on Tuesday said it has been the way of the opposition to create confusion and mislead the people. Reiterating that Minimum Support Price (MSP) will continue and so will be the APMCs, senior BJP leader and Information and Broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar said some of the opposition parties, who have come out in support of the bandh had themselves favoured closing down of APMCs, had implemented contract farming in the states they ruled.

The BJP claimed the opposition parties are misleading farmers by propagating lies on MSP, APMC, contract farming and other issues ■ **P4**

TN sees protests but life goes unaffected

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 8:

But for a few incidents of blocking trains in Kovilpatti and Namakkal, the nation-wide Bharat Bandh was observed in a peaceful manner in Tamil Nadu, where normal life was not disrupted.

Protests were held in many places in Chennai such as the Collector's

Office, Saidapet and Thiruvotiyur by various political parties where slogans were raised demanding the repeal of the three agricultural bills and the new Electricity Bill that have been termed as anti-farmer.

Other places in the State that saw protests were Sivagangai, Nagercoil, Villupuram, Trichy and Thanjavur. Many shops were closed in places like

Thiruvallur, Thirvarur, Mayiladuthurai, Kanchipuram, Nagapattinam, Kumbakonam, Pudukottai and in some part of Coimbatore, Erode, Villupuram and Nilgiris.

All opposition political parties in the state had pledged their support to the bandh. Many trade unions also held protests to mark their support to the bandh in various offices.

DMK president M.K. Stalin said the general strike was called to protect the land and the people. It should win and agriculture flourish in the country. Let the laws be shattered, he said in a Facebook post.

He said farming was not just a vocation but a right of everyone, adding that the three bills brought in by the Centre should be done away with.

CM inspects devastation in Cuddalore



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami inspects the flooded paddy field due to cyclone Burevi in Cuddalore district, on Tuesday.

— DC

Guv gives assent to Tamil quota amendment Bill

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC 8:

Governor Banwarilal Purohit has given his nod to the Bill amending the ‘Tamil Nadu Appointment in Preferential Basis in the Services under the State of Persons studied in Tamil Medium Act, 2010,’ which defines who would qualify for the jobs.

The amendment, which was notified in the Government Gazette on Monday, said a person studied in the Tamil medium means the candidate should have done the entire education through Tamil as medium of instruction.

In other words if the minimum qualification prescribed for the job was SSLC, the candidate should have done the entire schooling up to SSLC in Tamil medium and if the qualification was post-graduation then the entire studies leading to the MA or MSc degree should have been in Tamil as medium of instruction, as per the amendment.

The Bill was passed by the state assembly in March 2020 and had been pending with the governor for his nod since then. The Madurai bench of the Madras HighCourt had last week enquired about the fate of the Bill.

FDA data says Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine ‘strongly protective’

Washington, Dec. 8: Documents released by US regulators on Tuesday confirmed that Pfizer and BioNTech's Covid-19 vaccine was strongly protective against Covid-19, offering the world's first detailed look at the evidence behind the shots.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) posted its analysis online even as across the Atlantic, Britain on Tuesday began vaccinating its oldest citizens with the Pfizer-BioNTech shots.

But the U.S. judges experimental vaccines in a unique way: On Thursday, the FDA will convene what's essentially a science court that

will debate -- in public and live-streamed-- just how strong the data backing the shots really is.

A panel of independent scientists will pick apart the FDA's first-pass review before recommending whether the vaccine appears safe and effective enough for millions of Americans. The FDA, which typically follows the committee's advice, is expected to issue a decision in the days following the review.

If given the green light, the first recipients would be health care workers and nursing home residents according to plans laid out by each state. — AP

Indian couple gets vaccinated in UK

London, Dec. 8: An 87-year-old man and his 83-year-old wife from the north east of England on Tuesday became the first Indian-origin couple in the world to get a vaccine against Covid-19, after they got injected with their first of two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech jab at a hospital in Newcastle.

Dr Hari Shukla, a race relations campaigner based in Tyne and Wear, had been contacted by the National Health Service based on the criteria set for the world's first vaccine to receive regulatory approvals in UK last week.—PTI ■ **P4**

Mount Everest is taller by 86 cm, say Nepal and China

Kathmandu/Beijing, Dec 8: Nepal and China on Tuesday jointly announced that the revised height of the world's highest peak Mount Everest was 8,848.86 metres, about 86 centimetres more than the previous measurement done by India in 1954.

The Nepal government decided to measure the exact height of the mountain amid debates that there might have been a change in it due to various reasons, including the devastating earthquake of 2015.



A bird flies with Mount Everest seen in the background from Namche Bajar, Solukhumbu district, Nepal.

— PTI

The new height of Mt Everest, the world's highest peak, is 8,848.86 metres, China and Nepal jointly

announced on Tuesday, China's state-run Xinhua news agency said.

Nepal recalculates the

height of Mount Everest at 8848.86 metres, the country's Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali announced in Kathmandu.

The new height is 86 cms more than the previous measurement. According to the measurement done in 1954 by Survey of India, the height of Mount Everest is 8,848 metres.

According to China's past measurement, the height of Mount Everest is 8844.43 metres which were four metres less than Nepal's calculations.

Earlier, the media reports said Chinese surveyors have conducted six rounds of scaled measurement and scientific research on Mount Everest and released the height of the peak twice in 1975 and 2005, which was 8,848.13 metres and 8,844.43 metres respectively.

In Tibetan language, Mount Everest is known as Mount Qomolangma.

China and Nepal settled their border dispute in 1961 with the boundary line passing through the summit of Mount Everest. —PTI

OTHER STORIES

Bharat bandh: Flight services disrupted in ChennaiDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC 8

In the wake of 'Bharat bandh', peaceful nationwide lockdown, called by protesting farmers against the recently enacted farm laws, the flight operations in Chennai were affected on Tuesday.

Chennai daily handles over 200 domestic and international flights with more around 22,000 passengers. On Tuesday, the passenger traffic went down due to 'bandh'. Only 7,700 passengers travelled from Chennai to other parts of the state and country. Similarly, 8,500 passengers were reserved to travel Chennai from other parts of the country. Two flights from and to Madurai were cancelled at the Chennai airport on Tuesday. An Andaman-bound flight was also cancelled due to low patronage. Due to the nationwide lockdown, security arrangements were also beefed up at the Chennai airport.

Earlier on Monday, Air India made the announcement for those passengers unable to reach airport due to possible disturbance on Tuesday that no-show charges will be waived and one free date change allowed for those with confirmed tickets for travel. This will be applicable for those travelling on December 8 from any airport across the country.

TN to get rains till SaturdayDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 8

Following the heavy rains and strong winds brought by cyclone Burevi last week, Tamil Nadu is expected to get scattered rain on Wednesday followed by isolated rains till Saturday.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), thunderstorms with lightning are likely to occur at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Lakshadweep on Wednesday due to the impact of a low pressure area over the Gulf of Mannar.

In Chennai, the sky is likely to be partly cloudy for the next 48 hours. Thunderstorms are expected to occur in some areas. Maximum and minimum temperature will be around 30 and 24 degree Celsius respectively.

Chennai has recorded above-normal rainfall due to the persistent precipitation caused by the northeast monsoon and the back-to-back cyclones, Nivar and Burevi. Between October 1 and December 7, Tamil Nadu recorded 393 mm rainfall, which is 3 percent above the long-term average precipitation it typically experiences in this period. In the same time-frame, Andhra Pradesh has registered 368.2 mm rains. Telangana stands at 179.5 mm, Karnataka 198.8 mm and Puducherry at 894.3 mm.

Panel can address media reports: HC

■ 'Will help authorities to resolve issues'

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, DEC. 8

Emphasizing the need of forming a committed wing or committee consisting of officials from various departments to address the issues reported in the media, the Madras high court has said, "Why do not this court issue a direction to the authorities to constitute a wing to observe the incidents of negligence, failure of civic bodies to maintain drainage and collect garbage, leakage of sewage or drinking water and damage of public property and failure of officials to do their statutory duty, reported in newspapers, social media, TV and bring them to the notice of the authorities concerned to address those issues in the district level and state level".

Posing this query, a division bench comprising justices N. Kirubakaran and B. Pugalendhi directed the authorities to file their response on or before December 11.

Acting on a news report

published in an English daily regarding a police officer from the Tamil Nadu Special Police Force, allegedly threatening a woman of Narikuravar community, who was waiting at Sankarankoil bus stand, demanding sex, the bench initiated suo motu proceedings and posed the query.

The bench said though the police officer was caught, while indulging in the offence and produced before the police station, it appears that the police concerned have not registered a case, for want of a written complaint. This was not a solitary instance reported in the media.

Several other offences are committed, misdeeds, acts of negligence and acts of violation of laws were being reported in newspapers and in visual media, especially, on social media. However, no action was taken by the authorities based on the news reports, for want of a complaint.

The authorities, includ-

ing the police officials, cannot expect any formal complaint, when the commission of offence was reported either in the print media and visual media or on the social media. However, the authenticity of the news has to be ascertained before taking action, the bench added.

The bench said there was no mechanism like a committed wing or committee to watch social media, newspapers and visual media, to note as to whether any commission of offence or damaging of public property or any act of negligence etc., was being reported. If a committed wing or committee was formed, its officials could regularly follow the social media, visual media and newspapers, bring such issues to the notice of the authorities concerned for appropriate remedial action and thereby enabling the people to get their grievances/issues resolved and increase their confidence in the system, the bench added.



ASI officials check the seized idols kept at idol wing CID office in Guindy on Tuesday. — DC

ASI team examines 22 idols seized in 11 cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC 8

A team of officials from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on Tuesday visited the idol wing CID office in Guindy to examine 22 idols seized in 11 cases handled by the idol wing in the last five years.

The team comprising south zone regional director Maheshwari, former director of ASI D.

Dayalan, former superintendent engineer archaeologist, T. Sathyamurthy, professor of Thanjavur Tamil University Sheela and former curator R. Balasubramanian collected samples from the idols, and they took photographs of them for further examination.

According to sources, the team spent about two hours at the idol wing office and discussed with

idol wing officials. The officials saw the evidence which they had collected at the time of seizure from the smugglers.

The idol wing officials said that they had kept the seized idols at a portion of the parking lot, which they modified into an enclosure to preserve the valuable idols. The idols were seized in 11 cases registered in the last five years.

The ambassador of France to India, Emmanuel Lenain, accompanied by the Consul General of France in Puducherry and Chennai, Lise Talbot Barre, called on the Prince of Arcot, Nawab Mohammed Abdul Ali, at his ancestral home, Amir Mahal, during his visit to the city of Chennai, on Monday. The ambassador expressed his happiness for having met the Prince of Arcot and his heir-apparent and Dewan Nawabzada Mohammed Asif Ali.



Life of construction worker saved

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 8

The life of a 28-year-old construction worker, who sustained grievous injuries after an iron rod pierced his shoulder in an accident at a worksite on Monday, was saved by the doctors of Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital in an emergency surgery.

Bhuvanesh Kumar, 28, hailing from the Sriperumbudur, fell from an under-construction building at Avadi resulting in the injury. He was rushed to the hospital by his co-workers. The specialists in the departments of general surgery and cardio thoracic surgery immediately conducted a surgery saving his life.

It was found that the rod had penetrated 77cm deep in the left armpit. It was removed after administering Tetanus Toxoid. The patient almost recovered 30 minutes after the treatment. His condition is now stable, said the hospital authorities.

Meanwhile, health secretary Dr J. Radhakrishnan, who visited the patient at the hospital on Tuesday, said the state was capable of treating trauma cases effectively as trauma care centres had been set up in every district headquarters hospital.



The rod that pierced Bhuvanesh Kumar's body was successfully removed by doctors.

Against mixopathy



Indian Medical Association (IMA) members of Tambaram branch stage a protest on Tuesday in Chromepet against a government notification authorising PG practitioners in specified streams of Ayurveda to be trained to perform general surgical procedures, alleging the move will lead to "mixopathy". — DC

IIT-M start-up launches 3D tech in garments sector

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 8

The IIT-Madras (IIT-M)-incubated start-up TRI3D has introduced 3D technology to the traditional garments sector to help small and medium businesses survive the economic challenges caused by Covid-19.

The start-up has developed a software substitute for conventional model photoshoots, convenient for even the small boutique designers and weavers who cannot afford photoshoots. The images generated by TRI3D are acceptable on most of the popular e-commerce websites.

Mr. Krishna Sumanth Alwala, co-founder of the

start-up, said this technology would help bypass the task of arranging a day-long photoshoot with models having to constantly change in and out of sarees. With this, the desired image can be generated in minutes. The quality of the generated image is on par, if not superior, with the images taken by a photo-shoot, he said.

According to him, as many as 80,000 garments have been digitized and sold using this technology in India, Sri Lanka and Abu Dhabi in the last one year.

'More than 100 new generation entrepreneurs from across 50 locations in India have already

deployed this technology. In the pandemic times, it will help small scale entrepreneurs in ensuring their business is not behind in the digital revolution', he said.

'Since the pandemic, e-commerce has become almost an essential tool for survival of businesses as most customers opt to shop online. But, one of the main barriers for this channel is to generate images of garments to be uploaded to e-commerce websites. TRI3D's unique apparel visualisation technology converts flat images of garments such as sarees into beautiful photo-realistic 3D images on models, mannequins and creative representations', he said.

Issue notifications in vernacular languages of states: HC to Centre

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, DEC 8

Pointing out that languages spoken and used by people of every state are equal before law and no language is superior or no language is inferior, the Madras high court has expressed its expectation that the Central government would issue all the notifications in the vernacular language of the states, which is the primary requirement, apart from Hindi and English languages.

A division bench comprising Justices N. Kirubakaran and B. Pugalendhi passed the interim order on a petition filed by M. Sathesh, while staying the operation of the gazette notification issued by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, dated September 22, 2020, reducing the size of the Kanyakumari wildlife sanctuary from 0-10 km to 0-3 km.

According to the petitioner, though the draft notification was issued as early as on February 21, 2020, no public hearing was conducted, in view of the Covid-19 pandemic situation and the Standard Operating Procedure announced by the govern-

'TREAT THIS ENVIRONMENT ISSUE SERIOUSLY'

The bench said reduction of size of the wild life sanctuary from 0-10 km to 0-3 km would definitely affect the environment and the same was attempted, without any public hearing. If the notification was given effect to, definitely, it will affect the wild lives in the sanctuary. Like animals, many foreign birds were migrating to various sanctuaries across the country. Birds, animals and other creatures were having every right to live in the world. This universe was meant not only for the humans, but also for every other creature. Since this was a serious issue affecting our environment, the matter has to be dealt with very seriously.

ment, by imposing the nation-wide lock down. Moreover, the draft notification was not made available to the local people in the vernacular language, as per Rule 3 of the Notification of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, dated January 19, 2009, and the official memorandum dated April 19, 2020, unless it was issued in the vernacular languages. "The Central government cannot expect the people to know Hindi and English languages and it is expected of the central government to respect the languages of

issuance of the notification in Hindi and English languages will not be sufficient to comply with the requirement of the notification dated January 19, 2009, and the official memorandum dated April 19, 2020, unless it was issued in the vernacular languages. "The Central government cannot expect the people to know Hindi and English languages and it is expected of the central government to respect the languages of

The bench said mere

CHIDED FOR USING MOBILE, TEEN ENDS LIFE

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC 8

A 17-year-old schoolgirl allegedly ended her after being scolded by her parents for excessive use of mobile phone here on Tuesday in Little Kanchipuram.

The deceased has been identified as A. Pooja (17), daughter of Arulananthan, and a resident of Kotrampalayam Street, Rangaswamy Kulam in Little Kanchipuram. Arulananthan has been running an eatery in the neighbourhood. Police said Pooja was a class 12 student of the Government school in Kanchipuram.

Police sources said on Monday, Pooja's parents reprimanded her for spending too much time on her mobile phone. After being scolded, the 17-year-old went to her room and locked herself in. On Tuesday morning, her mother knocked the door to check on her. When she did not respond, parents allegedly broke the door open and found her hanging from the ceiling.

The girl was rushed to a hospital nearby where she was declared brought dead. On being informed, the police officers sent her body to the Kanchipuram government hospital for post-mortem. Police said that they are waiting for the final post-mortem report to ascertain the exact cause of the 17-year-old girl's death. Vishnu Kanchi police registered a case and are investigating.

with the procedures. This court expects the Central government to issue all the notifications in the vernacular language of the states, which is the primary requirement, apart from Hindi and English languages. Otherwise, the very purpose of the notification will be lost. After all, languages are medium of communication for people. Languages spoken and used by people of every State are equal before law. No language is superior and no language is inferior", the bench added.

"Prima facie, it is clear that the notification is not made known to the local people, as required. It is suffice to say that the local people are prevented from making any effective objection to the impugned notification. That apart, the present Covid-19 virus has also made the issue very complex, as the people could not come out and give their objections. Therefore, there shall be an order of interim stay of the gazette notification issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, dated September 22, 2020", the bench added and posted to December 14, further hearing of the case.

PIL to consider govt aided school students under 7.5% quota ambit

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC 8

A PIL has been filed in the Madras high court, seeking to declare certain provisions of the Tamil Nadu Act 34 of 2020 as ultra vires of Article 14 and 15 (4) of the Constitution, in so far as it excludes the students studied in the government aided schools, depriving them the equal treatment on par with the students of the government schools regarding 7.5 per cent reservation on preferential basis in admission to UG courses in medicine, dentistry, Indian medicine and Homeopathy disciplines.

A division bench comprising Justices R. Subbiah and C. Saravanan before whom the PIL filed by Tamil Nadu Catholic Educational Association came up for hearing, ordered notice, returnable by January 5, 2021, to the state government and Director of Medical Education.

Senior counsel Xavier Arulraj, appearing for the petitioner submitted that the Tamil Nadu admission to UG courses in medicine, dentistry, Indian medicine and Homeopathy on preferential basis to students of Government Schools Act, 2020, has introduced a horizontal reservation which is discriminatory

prising R. Subbiah and C. Saravanan before whom the PIL filed by Tamil Nadu Catholic Educational Association came up for hearing, ordered notice, returnable by January 5, 2021, to the state government and Director of Medical Education.

Senior counsel Xavier Arulraj, appearing for the petitioner submitted that the Tamil Nadu admission to UG courses in medicine, dentistry, Indian medicine and Homeopathy on preferential basis to students of Government Schools Act, 2020, has introduced a horizontal reservation which is discriminatory



towards the students studied in aided Tamil medium schools, even though the students thereon stand on par with government schools, socially and educationally.

The students studying in government schools and government aided schools share the common socio educational advantageous and disadvantageous. Those who

cannot pay for self financing CBSE, ICSE and Matriculation schools opt for government schools and government aided schools. Except the difference in administration, wherein the government schools were directly administered by the authorities while the gGovernment aided schools were indirectly administered by the authorities through the management, there was no substantial difference among the student community who share their social educational barriers. The impugned Act confuses private schools from government aided schools, he added.

OTHER STORIES

Opposition burn PM's effigy

SANJEEVI ANANDAN | DC KRISHNAGIRI, DEC 8

The Opposition parties in the district staged protests in several places in the district, and also burnt the Prime Minister Modi's effigy, in support of the farmers' protest in Delhi.

In Hosur, the CPI staged a protest, presided by party's former MLA T Ramachandaran and senior leader C Mahendran. A mass rally took place before the protest was held at a place called 'Ram Nagar'. As many as 5,000 CPI cadres participated in the rally. The cadres also burnt an effigy of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and police could not stop the incident as a large number of CPI cadres had cordoned off the area.

In Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri districts, similar protests were held by the DMK and other Opposition parties. Barring these incidents, the protests passed off peacefully without affecting the normal life of people. Bus services between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka via Hosur were operated without any trouble. Business establishments were also open.

Man dies in school wall collapse

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUCHY, DEC 8

A 45-year-old collie died even as his wife and children were injured as the compound wall of a school collapsed on them at Kotapatti village near Manapparai in the district, on Monday night.

The deceased was identified as Selvakumar. He and his family were fast asleep when the school compound wall, located adjacent to their house, fell on the roof of Selvakumar's house, killing Selvakumar and injuring his family members. The injured were admitted to the Manapparai government hospital. Following this, villagers staged a road roko on the Manapparai - Kulithalai highway demanding adequate compensation for the family of the deceased, and also a job and rebuilding of the damaged house.

Man murders wife, gets 19-year RI

Kanyakumari: A daily wager was sentenced to 19 years of rigorous imprisonment by the Kanyakumari district Mahila court for murdering his wife. Nine years ago, on September 22, 2011, Sundararajan (38) from Thingal Nagar near Nagercoil, was arrested for strangling his wife, Vincy (27), to death.

Partial response to Bharat bandh

R VALAYAPATHY/ G SRINIVASAN | DC TIRUCHUR/THANJAVUR, DEC 8

The 'Bharat bandh' called by the Opposition parties including the Left parties in support of the on-going nationwide farmers agitation in New Delhi evoked partial response in the Central districts of Tiruchy, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Pudukkottai, Tiruvavur and Nagapattinam, on Tuesday.

Since public transport plied as usual, almost all shops remained open and normal life was not affected in any way in these districts. But, most auto-rickshaws were off the road.

Police took into custody thousands of protesters across these districts as they attempted to stage rail and

road rokos.

In Tiruchy, vehicular traffic came to a halt for over an hour at the busy central bus stand area when a section of agitators led by DMK principal secretary, KN Nehru, staged a demonstration in front of the central bus stand. Police took them into custody and restores normalcy.

Protests were held in 48 places in Thanjavur district on Tuesday as part of 'Bharat bandh', and police arrested 3,021 persons in this connection. In Thanjavur, farmers led by P Maniarsan of Cauvery Urimai Meetpu Kuzhu staged a demonstration at Irwin bridge, and police arrested them. Near Anna statue, members of the various political parties staged a demonstration.

Thiruvaiyaru MLA (DMK) Durai.Chandrasekaran and Thanjavur MLA (DMK) TKG Neelamegam, participated.

At the railway station, farmers led by Punniyamurthy of Thamilizhaga Cauvery Vivasayiagam staged a demonstration and police arrested them. Agitations were held in Kumbakonam, Pattukottai, Orathanadu, Madukkur and other places.

Shops except tea stalls and drug stores remained closed in the district. Majority of shops in rural areas remained shut. Autorickshaws and taxis did not ply in towns like Thanjavur, Kumbakonam and Pattukottai as trade unions participated in the bandh. State transport corporation buses were operat-

ed, but crowd was less.

The Left parties claimed that the bandh was a success in Pudukkottai district, with a good response from the public. A section of lawyers boycotted court proceedings and staged a demonstration in front of the court complex. Hundreds of protestors were taken into custody by police in Karur, Perambalur and Ariyalur districts, when they attempted to stage road rokos. In Tiruvavur and Nagapattinam districts, the bandh was almost total as most of the shops remained closed and autos were off the road. Local administration minister, SP Velumani, now camping in Nagapattinam and overseeing relief and rescue operations, criticised DMK president Stain's dual role in the farmers issue.

CM urged to give up 8-lane highway

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC 8

DMK president M. K. Stalin and PMK Youth wing leader Dr Anbumani Ramadoss expressed their disappointment over the Supreme Court verdict on the controversial eight-lane highway between Chennai and Salem and urged Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to give up the project.

The Supreme Court has overturned the Madras high court order that cancelled the central government project to connect Chennai and Salem through a modern eight-lane highway and also ordered the return of the land acquired for the purpose to its original owners.

Anbumani Ramadoss, who was a litigant in the case both in the high court as well as in the Supreme Court, was happy that the state government would have to go in for land acquisition afresh to re-launch the scheme and hence asked the Chief

AIADMK calls for poll meeting

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC 8

Girding up the loins for the coming Assembly Election in 2021, the ruling AIADMK has called for an advisory meeting of its Ministers, party district secretaries and regional in-charges on

Monday, December 14, 4.30 pm, at the party headquarters.

The notification for the meeting urged the participants to come prepared with details on what they had done with regard to the guidelines given to them on the work to be undertaken for the elec-

tions at the meeting held at the party headquarters on November 20.

The advisory meeting would be chaired by the party coordinator O Panneerselvam and the joint coordinator Edappadi K. Palaniswami, the notification said.



Minister to abandon the project.

Implementing the project would tantamount to over 10,000 families of agriculturists losing their

farm land in more than 7,000 acres, Ramadoss said and added that there was no need for the new highway as there were two roads connecting Chennai with Salem, one through Ulundurpettai and the other through Vellore and Krishnagiri. Also, a third highway was coming up via Tindivanam and Krishnagiri, he said.

Urging the state government not to wash its hands on the highway on the pretext that it is a Central scheme, Stalin said Palaniswami, who let loose the police on farm-

ers to acquire their lands, should now say no to the greenfield project that would cause devastation to large tracts of farm land.

However, he accused the AIADMK government of not presenting its case before the Supreme Court highlighting the livelihood and land rights of farmers and the BJP government for insisting that would implement the project.

The verdict, he said, had come as a disappointment not just to the farmers but also to environmentalists.

Expert for authentic tracking devices in public transport

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC. 8

Is Tamil Nadu committing various irregularities in the implementation of mandatory fitment of vehicle location tracking devices and emergency buttons in public transport?

The international road safety expert, Dr. Kamaljeet Singh Soi, Chairman Raahat - The Safe Community Foundation and President, Global Society of HSE Professionals, is making the charge that the State is not insisting on AIS 140/IRNSS standards for devices. Also, the transport authority is arbitrarily granting approval to only eight VLTD manufacturers without following well-established procedures with transparency.

In the wake of the Nirbhaya gang rape tragedy, the Justice Verma Commission had made certain recommendations towards aiding women's

safety in public transport and the Union government amended the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 by introducing Rule 125-H making the fitment of tamper-proof GPS locators and emergency buttons for public service vehicles.

Taking a step towards implementing the aforementioned recommendation of the Committee, the Central Government issued Notification GSR 1095(E), amending the Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989 by introducing Rule 125-H making the fitment of Vehicle Location Tracking Devices with Emergency Panic Button mandatory for Public service vehicles and goods vehicles with national permit in the country.

Dr Kamaljeet went on to highlight certain "unfair practices" adopted by the office of the Transport Commissioner, State Transport Authority. The principal charge is - "Not adopting an AIS 140 com-

pliant backend application for monitoring the vehicles fitted with VLTD's and handling the alerts from the Panic Buttons in case of emergency thereby defeating the main objective of women safety and security."

He also pointed out the "Non-issue of notification calling for AIS 140 certified VLTD manufacturers for getting their devices enlisted after approval in the state," and the approval of only eight manufacturers.

The device fitment data to all vehicles registered after Jan. 1, 2019 is also supposed to be uploaded on VAHAN thereby missing out on a system to handle the emergency alerts coming from the devices in case of an emergency.

Dr Soi calls for the TN Transport Department to adopt a foolproof mechanism for implementation of Rule 125H with authentic tracking and emergency button enabled devices.

Scam in library purchases alleged

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC 8

Former School Education Minister Thangam Thenarasu alleged that there was a major scam in the purchase of books for the public libraries in the State during the past 10 years as there was no transparency in the procurement and urged the government to come out with a white paper on the matter.

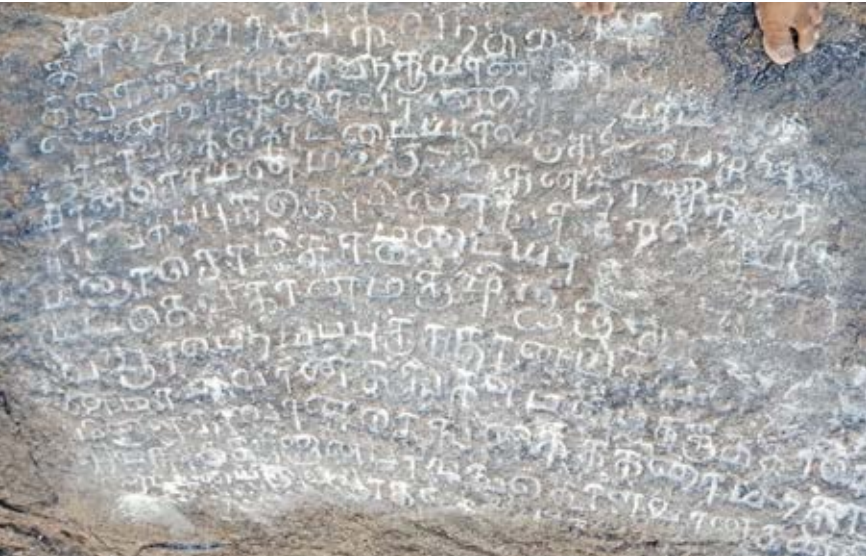
The School Education Minister, under whom the library department functions, should come out with details of the books bought, their quantity, publishers and the amount spent on them, Thenarasu said in a statement on Tuesday. He said around 4,500 libraries, including the historic 125-year-old Connemara library and the Anna Centenary Library, were functioning under the directorate that was formed in 1972 by the then Chief Minister M Karunanidhi.

Though several crores of rupees were spent on buying thousands of books for the libraries by the government, writers and publishers resent the fact that there was no transparency in the purchase, which was facilitated by middlemen.

Even the recently published famous books in Tamil were not being bought even for the Connemara library, which was one of the four national depository centres in the country, Thenarasu said.

In recent years, even books that won the Sahitya Academy awards were not found in the shelves of the libraries and an RTI application seeking details on the books bought by the directorate was not answered properly, the former minister alleged.

Chola inscriptions found in Tiruvannamalai dt



Stone inscriptions belonging to king Kulothunga Chola era were unearthed in Thandarampattu region in a tank bund in Kottaiyur, Tiruvannamalai, by a team of history research scholars, comprising secretary, Tiruvannamalai district historical research Centre, C Balamurugan, researchers Palaniswami, Kumaravel, N Sudhakar and Raja. The first part of the inscription was in the form of a poem of four lines of a stanza, totalling 14 lines, describing the handing over of 500 Kuzhis of land to a temple in the erstwhile Aadaiyoor country on the banks of Pennai river, as donation by king Kulothunga Chola during his 17th year of reign. The ancient temple could have been now totally destroyed by nature within these 800 years, say villagers.

— K. Senthil Nathan

Rain after cyclone dashes hope of good harvest

A ARUL PALANI | DC CHENNAI, DEC. 8

The hope of a good harvest next year has been dashed by the incessant rainfall triggered by Nivar and Burevi cyclones. The paddy and other crops raised on lands in Cuddalore, Tiruvavur, Villupuram, Nagapattinam - Mayiladuthurai, which were waiting for harvest next month, remained in three feet deep water for more than two weeks. Almost all the crops were damaged, said K.V. Elgangeeran, president of the Cauvery Delta Farmers Federation.

The farmers raise short-term Kuruvai crop from June, long-term Sambha crop from August to December and Navarai from January. After a gap of nearly 30 years, the farmers were hoping for a bountiful production this year since water was released from the Metur reservoir for irrigation on

June 12 this year. The production of paddy and other food products had touched a record 12.97 million tonnes during 2014-15. Next year the production declined to a low of 5.23 mt as farmers had skipped the Kuruvai crop due to water scarcity.

As water had been released in June farmers and officials were hoping for a good harvest this year. Officials were hoping for a production of nearly 28 lakh tonnes of paddy. However, the catastrophic cyclones dashed their hopes and delta and other regions continue to receive heavy rainfall. The Cuddalore district received moderate rainfall on Tuesday also.

Normal life has been affected in Chidambaram, Kattumanar, Koil, Parangipettai, Keerapalayam, Kurinjipadi, Kammapuram and, Cuddalore for more than a week.

According to a preliminary estimate, the crops

raised on more than 6 lakh acres of land were damaged due to inundation. The delta region including Cuddalore remained the worst hit by the rainfall.

The paddy raised in 2.55 lakh acres of land, ground nut (manila) in 2,000 acres, sugarcane in 1,000 acres, banana and vegetable raised in 2,000 acres in Cuddalore were damaged. Paddy raised on 3 lakh acres of land in Nagapattinam - Mayiladuthurai region, 1.5 lakh acres in Tiruvavur and 50,000 acres in Villupuram district were damaged.

Elangeeran has demanded the government to pay an immediate relief of Rs 30,000 for loss of paddy per acre, Rs 50,000 for ground nut and Rs 1 lakh for sugarcane.

He demanded the Central and state government officials to conduct a survey immediately and submit a report to the Centre.



Corporation commissioner P. Kumaravel Pandian imposes a fine of ₹55,000 on a private firm for dumping waste in Race course area in Coimbatore.

— Vignesh B.

2,500 oppn party workers arrested

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUNELVELI, DEC. 8

Around 2,500 men including two DMK MLAs were arrested in the four southern most districts of Tamil Nadu for staging road blockades in support of the farmers' agitation against the three farm laws in New Delhi.

The DMK led opposition parties organised road blockades as part of the nation wide bandh called by the all trade unions against the three farm laws of the central government, however had least impact on the general public in southern most districts of Tirunelveli,

Thoothukudi, Kanyakumari and Tenkasi districts. A group of around 100 fishermen at Pamban in Ramanathapuram district show their solidarity with the agitating farmers by holding black flags in the sea and shouting slogans against the central government.

Probe torture of tribals by MTR foresters, demands council

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, DEC 8

Alleging torture of tribesmen by the foresters attached to the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR), in a case related to poisoning of wild animals, irate tribal communities here, represented by the vulnerable tribal groups council (PVTGC), wanted a CB-CID inquiry into the issue, and save the tribesmen from the clutches of forest officials.

It is said the MTR administration nabbed five persons including some tribesmen in the Bokkapuram hamlet a couple of days back, regarding poisoning of five wild dogs to death last September. But the tribesmen allege that

the MTR forest officials tortured them and forced them to confess to the crime.

It may be noted that one Samiyappan, a tribesman from Bokkapuram hamlet, who attempted suicide on Sunday, is alleged to have taken the extreme step as he was tortured by forest officials to confess to the crime in which he had no role.

While this has shocked the foresters, the MTR administration has tried to downplay the event saying, the tribesman tried to put pressure on the foresters to change the course of investigation.

However, B. Pushpakumar, secretary, PVTGC, charged that it has become the habit of forest officials to target

tribesmen and torture them to confess to crimes, merely to close the file related to the case.

"In the present case, if the foresters have enough proof against the tribesmen, they can easily arrest them. But, the foresters took 10 tribesmen to a forest guest house at Siriyoor. In the name of enquiry, they adopted inhuman ways and tortured the innocent tribes and forced them to confess to the crime.

The PVTGC also has urged the chief minister to intervene in the matter immediately and punish the officers who meted out inhuman treatment to the tribes, and also order a CB-CID inquiry to unearth the truth.

Fraud in NMR charter train services, says BDP

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, DEC 8

The inept handling of the charter train service in the Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR) by the Southern Railway has led to chaos, and made the common man perceive that the NMR is being privatized. Despite widespread criticism, the Baduga Desa Party (BDP) has sought a CBI inquiry into the style of functioning of the railway administration.

The sudden changes made in charter train

services, gives room to suspect that private players have been allowed to eat into the revenue of the NMR.

Rajesh Kumar James, secretary, Citizens' Forum of Coonoor (CFC), said though the Southern Railway already gave an explanation for the new developments, it has not gone down well with the public.

"Usually in the past, only corporate companies and big organisations booked the NMR train for its charter service. Even such trips were well pub-

lished in advance by the railways to inform the public. But when such a charter service was plied last week, the first NMR ride with passengers after the lockdown, no such announcement was made, leading to confusion and fury.

Though the CFC appealed to the railways to resume regular NMR train services in October itself, the railway administration turned a deaf ear. But now, what made them opt for charter train service? quipped Rajesh Kumar.

BDP president Manjai V. Mohan, said he suspected foul play in the operations of charter train service, and allowing tour operators in the name 'TN-43', the franchise of the charter train service, to change the original appearance of the train to suit their designs.

"The Southern Railway owe an explanation to the public as to what prompted them to begin the charter train service in a hurried manner before resumption of even regular train services in the NMR. 'They also owe an

explanation as to why the franchise was allowed to fix exorbitant fares for the services. It is suspected that some bigwigs have joined hands with railway officials to cheat NMR travelers. To clear the mess, the BDP will seek a CBI enquiry to get to the crux of the matter. When the Southern Railway itself ran weekend specials, special fare special trains in recent years, no one understands as to why it was decided to go against the interests of the public and tourists this time," added Mohan.

SHORT TAKES

FIVE ALLEGED
TERRORISTS SENT
TO 4-DAY CUSTODY

New Delhi, Dec. 8: Five persons suspected to have terrorists links and arrested after an encounter here were remanded for custodial interrogation of four days by a Delhi Court on Tuesday. According to the police, Shabir Ahmad, Md Ayub Pathan and Riyaz Rather were allegedly affiliated with terrorist organisation Hizbul Mujahideen while Gurjit Singh and Sukhdeep Singh were accused of being involved in the killing of Shaurya Chakra winner Balwinder Singh in Punjab. All the five were arrested on Monday after an encounter from Shakarpur locality in east Delhi.

They were produced before Metropolitan Magistrate Sahil Khumri, who allowed their police custody till December 11. The police had sought their remand for eight days saying it was required for further investigation in the case.

According to the police, Ahmad, Pathan and Riyaz were from Kashmir and they were allegedly supplying money to the other two from Punjab to carry out targeted killings. The five have allegedly revealed Pakistan spy agency ISI's attempt to link Khalistani operatives with terror outfits in Kashmir, police said. Advocate Qausar Khan, appearing for the accused, said two of the accused have been charged under the NDPS Act and three have been booked under relevant sections of the Arms Act.

HC DISMAYED
OVER NAVLAKHA'S
SPECTACLES ROW

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, DEC. 8

Observing that humanity is most important, the Bombay High Court on Tuesday referred to alleged theft of activist Gautam Navlakha's spectacles inside Talaja prison and called for the need to conduct a workshop for jail officials to sensitise them on the needs of prisoners.

Navlakha is an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case and the issue of theft of his spectacles was also heard on Tuesday when it was hearing two petitions filed by activists, Ramesh Gaichor and Sagar Gorkhe, challenging their arrest by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case.

Navlakha's family members on Monday claimed that his spectacles were stolen on November 27 inside the Talaja prison, where he is lodged. They claimed that Navlakha is "almost blind" without the spectacles and yet, when they sent a pair of new spectacles to him by post earlier this month, the prison authorities refused to accept it and sent it back.

"Presently Gautam Navlakha is in acute distress, is unable to see things around him and consequently his blood pressure has shot up," read a statement circulated on Monday evening by Navlakha's lawyers that was signed by the activist's wife Sahba Husain.

SHAH SAYS
LAWS TO STAY;
TALKS FAIL

FROM PAGE 1

Finally, the meeting was held on the Indian Council of Agricultural Research campus in Pusa. Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Consumer Affairs minister Piyush Goyal and senior officials of the ministry were also present.

One farmer leader, Ruldu Singh Mansa, returned saying he will not be part of the meeting due to confusion over the venue. In a social media post, Joginder Singh Ugrahan, who was not invited to the meeting with Mr Shah, said there was no need for the talks before official consultations and hoped that the leaders attending the meet would keep in mind the view of the larger group.

The meeting, however, appeared to have created a discord among the organisations spearheading the protests on Delhi's borders for the past 12 days with the head of the BKU (Ugrahan), which is one of the largest outfits in the bloc, questioning the rationale of the talks a day before the scheduled official consultations. Hours ahead of a meeting with Mr Shah, farmers have reiterated their stance of not compromising on their demand that the three contentious farm laws be repealed.

Snowtime again



People walk on a snow covered road at Gulmarg in Baramulla district of north Kashmir on Tuesday after the fresh snowfall. Snowfall continued in many areas in the higher reaches of the valley with Gulmarg recording about seven inches of fresh snowfall. They said other areas like Gurez, Mughal Road and Zojilla axis on Srinagar-Leh road also received fresh snowfall.

— PTI

Ministry: 3 vaccine candidates
under active consideration

Covid crisis has stabilised with active cases showing a clear-cut declining trend

New Delhi, Dec. 8: Three Covid-19 vaccines candidates, developed by Bharat Biotech, Serum Institute of India and Pfizer, are under active consideration of India's drug regulator and there is hope that early licensure is possible for all or any of them, the Union health ministry said on Tuesday.

Over the last four days, the Indian arm of US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, Pune-based Serum Institute of India and Hyderabad-based pharmaceutical firm Bharat Biotech have applied to the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) seeking emergency use authorisation for their potential Covid-19 vaccines.

At a press briefing, NITI Aayog member (Health) V.K. Paul said the Covid-19 situation in India has stabilised with active cases showing a "clear-cut declining trend" even though the pandemic situation in many other countries is becoming quite serious. The concern and anxiety that arose following an increase in daily cases of infection in Delhi has also settled now, he said.

NARAVANE ON
6-DAY VISIT TO
UAE, SAUDI

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 8

In a strategically significant move, Chief of Army Staff Gen. M.M. Naravane left Tuesday on a six-day visit to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The Army said the visit was "historic" as it is the first time an Indian Army Chief will visit the two Middle Eastern nations.

This is part of the Narendra Modi government's strategy to boost ties in the region. It is also significant as the UAE and Saudi Arabia have close relations with Pakistan. Of late, however, the Saudi relationship with Pakistan has come under a strain.

During the visit, Gen. Naravane will meet his counterparts and the senior military leadership of the two countries. The Army Chief will visit the UAE on Dec. 9 and 10, when he will call on senior military officials and discuss avenues for enhancing India-UAE defence ties.

He will then travel to Saudi Arabia for the second leg of his tour, from Dec. 13 to 14. He will take forward defence cooperation between India and Saudi Arabia.

Mobile tech to be used
for vaccination drive: PM

New Delhi, Dec. 8: With the chances of a Covid-19 vaccine being available soon increasing, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that mobile technology will be used for mass inoculation against the pandemic.

Speaking at the India Mobile Congress, he said mobile technology has enabled benefits worth billions of dollars to reach the deserving and also helped the poor and vulnerable during the pandemic.

Asked what steps would be followed by the DCGI in the absence of a watertight emergency use authorisation law for granting licence to vaccine makers, Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said not all countries' regulatory framework or rules and acts mention emergency use authorisation.

Success of Bandh opened
Centre's eyes, say farmers

FROM PAGE 1

In Rajasthan, where "mandis" were closed but shops remained opened, there were reports of clashes between workers of the state's ruling Congress and the BJP.

All India Kisan Sabha general secretary Hannan Mollah described the shutdown as a show of strength by the farmers. "We are standing by our demand that we want a complete repeal of the three laws and will not accept any cosmetic changes. If our demands are not met, we are ready to take our agitation to the next level," Mr Mollah said.

Life was hit in Bihar too with train tracks, highways and inner roads

teeming with protesters as Opposition parties extended their support. RJD supporters and workers of Pappu Yadav's Jan Adhikar Party fanned out to various parts of Patna, forcing shopkeepers to down their shutters and deflating tyres of vehicles plying on the roads. In Jehanabad, the movement of Patna Palamu Express was obstructed for a few minutes until the bandh supporters, squatting on the tracks, were chased away by the police. Train services were also affected in Odisha as activists of farmers' organisations, trade unions and political parties held sit-ins on tracks in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Bhadrak and Balasore.

The verdict said that it has not expressed "any opinion either way on the correctness and validity of the permissions or clearances accorded by the competent authorities under the environment and forest laws.

It said that the orders granting permissions under the environment and forest laws were not

"It is also with the help of mobile technology that we will embark on one of the world's largest Covid-19 vaccination drive," he said. He did not provide details.

At the IMC, Modi said, "We need to work together to ensure a timely roll-out of 5G to leapfrog into the future and empower millions of Indians."

He also pitched for making India a global hub for telecom equipment, design, development and manufacturing.

"So, the fact that this phrase is not used in the national regulatory framework of any country does not mean that specific country does not have an enabling provision to accord an approval which is early and which is distinct from a regular market approval. India's regulatory framework has a specific provision for

grant of emergency use authorisation. Although this phrase is not used," he said.

The New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019, clearly specifies that under specific special situations, relaxation, abbreviation, omission, or deferment of data including local clinical trial data may be considered for

AAP claims Kejriwal under
house arrest, cops deny it

FROM PAGE 1

Sources said that police has tightened security around Mr Kejriwal's residence where BJP councillors led by three mayors have been protesting since Monday for the release of funds due to the civic bodies.

"I am glad Bharat Bandh was successful. I prayed for protesting farmers while sitting inside," Mr Kejriwal added.

Deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia also said that he was not allowed to enter Mr Kejriwal's residence. The AAP leader later addressed a press conference outside the CM's residence.

Addressing a press conference earlier, AAP spokesperson Saurabh Bhar-

approval.

"This is our law. Similarly other countries also have their legislations," Bhushan said. Giving a bird's-eye view of the Indian landscape of Covid-19 vaccines, Bhushan mentioned that eight vaccines are at different stages of development.

One is Covishield, which is being manufactured by Serum Institute of India in collaboration with AstraZeneca. Phase two and three clinical trials of this vaccine is underway and the firm has applied form emergency use authorisation.

Another is Covaxin, which is being indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and is presently in phase three of clinical trials. It has also applied to the DCGI seeking emergency use authorisation.

The third one is ZyCoV-D, being developed by Cadila Healthcare Ltd in Ahmedabad in collaboration with central government's Department of Biotechnology and is in phase two of the trials.

— PTI

BJP men killed
worker with
shotgun: Police

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, DEC. 8

The West Bengal Police has put the blame of BJP worker Ulen Roy's death on "shotgun fire" by "armed persons", who it alleged, were brought by the saffron party to its rally to Uttar Kanya, the North Bengal state secretariat in Siliguri, on Monday with a "malafide intention to create violence."

In a veiled reference to the incident, West Bengal and Trinamul Congress supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee told a meeting in Burdwan West, "BJP holds it's rallies but kills own workers to peddle lies...They just killed someone firing pellets so easily!"

Calling the incident "unprecedented" and "unheard" the police has entrusted the criminal investigation department (CID) for a probe though the BJP, which observed a 12-hour North Bengal bandh on Tuesday in protest of its worker's death, rejected it's allegations.

The police, which earlier rejected the BJP's claims of lathicharge as the cause of Roy's death, stated, "As per the post mortem report 'death was due to the effects of shotgun injuries.' Police do not use shotguns. It's

obvious that during yesterday's protest in Siliguri, armed persons were brought and they fired from firearms. The deceased received pellet injuries from a shotgun fired from close range by a person standing near the deceased in the protest program."

It added, "This is unprecedented. Bringing armed persons in protest programs and inciting them to fire is unheard off. There was a malafide intention to create violence by the use of firearms. CID West Bengal has been asked to investigate. Truth will come out and strong action will be taken against all those who planned and executed the heinous crime."

Countering the police version, state bjp president Dilip Ghosh said, "I found at least ten more workers, who were on the front of the rally, suffered similar gunshots like Roy's. The police provoked them to come towards them. When they moved ahead, the firing began suddenly. Roy alone had around 10 wounds from gunshots. Who, if not the police, opened the fire then? Who were with the police there? Were they Trinamul Congress workers in the police uniform? We find them with the cops everywhere to attack us."

High voter turnout
in Kerala civic polls

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
DEC. 8

Moderate to heavy polling was witnessed in the first phase of local body polls held in five districts of Kerala on Tuesday.

The total poll percentage recorded in the first phase till 6.05 pm was 72 per cent. Thiruvananthapuram - 68.59, Kollam 72.35, Pathanamthitta — 69, Alappuzha 76 and Idukki 73.57 per cent. The percentage is likely to go up further in the final count. The ruling CPM led LDF, opposition Congress led UDF and BJP led NDA are keeping their fingers crossed over the high voter turnout.

Long queues were seen outside polling stations in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Idukki districts since morning for the polls which are considered semi finals before the crucial Assembly elections next year.

Despite strict Covid-19 safety protocol in place, voters came out in large numbers especially in the forenoon to exercise their franchise. The voter turnout hinted at a tight contest with the ruling LDF making every effort to retain its hold in the



Residents stand in a queue to cast their votes in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday.

— PTI

local bodies and opposition UDF and BJP giving a tough challenge.

In most places the voters complied with social distancing norms while standing in the queues, wore masks and used sanitisers while entering the polling booth. The officials had kept sanitisers, buckets of water and soap outside each polling booth. In some booths, the officials had to intervene to prevent the voters and workers of political parties from crowding around.

Elections were held to 6,910 wards across 395 local bodies in the five districts which had 88.26 lakh registered voters and 11,225 polling booths.

Barring reports of minor skirmishes, the polling was peaceful in all five districts. Polling was affected in the initial phase in some districts following minor defects in the functioning of EVMs in 50 odd EVMs.

Indian couple, Shakespeare
get vaccinated in UK

FROM PAGE 1

His wife, Ranjan, then volunteered for the job as she also falls within the first phase of people aged 80 and over, care home workers as well as NHS workers at high risk eligible to receive the "life-saving jab".

"Hari Shukla and his wife Ranjan have become the first two patients at Newcastle Hospitals —

and two of the first people in the world — to receive the Covid-19 vaccine," Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust said. They join 90-year-old Margaret "Maggie" Keenan from Coventry as the very first in the world to receive her shot, followed by 81-year-old William Shakespeare in Warwickshire as the second.

"unsatisfactory" the project report of a consultant and said it needed to be scrapped. It had said unless a proper study was made, the impact on the forest lands, water bodies, wildlife, flora and fauna cannot be assessed.

Environmental clearance was mandatory since the project would have an adverse impact on the environment, including water bodies, it had said.

SC greenlights land acquisition for express way

FROM PAGE 1

The subject matter or the issues before the High Court and hence, it would be open to the affected persons to question the validity before the appropriate forum, it said. The bench said that it did not wish to deal with the judgements relied upon and the effect that the project of this nature may have environmental impact and ought not to be taken forward.

"We have not examined

the efficacy of the permissions/clearances granted by the competent authority under the environment or forest laws, as the case may be. If those permissions/clearances are assailed, only then the decisions (previous judgements) may be looked at," it said.

Referring to judgements mentioned on legality of grant of environmental clearance to projects, the

top court said that in those cases it was called upon to "examine the challenge in the context of permissions given by the competent authority under the environment laws."

The apex court praised lawyers for their able assistance in dealing with bulky files that too in hearings conducted through video conferencing due to ongoing pandemic.

Earlier, the High Court's

order had come on a batch of petitions filed by 35 land owners and PMK leader Ramadoss. They had challenged the land acquisition proceedings.

The High Court had made clear that grant of prior environmental clearance would undoubtedly require a thorough study of the area and before that, a public hearing was needed to be conducted. It had also held as

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SHORT TAKES

AVALANCHE WARNINGS AFTER SNOWFALL IN OZ

Berlin, Dec. 8: Authorities in Austria issued avalanche warnings on Tuesday for the east of the country as 4,000 homes there were without electricity and one man was injured while on a back-country skiing tour.

After several days of heavy snowfall in East Tyrol and other parts in the Austrian Alps, several roads were still closed in Tyrol and some valleys were cut off from the rest of the country. Electricity provider Tinetz said several electrical lines were snapped either by snow or by fallen trees, public broadcaster ORF reported. A 23-year-old German man was injured Monday in the Hahnenkamm skiing region in Tyrol when he went skiing on a closed slope.

PAKISTAN ARRESTS TWO ISIS MEMBERS

Lahore, Dec. 8: Pakistan's security agencies on Tuesday arrested two members of the Islamic State (ISIS) terror group on the charges of terror financing in Punjab province.

According to the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab police, it received a credible source information that two terrorists were collecting funds for the ISIS in Model Town of Bahawalnagar, some 400 kms from Lahore.

"An intelligence-based operation was conducted by CTD at Model Town Bahawalnagar. It arrested the two terrorists of ISIS. Funds collected for terrorism financing and literature have been recovered," a CTD spokesperson said in a statement here on Tuesday.

The terrorists are identified as Mohibur Rehman and Usman Ghani alias Abdul Rehman. A case has been registered in CTD Police Station Multan.

THAI DISSIDENT'S KIN MEETS JUDGE IN CAMBODIA

Phnom Penh, Dec. 8: The sister of an exiled Thai dissident who was reportedly abducted in Cambodia earlier this year appeared before a judge in Cambodia's capital on Tuesday to offer evidence that she hopes will lead to an official investigation into her brother's disappearance.

A group of armed men snatched Wanchalearn Satsaksit, 38, off the street in front of his apartment in Phnom Penh, the capital, in early June before taking him away in a black car, according to human rights groups and fellow activists, citing witness accounts and security video at the building.

Sitanan Satsaksit, the dissident's older sister, was joined by her lawyers at the office of the investigating judge at the Phnom Penh Municipal Court and said she hoped the meeting would prompt a formal investigation into her brother's whereabouts. Cambodia has denied that any abduction took place and said no investigation was planned.

UN URGES RUSSIA TO WITHDRAW FROM CRIMEA

United Nations, Dec. 8: The U.N. General Assembly has approved a resolution urging Russia to immediately withdraw all its military forces from Crimea "and end its temporary occupation of the territory of Ukraine without delay."

The vote in the 193-member world body was 63-17 with 62 abstentions, close to the vote on a similar resolution adopted last year. The measure, which is not legally binding but a reflection of world opinion, was supported on Monday by Western nations and their supporters and opposed by Russia and its supporters including China, Cuba, Venezuela, Iran and Syria.

Russia sent troops into Crimea and annexed the peninsula in 2014. It has supported separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine in a six-year war that has killed 14,000 people. An uneasy cease-fire has been in effect since late July. The resolution condemned the occupation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by Russia and reaffirmed "the non-recognition of its annexation."

It affirmed that "the seizure of Crimea by force is illegal and a violation of international law," and said it must be "immediately returned."

Don calls US '3rd world country'

Washington, Dec. 8: President Donald Trump has likened the US to a "third world country" as he blasted the "rigged" election, reiterating his unsubstantiated claims about widespread voter fraud in the presidential polls. The election was a "disgrace to our country", Trump told reporters at the Oval Office of the White House on Monday during a ceremony to present the Presidential Medal of Freedom to wrestler and coach Dan Gable. "It's like a third-world country — these ballots pouring in from everywhere, using machinery that nobody knows ownership, nobody knows anything about. They have 'glitches', as they call them. Glitches. The glitches weren't glitches. They got caught sending out thousands of votes — all against me."

— DONALD TRUMP
US President

It's like a third-world country — these ballots pouring in from everywhere, using machinery that nobody knows ownership, nobody knows anything about. They have 'glitches', as they call them. Glitches. The glitches weren't glitches. They got caught sending out thousands of votes — all against me.

Biden's transition to power but has not yet conceded defeat, alleging massive voter fraud and electoral malpractice. However, state election officials and the media have denied such large-scale fraud.

Election officials in key battleground states have declared Biden the winner, giving him an unofficial 306-232 edge in the Electoral College that determines the outcome of US presidential contests. The Trump campaign has filed multiple lawsuits in several states.

— PTI

Austin selected as defence secretary

Washington, Dec. 8: US President-elect Joe Biden has selected retired Army general Lloyd Austin to run the Pentagon as Secretary of Defence, according to media reports. If confirmed by the Senate, the 67-year-old career military officer would be the first African-American to lead the Department of Defence. The office of the President-elect did not confirm the news, but said Biden will announce additional members of his Cabinet before Christmas, including his nominee for Secretary of Defence and members of his economic and domestic cabinet before the end of this week.

"Retired Gen. Lloyd Austin, once viewed as a long-shot candidate to be President-elect Joe Biden's defence secretary, has been chosen to lead the Pentagon," *Politico* reported on Monday.



Lloyd Austin

Biden's decision to pick Austin comes amidst increasing pressure from the African Americans to name one of them to the top four positions — Secretary of State, Treasury Secretary, Defence Secretary and Attorney General, according to political observers.

Austin was the Commander of the US Central Command from 2013 to 2016.

— PTI

Religion: Both Pak, China worry US

Washington, Dec. 8: The US has designated Pakistan and China among eight other countries that are of particular concern for violation of religious freedom, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has said. Pakistan and China along with Myanmar, Eritrea, Iran, Nigeria, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan were placed in the list for engaging in or tolerating "systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom", Pompeo said in a statement on Monday.

The State Department placed the Comoros, Cuba, Nicaragua and Russia on a Special Watch List (SWL) for governments that have engaged in or tolerated "severe violations of religious freedom".

"Religious freedom is an unalienable right, and the bedrock upon which free societies are built and flourish. Today, the United States — a nation founded by those fleeing religious persecution, as

the recent Commission on Unalienable Rights report noted — once again took action to defend those who simply want to exercise this essential freedom," Pompeo said.

The US also designated al-Shabaab, al-Qaida, Boko Haram, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the Houthis, ISIS, ISIS-Greater Sahara, ISIS-West Africa, Jamaat Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin and the Taliban as 'Entities of Particular Concern'. Pompeo said the US did not renew the prior 'Entity of Particular Concern' designations for al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIS-Khorasan due to the total loss of territory formerly controlled by these terrorist organisations.

"While these two groups no longer meet the statutory criteria for designation, we will not rest until we have fully eliminated the threat of religious freedom abuses by any violent extremist and terrorist groups," he said.

— PTI

Boris to head to Brussels to break post-Brexit deadlock

Prospect of tariffs on goods unless the UK and EU ratify deal by month-end

London, Dec. 8: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will fly to Brussels this week for crunch talks to try and break the deadlock with the European Union (EU) over a post-Brexit trade agreement ahead of the December 31 deadline. The clock is ticking for the end of the Brexit transition period and unless the UK and EU are able to thrash out and ratify a deal by the end of this month, Britain will have left the 27-member economic bloc on January 1, 2021, with the prospect of tariffs on goods as both sides trade on World Trade Organisation (WTO) terms.

"I'm always hopeful, but I've got to be honest, the situation at the moment is very tricky," Johnson told the BBC. But he added that he remained optimistic and hopes for "the power of sweet reason". "We will see where we get to in the course of the next two days, but I think the UK government's position is that we are willing to engage at any level, political or otherwise, we are willing to try anything. But there are just limits beyond which no sensible, independent government or country could go and people have got to understand that," he said.

Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen issued a joint statement on Monday night after their respective Chief Negotiators, Michel Barnier and Lord David Frost, failed to



Pedestrians cross Westminster Bridge as fog envelopes the Elizabeth Tower, commonly known by the name of the bell, "Big Ben", and the Palace of Westminster, home to the Houses of Parliament, in London on Tuesday as talks on a trade deal between the EU and the UK enter a critical stage.

— AFP

overcome the final hurdles in three key areas of divergence. "We agreed that the conditions for finalising an agreement are not there due to the remaining significant differences on three critical issues: level playing field, governance and fisheries," the joint statement noted.

"We asked our Chief Negotiators and their teams to prepare an overview of the remaining differences

to be discussed in a physical meeting in Brussels in the coming days," it said. The two leaders spent over an hour talking on the phone on Monday night but failed to resolve any of the key remaining differences. While no date has been set for their face-to-face meeting, it is expected either before or after a scheduled EU summit on Thursday. Barnier and Frost, meanwhile, will

meet on Tuesday to draw up a list of the outstanding differences.

The UK and EU have been trading for years without paying tariffs or conducting customs or border checks, which is set to change at the end of the Brexit transition period unless they agree a new pact. The major stumbling blocks remain a set of shared rules and standards, or level playing

field, to ensure businesses in one country do not have an unfair advantage over their competitors.

Brussels wants the UK to follow EU rules closely in areas such as workers' rights and environmental regulations, but Britain says the basis of the Brexit vote in the June 2016 referendum was to break free from following common rules and reassert national sovereignty.

— PTI

Georgia again certifies Presidential election results showing Biden won

Atlanta, Dec. 8: Georgia's top elections official on Monday recertified the state's election results after a recount requested by President Donald Trump confirmed once again that Democrat Joe Biden won the state, and the governor then recertified the state's 16 presidential electors.

"We have now counted legally cast ballots three times, and the results remain unchanged," Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger said during a news conference at the state Capitol before the results were recertified. Georgia law allows a losing candidate to request a recount if the margin between the candidates is within 0.5 per cent. Trump requested the recount after the results certified by Raffensperger showed that Biden led by a margin of

12,670 votes, or 0.25 per cent of the roughly 5 million ballots cast.

During the recount, which was done using scanners that read and tally the votes, there were discrepancies in vote totals in some counties. Since the results of a recount become the official results, those counties had to recertify their results. Once that was done the secretary of state recertified the statewide results.

Kemp then recertified the state's slate of 16 presidential electors — all prominent Democrats — as required by state law, spokesman Cody Hall said. The recertification of results comes before the federal "safe harbor" deadline on Tuesday — electors named by that date in accordance with state law cannot be disregarded by Congress.

— AP

Support Democrats: Hindu-Americans

Washington, Dec. 8: President-elect Joe Biden's Hindu-American and South Asian supporters are ramping up efforts to convince Georgia's rapidly-growing Hindu population to support Democratic candidates in the January 5 Senate runoffs. Hindu-Americans' population in Georgia has grown significantly in recent years, with approximately 100,000 living in the state, including naturalised citizens originally from India, Bhutan, Nepal, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago.

While most of them live in the Atlanta metropolitan area, sizable numbers

are also living in Savannah, Macon, and in the southwestern part of the state. "Hindus in Georgia should ensure that their Senators will fight for inclusion and pluralism, and not those who seek to return the state to its darker days of racism and xenophobia," said Hindu Americans for Biden co-chair Sohini Sircar.

The two Democratic candidates are Jon Ossoff and Rev. Raphael Warnock. Hindu-Americans can seize the moment and help to bring about a more pluralistic vision for the country and a resounding defeat of Trumpism.

— PTI

Indian-origin Raj Chouhan elected Speaker of Canada's British Columbia

Toronto, Dec. 8: Raj Chouhan, an Indian-origin legislator in Canada, has been elected as the Speaker of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly, becoming first from the community to occupy the post, according to a media report.

Chouhan, who has represented Burnaby-Edmonds constituency five times in the British Columbia legislature, has served as Deputy Speaker in the previous government and would be replacing retiring

Darryl Plecas as Speaker, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) News reported on Monday.

Punjab-born Chouhan immigrated to Canada in 1973 and started working on a farm. He was greatly impacted by the plight of other immigrant workers and the wide disparity between the rich and poor in a prosperous country.

This contributed to his ongoing advocacy for community and social justice for workers, the report said, citing Chouhan's biography. "I am truly grateful to have been entrusted with this role by all members of the legislative assembly," Chouhan was quoted as saying in the report.

"As a proud member of the Indo-Canadian community, I am tremendously proud of this historic occasion and honoured to continue my public service in this new role," he added. Chouhan's selection was the first order of business Monday as British Columbia politicians returned to the legislature for a brief session after the October election that gave the New Democratic Party (NDP) a majority government.

Former NDP cabinet minister Moe Sihota called Chouhan's selection "a historic day for British Columbia." "We are in awe of Raj's accomplishment and what it says about ethnic communities in general, and the degree to which we are beginning to take our place in society," Sihota said on CBC Radio.

— PTI

BORDER: CHINA SAYS WORKING WITH INDIA

Beijing, Dec. 8: China and India are working for further de-escalation of the border standoff in eastern Ladakh and both sides will have consultations to determine specific arrangements for the next round of talks, a senior Chinese official said on Tuesday.

The Chinese and Indian armies held the 8th round of Corps Commander-level meeting on November 6 to resolve the border standoff that erupted in early May.

Asked when the next round of talks will be held, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told a media briefing here that "China and India have been in communication through diplomatic and military channels on the border issue and we are working for further de-escalation of the border situation."

"Based on the implementation of current consensus, we will have consultations to determine specific arrangements for further talks," she said.

— PTI

TAIWAN ARMS SALE, HK CURBS: CHINA FLAYS US

Beijing, Dec. 8: China on Tuesday lashed out at the US over new sanctions against Chinese officials and the sale of more military equipment to Taiwan.

The US actions are part of what critics see as an effort by the Trump administration to put in place high-pressure tactics toward Beijing that could make it more difficult for President-elect Joe Biden to steady relations.

The Cabinet's office for Hong Kong affairs expressed "strong outrage and condemnation" over the sanctions levelled against 14 members of the standing committee of China's legislature, which passed a sweeping Hong Kong National Security Law earlier this year. Foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying, meanwhile, demanded the US cancel its latest arms sale to Taiwan.

— AP

SPACE | RECORD

Hayabusa2 spacecraft released capsule Saturday from 2,20,000 km away

Capsule with asteroid samples arrives in Japan

Tokyo, Dec. 8: A small capsule containing asteroid soil samples that was dropped from space by Japan's Hayabusa2 spacecraft and landed in the Australian Outback arrived on Tuesday in Tokyo for research into the origin of the solar system and life on Earth.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency said its capsule, tightly sealed and carefully stored in a container box, arrived in

Japan on a flight from Australia, attended by a group of JAXA officials.

At the end of its yearlong journey from asteroid Ryugu, more than 300 million kilometers (190 million miles) from Earth, Hayabusa2 released the capsule Saturday from 2,20,000 kilometers (1,36,700 miles) in space, successfully sending it to land on a targeted area in a sparsely populated desert in Woomera.

● **THE JAPAN Aerospace Exploration Agency said its capsule, tightly sealed and carefully stored in a container box, arrived in Japan on a flight from Australia, attended by a group of JAXA officials.**

The extremely high precision work at the end of Hayabusa2's six-year mission thrilled many

Japanese. The box with the capsule inside is now being transported to JAXA's research facility in Sagami-hara, near Tokyo, for analysis.

Launched in December 2014, the unmanned Hayabusa2 spacecraft touched down twice last year on the asteroid Ryugu. Despite an unexpectedly rocky surface that even forced the mission's team to revise landing plans, the spacecraft

successfully collected data and soil samples from two locations — on the surface and from underground. Scientists say the samples, especially ones taken from under the asteroid's surface, contain data from 4.6 billion years ago unaffected by pace radiation and other environmental factors.

They are particularly interested in studying organic materials in the samples to learn about

how they were distributed in the solar system and if or how they are related to life on Earth.

The samples will be treated in a clean room at the Sagami-hara facility to avoid any external impact, and the work is expected to start soon. After initial studies and curation in Japan, some of the samples will be shared with NASA and other international scientists for further study.

— AP

DECCAN Chronicle

9 DECEMBER 2020

Court rap over Central Vista: Rethink in order

The Supreme Court's rap on the knuckles of the Narendra Modi government for its unseemly hurry to forge ahead with its plan to disfigure the most iconic vista of New Delhi, built between 1921 and 1927 by architects Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker, and leave the exchequer poorer by at least ₹20,000 crores — though this is likely to escalate — is well-received. Worryingly, the Modi government had taken advantage of the lockdowns it had ordered to push ahead with what is being dubbed as the PM's vanity project despite the matter being sub judice. The bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar, Dinesh Maheswari and Sanjeev Khanna has rightly put a lid on it, as of now.

The 64,500 square metre Central Vista redevelopment plan was hatched on the frivolous basis of putative cost-benefits of integrated offices, as the government sought to play up the walking distance between various departments in terms of traffic jams and blame on architecture delays due to politics, red tape and work culture. The requirement of carrying out occasional repairs in the Parliament building was seen as an insurmountable problem, but the structure is only 100 years old and by no means worn out as it is being claimed to be. It needs care, of course, given its Grade I heritage status. The plan also goes against the Delhi Master Plan, which states that no new offices should be built and every effort made to decongest it.

Besides the very real threats to heritage and the environment, as hundreds of trees must now be translocated leading to the loss of biodiversity, not to mention the city's most popular space for public recreation, almost every other aspect of the redevelopment plan — its clearances, public consultations and aesthetics — is problematic. For one, no heritage assessment analysis was done. The environment impact assessment report as well as the Central Vista committee report was rushed. The DDA changed the land use after a perfunctory hearing on 1,300 public objections. The tender to build the new Parliament building, that went to a Gujarat-based architecture firm, was hastily awarded. There are well-founded suspicions that the project is indeed a gravy train for the ruling party's favourites. All this forms the substance of the bunch of 10 petitions the Supreme Court is currently hearing.

It is also learnt that the plan entails the demolition of four bhavans built in the 1960s — the iconic National Museum, Vigyan Bhavan, the fairly recent IGNCA, and the very new and expensive external affairs ministry buildings. That flies in the face of the basic tenets of sustainability.

But what shows the Centre's move in the most terrible light is that it's being done as lakhs of Indians lack food security and the nation's medical infrastructure needs strengthening on an urgent basis.

Government sources claim that a belief that the current Parliament House was "unlucky" and anticipation of delimitation — the new building can house 1,224 instead of 790 members — are among the real reasons for the exercise. The Supreme Court has, meanwhile, in its order Monday, given the green light to hold the foundation stone laying ceremony for the project, albeit conditionally, on Thursday, December 10. This will be accompanied by a religiously coloured bhoomi puja, which should have had no place in an institution that serves a secular republic. Doubts may well be created in the minds of our citizens about the future outcome of the lawsuit.

Anju's inspiring secret

It may take just a microsecond to post a composed tweet but in that instant our estimation of the long jump athlete Anju Bobby George went up a billion fold. While her revelation in a Twitter bombshell that she has had only one kidney since birth is remarkable enough, what lends her narration an incredible dimension is her reticence to say this during her career. In choosing to let out the secret at a difficult time for humanity during the coronavirus pandemic, she has timed well the telling of her inspirational tale of success against seemingly insurmountable odds.

It is at the drop of a hat that professional athletes are known to complain about the state of their body and mind during competition, the conditions in which they compete and the problems they face in their sporting career and life. Anju may have come face to face with her true condition only in 2001 when she consulted doctors because of excessive fatigue. Remarkably, her best years in athletics came soon after with medals in Asian, Commonwealth and World competitions. Her battle against her body was made worse by her allergy to painkillers but she never trotted out an excuse in public.

Women in sport are an inspiration because they face additional difficulties in their physiology and hormonal balance. Their spirit shines through as they compete, with mothers seen going on to win medals and even tennis grand slams. Besides stereotypical sporting challenges, women also have had to battle racial discrimination like the Williams sisters and male domination and chauvinism like Billie Jean King. While a batsman might let on that he is colour blind or an athlete talk freely about his heart condition, women stars are known for their patient and silent determination to achieve. Given such a background, Anju's achievements gain a lustre, as does her husband, coach and sportsman Robert George's contribution to her career.

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Subhani

At the Singhu border: An agitation like none other



Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

The farmers' movement rocking the Delhi region, with its ripple effects spreading, appears unique due to its patterns of participation and mobilisation, which lend it spectacular social energy articulated in wholly peaceful fashion. Whether it has the potential for wider political impact will depend on its staying power.

The Narendra Modi government's efforts to discredit it as a "Khalistani" plot — as Sikh farmers are its most visible element — or the devious result of the Congress' machinations have cut no ice, but the government continues to play a perception game through the media.

Mr Modi's reputation is for not going back. Thus, mind games are being played to tire out the protesters. But if these tactics don't succeed quickly, an unlikely prospect since Prime Minister Modi is stuck in a rigid pro-big industry position which farmers read as being anti-farmer, the government could be headed for a very chilly winter.

Large-scale protest movements and mobilisations, by their very nature, have about them a degree of latent militancy. This doesn't always mean violence, although it can degenerate into that, causing irreversible injury to the cause itself, as in the Assam, Punjab and Kashmir agitations in the 1983-93 decade.

The protests that rocked the country during the JP agitation in the 1970s, culminating in the Emergency, did not involve people's violence but the active willingness to give battle to the State appeared ever present and the air was seldom free of tension, although the movement had the participation of Gandhians.

The Anna Hazare movement, which led to the undoing of the

Manmohan Singh government, appeared to have been brought together for that very purpose by its BJP-RSS core. It wore the clothing of an anti-corruption campaign as Dr Singh was perceived as a man of unshakeable integrity. It attracted idealists, had extensive urban middle class and media backing, and proved a greatly successful affair, even giving birth to a political party which bends to sectarian Hindu sentiments when in trouble rather than to any known principle.

In sharp contrast, while the entirely peaceful anti-CAA movement of last year, mostly involving Muslim women — usually seen as home-bound — in urban settings across the country, did gain international attention, it failed to receive wide national endorsement, although it campaigned with rare courage on a very important national issue — the communal changes made by the Modi government in citizenship laws.

The present government, with its religion-based orientation, and near monopolistic influence on the media and social media, demonised this movement and harassed and punished many of those involved, with the judicial system remaining quiescent and lackadaisical.

Based on a broad appreciation of these historical events, in which this writer was a keen professional observer, it's not hard to see that the truly massive mobilisation of farmers at Delhi's Singhu border with Haryana at the national capital's northern end, from where the road leads to Punjab, has characteristics that separate it from anything in recent decades.

Perhaps its most noteworthy feature is its participation and mobilisation quotient. The movement eschews political links and is about the farmers' demands alone.

It challenges laws that were first brought through the ordinance route and then passed with unseemly haste in Parliament without discussion and rushed through the Upper House bypassing established voting procedures. But it's not just Punjab's farmers who are at the Singhu border, every section of Punjab society and many from Haryana are out there laying siege to the nation's capital.

While every state in India is primarily agrity. It attracted idealists, had extensive urban middle class and media backing, and proved a greatly successful affair, even giving birth to a political party which bends to sectarian Hindu sentiments when in trouble rather than to any known principle.

Farm holdings are small, and this part of the country was among India's poorest in 1947 for want of irrigation. But irrigation and power availability through the Bhakra-Nangal, and vastly improved yields through green revolution technologies, made Punjab and Haryana relatively prosperous. On this edifice has rested education, sports, physical and health infrastructure, industry and the arts. This is why writers, poets, artists and sportspersons are returning their national awards in solidarity with the farmers, who are also likely to be relatives. But it's useful to note that good yields turn to a reasonable income only due to the assured minimum price or minimum support price (MSP), a subsidy in economic terms which distorts the market. Is it necessary for the government to fight that subsidy if it has made entire regions economically viable and socially

stable?

A day's visit to the Singhu border is a fascinating experience. There are miles of tractor trolleys. During the day protesters mill about and listen to speeches or run the countless "langars", or community kitchens, where free food is respectfully served to all — including the hordes of Delhi's poor who show up — according to the precepts of "sewa", or service, in Sikhism. At night they sleep in their tractors or under them. There are no shops of any kind. Camaraderie flows. There is much talk about "Modi conspiring with big industry to finish the farmer".

It is said that the riders in Chenghiz Khan's amazingly mobile 13th century army slept on horseback, covering distance even when asleep. The diesel-run steel tractor is the Punjabi farmer's steed racing to take on the Modi government. Social solidarity is his weapon. Women and the elderly are also zealous participants. Delhi's Muslims too run free food stalls. The protesters say they are stocked for a few months and can replenish. Backing them are Punjab and Haryana traders, teachers, journalists, social workers, industrial workers — well, nearly everyone except the BJP and RSS outfits.

The farmers are on the Haryana side in Sonapat district. On the Delhi side, facing them, are thousands of Delhi police, CRPF and Rapid Action Force personnel, all under home minister Amit Shah. There is unspoken political tension. The tens of thousands of protesters radiate energy. The BJP government in Haryana is a likely first casualty if its MLAs come under public pressure. This is one movement that can't be reviled as "anti-national", or "anti-Hindu". Its protagonists can't be asked to go to Pakistan or Rome.

Also, new labels have to be found. Is it farmers' "sit-in" when the protest stretches over many invisible miles, or is it the whole society marching on the command headquarters?

Is it a farmers' 'sit-in' when the protest stretches over many invisible miles, or is it the whole society marching on the command headquarters?

LETTERS

CENTRAL VISTA PROJECT

While the Solicitor General has categorically assured that no constructions or demolitions would be undertaken on the proposed new Parliament building under Central Vista project on a suo motu listing of the case, it is not understood what is the urgency of the ground-breaking celebrations. Prime Minister is not going to be out of India in the near future. It is my advice that ground-breaking for all such projects should be programmed and, as and when the apex court clears them, the Prime Minister may lay the foundation stones one after another.

N.S. Sharma, via-email

THE STAY given by the Supreme Court to the ambitious project of the central government is on expected lines. The high cost of construction of a new Parliament is not necessary in the present context of Covid-19, on the prevention of which the government has to spend in crores. Also, the soldiers fighting along the borders for our security are to be supplied with all reasonable living comforts to sustain their morale and physical fitness. Supply of highly sophisticated combat weapons to match those used by our enemies is another crying need. Such spending should be the government's priority. The present Parliament building is stated to be strong enough to last for another 25 to 30 years without any major repair or alteration. Hence there is no need for the BJP government to rush with the proposal of construction. The SC has given the right verdict at the right time.

Kooduthuraiyan, Coimbatore

UK VACCINE ROLLOUT

THE UK has begun giving the first doses of the world's first approved Covid-19 vaccine — the Pfizer/ BioNtech — to care home residents and staff, frontline health workers and people aged over 80. And 90-year-old Margaret Keenan has become the first person to receive a Covid jab. The start of the mass vaccination programme is glad tidings against the backdrop of over 67.5 million cases and 1.55 million casualties worldwide. It is a milestone moment after an unprecedentedly tough year. This is a huge step in the fight against Covid-19 and is the only true exit strategy from the Covid-19 pandemic and hopefully, it marks the beginning of the end of the scourge. The vaccine is administered in two shots, three weeks apart. Developed without cutting corners in 10 months' time, the vaccine is a triumph of science and a tribute to human ingenuity.

G. David Milton, Maruthancode

Mail your letters to editor@deccanmail.com

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Babus angered by Haryana IAS cadre post appointments

As noted in an earlier column, there is a degree of discontent among Haryana babus over what many consider is a consistent attempt by the Manohar Khattar government in the state to allow the "usurping" of IAS cadre posts by other services. The Haryana government has appointed several IPS, IFS and IRS officers to the cadre posts of the IAS.

Now Haryana IAS officer and well-known whistle-blower Ashok Khemka has entered the fray with his take on the issue. Not known to mince words, a habit that has often landed him in trouble, Mr Khemka has reportedly written to chief secretary Vijai Vardhan and demanded that such cases should be referred to the Centre for consideration.

Those in the know say that in his letter the IAS officer pointed out

that the IAS cadre rules stipulated that a non-cadre officer may be appointed temporarily (maximum three months) to a cadre post if no suitable cadre officer is available. Continuing an officer for a longer period requires prior approval of the Centre. He urged Mr Vardhan to refer the cases of IPS, IRS and IFS officers appointed on the cadre posts of IAS officers to the central government.

And Mr Khemka is not a solitary voice, it turns out that he has now been joined by the Haryana Civil Service Association whose president Dr Vandana Disodia, too, has highlighted the issue. It is not going to die down.

EMPANELMENT BLUES

The trend of reduced representation at the joint secretary level has got the "heaven born" worried. But none are more worried than

the 2003 batch of IAS officers, whose wait for empanelment is getting inordinately prolonged even by the standards of the Modi sarkar.

Sources say that since August 2019 only one fresh round of 37 officers of the 2002 batch and 25 officers from previous batches have been empaneled as joint secretaries. But the 2003 batch officers continue to await their turn. Meanwhile, four fresh batches of IAS (from the early 1990s) have been empaneled as additional secretaries and two batches (1987 and 1988) have been empanelled as secretaries.

Further, only 17 per cent of the empaneled officers are from the IAS, with the lion's share going to non-IAS officers. This trend is likely to stay in the back of the minds of senior IAS officers even as the 2003 batch continues to hope that

their empanelment happens sooner than later.

CLEARING THE AIR ON COVID VACCINE

In October, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said the government was preparing to reach every single citizen with the Covid vaccine. In the run-up to the Bihar Assembly elections, the BJP even promised free vaccine to the state's voters in lieu of their support.

The election done and dusted; the government has now changed its stance. Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan has "clarified" that the government never spoke about vaccinating the entire country! He said that it is important that the discussion be based "only on factual information". Mr Bhushan said that the average daily positivity rate in India is 3.72

per cent and India has the lowest number of cases per million count among all major countries, with 211 cases per million.

According to him, the government's aim now is to vaccinate a critical mass of people and break the transmission of the virus, this not having to vaccinate the entire population, which by itself would be a challenging exercise. This ties in with the view of the World Health Organisation (WHO) experts who say that 65 to 70 per cent vaccine coverage rate is sufficient to reach herd immunity.

But the question is whether the voters of Bihar will get the vaccine first as promised in the BJP's poll manifesto or was it just another jumla?

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

SHORT TAKES

IOC bans Belarus prez from Games

Lausanne: The IOC suspended the authoritarian president of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, from all Olympic activities including the Tokyo Games next year. Lukashenko, who has led the Belarus Olympic Committee for 23 years, claimed a sixth presidential term after a state election in August widely viewed as rigged in his favour. Belarus has since been in turmoil amid protests and a crackdown by security forces, and the International Olympic Committee has investigated complaints from athletes that they faced intimidation. IOC president Thomas Bach said after a board meeting on Monday that the Belarus Olympic body's current leadership has not appropriately protected Belarus athletes from political discrimination within sports organizations in the country. — AP

Saints extend unbeaten run

Brighton: Southampton extended their unbeaten run against Brighton to eight games and moved into fifth place in the English Premier League with a 2-1 win. As 2,000 Brighton fans were welcomed back in their home stadium for the first time following a nine-month absence because of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, Southampton rallied after going a goal behind. Brighton took the lead from the spot in the 25th minute, when Pascal Gross sent goalkeeper Alex McCarthy the wrong way after James Ward-Prowse handled the ball in the area. Ralph Hasenhuttl's lineup equalised just before halftime after Ward-Prowse made up for his earlier error to pick out Jan Vestergaard, who headed home the corner. — AP

Para-athletics coach tests +ve

New Delhi: Para-athletics coach Gajender has tested positive for Covid-19 and is under home quarantine, the Sports Authority of India said on Tuesday. Gajender is the coach and husband of para-athlete Simran, who is training at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here. — PTI

Team Hero up for Dakar rally

New Delhi: Close on the heels of an exciting win at the BAJA Portalegre, Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest two-wheeler manufacturer Hero MotoCorp, on Tuesday unveiled their plans for the Dakar Rally 2021.

Participating with a full strength three rider team, Hero MotoSports will take on the Dakar 2021 with the 2020 FIM Cross-Country BAJAs World Cup winner — Sebastian Buhler, 2019 Pan Africa Rally winner — Joaquim Rodrigues and ace Indian rider — C.S. Santosh. This will be the second official appearance for Sebastian in Hero colors at the Dakar, while it will be the fifth appearance for both JRod and Santosh.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Lanka Premier League: Kandy vs Jaffna from 3 pm on Sony Six; Galle vs Dambulla from 7.30 pm on Sony Ten 2

FOOTBALL

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

Champions League: Midtjylland vs Liverpool from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Ajax vs Atalanta from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 1; Real Madrid vs Monchengladbach from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1; Salzburg vs Atletico Madrid from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Six; Manchester City vs Marseille from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2; Inter Milan vs Shakhtar Donetsk from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 3

WWE

NXT: Bouts from 6.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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Members of the Indian team pose with the winner's trophy at the end of the third T20 international against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Tuesday. Indian won the series 2-1.

— AP

Oz trump Kohli & Co

Virat's chancy 85 in vain as Australia win final T20

Sydney, Dec. 8: Australian bowlers held their nerves to come up trumps against the genius of Virat Kohli, stalling an Indian clean-sweep with a 12-run victory in the third and final T20 International here on Tuesday.

While India won the shortest format 2-1, it was overall an even result for the two teams which won three white-ball games each. Tuesday's loss ended the visitors' 10-match winning streak in the format.

Kohli got as many as four reprieves and cashed in well enough to smash his way to 85 off 61 balls but India could only reach as far as 174/7 in their pursuit of 187 in 20 overs.

It was a slash drive off

SCORECARD	
Australia: Matthew Wade lbw b Thakur 80, Aaron Finch c Hardik Pandya b Washington Sundar 0, Steven Smith b Washington Sundar 24, Glenn Maxwell b T. Natarajan 54, Moises Henriques (not out) 5, D'Arcy Short run out (sub Manish Pandey/Rahul) 7, Daniel Sams (not out) 4. Extras (lb-1, w-10, nb-1) 12. Total: (for 5 wks, in 20 Overs) 186.	India: K.L. Rahul c Steven Smith b Maxwell 0, Shikhar Dhawan c Daniel Sams b Swepson 28, Virat Kohli c Daniel Sams b Andrew Tye 85, Sanju Samson c Steven Smith b Swepson 10, Shreyas Iyer lbw b Swepson 0, Hardik Pandya c Finch b Zampa 20, Washington Sundar c Andrew Tye b Abbott 7, Shardul Thakur (not out) 17, Deepak Chahar (not out) 0. Extras (b-1, w-6) 7. Total (for 7 wks, in 20 overs) 174.
FOW: 14-1, 79-2, 169-3, 175-4, 182-5. Bowler: Deepak Chahar 4-0-34-0, Washington Sundar 4-0-34-2, T. Natarajan 4-0-33-1, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-41-0, Shardul Thakur 4-0-43-1.	FOW: 0-1, 74-2, 97-3, 100-4, 144-5, 151-6, 164-7. Bowler: Glenn Maxwell 3-0-20-1, S. Abbott 4-0-49-1, Daniel Sams 2-0-29-0, Andrew Tye 4-0-31-1, M. Swepson 4-0-23-3, Adam Zampa 3-0-21-1.

Andrew Tye in the penultimate over which was plucked inches off the ground by Daniel Sams, who compensated for a forgettable day with the ball.

An over before that Hardik Pandya's swagger was checked by Adam Zampa (1/21 in 3 overs).

Zampa's leg-break turned enough to force the 'Baroda Bomber' to hit one against the turn and be caught at short third-man. Once Pandya was gone, there was too much pressure on Kohli and this was one rare occasion when he failed to take the team home.

While he hit four fours and three sixes, Kohli did lead a charmed life as Steve Smith missed a dolly at deep mid-wicket fence when he gave Maxwell the charge.

Then Sean Abbott failed to get his hands on a tough return catch while another slipped through Tye's

palms. During the fag end, Matthew Wade missed an easy stumping.

The Indian captain scored his third half-century of the tour and an effortless six off Abbott after the completion of the milestone gave much-needed relief to the Indian dug-out. This was after Mitchell Swepson's (3/23) innocuous leg-breaks reduced them to 100 for 4.

Swepson would be the first to admit that he was lucky to dismiss Shikhar Dhawan (28 off 21 balls) with a half-tracker and ever unreliable Sanju Samson (10) with a low full-toss. The only wicket-taking delivery he bowled was the one that got Shreyas Iyer out for a first-ball duck. — PTI

SAHA HITS HALF TON AS VISITORS EKE OUT DRAW

Sydney, Dec. 8: In the form of a sedate half-century, Wriddhiman Saha got himself some invaluable batting practice ahead of the first Test against Australia, but his other famed Indian colleagues failed to bat long as their warm-up game against Australia A concluded in a draw here on Tuesday.

Medium pacer Mark Steketee, who returned impressive figures of 5/37, came in the way of what could have been a few sessions of good batting practice on the third and final day for the touring Indians.

Making up for his first-innings nought, Saha top-scored for the visitors with 54 after facing 100 deliveries at the Drummoyne Oval on the third and final day of the tune-up.

Bracing for the first Test, the seasoned Saha found the fence seven times during his stay in the middle.

Beginning with a deficit of 59 runs, the Indians declared their second innings at 189 for nine and in reply, the Australians,



Wriddhiman Saha

needing 130 in 15 overs to register an outright victory, reached 52 for one when the stumps were drawn for one last time in the game.

India vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane, who is going to lead the team in the absence of Virat Kohli after the first Test, followed up his neat first-innings century with a knock of 28. — PTI

Brief scores: Australia 'A' 306/9 decl. & 52/1 drew with India XI 247/9 decl. & 189/9 decl. (Saha 54*, Steketee 5-37).

YORKER KING | ON SONG

Pandya gives his award to Nattu

Sydney, Dec. 8: Adjudged Player of the T20 Series for his superb show with the bat against Australia, India all-rounder Hardik Pandya on Tuesday said that newcomer T Natarajan deserved it more than him for his "outstanding" bowling performance.

The 29-year-old from Tamil Nadu has been sensational since making his international debut in the third ODI at Canberra, snapping eight wickets in four matches.

"Special mention for Natnaran, in the absence of (Mohammed) Shami and Jasprit (Bumrah), he stood out and really delivered under pressure," Kohli said. "It is outstanding because he is playing his first few games at international level. He looks very composed, he is a humble and hard working guy, he is sure of what he is doing."

India is scheduled to host the T20 World Cup in October and November next year.

"I hope he continues to keep working hard on his game and gets better because a left-arm bowler is an asset for any team and if he can keep bowling in this way consistently, it will be a great thing for us heading into the World Cup next year," Kohli said.

— Agencies



T. Natarajan with Hardik Pandya.

— Twitter

Dance breaks into Olympics

Geneva, Dec. 8: Breakdancing became an official Olympic sport.

The International Olympic Committee's pursuit of urban events to lure a younger audience saw street dance battles officially added to the medal events program at the 2024 Paris Games.

Also confirmed for Paris by the IOC executive board were skateboarding, sport climbing, and surfing.

Those three sports will make their Olympic debuts at the Tokyo Games which were postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic by one year to open on July 23, 2021.

Alongside the additions, the IOC made subtractions: The slate of 329 medal events in Paris is 10 fewer than in Tokyo, including four lost from weightlifting, and the athlete quota in 2024 of 10,500 is around 600 less than next year.

Two sports with troubled governing bodies boxing and weightlifting saw the biggest cuts to the number of athletes they can have in Paris.

Weightlifting should have 120 athletes in Paris, which is less than half of its total at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. The sport could be dropped entirely due to its historic doping problems and IOC concerns over the pace and depth of reform at the International Weightlifting Federation.

The IOC stressed its future priorities for Paris, and beyond to the 2028 Los Angeles Games, by claiming it will hit a long-term target of equal participa-

tion by men and women athletes, and more urbanised events.

With Paris organisers needing time to prepare their project, the IOC kept to its pre-pandemic schedule to confirm the 2024 sports lineup this month even before some are tested in Tokyo.

Breakdancing will be called breaking at the Olympics, as it was in the 1970s by hip-hop pioneers in the United States.

It was proposed by Paris organisers almost two years ago after positive trials at the 2018 Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires. Breaking passed further stages of approval in 2019 from separate decisions by the IOC board and full membership.

In Paris, breaking has been given a prestige downtown venue, joining sport climbing and 3-on-3 basketball at Place de la Concorde. — AP

● The IOC's pursuit of urban events to lure a younger audience saw breakdancing officially added to the medal events program at the 2024 Paris Games.

● The street dance battles will be called breaking at the Olympics, as it was in the 1970s by hip-hop pioneers in the United States.

MACHADO'S BRACE RESCUES NORTHEAST

Goa, Dec. 8: Bengaluru FC and NorthEast United split the points after playing out a thrilling 2-2 draw at the Fatorda Stadium, here on Tuesday.

Gerard Nus' men took an early lead through a fortuitous strike from Luis Machado (4') but Bengaluru hit back through Juanan (13') and substitute Udanta Singh (70'). Just as the Blues looked set for a win, Machado (78') struck again to ensure his team got a share of the points.

NEUFC got off to the best possible start when they scored in just the fourth minute. Rochharzela cut into the box and unleashed a shot at goal. His strike struck his teammate Machado and Bengaluru goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu could only look on in despair as the ball looped in.

But rather than be pegged down by the early goal, Bengaluru responded with a flurry of attacks and eventually found their equaliser, NEUFC's lead lasting just over ten minutes. A Rahul Bheke throw caused all sorts of chaos in the NEUFC box and it fell to Juanan, whose first-time shot found the net. — Agencies

Pakistan team released from managed isolation in NZ

Wellington, Dec. 8: The Pakistan cricket squad has been allowed to leave managed isolation to begin their preparation for Twenty20 and Test series against New Zealand.

All members of the squad tested negative on the 12th day of their 14-day stay in isolation and will be allowed to travel to the South Island resort of Queenstown, where they can now train as a group.

The team's exemption to train in smaller groups after the third day in isolation was revoked by New Zealand health authorities when players breached protocols by mingling in corridors and sharing food. Six members of the 53-

● All members of the Pakistan squad tested negative on the 12th day of their 14-day stay in isolation and will be allowed to travel to Queenstown.

strong squad tested positive for Covid-19 on arrival and two more subsequently returned positive tests and were moved to the quarantine wing of their hotel.

New Zealand's Ministry of Health reported 52 members of the Pakistan squad will be released from the quarantine facilities in Christchurch on Tuesday. "One case will remain in

the Christchurch quarantine facility until fully recovered," the ministry said in a statement.

That person is reported to have shown symptoms of Covid after arriving in New Zealand from Dubai but has since tested negative.

"After extensive testing and completion of their time in managed isolation in Christchurch, the ... medical officer of health is satisfied these people pose a very low risk to the community," the ministry added.

Head coach Misbah-ul-Haq earlier was quoted as saying his Pakistan players had suffered mentally and physically during their time in isolation. — AP