

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VISAKHAPATNAM | TUESDAY | 8 DECEMBER 2020

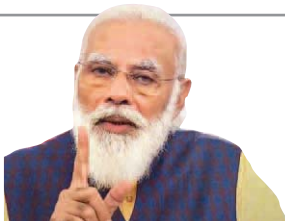
WEATHER



Max: 30.6°C
Min: 19.8°C
RH: 64%
Rainfall: NIL
Forecast: Mst.
Max/Min temp.
30/19 °C

NATION | 4

Can't progress to next century with old laws: PM



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WORLD | 5

Fauci's 'Wear a mask' tops quotes list



SPORTS | 8

Anju reveals she won medals with one kidney



Vol. 36 No. 194 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES | ₹6.00

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES (+23,989)
DEATHS (+380)

96,97,843 1,40,925

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+517) (+2)

TS: 2,73,858 1,474

(+316) (+5)

8,72,288 7,038

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

6,76,64,377

DEATHS 15,45,949

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana

Tithi: Kartika Bahula Ashtami till 5.12 pm

Star: Pubba till 1.43 pm

Varjyam: 8.32 pm to 10.03 pm

Durmuhurtam: 8.50 am to 9.34 am; 10.49 pm to 11.41 pm

Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm

HJRI CALENDAR

Rabbi-ul Aakhir 22, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.50 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 4.45 pm

Maghrib: 6.15 pm

Isha: 8.15 pm

SUNSET TODAY 5.22 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.16 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 00.29 PM

MOONRISE TODAY ---

COUNTER POINT



No food today... in support of farmers' Bharat Bandh!

SHORT TAKES

Phone-based test for Covid

Washington: Scientists have developed a novel technology for a CRISPR-based Covid-19 diagnostic test that uses a smartphone camera to provide accurate results in under 30 minutes. According to the research published in the journal *Cell*, the new diagnostic test can not only generate a positive or negative result, it also measures the viral load — in a given sample. "One reason we are excited about CRISPR-based diagnostics is the potential for quick, accurate results at the point of need," said Jennifer Doudna, a senior investigator at Gladstone Institutes in the US.

Small cos to file 4 GST returns/yr

New Delhi: Businesses with up to ₹5 crore turnover will have to file only four GST sales returns, or GSTR-3B, from January instead of 12 at present, according to sources. The Quarterly filing of Return with Monthly Payment (QRMP) Scheme would impact almost 94 lakh taxpayers, about 92 per cent of the total tax base of the goods and services tax (GST), he added. With this, from January onwards, small taxpayers would need to file only eight returns (four GSTR-3B and four GSTR-1 returns) in a year, one of the sources said.

Patient count rises with mystery illness

WHO team to visit Eluru to study disease

DC CORRESPONDENT
ELURU, DEC. 7

Mysterious illness continued to spread panic in Eluru in West Godavari district, with the number of cases increasing to nearly 450 on Monday. Out of this, 263 patients were discharged after recovery, while 171 are being treated at local government hospitals. Seventeen critically-ill patients were sent to Vijayawada for better medical care.

The unidentified disease has spread to more places in Eluru. Officials have added 300 beds in local government hospitals, 100 beds in ASRAM Hospital and 50 beds in Vijayawada for treating the mystery illness.

Though a majority of people infected by unknown pathogens have recovered and most of the others are stable, sudden worsening of the affected person's condition has created panic among people.

A constable — P. Kiran Kumar of Eluru Three town — who was on duty during the Chief Minister's visit to the city has suddenly collapsed on the road and gone unconscious with fits. He was immediately shifted to a hospital. Another employee of the irrigation department has suddenly fallen sick while sitting on his chair in his office. A driver of an ambulance belonging to a government hospital fell ill with the same symptoms.

The mysterious disease has caught the attention of national and international medical experts. A team of experts from the All India Institute of Medical and Sciences (AIIMS) came to the hospital and took samples from five patients. Expert teams from Pune-based National Institute of Virology and Hyderabad-based Indian Institute of Chemical Laboratory and National Institute of Nutrition are also coming to Eluru to find out about the disease through their experiments.

An expert team from the World Health Organization (WHO) will also come to Eluru on Tuesday, said Katamneni Bhaskar, the commissioner of the medical and health department.

One of the causes for the mystery illness, according to experts, could be 'neurotoxins', which enter the human body through water. There were reports of a suspected water contamination in the areas reporting most cases of mystery illness. Leaked water pipelines situated adjacent to sewerage drain pipelines could be the source of contamination. The people living in the affected areas said a bad smell was emanating

Monitor patients for a month: CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 7

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Monday directed health officials to keep all patients affected by mystery illness under medical observation for a month.

Jagan visited Government Hospital in Eluru on Monday. He interacted with patients and enquired about their health. He assured them and their relatives that the government would provide all the help to them. He spent 45 minutes in the hospital. Later, he reviewed the situation with the officials at the Zilla Parishad Office.

The officials told the Chief Minister that tests conducted on water samples revealed no contamination and all medical tests conducted on patients showed all parameters in 'normal' range. They

told the Chief Minister that blood culture reports are yet to come.

The officials said the cases had been reported from both urban and rural areas. Though the people are drinking boiled water or mineral water, the officials said they had fallen sick and had been affected by the disease.

The Chief Minister enquired with the officials if any patients were readmitted to the hospital after they were discharged. When the officials said three patients were readmitted, Jagan asked them to keep such patients under medical observation for one month, and they should be given good nutrition, food and suitable drugs.

He instructed the higher official of the medical and health department to stay in Eluru to monitor the situation.

PCB rules out water pollution

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 7

The Pollution Control Board has ruled out water contamination to be the cause of unidentified illness in Eluru after testing water samples collected from the affected areas, local water treatment plant and the Eluru canal.

They conducted tests on water samples to find out the presence of toxic metals and pesticides at its zonal lab in Visakhapatnam. The results, however, were negative.

Officials at the Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board (APPCB) maintain that nearly 80 per cent people in the town are consuming mineral water. "If residues of pesticides have got mixed in the water, people could not drink the

water because of its pungent odour."

The officials initially suspected the mix up of pesticides in the water as the symptoms exhibited by patients were almost identical to those who consume pesticide to commit suicide.

The officials have also ruled out air pollution as there are no polluting factories located in Eluru. The ambient air quality and air quality index in the town are good as the APPCB has monitoring stations to keep a tab on air pollution in the town.

The APPCB is also going to test the quality of milk by collecting samples from the affected families as the people had started complaining about their health from Saturday onwards.

from drinking water supplied by Eluru civic body.

Sources said 22 types of samples from water were taken for testing. While many of them have proved that the quality of the water was maintained as per the parameters, the results of two water samples and blood culture tests are yet to come.

According to West Godavari district collector Revu Muthyala Raju, local officials have surveyed

57,863 families to identify the persons suffering from unidentified disease in areas in Eluru.

According to a report that the collector had submitted to the CM, officials from village and ward secretariats found 191 sick people and they got them admitted to the hospitals.

He said that the disease was not communicable in nature and it is not being transmitted from one person from another so far.

Keep peace, states told

Bharat Bandh today; protesters told to adhere to Covid norms

DC CORRESPONDENTS
NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

In view of Tuesday's Bharat Bandh by various farmer unions, the home ministry is closely co-ordinating with all States and Union Territories to ensure that law and order is maintained. In a countrywide advisory, it said states and UT administrations must ensure that the Covid-19 guidelines issued with regard to health and social distancing are strictly followed.

The farmers have been camping along Delhi's borders in large numbers for more than 10 days now.

With massive protests at Delhi's borders continuing for the last 12 days, the protesting farmers at the Singhu border urged peace, and clarified that no shops or establishments will be forcibly closed on account of the bandh. "There will be a complete 'Bharat Bandh' till 3 pm on Tuesday, but emergency services will be allowed," farmers' leader Balbir Singh Rajewal said. Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesman Rakesh Tikait said that "tomorrow's Bharat Bandh is from 11 am to 3 pm. It is a symbolic protest. We will begin at 11 am so everyone can reach office on time... Services such as ambulances, even weddings, can go on. People can show their card and leave".

Home ministry officials said they were in constant touch with their counterparts in different states to ensure that the strike remains largely peaceful and any kind of violence can be avoided. They added that adequate personnel from central paramilitary force have also been deployed so that these can be rushed at a



Wrestler Kartar Singh, hockey player Rajbir Kaur, Olympics gold medalist hockey player Gurmair Singh and other sportspersons march towards Rashtrapati Bhavan to return their awards to the President in protest against the new farm laws, in New Delhi, on Monday.

— PTI

End agitation by 1 pm, says AP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 7

Agriculture minister Korasala Kannababu on Monday asked farmer unions to wind up their agitations as part of Tuesday's Bharat Bandh by 1 pm to avoid any inconvenience to the general public in the state.

In a statement issued here on Monday, the minister said instructions were issued to all government offices to start functioning from 1 pm onwards, and APSRTC was directed not to operate its services until 1 pm on Tuesday in the state. He

short notice in case of an eventuality.

"All necessary arrangements have been out in place and we feel that the strike call will remain peaceful. The situation is being constantly monitored and all states have also been asked to make

said instructions were also issued to all educational institutions to remain shut. He wished that the ongoing talks between both the Centre and the farmers would be resolved amicably. He appealed to the unions to ensure that the bandh is held in a peaceful atmosphere.

all necessary law and order arrangements," a senior Ministry official added.

According to sources, the farmer unions were likely to further intensify their agitation in case the issue is not resolved at the earliest.

SC rejects TS objection on power staff

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

The Supreme Court on Monday said that the allocation of staff between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh by Justice D.M. Dharmadhikari committee is final and the same can't be challenged by anyone including employees and officers before any judicial fora.

Holding that the staff allocation by the committee is final, Justice Ashok Bhushan heading a bench also comprising Justice M.R. Shah in a judgement pronounced today said, "We clarify that the One-Man Committee having completed the process of allocation, the said allocation cannot be challenged by any employee or any utility before any forum."

Insofar as the allocation made by the One-Man Committee, the court said, "no objection or challenge by any employee or officer is entertainable".

Having slammed the doors on any attempt to challenge Justice Dharmadhikari one man committee report on distribution of staff between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh post reorganiza-

tion of Andhra Pradesh and carving out of Telangana, the court said, "We make it clear that the One-Man Committee was entrusted only with distribution of personnel between the two States, which distribution has been finalised by the One-Man Committee."

■ Page 2: Staff can litigate on salary issues: SC

Apex court slams Centre on Central Vista project

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

The Supreme Court on Monday pulled up the Centre for going ahead with its Central Vista project despite the challenge to the ₹20,000-crore project pending before it, but allowed the foundation-laying of a new Parliament building by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday, December 10, after the Centre assured the court that no construction or demolition work would be done till the case

is finally decided.

"We have shown deference to you and expected that you will act in a prudent manner. The same deference should be shown to the court and there should be no demolition, nor construction nor any felling of trees," said Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, who headed a bench that also comprised Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Sanjiv Khanna.

The court took suo motu cognisance of the activities linked to the Central Vista project, including

the construction of a new Parliament building, saying: "We have listed this matter because of certain developments we came across in the public domain."

"We never thought you will go ahead so aggressively with the construction. The fact that there is no stay does not mean you can go ahead with everything," the Supreme Court bench told solicitor-general Tushar Mehta as the matter was taken up for hearing on Monday morning.

LANDSLIDES ON TIRUMALA ROAD, AFFECTS TRAFFIC

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 7

The second ghat road leading to Tirumala witnessed landslides at a few places in the wee hours of Monday, leading to disruption of vehicular traffic.

Passersby saw huge boulders on the roadside at the 12th km stretch of road which rolled down as the soil got washed away due to the recent rains under the influence of cyclone Nivar and then Burevi that followed in quick succession. No casualties were reported in the incident as the ghat road was closed at that time.

However, vehicular traffic was disrupted for a couple of hours after the ghat road was thrown open for Tirumala-bound vehicles.

On learning about this, the TTD's engineering staff along with the security personnel reached the spot and restored the traffic after clearing the debris.

Meanwhile, boulders fell on the second ghat road, the second time in just two weeks, raising concerns over the safety of pilgrims and locals, who take the route to Tirumala every day. The TTD authorities through public addressing systems are directing the pilgrims and locals to drive cautiously on the twin ghat roads.

BUMPER | CROP

Copious amount of water likely to help farmers to reap bumper harvest

Kadapa reservoirs bring simile to farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, DEC. 7

Reservoirs across Kadapa district are filled with water to the brim, following the release of water from the Srisailem reservoir, which received copious inflows because of heavy rains in the upper stream areas.

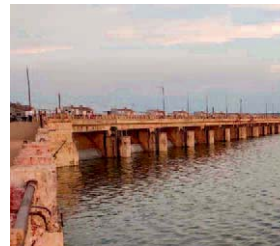
The reservoirs in Kadapa have the capacity to store 84,489 tmc feet of water. Currently, the reservoirs have 68,980 tmc feet of water, which is 82 per cent of its full capacity.

Apart from outflow from the Srisailem reservoir, a

large volume of floodwater reached reservoirs in the district from heavy rains that the district witnessed from August to November last year.

Farmers are happy with water in all the projects. Officials say there is a possibility of an additional strategic watering for crops this year.

With a water allocation of 10 tmc feet, the KC Canal covers 92,000 acres, where farmers are cultivating paddy this year. The officials said 55,600 acres would be irrigated under the Pulivendula Branch Canal.



The officials hope that 12,869 acres under the Lower Sagileru project, 10,236 acres under the Annamayya project and 12,850 acres under the Buggavanka project will also come under cultivation this year. They said up

WATER LEVELS AS ON MONDAY IN ALL THE KADAPA DISTRICT RESERVOIRS IN TMCS		
Name of the Reservoir	capacity	present water
Subsidiary Reservoir-1	02.134	01.413
Subsidiary Reservoir-2	02.447	01.650
SPVB Reservoir	17.730	13.729
Gandikota Reservoir	26.850	20.000
Mylavaram Dam	06.500	06.442
Vamikonda reservoir	01.658	01.622
Sarvaraja Sagar Reservoir	03.060	01.002
Chitravathi Balancing reservoir	10.229	10.036
Paidipalem Reservoir	06.000	05.855
Annamaiah Project	02.240	01.111
Lower Sagileru	00.169	00.066
Buggavanka Reservoir	00.510	00.438
Velligallu Project	04.640	04.611
Pincha Project	00.327	00.005

to 80 per cent of ayacut that was under the upper Sagileru and Velligallu

reservoirs will be irrigated this year. They also said that 70 per

SHORT TAKES

GOV RELEASES ₹2L TO KIN OF MARTYRED MAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 7

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan released ex gratia amount of Rs 2 lakh here on Monday to the kin of an army man killed in an encounter recently in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Governor sanctioned the amount from his discretionary grant funds to be given to the wife of Praveen Kumar Reddy, Havildar of Indian Army, as he was martyred in an encounter with the terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir. The Governor handed over the cheque of Rs 2 lakh to the 18 Madras Regiment of the Indian Army for transferring the same amount to the wife of a martyred army man who belonged to Reddyvaripalle of Chittoor district.

PK STAGES STIR, ASKS FOR RELIEF TO NIVAR-HIT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 7

Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan has taken up stir at his house in Hyderabad on Monday, demanding that the AP government pay relief worth ₹35,000 per acre and immediate relief of ₹10,000 as farmers suffered crop loss in over 17 lakh acres due to Cyclone Nivar.

The Jana Sena chief in a statement issued on Monday turned critical on AP government for failing to decide on the extent of relief to be provided to the affected farmers. He said that during a recent visit to the four storm-affected districts, farmers told him that they require ₹50,000 per acre as they lost the crops, to invest again in the crops.

He said that as the state government was not interested in revenue from liquor, it could use the annual revenue of Rs 16,500 crore being generated from liquor to provide relief to the affected farmers.



Yarlagaadda Lakshmi Prasad

COMMISSION BATS FOR TELUGU USE IN ADMIN AFFAIRS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 7

The chairman of the AP Hindi Academy and Official Language Commission, Dr Yarlagaadda Lakshmi Prasad, has suggested the district administration to ensure that all correspondence and orders are in Telugu for a wide reach of information on welfare programmes being implemented by the state government.

During a review with district officials here on Monday, Lakshmi Prasad has claimed that the state government has been taking all measures necessary to implement Telugu as an official language in the administrative affairs.

Referring to the state government's directions to the Commission to verify the use of official language as Telugu in administrative procedures, he said they are putting all their efforts to achieve the target.

As part of the initiative, a report is being submitted to the government on utilisation of mother tongue, a plan for its implementation, and making its use compulsory, the chairman said.

Lakshmi Prasad praised the Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy for making Telugu as a compulsory subject for classes 1 to 10.

Reminding that former chief minister late Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy provided the status of oriental language to Telugu, he said former chief ministers N.T. Rama Rao and Jalagam Vengala Rao also paid special attention to the mother tongue.

He also lauded Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu for his efforts in shifting the Centre of Excellence in Studies in Classical Telugu from Mysuru to Nellore.

Lakshmi Prasad instructed the district officers to check department-wise use of Telugu for official procedures and take measures for complete implementation.

Govt to start construction of 15.6-L houses for poor

House site pattas to be given to 30.75 lakh people from Dec. 25

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 7

The state government to start construction of 15.6 lakh houses at the rate of 8,914 houses each in all 175 Assembly segments on December 25 in Andhra Pradesh.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy reviewed the implementation of 'Navaratnalu Pedalandariki Illu' programme with the ministers and the officials here on Monday.

He directed the officials to start construction of houses from the first day onwards, as they were going to distribute house site pattas to 30.75 lakh people from December 25 to January 7 in the state.

The state government planned to take up construction of 28.3 lakh

● **THE STATE** government planned to take up construction of 28.3 lakh houses in the next three years and, out of them, construction of 15.6 lakh houses would be commenced on December 25 while 12.7 lakh houses would be taken up in phase-II.

houses in the next three years and, out of them, construction of 15.6 lakh houses would be commenced on December 25 while 12.7 lakh houses would be taken up in phase-II.

About the legal hurdles in the distribution of 3,65,987 house sites to the poor, the state government intended to give a letter each beneficiary assuring that their house site would be given to them once the legal hurdles were cleared. The CM directed the officials to take all necessary measures to get the cases resolved on distribution of house sites in various courts in the state in an expeditious manner.

He assured the beneficiaries to provide the benefit in whichever way they wanted.

Accordingly, he said that if the beneficiary wanted a constructed house in the allotted house site, it could be done or in case the beneficiary wished the supply of construction material and money for labour component, it could be

tion of 15.6 lakh houses would be commenced on December 25 while 12.7 lakh houses would be taken up in phase-II.

done.

He added that even if the beneficiary wanted money for the construction of the house, it also could be given.

He called upon all departments to work in coordination to take up construction of houses in an expeditious manner with proper planning.

He also felt the need to develop the necessary infrastructure at the upcoming housing colonies to avoid any inconvenience to the beneficiaries and their families.

He called for the construction of a model house in every layout.

As the government is getting ready to distribute 30.75 lakh house sites to the poor, worth of Rs 23,535 crore, and acquired 68,361 acres land.



Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu takes a look at the fishing equipment during his visit to Visakhapatnam Research Centre of the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology for an interactive session with the scientists and staff on the Beach Road in Visakhapatnam on Monday.

Covid-19, a game changer for fisheries sector: V-P

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 7:

Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu opined that Covid-19 might prove to be a game-changer for India's fisheries sector as the pandemic has made people conscious of adopting healthy dietary habits.

Addressing the scientists and staff at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute and Central Institute of Fisheries Technology here on Monday, he said that fish is a great source of protein and holds the key for reducing malnutrition in the country, especially in children. In this regard, he asked health experts and nutritionists to bring awareness among the common people about the many benefits of having fish in the diet.

"Fish is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which are necessary for our body and good for cardiovascular health. This aspect needs to be popularized and conveyed to the common man", he said.

Naidu said that from the pristine waters of the Himalayas to a long coastline of over 8000 kms, India is blessed with vast aquatic resources.

"These waters are

● **FISH** is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which are necessary for our body and good for cardiovascular health. This aspect needs to be popularised.

endowed with a diversity of fish fauna that has been supporting livelihoods of millions of people for many generations", he added.

Noting that India ranks second in the world in total fish production, he said that there still was a lot of potential to be harnessed in both inland and marine fisheries. He said that with a modest start from being a small scale industry, fisheries have grown to become a very important socio-economic force for the country over the past few decades and currently provides employment to nearly 15 million people on the Indian coast. India is the world's fourth largest exporter of fish and the sector has been one of the major contributors of foreign exchange earnings, he said and added that India should aspire to become number one in export of fish.

Observing that with the growing population and

the increasing demand for animal protein, the domestic requirement of fish is estimated to increase significantly, Naidu called for bridging the gap in demand and supply of the annual fish production in the country.

Naidu opined that catching fish and deep-sea fishing cannot meet the demand and thriving marine fish culture is the way forward. Stating that over 8000 kms of coastline offers immense potential for the development of mariculture, the Vice-President said that cage farming is widely recognized as the most important technology in mariculture for increasing fish production. He lauded CMFRI and CIFT for their good work in this regard and said that much more needs to be done.

Similarly, he called for the need to improve value-addition to fish, by maintaining the highest quality, consistency and reliability by better grading, quality assurance, and packaging of products.

Minister Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao, Dr A Gopalakrishnan, Director, CMFRI, Dr R. Raghu Prakash, CIFT, Subhadeep Ghosh, and other scientists were present.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy consoles a patient who is suffering from mystery illness at the Government hospital in Eluru.

Jagan is looking to increase green cover in Vizag: MP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 7

Rajya Sabha member and in-charge for north Andhra political affairs of the party V. Vijaya Sai Reddy said that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was particular about increasing greenery in Visakhapatnam and had suggested massive sapling plantation.

The MP was speaking at the small gathering in connection with the planting of saplings in law college premises and Panorama Hills in Madhurawada area along with minister for tourism and culture Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao and local officials.

He said trees were

nature's gift to humankind, and it was the responsibility of the people to sustain the green environment to neutralise the increasing pollution being caused by vehicles and the industries.

Mr Srinivasa Rao reminded that people must take permission from the concerned government department for cutting trees. "We are aiming at planting saplings in 1,000 parks in the city and build fencing around them. We will also plant saplings on either side of the roads to prevent mushrooming and illegal encroachment by street vendors," the minister said.

Commissioners of GVMC and other were present at the event.

Staff can litigate on salary issues: SC

FROM PAGE 1

On the applications raising the plea relating to salaries and allowances, the court said, "They need no consideration in these proceedings and employees of power utilities are free to adjudicate their claims before appropriate forum in accordance with law."

Having held that that the report by Justice Dharmadhikari on staff distribution between two States is final and non-challengeable, the court said, "We have found no merit in the objections to One-Man Committee's Concluding Report dated 20.06.2020 it is obligatory for power utilities of both the States and all concerned to carry out and implement the directions of the One-Man Committee Report."

The top court verdict came on petitions by Telangana Power Utilities, certain employees and employees' associations challenging the June 20, 2020, concluding report by the One-Man Committee.

The SC noted that in the erstwhile state, the power utilities were Andhra

● **The court said, we have found no merit in the objections to One-Man Committee's Concluding Report dated 20.06.2020 it is obligatory for power utilities of both the States and all concerned to carry out and implement the directions of the One-Man Committee Report.**

Pradesh Generation Corporation, Andhra Pradesh Transmission Corporation and four Power Distribution Companies — Eastern, Southern, Central and Northern DISCOMS. By three Andhra Pradesh government orders issued on May 29, 2014, for distribution companies, generation companies and transmission Corporation, the assets and liabilities of the corporations and companies were to be apportioned between the two new States. However, the dispute arose after power utilities of the two newly formed states could not arrive at any consensus with regard to modalities for allocation and distribution of personnel.

ALLOW HEARING ON PETITION DEALING WITH JUDGES, SAYS ADVOCATE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 7

Advocate S. Sarath Kumar asked the AP High Court three-judge bench, headed by Chief Justice J.K. Maheswari, to allow a hearing on whether judges, who got lands in capital city Amaravati region on nominal rate from the previous Telugu Desam regime, could take up an impartial hearing on acts related to decentralisation and repeal of CRDA, on Monday.

The advocate argued that if he was not allowed to argue on these two issues in the court, it would tantamount to deprival of his constitutional right to submit his views on the subject. He asked the court to issue a judicial order if it could find any trouble in taking up the hearing of the case.

However, the court informed him that there was no relationship on a batch of petitions filed challenging the two acts - AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions and repeal of CRDA, 2020 - and the petition on whether judges purchasing lands on the nominal rate in the Amaravati region. The court said that once the case was taken up for hearing, judicial order would be issued.

As the court was hearing the batch of petitions on two acts, advocate general S. Sriram informed the court that Supreme Court senior advocate Dushyant Dave would submit his arguments on behalf of the state government and asked for posting the hearing in the case to Tuesday. Accordingly, the court adjourned the case for hearing to December 8.

● **SOUGHT** hearing on whether judges, who got lands in capital city Amaravati on nominal rate from the previous Telugu Desam regime, could take up an impartial hearing on acts related to decentralisation and repeal of CRDA, on Monday.

HOLY COW TTD launches Gudiko-Gomata programme sponsored by Hindu Dharma Prachara Parishad

Pledge to protect Desi cows: TTD chairman

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 7

TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy has called upon the public to take a pledge to protect Gow Mata (holy cow) and appealed for a donation of desi breeds of cows to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD).

The TTD trust board chief on Monday launched the Gudiko-Gomata programme, sponsored by the Hindu Dharma Prachara Parishad (HDPP) and S.V. Go-Samrakshanashala at Sri Kanaka Durga temple in Vijayawada, along with AP endowments minister V. Srinivas. A pair of cow and calf were handed over to the temple authorities amidst chanting of Veda mantras and Mangala Vadyams.

The TTD chairman said, "The cow has occupied the place of mother and hence

hailed as "Gomata", in Hindu Sanatana Dharma. The Purnanic legends say that worship of cow begets fruits of worship of all Gods." He appealed that everyone should swear to protect the cows in the country.

He said the TTD board has launched the Go Samrakshana programme under the instructions of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. "A detailed action plan is being prepared for implementing the programme in Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu states apart from AP," he added.

AP endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas lauded the unique programme of TTD as a trendsetter and that all should support it.

Local MLAs Malladi Vishnu, Jogi Ramesh, K. Parthasarathy, TTD JEO P. were present.



TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy, Kanakadurga temple chairman Pyla Sominaidu others garland and feed a cow after launching 'Gudiko Gomatha' programme at Kanakadurga temple in Vijayawada on Monday.

— DC

TTD chairman warns action against fake websites

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 7

TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy has warned against fake social media websites of stringent legal action if they try to cheat devotees of Lord Venkateswara.

In a statement on Monday, the chairman said that this warning came in the wake when www.balaji-prasadam.com, a fake website, was found misguiding devotees of delivering Srivari laddu prasadam anywhere in the country.

The message on delivering laddus anywhere in the country by the fake website went viral on social media. Responding

● **The TTD vigilance and security officials have so far filed criminal cases on over 20 such fake websites.**

to reports of fake websites, the TTD chairman has directed the IT department of the TTD to take suitable action to block such fake websites.

It may be noted that the TTD has been receiving numerous complaints from devotees that many of them are being cheated by fake portals. Responding to it, the TTD vigilance and security officials have so far filed criminal cases on over 20 such fake websites.

IN BRIEF

SI TRANSFERRED
FOLLOWING BY
COMPLAINTDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 7

Acting on the alleged assault complaint lodged by a woman complainant against the Sub-Inspector Prakash Kumar of M.R. Palli police station, Tirupati SP Avula Ramesh Reddy on Monday transferred the SI to the Vacancy Reserve (VR).

It may be recalled that Vanitha Vani, hailing from Upparapalli in Tirupati rural limits, staged a protest at the M.R. Palli police station on Saturday, alleging that the SI Prakash Kumar had assaulted her using his belt and demanding action against him.

Tirupati urban SP, who was out of town at that time, learnt about the development later and cracked the whip against the SI against whom the woman complainant levelled allegations. Before transferring the SI to VR, the SP also ordered a probe by appointing additional SP E. Supraja as in-charge for the enquiry.

Meanwhile, SP Ramesh Reddy directed all the police officers under the Tirupati urban police wing to adopt a friendly-policing approach and smoothly behave with the public. He warned of severe consequences if anyone found to be acting harshly with the common people.

THREE KILLED,
FOUR INJURED
IN MISHAPDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 7

Three persons were killed and four injured when the car they were travelling rammied into a parked lorry on NH-16 at Bommuluru of Hanuman Junction in Krishna district in the early hours on Monday.

According to the police, a marriage party comprising seven persons including the driver was returning from Bhimavaram to Nuzvid after attending the marriage of granddaughter of Seemakurthy Nageswara Rao, 65, for the performance of Satyanarayana Vratam. By the time, their vehicle reached Bommuluru, the driver lost control on the vehicle and hit the lorry from behind. Under the impact, three persons were killed on the spot. They were identified as Prathi Tata Rao, 70, his wife Kotipalli Durga Parvathi, 65, and Seemakurthy Nageswara Rao. The injured were shifted to a government hospital at Eluru in West Godavari for medical treatment.

Police booked a case and investigation is underway.

NEW TRAIN TO
CHATRAPATHI
TERMINALDC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, DEC. 7

South Central Railway authorities agreed to operate a special train between Nagercoil-Chatrapathi Terminal via Anantapur district.

The special train- 06340 will be operated for four days in a week, Hindupur MP Gorantla Madhav said. The new train will be operated on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. The special train enters Anantapur district through Chittoor and Madanapalle.

Festive lights



Women light earthen lamps around a Nandi statue during the Karthika Somavaram special prayers at Lord Shiva Temple at HB Colony in Visakhapatnam on Monday. — K. MURALIKRISHNA

COPS RECOVER
GOLD WITHIN
HOURS IN VIZAGDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 7

The city crime police exhibiting their improvised skills recovered ₹12 lakh worth gold that was lost by a family on shopping at a busy Jagadamba Centre on Sunday evening. Two auto drivers found the bag containing the gold and split among themselves.

Deputy commissioner of police I. Suresh Babu told reporters that the complainant P. Venkateswara Rao of Akkayapalem in Visakhapatnam came to Jagadamba Centre in his car along with family members and visited the Co-Optex showroom on Sunday evening.

While alighting from the car, a bag containing gold ornaments fell from the possession of his wife and went unnoticed. He along with his wife, went to MR Peta police station and narrated the missing of the bag and its contents and requested for tracing it.

Immediately circle inspector Ch. Simhadri Naidu swung into action along with his personnel to trace the bag. On verification of CCTV footage nearby, he found one auto-rickshaw driver picking up the orange coloured bag. The inspector who happened to be nodal officer for community policing for auto-rickshaw drivers contacted the union leaders and traced the auto-rickshaw and the owner Gandhi Fancis at Dolphin Junction. He confessed to finding the bag and sharing the gold with another driver Mugi Dhanaraju, a resident of Chengalraopeta.

The inspector later recovered the entire gold and handed them.

AP records 316 Covid
cases, 5 more deaths

Guntur topped with 87 daily corona cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 7

AP registered 316 new Covid-19 cases taking the tally to 8,72,288 and five deaths raising the toll to 7,038 in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities released Covid-19 bulletin on Monday reporting that out of 43,006 samples tested, only 316 persons were found infected with Covid-19.

Out of a total number of 1,04,53,618 samples tested so far, 8,59,624 patients were recovered, and 5,626 patients are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of Covid-19, Guntur topped the state with 87 followed

● Out of 43,006 samples tested, only 316 persons were found infected with Covid-19.

● Out of a total number of 1,04,53,618 samples tested so far, 8,59,624 patients were recovered, and 5,626 patients are still active with the virus.

by 36 each in Krishna and Kadapa, 35 in East Godavari, 32 in Chittoor, 25 in Nellore, 15 in West Godavari, 13 in Srikakulam, 12 in Visakhapatnam, nine each in Anantapur and Prakasam and four in Kurnool and three in

Vizianagaram.

With regard to total active cases of confirmed Covid-19, Krishna took the lead in the state with 1,063 followed by 880 in Guntur, 750 in East Godavari, 642 in Nellore, 471 in Chittoor, 440 in West Godavari, 329 in Visakhapatnam, 308 in Prakasam, 198 in Anantapur, 173 in Srikakulam, 156 in Kadapa, 125 in Vizianagaram and 91 in Kurnool.

Krishna registered the death of two Covid-19 infected patients followed by one each in Anantapur, Kadapa and Visakhapatnam. Among cumulative cases of death of Covid-19 infect-

ed patients, Chittoor was worst hit with the highest number of 834 followed by 653 in Guntur, 649 in Krishna, 636 in East Godavari, 594 in Anantapur, 578 in Prakasam, 545 in Visakhapatnam, 527 in West Godavari, 499 in Nellore, 487 in Kurnool, 453 in Kadapa, 346 in Srikakulam and 237 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities discharged 595 Covid-19 infected patients after recovery from various hospitals in the state.

AP conducted Covid-19 tests on 1,95,761 samples per one million population and registered a positive rate of 8.34.

MAN SLITS HIS
WIFE'S THROAT,
KILLS HIMSELFDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 7

Following disputes among the family, a man killed his wife by slitting her throat and then ended his life by slitting his throat with the same knife at a mango garden in Gaddakindapalli under Anupalli panchayat of Ramachandrapuram mandal in Chittoor district on Monday.

According to the police, G. Venkatesh Reddy, 32, was the caretaker of the house, where he lived along with his wife, T. Sireesha, 23. This was Venkatesh Reddy's second marriage. They lived in a house at Cherlopalli near Tirupati before the lockdown was imposed.

They vacated Cherlopalli and shifted back to Venkatesh Reddy's native village.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE Husband, his parents wanted a boy

Man forces wife to drink acid

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 7

Obsessed with having a male child, a man forced his wife to drink acid mixed with water to punish her for bearing a girl child. The incident came to light on Monday when the Vizag city police booked cases against the man for allegedly attempting to kill his wife by beating her and forcing her to drink water mixed with acid. The woman, along with her parents, approached the police a few days ago

● The incident took place in April this year in Saripalli under Pendu-rthi in Vizag city. However, the woman J. Aparna did not disclose the incident to her parents and others as her husband had threatened to kill their child.

seeking action against her husband.

The incident took place in April this year in Saripalli under Pendu-rthi in Vizag city. However, the woman J. Aparna did not disclose the incident to her parents and others as her husband had threatened to kill their child.

She was also admitted into King George Hospital in the city for treatment. Aparna hailing from Chintalapalem village of Kothavalasa mandal in Vizianagaram district married J. Gangu Naidu of Bhimannadrapalem village of Anandapuram mandal on August 26, 2016. A

year after the marriage, Aparna became the mother of a baby girl. As they wanted a boy, Naidu and his parents used to harass Aparna mentally and physically for giving birth to a girl. Later Aparna and her husband shifted to the Saripalle area in Vizag city. However, the harassment did not end.

As she saw no relief from the torture and her health condition turned bad Aparna revealed the truth to her parents and informed the city police chief on December 4.

8 smugglers held;
sanders logs seizedDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 7

Continuing the drive against illegal red sanders smuggling, Chittoor district police wing on Monday arrested eight red sanders smugglers and seized 168 logs worth ₹4 crore and vehicles worth ₹60 lakh in connection with two smuggling cases

Disclosing the case details to media persons, Chittoor SP Mr S. Senthil Kumar said, Puttur Police led by CI M. Venkatarami Reddy was conducting vehicular checking at Taduku forest check post when a speeding truck moving towards Chennai from Tirupati tried to evade the police checking.

Puttur police, however, intercepted the vehicle after a hot chase and arrested six smugglers and seized 103

red sander logs. A case has been registered at the Taluk PS and smugglers were sent to remand, the SP said.

In another incident, the Chittoor Taluk police have intercepted two vehicles on Tirupati-Bengaluru highway at Kodigutta cross in Murakambattu. Two smugglers have tried to smuggle 65 red sanders logs in these vehicles.

The police have seized all the logs and arrested the smugglers, after registering a case.

The arrested accused were identified as R. Bala Murugan, 25, T. Gangaiah, 35, M. Dorai Raja, 40, K. Sudhakar, 30, D. Naveen, 29, Y. Rajesh, 29, M. Aravind Reddy, 34, and N. Chandrababu, 29. The SP sent out a stern warning to red sanders smugglers and said that they would continue the drive.

7 HELD, 25 RED SANDERS LOGS SEIZED

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, DEC. 7

The Kadapa police arrested seven members of red sanders cutting labourers and seized 25 red sanders logs weighing 682 kg. The officer on special duty Devaprasad held a media conference at the district police office on Monday morning and explained the details. The Ramapuram police were on a casual vehicle checking at the Medarapalli check post on

Sunday night when they found the red sanders logs in a truck which was carrying coconut coir. The labourers, who are also travelling in the same vehicle, kept these logs inside the coconut coir bales. The police identified the red sander logs and seized the vehicle. The police filed a case and investigated. Rayachoti DSP Vasudevan, Lakkireddypalli Inspector Yugandhar, SI Mynuddin were present in the press meet.

JOINT OPERATION BY SEB, POLICE HELP
BOOK 1,088 CASES, NAB 1,537 IN STATEDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 7

A state-wide joint operation by the special enforcement bureau and police under operation Nigha, helped book 1,088 cases and arrest 1,537 persons on the intervening night of December 5 and 6 in AP.

All the personnel from SEB and the police were formed into 269 special teams along with other local police station teams and conducted route watch, and surprise checks at 1,117 identified vulnerable points in the state. Accordingly, the

teams seized, 3,652 nips of NDPL, 11,230 nips of DPL, 60,167.7 lt of liquor, 43,326 lt of fermented jaggery wash, 349 tones of sand, 530 kg of ganja, 140 kg of black jaggery, 4.45 lakh sachets of gutka worth of ₹45 lakh, ₹11.76 lakh cash, 8.35 lakh gaming coins during raids on gambling places, unaccounted silver of 1.5 kg and cash of ₹13.80 lakh.

DGP Goutam Sawang appreciated the efforts of the field for successfully carrying out the operation Nigha and directed them to organise such special drives regularly.

EAST GODAVARI COLLECTOR DEFERS
DECISION ON DIVIS PHARMA UNITDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 7

The East Godavari District Collector D. Muralidhar Reddy deferred the decision on setting up of Pharma Unit by Divis Laboratories in Thondangi mandal in the district.

He convened a meeting with the representatives of Divis Laboratories on Monday in the presence of Tuni MLA Dadisetty Raja.

He discussed the issues raised by the people in the area and their objections. He told the company representatives that the government would decide on the proposed pharma unit only following the wishes of the people.

He said that the final deci-

sion would be taken only after consideration of local representations and the discussions on company proposals in the next meeting. The Joint Collector G. Rajakumari, District Industries General Manager B. Srinivas, Pollution Control Board Executive Engineer Mr Ramarao, APIIC General Manager K.C. Sudhakar and others were present.

According to sources, Mr Muralidhar Reddy told the company representatives that the people of the Thondangi Mandal were objecting to air and water pollution, providing local employment and utilisation of CSR funds. He also mentioned the future of the hatchery industries.

BJP: NDA IS A
FARMER-BIASED

Kadapa: BJP state secretary Nagotu Ramesh Naidu said the country's farmers were openly welcoming the agrarian reforms. He said the opposition, which is all set to discredit Prime Minister.

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SHORT TAKES

CAN'T BUILD NEW CENTURY WITH OLD LAWS: PM

Lucknow, Dec. 7: Amid the row over laws meant to bring a major change in the agri-marketing sector, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said reforms are needed for development and some laws from the past century have become a burden now.

Launching the Agra metro rail project through video conference, Modi said the reforms carried out by his government are also getting reflected in election results. His pitch on the importance of reforms comes ahead of Tuesday's Bharat Bandh over the three new farm laws enacted at the Centre. But during his brief address, the Prime Minister made no direct reference to the new laws or the farmers' protests.

"Reforms are needed for development. Reforms are very much needed for a new order and to give new facilities. We cannot build the next century with the laws of the previous century," he said. "Some laws that used to be good in the past century have become a burden in the present century. Reforms should be a continuous process," he said. Modi said his government is carrying out "holistic reforms".

"Earlier, reforms used to happen in a piecemeal manner, or keeping in mind some sectors and departments," the Prime Minister said.

RAJINI IS A MAN OF HIS WORD, SAYS ELDER BROTHER

Bengaluru, Dec. 7: Ahead of launching his political party next month, Tamil superstar Rajinikanth paid a visit to his elder brother R. Sathyannarayana Rao in Bengaluru, where he grew up. "We hadn't met for quite some time. He came last night and left this morning for Chennai after spending some good time," 77-year-old Rao said on Monday.

Rajinikanth sought the blessings of his brother, who wished him good health and a long life. Rao declined to offer comments on the political innings of his brother.

"Didn't he say that he (Rajinikanth) will talk about that on December 31?" Rao said. Rao recalled that Rajinikanth spent his childhood in the city, where he was born, and lived here till the age of 22 before shifting to Chennai.

"He (Rajinikanth) has 'gurukripa' (grace of the guru)," he said. "He (Rajinikanth) is a man of his word. He definitely does what he says. He always keeps his word," Rao added.

Rajinikanth announced on Thursday he would launch a political party in January 2021 to contest in the Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu.

SC REFUSES TO QUASH FIR AGAINST ANCHOR

New Delhi, Dec. 7: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to quash FIRs lodged against TV anchor Amish Devgan for his alleged defamatory remarks on Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti during a show on June 15, but granted him protection from arrest till conclusion of probe if he continues to cooperate in the investigation.

The top court, however, agreed to the submission of the news anchor that all pending FIRs pertained to the same telecast and ordered transfer of all seven cases registered in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Telangana and Madhya Pradesh to Ajmer where the first complaint was registered. A bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and Sanjiv Khanna reproduced the relevant portions of the transcript of the debate anchored by Devgan on June 15 and said that it was "apparent that the petitioner (the journalist) was an equal co-participant, rather than a mere host".

"The transcript, including the offending portion, would form a part of the 'content', but any evaluation would require examination and consideration of the variable 'context' as well as the 'intent' and the 'harm/impact'.

These have to be evaluated before the court can form an opinion on whether an offence is made out.

The evaluative judgment on these aspects would be based upon facts, which have to be inquired into and ascertained by police investigation," the bench said.

CONGRESS BACKS BHARAT BANDH IN MP, C'GARH

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, DEC. 7

Former chief minister and Madhya Pradesh Congress unit president Kamal Nath on Monday declared his party's support to the December 8 "Bharat Bandh" call given by different farmers' bodies in protest against the 3 farm laws by the Centre.

In a statement issued here, Nath said all the district units of the party in the state have been asked to stage demonstrations in district headquarters and submit memorandums to the local district collectors seeking withdrawal of the 3 'controversial' farm bill passed in the parliament recently, on the day. Nath also slammed the Centre for bringing the laws without consulting the farmers' bodies.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Tuesday said the ruling Congress would support "Bharat Bandh."

He described the 3 farm laws as 'anti-farmer' and demanded the Centre to repeal them.



Farmers distribute eatables during their agitation against the new farm laws at Singhu border in New Delhi on Monday.

— PTI

Oppn support irresponsible: BJP

Alleges Opposition parties are trying to save their existence through farmers protests

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

Insisting that a section of farmers have fallen in the grip of a few vested interests, the BJP on Monday said Opposition parties are supporting the protests by some farmers' groups against the recently passed legislations "to save their existence after being repeatedly rejected by people in different elections across the country."

The ruling party said Opposition parties jumping in to support the protest and the 'Bharat Bandh' called by some farmers unions are "irresponsibly and unwarrantedly trying to give protests a wrong direction in order to serve their political interests."

The BJP asserted that the reforms will benefit the small and marginal farmers, which are 86 per cent of the total farming community.

Pointing out that the earlier Congress-led UPA government, the then agriculture minister and NCP supremo Sharad Pawar and the Congress' Rahul Gandhi had supported reforms in the APMC Act, senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said whether it is CAA or Shaheen Bagh or any reform, Opposition opposes the Modi government for the sake of opposition forgetting their own work on the same issue in the past, exposing their "double standards."

Reading from the Congress' 2019 Lok Sabha poll manifesto and citing a meeting of Congress chief ministers called by Gandhi in 2013, a policy document of the erstwhile Planning Commission and letters by the then agriculture minister Pawar to chief ministers of all states, Prasad said all had suggested and supported amendment in the APMC

Act, which the Modi government has done. On the issue of contract farming, Prasad pointed that during the UPA rule, states like Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chattisgarh, Odisha, Haryana, Goa, Maharashtra, MP, Mizoram had implemented model contract farming.

"I will reiterate again that farmers' land can neither be leased nor sold nor mortgaged in contract farming as it is not the land but produce that will be the collateral," he asserted. On allegations that the government wants to shut down mandis, he said since the implementation of reforms laws, the minimum support price of six Kharif and Rabi crops have been hiked and by the end of November, 318 lakh tonnes of rice worth ₹60,000 crore has been procured out of which 202 lakh tonnes of paddy has been procured from Punjab.

Cong: Govt responsible for inconvenience due to stir

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

Lending its full support to the 'Bharat Bandh' called by farmers' unions against the three central agriculture laws, the Congress on Monday said the government would be responsible for any inconvenience caused to the people due to the strike.

Around 18 Opposition parties, including the Congress, have already supported the 'Bharat Bandh' call.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi asserted that the Congress supported the "peaceful" Bharat Bandh.

The 'Adani-Ambani Farm Laws' have to be revoked, "Nothing less is acceptable", Gandhi tweeted.

Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar said that the government would be responsible for any inconvenience caused to the people due to the strike.

"The Modi government is squarely responsible for the current situation and it would be responsible for any inconvenience caused to the public during the Bandh tomorrow," Jakhar told the media.

Accusing the government of following the US

model in acting as a "lobbyist" for corporates, he said, "Please do not follow America. The government should not become a lobbyist for the corporate. Corporatising agriculture is not acceptable. The Prime Minister should take note of it".

He said government's intention behind bringing the three laws is "suspect" and accused the ruling dispensation of "misleading" the country on the three legislations.

Jakhar reiterated his party's demand to call a special session of Parliament to discuss the matter afresh and repeal the three farm laws.

KEJRIWAL REVIEWS ARRANGEMENTS AT BORDER

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday visited the Singhu border, where thousands of farmers are protesting against the Centre's new farm laws, and checked arrangements made for them by the city government.

The visit comes a day after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) extended its support to the 'Bharat Bandh' called by farmers' organisations on December 8. Kejriwal was accompanied by his cabinet ministers and some party MLAs during the brief visit to the protest venue on the Delhi-Haryana border.

"I checked the arrangements. We received a lot of pressure to allow the use of stadiums as temporary prisons but we did not give permission and I feel this helped the movement. Since then our party MLAs and ministers have been involved in ensuring that farmers do not face any discomfort," he said.

"We are working like 'sewadaar'. Here I have not come as a Chief Minister but as a 'sewadaar' to serve the farmers. It is our responsibility to support the farmers," he told reporters.

On Sunday, Kejriwal had said that all AAP workers across the country will support the nationwide strike and appealed to all citizens to support the farmers. Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, are protesting at various border points of Delhi against the new farm laws.

The Centre's offer to amend the contentious laws failed to cut ice with farmer groups during the fifth round of talks on Saturday.

● **THE VISIT** comes a day after the AAP extended its support to the 'Bharat Bandh' called by farmers' organisations on December 8. Kejriwal was accompanied by his cabinet ministers and some party MLAs during the brief visit to the protest venue on the Delhi-Haryana border.

MORTAL REMAINS FOUND AT CRASH SITE, SAYS NAVY

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

Indian Navy said on Monday that mortal remains of a human body have been recovered in the vicinity of the wreckage site of crashed fighter aircraft MiG-29K.

"The samples are being sent for DNA testing for confirmation of identity," said Indian Navy.

Indian Navy's two-seater, trainer aircraft MiG-29K flying over Arabian Sea had crashed on Nov. 26. One of the pilot of the MiG-29K was rescued. However, the second pilot Cdr Nishant Singh has been missing. "Due to salt water the body could not be physically identified," said sources.

India hosts fewer foreign defence firms despite largest importer tag

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

India hosts a relatively low number of large foreign defence manufacturers considering that it has been among the world's largest arms importers for decades and has a policy of domestic arms — industrial development, according to a report by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

The report looked at the international presence of the 15 largest arms companies in 2019. These companies are present in a total of 49 countries, through majority-owned subsidiaries, joint ventures and research facilities.

The report said that it identified 13 foreign entities in India. However, only two are involved in manufacturing activities. Airbus, BAE Systems, Boeing, General Dynamics, L3Harris Technologies, Leonardo, Lockheed Martin and Thales all have foreign entities in India.

UK hosts the most entities about 14 per cent of the total for the 15 largest arms companies. This was followed by Australia (9.5 per cent), the USA (9.0 per cent), Canada (7.5 per cent), Germany (7.3 per cent), Saudi Arabia (6.0 per cent), Italy (3.8 per cent) and India (3.3 per cent).

With a global presence spanning 24 countries each, Thales and Airbus

are the two most internationalised companies — followed closely by Boeing (21 countries), Leonardo (21 countries) and Lockheed Martin (19 countries).

The report said that low presence of foreign companies could be explained by its Indian rules on foreign investment in its domestic arms industry, which have evolved over time. As India developed its arms procurement policy, it introduced offset requirements to leverage foreign technologies in support of its arms industry. However, between 2006 and 2014 the offset rules capped foreign direct investment in Indian arms companies at 26 per cent; this rose to 49 per cent

after 2014. In September 2020 the cap was revised again, to 74 per cent. "This higher threshold may raise the interest of major arms companies in partnering with India's domestic firms or setting up local subsidiaries, it said.

In August, India announced a negative list of 101 defence platforms and weapons whose import will be progressively banned starting December 2020 to boost indigenisation of defence production under Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. India hopes with this embargo, contracts worth ₹4 lakh crore will be placed with the domestic industry within the next five to seven years.

Polling to be held in five districts of Kerala today

DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC. 7

Five of the 14 districts in Kerala will go to polls on Tuesday in the first phase of local body elections, considered the semifinals ahead of the Assembly polls in 2021.

The voters of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Idukki districts, will go out to vote in polling booths amid Covid-19 safety protocol. The polls are crucial for the ruling CPM led LDF, opposition Congress led UDF and the BJP which is making desperate attempts to make inroads into the red bastion. All eyes are set on the prestigious Thiruvananthapuram corporation. The BJP buoyed by the massive surge in GHMC elections in Hyderabad believes that the corporation is within their striking range.

In 2015 polls it won 34 seats becoming the main opposition. This time it is targeting 70 of the 100 wards. The LDF on the other hand is confident of retaining the corporation on the strength of its development work and pro-poor welfare programmes.

There are 88,25,620 registered voters across these districts who will elect representatives to 318 grama panchayats, 50 block panchayats, five district panchayats, 20 munic-

ipalities and 2 corporations. Though the main fight is between the ruling CPM led LDF and opposition Congress led UDF, with the BJP too putting up a strong fight the local body polls are expected to witness triangular contests in many local bodies.

The LDF which has traditionally maintained an upper hand in local body polls, is facing a tough challenge this time in the wake of sensational gold smuggling case involving chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan's former principal secretary M. and some other functionaries of the CMO.

Though the local issues usually gain precedence over state or national issues in the local body polls, the gold smuggling, corruption and the arrest of CPM's former state secretary Kodieryi Balakrishnan's son in a money trail related to drug racket are being used widely in opposition campaigns.

Almost all major central investigation agencies including National Investigation Agency (NIA), CBI, Enforcement Directorate, Customs are probing cases related to gold smuggling and alleged corruption in government's major schemes. The LDF on its part has tried to build a counter attack accusing the central agencies of implementing the political agenda of the BJP led government at the Centre.

QUACK | CHARGE

Surgery by PG Ayurveda practitioners poses threat, say docs

Docs want Ayurveda surgery order recall

New Delhi, Dec. 7: The AIIMS Resident Doctors' Association (RDA) on Monday demanded withdrawal of a Central Council of Indian Medicine notification authorising post-graduate Ayurveda practitioners to be trained in general surgical procedures, saying it would "encourage quackery" and "pose hazardous risk" to the health of the population.

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has given a call to all doctors practising modern medicine to withdraw non-essential and non-Covid services on

December 11 protesting the new regulations.

Emergency services, along with ICUs and CCUs, will function but no elective surgical case will be posted, the doctors' body has said.

Doctors of modern medicine across the country will hold demonstrations in over 10,000 public spots on Tuesday in small groups of 20 following the Covid-19 protocols between 12 noon to 2 pm to protest the regulations, IMA said.

In a letter to Union health minister Harsh Vardhan, the RDA raised

objection over the "mixing of streams" of medicine, stating it "poses hazardous risk to the health of innocent, general population which may be irreversible and fatal".

It said that modern medicine has evolved over a period of time through groundbreaking research and all possible developments. "This journey of modern medicine is entirely different from that of Ayurveda. Therefore, it is neither legitimate nor safe for our patients to be treated by the doctors with incomplete knowledge of the different streams," the

AIIMS RDA said.

In the letter, it stated that Ayurveda is a strong system to uphold its dignity and do wonders on its very own without any illegitimate support or encroachment into any separate stream of medicine. Bachelors of Ayurveda must be given entirely separate degrees and titles such as 'Vaidya' and not similar to the doctors learning and practising modern medicine. Bachelor and Masters degree in allopathy and all other streams of medicine must be distinct in order to avoid "crosspathy" in

disguise, the RDA said.

"Thus, standing in solidarity with all the practitioners and learners of modern medicine in India we oppose these new regulations which would encourage quackery and demerit and its immediate withdrawal in order to preserve the sanctitude and uphold the virtues of both Ayurveda and Modern Medicine and above all to safeguard the health of the patients and population. If no immediate action is taken against the same, we shall be forced to take strict, further steps," the RDA warned. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

ACTING U.S. DEFENCE SECY IN INDONESIA

Jakarta, Dec. 7: The acting US secretary of defence met with his counterpart in Indonesia on Monday as part of a visit to Asia in which he will push Washington's free and open Indo-Pacific policy.

Christopher Miller met Indonesian Minister of Defence Prabowo Subianto on Monday, according to Prabowo's office. The Pentagon has said during his trip Miller will meet with his counterparts and other senior officials to discuss the importance of the bilateral defence relationships and securing a free and open Indo-Pacific.

After Indonesia, Miller will head to the Philippines. Miller was installed by President Donald Trump on November 9 after he fired Mark Esper.

POPE TO MAKE PILGRIMAGE TO IRAQ IN MARCH

Vatican City, Dec. 7: Pope Francis will make a pilgrimage to Iraq in March, pandemic conditions permitting, the Vatican said on Monday, in announcing what would be the pontiff's first trip aboard in more than a year.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Brunetti on Monday said Francis will make the March 5-8 visit, with stops in Baghdad, and the "plains of Ur, linked to the memory of Abraham," the Biblical patriarch, as well as to the cities of Irbil, Mosul and Qaraqosh.

Brunetti said the trip's schedule will be announced later and will take into consideration "the evolution of the worldwide health emergency" that is the Covid-19 pandemic. It would be the first trip abroad for Francis since November 2019, when he visited Thailand and Japan. Francis turns 84 on December 17. The Vatican said Francis had accepted invitations from the Iraqi government from the local Catholic church.

INDIAN EXPAT CHARGED IN UAE FOR MURDER

Dubai, Dec. 7: A UAE-based Indian expat has been charged with beating a compatriot to death after a heated argument over illegal rented accommodation, according to a media report.

The Dubai Court of First Instance on Sunday heard the case and charged the 31-year-old accused for assaulting and leaving his compatriot in unconscious condition following an argument after he went to collect rent from the victim, the *Gulf News* reported on Sunday.

According to records, the incident happened in August when the victim's mother was worried as her repeated calls to her son went unanswered. She then called his friend, who went to his rented apartment to check after breaking open the door with the security guard and found him lying dead on the bed.

Dubai Police were alerted and investigations revealed that the victim had died three days before the body was discovered, the report, which does not identify both the victim and defendant, said.

MINERS' DEATH: CHINA CITY CRACKS WHIP

Beijing, Dec. 7: China's southwestern megacity of Chongqing has ordered a crackdown on breaches of mine safety following last week's deaths of 23 workers in one of the country's worst recent mining disasters.

State media reported Monday that officials were called to a video conference Sunday and told to undertake thorough reforms after the deaths at the Diaoshuidong mine, which was caused by the buildup of deadly levels of carbon monoxide in the shaft. There have been no reports of arrests, although a full investigation has been launched into Friday's disaster.

One miner was rescued from the mine, where the death toll had originally been put at at least 18. Miners were reportedly dismantling equipment in the mine, which had been closed two months earlier and may have lacked the ventilation systems needed to clear the gas that leaks from the coal seam. China's coal mining industry used to be the world's deadliest, suffering more than 5,000 fatalities a year from explosions, floods and gas leaks. Safety improved dramatically after authorities overhauled the industry starting about 15 years ago.

Sinovac aims 600 mn capacity

Chinese company gets \$500 mn investment in a boost to its vaccine development efforts

Taipei, Dec. 7: Chinese vaccine company Sinovac announced Monday that it is planning to complete a new facility to double its annual vaccine production capacity to 600 million doses by the end of the year, while also securing a \$500 million investment in a boost to its Covid-19 vaccine development efforts.

The company is currently conducting the last stage of clinical trials for its vaccine candidate in Brazil, Turkey and Indonesia and is among the frontrunners of China's vaccine efforts. China has at least five Covid-19 vaccine candidates running late stage clinical trials across more than a dozen countries. Sino Biopharmaceutical Ltd., a pharmaceutical conglomerate, bought a 15 per cent stake in Sinovac for an investment of \$500 million.

The funds will allow the company to "improve our vaccine sales capabilities, expand in Asia markets, develop and access new technologies, and most importantly, accelerate our efforts to help combat the global pandemic," Sinovac CEO Yin Weidong said in a statement. On Sunday, 1.2 million doses of its experimental vaccine arrived in Indonesia and are expected to be approved for use soon.

Sinovac's candidate is a two-dose inactivated vaccine, an old-school technology in which a live virus is killed and then purified. It can be stored at 2 to 8 C (36 to 46 F), within the range of a normal refrigerator, unlike some other vaccines candidates that require far lower temperatures. Sinovac's experimental vaccine is currently approved for emergency use in China, although it has not yet obtained final market approval.

Under emergency use, it has been distributed to groups the Chinese government deemed suitable, including front-line medical workers and border personnel. The latest public data from the company, published in the science journal *Lancet*, showed its candidate produced lower

Virus 'war zone', warns Korean min

Seoul, Dec. 7: South Korea's health minister said Monday that the Seoul metropolitan area is now a "Covid-19 war zone," as the country reported another 615 new infections and the virus appeared to be spreading faster. The president, meanwhile, issued a call to expand testing and contact tracing.

The country has recorded more than 5,300 new infections in the past 10 days and Monday was the 30th day in a row of triple-digit daily jumps. Most cases have come from the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area, where half of South Korea's 51 million people live.

With people increasingly venturing out in public and spending longer hours indoors amid cold temperatures, health workers have struggled to stem transmissions tied to

restaurants, saunas, schools, hospitals and long-term care facilities.

"The capital area is now a Covid-19 war zone," Health Minister Park Neung-hoo said, asking for citizen vigilance. He said the country may have to increase social distancing to prevent the resurgence in the capital area from "exploding into a major outbreak nationwide and collapsing the health-care system." Na Seong-woong, a senior official from the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency, said the country could be reporting around 900 new infections a day next week if it fails to slow the virus quickly. While South Korea managed to contain a major outbreak in spring, it's less clear where the reinforcements will come if the virus wreaks havoc in the Seoul area. — AP

levels of antibodies in people than those who have recovered from Covid-19. — AP

Lawmakers: Covid-19 relief bill won't offer \$1,200 checks

Washington, Dec. 7: With time running out, lawmakers on Sunday closed in on a proposed Covid-19 relief bill that would provide roughly \$300 in extra federal weekly unemployment benefits but not another round of \$1,200 in direct payments to most Americans, leaving that issue for President-elect Joe Biden to wrestle over with a new Congress next year.

The \$908 billion aid package to be released Monday would be attached to a larger year-end spending bill needed to avert a government shutdown this coming weekend. The cash payments were popular when they were first distributed after the pandemic hit. — AP

TRUMP LAWYER RUDY GIULIANI TESTS POSITIVE

Washington, Dec. 7: Rudy Giuliani, the personal lawyer to Donald Trump, has tested positive for Covid-19, becoming the latest person in the US president's inner circle to be infected by the deadly virus.

Giuliani, 76, has been taken to the MedStar Georgetown University Hospital in Washington DC, according to US media reports.

The news of the former mayor of New York testing positive was first tweeted by President Trump on Sunday. The president and his team have been criticised for shunning Covid-19 safety guidance.

Trump, 74, was tested positive in October. — PTI

TECH PROVIDES RESULTS IN LESS THAN 30 MINS

Washington, Dec. 7: Scientists have developed a novel technology for a CRISPR-based Covid-19 diagnostic test that uses a smartphone camera to provide accurate results in under 30 minutes.

According to the research published in the journal *Cell*, the new diagnostic test can not only generate a positive or negative result, it also measures the viral load — the concentration of virus — in a given sample. All CRISPR diagnostics to date have required that the viral RNA be converted to DNA and amplified before it can be detected, adding time and complexity, the researchers said.

In contrast, the new approach skips all the conversion and amplification steps, using CRISPR to directly detect the viral RNA, they said. — PTI

UK to Brexit-proof Pfizer vaccines

London, Dec. 7: Britain said on Monday that plans are being put in place to ensure the transportation of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19 is not affected in the event of no agreement being clinched with the European Union by the end of the Brexit transition period on December 31.

The first vaccine doses have been arriving from Pfizer's manufacturing site in Belgium after the UK's independent regulator gave the official go-ahead for its rollout from this week. However, the bulk of the supply is expected in the New Year and the UK's Road Haulage Association has warned that a failure to agree an EU-UK post-Brexit trade deal by the end of this month could see "significant disruption" to the flow of goods for many months.

"We have looked at use of non-commercial flights,

we've got border arrangements in place," Foreign Office minister James Cleverly told UK media outlets in reference to Brexit-proofing vaccine supplies. This could "potentially" involve the armed forces being deployed if required, as the minister added: "This is such an important product, it's probably perhaps the most important product, so we will look to ensure that those supplies are available in the UK in whatever circumstance."

The UK and EU are locked in last-ditch efforts to try and thrash out an agreement that can be ratified by all 27 EU members before the December-end deadline. Significant differences over fishing rights and business competition rules remain the main stumbling blocks but both sides have said there is still time to agree a pact. — PTI

LIBRARY | UPDATE

PoC George Floyd's 'I can't breathe' also finds mention

Fauci's 'Wear a mask' tops quotes list

New Haven (US), Dec. 7: A plea from Dr Anthony Fauci for people to "wear a mask" to slow the spread of the Coronavirus tops a Yale Law School librarian's list of the most notable quotes of 2020.

The list assembled by Fred Shapiro, an associate director at the library, is an annual update to "The Yale Book of Quotations," which was first published in 2006. Also on the list is "I can't breathe," the plea George Floyd made repeatedly to police officers holding him down on a

Minneapolis street corner. Several quotes from the presidential campaign appear including Joe Biden telling a student: "You're a lying dog-faced pony soldier."

Shapiro said he picks quotes that are not necessarily admirable or eloquent, but rather because they are famous or particularly revealing of the spirit of the times.

THE LIST 1. "Wear a mask." — Dr. Anthony Fauci, CNN interview, May 21. 2. "I can't breathe." — George Floyd,

plea to police officer, Minneapolis, May 25. 3. "One day — it's like a miracle — it will disappear." President Donald Trump, referring to the coronavirus in remarks at an African American History Month reception at the White House, Feb. 27. 4. "I see the disinfectant that knocks it out in a minute, one minute. And is there a way we can do something like that by injection inside or almost a cleaning?" — Trump, in remarks at a White House Coronavirus Task Force news

Iran says US 'got the message' on tense exchanges in Gulf

Tehran, Dec. 7: Iran said on Monday it was glad the United States "got the message" and modified its behaviour in the Persian Gulf, after the top US Navy official in the region said his forces had reached a state of deterrence with Iran after months of regional attacks and seizures at sea.

"We are happy that the other party has got the message and made its behaviour more respectful," Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said. He said the US military is the "main source of tension" in the region and that Iranian forces have always acted professionally.

"Unfortunately, the US has often had an unprofessional approach toward Iran's navy," he said. He was responding to Vice Adm. Sam Paparo's remarks, delivered at a conference in Bahrain on Sunday. Paparo, who oversees the Navy's 5th Fleet based in Bahrain, said the two sides

HALEY OPPOSES BIDEN'S PLAN TO REJOIN IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

Washington, Dec. 7: Nikki Haley, the former US envoy to the United Nations, on Monday opposed President-elect Joe Biden's plan to re-join the Iranian nuclear deal, saying the Trump administration's sanctions on Tehran deprived the regime of the money it needed to harm American military.

"The Iran deal is only as reliable & trustworthy as the partner who signs the agreement & Iran is nei-

ther of those. Iran continues to enrich uranium, sponsor terrorists & call for Israel & America's destruction. Members of the Iranian parliament recently chanted Death to America," Haley tweeted.

In an interview to *The New York Times*, Biden had expressed his desire to rejoin the Iranian nuclear deal, one of the key foreign policy accomplishments of the Obama Administration. — PTI

responding with a missile attack on US forces.

The US Navy routinely has tense encounters with the Revolutionary Guard, whose speed boats race alongside American warships in the Persian Gulf and sometimes conduct live-fire drills with machine guns and missile launches in their presence.

In recent years Iran has seized oil tankers and been blamed for a series of limpet mine explosions targeting tankers. Tehran denied involvement, but Revolutionary Guard members were filmed taking an unexploded mine away from one tanker.

In recent days, a mine struck an oil tanker off Saudi Arabia and a cargo ship near Yemen came under assault. Suspicion immediately fell on Iranian-backed rebels in Yemen, known as Houthis. The rebels have not commented on the attacks. — AP

Azerbaijan's war victory



A TV crew works on Baku's Azadliq square in front of a huge poster reading "Karabakh is Azerbaijan!" decorating the facade of a hotel on Monday, days ahead of December 10 military parade celebrating the country's victory in its armed conflict with Armenia over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region. — AFP

Texas officer kills man suspected of hitting worker with his vehicle

Mesquite, Dec. 7: An off-duty police officer shot and killed a 30-year-old man who refused to stop after striking a highway construction worker with his vehicle in Dallas, authorities said.

The Mesquite Police Department said off-duty officers from the East Texas cities of Jefferson and Seven Points were providing construction security in Dallas early Saturday when the construction worker was hit. The suspect refused to stop at the scene, and officers requested assistance as they pursued him on Interstate 635, police said Saturday in a statement.

The suspect finally stopped "after contact was made between the suspect's vehicle and the officer's vehicle" in the Dallas suburb of Mesquite, according to the statement. One of the officers then shot the suspect, police said.

The statement did not explain what prompted

● **THE SUSPECT** refused to stop at the scene, and officers requested assistance as they pursued him on Interstate 635, police said Saturday in a statement.

the shooting nor if the off-duty officers identified themselves to the suspect as police. Mesquite Lt. Stephen Biggs said Sunday that he couldn't say much more than what was included in the statement because the investigation is ongoing.

Biggs added Sunday that he was told the off-duty officers were in a vehicle owned by a private security company. It was not immediately clear who told him that. When Mesquite officers arrived, the suspect had been shot and the off-duty officers who pursued him were providing first aid.

Mesquite police then took over first aid until paramedics arrived. Police said the suspect

Shooting at eatery: Varsity campus shut

Kennesaw, Dec. 7: A university campus in Georgia briefly told students to lock their doors and turn off their lights Sunday after a shooting at a nearby Mexican restaurant.

Kennesaw State University sent an alert across its Marietta campus about 2:45 p.m. about an "armed intruder."

The alert was lifted about an hour later with the university saying on social media that the suspect had been apprehended. The university issued

the alert after a man fired a gun at the El Rancho restaurant just off campus and then ran, Marietta Police said in a statement.

Police did not release any additional information about the shooting, including the name of the man taken into custody or whether anyone was hurt.

Kennesaw State University's Marietta campus is about 20 miles (about 32 kilometres) north of Atlanta. — AP

Dallas police Officer Tamika Dameron said Sunday that the department did not know the current condition of the construction worker. — AP

6 cleric supporters killed in Indonesia

Jakarta, Dec. 7: Indonesian police Monday fatally shot six followers of a firebrand cleric who returned last month from a 3-year exile in Saudi Arabia after criminal charges against him were dropped, officials said, prompting fears of more violence.

Jakarta Police Chief Muhammad Fadil Imran said police were following a car carrying 10 supporters of Rizieq Shihab, the leader of the Islamic Defenders Front. The followers attacked the police with guns and swords.

"The officers then took action so that six died from the group of 10 people," he said. An official of the Front, Ahmad Shabri Lubis, gave a different account, saying that Shihab and his family were heading to a place to deliver a sermon and that guards travelling with them had been shot. "On their way to the sermon location, the group was intercepted by unknown people that we strongly believed were part of an operational group to stalk and harm him," Lubis said. — AP

DECCAN Chronicle

8 DECEMBER 2020

Govt needs to do more to push vaccine awareness

The news of Haryana health minister Anil Vij contracting Covid-19 after receiving a shot of Covaxin, the Coronavirus vaccine that Indian company Bharat Biotech International Ltd has developed in association with the Indian Council for Medical Research, may be seen as a setback but the larger point the incident flags is the need for a far better understanding of the defence that human beings have created against the killer micro-organism. It has now emerged that the state minister, who volunteered for the trial, had received only one shot of the vaccine and that he had missed the second one, which should have been administered 28 days after the first one. Though anyone's body should start developing immunity with the first dose itself, it would take the second dose to make it fairly foolproof. According to the company, the Covaxin trials are based on a two-dose schedule, which are administered 28 days apart. The vaccine's efficacy will be determined two weeks after the second dose. As per the data the company has published, it expects a certain number of infections among the volunteers, and the minister contracting the disease is not entirely unexpected.

The Centre must think of designing a campaign on the need for vaccination and its protocols. If a minister can skip a dose, it is likely that many Indians may do so

It may be remembered that the efficiency of the Pfizer vaccine that has been given a licence in the United Kingdom as well as Bahrain is only 95 per cent.

So, it's no reason to be less confident about the indigenous vaccine development process that is now under way. It should not also impact India's partnership in the development and manufacture of the other vaccines as well — Indian volunteers are part of the clinical trial of vaccines developed in foreign countries; Indian companies are gearing up for the mass production of vaccines once they receive the authentication.

However, the incident related to the Haryana minister has some lessons for the government. It has been working with the stakeholders on the details of the way people are to be vaccinated. It has a lot of ground such as finalising the norms for preparing the priority list, arranging the logistics, creating a cold chain and setting up the last mile inoculation mechanism to cover.

It looks like the government has taken one area for granted — public awareness about the vaccine. That the government had made no plans as such on handling Covid-19 when it struck is obvious — most decisions were haphazard, giving little thought on their impact on the people at the bottom. It is noteworthy that the government later launched awareness campaigns about the pandemic. And given that the number of daily cases has not risen the way it was projected, it would be safe to assume that the campaign had played its part.

The government should think of designing a similar campaign on the need for vaccination and its protocols. If a minister can skip a dose for whatever reason, it is highly likely that millions of Indians could do something similar due to sheer ignorance or negligence, defeating the very purpose of the entire exercise. This is a serious public health issue, and the government must use whatever tools it has to make it a success. The campaign on vaccination looks as important as vaccination itself.

Christmas threat harmful

The extreme right-wing group Bajrang Dal's threat to Hindus who may wish to attend church on Christmas Day in Assam's Barak Valley is a self-destructive diktat emanating from hard Hindutva. It's a clear threat not just to communal harmony but also an assault on Hinduism, which is an open religion that for millennia has been known to respect variety, plurality and diversity and for its acceptance of all other faiths. The likes of the Bajrang Dal do no justice to the beliefs of its own faith that has been able to assert itself globally without threatening any other faith.

Regardless of such threats materialising to pose a danger to ordinary people who have been accustomed to celebrating the special days of all faiths, the truth is they serve only to tear the fabric of harmony prevailing in most parts of India. Fringe elements tend to be pockets of religious bigotry and communalism, but their voluble presence presents an image that brings about an avoidable perception across the world that India is a hotbed of Hindu communalism.

The threat itself was triggered by a non-event in the assumed closing of a Vivekananda cultural centre in Shillong, which was denied by the Meghalaya government, which said the centre was merely shut for a district holiday. Taking offence at imaginary slights and assuming a rigid stand on religious matters is not uncommon for Hindutvadis. What makes this case curious is that the main character in this play of religious fervour, Mithu Nath of Bajrang Dal, is indoctrinated to the extent of claiming that Hindus have never broken a mosque or church to build a temple. Recent history doesn't bear that out: we know how the Babri Masjid was brought down in a cataclysmic moment for inter-religious harmony.

All governments need to rein in such divisive forces or at least reassure people that they will not come to any harm if they follow the simple but eloquent practice of enjoying all festivals: whether it be Diwali, Id or Christmas.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Subhani



Worry on Brahmaputra waters seems misplaced



Mohan Guruswamy

Last week, the Chinese state media said the country could build up to 60 GW of hydropower capacity on a section of the Brahmaputra, citing a senior executive. Yan Zhiyong, chairman of the state-owned Power Construction Corporation of China, speaking at an industry conference, said plans to dam the river were a "historic opportunity". This is not a confirmation but an old pipe-dream. But it has set off a howl of protest in the social media.

The Chinese have built a run of the river hydel (215 MW) project at Zhangmu, just like the dams that India is building on the Jhelum and which Pakistan vigorously contests. The bottom-line is that the upper riparian states may use the water but not divert it. But we seem to have other concerns too. An external affairs ministry consultant has cautioned: "First, China's attempt to build infrastructure in Tibet and improve its connectivity with the Chinese mainland has been one of China's major strategies, not only in terms of military preparedness but also to overcome the challenge of regional disparity. Second, China has been working on improving infrastructure and connectivity with the frontier states along its border. Finally, the Brahmaputra is a major lifeline for India's northeastern region. If the situation continues unabated, it will have long-term implications for India."

Let's examine these. Should not the improvement of infrastructure within its own territory be the concern of every government? Are we to keep complaining about every road or bridge, just in case military vehicles

use them? Our first two concerns are not really serious. Then there is the concern over the Brahmaputra waters. We need to familiarise ourselves with some realities.

Many Indian and international security experts have been warning of the looming "water wars" between the two countries. A few years ago, the late B.G. Varghese, an acknowledged expert on the India-Pakistan-China water disputes, and myself made a presentation on this subject at the well-known think-tank, the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS). We showed that India and Bhutan together generate about 80 per cent of the system's input. China accounts for almost half the basin area, but it actually contributes a fraction of the system's input of waters. The narrow Yarlung Tsangpo actually becomes the mighty Brahmaputra only after it enters India after the Great Bend. Yet the water wars narrative persists.

The supporters of this narrative believe that China already has a plan to divert the Brahmaputra river's waters — more specifically, the western route of China's South-North Water Diversion Projects. They are referring to the Grand Western Water Diversion Plan (GWWD), which was proposed a long time ago by Chinese water expert Guo Kai, to divert water from the upstream sections of six rivers in southwest China, including the upstream Mekong, the Yarlung Tsangpo River, and the Salween, to the dry areas of northern China. Writing about this, Zhang Hongzhou, of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore, unambiguously states: "This is a misperception. It was

only an idea. And it will be no more than an idea."

The Yarlung Tsangpo originates near Mount Kailash and traverses eastward for about 1,700 km as a relatively shallow and small river when the river enters the area known as the Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon. This is the deepest canyon in the world, and at 504.6 km is longer than the famed Grand Canyon (446 km) in the US. As the gorge bends around the 7,800-metre-high Mount Namcha Barwa and cuts its way through the eastern Himalayan range, its waters drop from about 2,900 metres (9,500 ft) near Pei to about 1,500 metres (4,900 ft) at the end of the upper gorge, where it is joined by the Po Tsangpo river. The river continues through the lower gorge to the Indian border at an elevation of 660 metres (2,170 ft). The steep river drops make it a raging torrent all along the canyon. As the canyon passes between the peaks of the Namcha Barwa and Gyal Peri mountains, it reaches an average depth of about 5,000 metres (16,000 ft) around Namcha Barwa. The canyon's average depth overall is about 2,268 metres (7,440 feet), while the deepest depth reaches 6,009 metres (19,714 feet). Now imagine the physical challenge of damming this canyon. And if it is meant to also support irrigation in Yunnan, the water has to be lifted a few thousand metres and will involve monumental costs. Even in China a cost-benefit analysis will make its unviability apparent. Even the technically less challenging American-designed Three Gorges

Dam in Hubei cost China over \$50 billion.

Now let's look at some basic realities of the Yarlung Tsangpo-Brahmaputra system. While China has the largest spatial share of the basin at over 50 per cent, it generates only 22 per cent of the total basin discharge. Tibet's low precipitation and desert conditions is the main reason for this. In contrast, the India section of the basin, with about 34 per cent of the basin area, contributes about half of the total discharge. This is because of melting snows in the eastern Himalayas and the severity of the monsoon. Equally significant is the contribution from Bhutan, that has 6.7 per cent of the total basin area but generates 21 per cent of the output. The utilisation rate of water in the Brahmaputra is very low. Prof. Pranab Kumar Ray, director, Centre for Hydro-Meteorological Research, Kolkata, in "Rivers of Conflict or Rivers of Peace", a paper published by the ORF, estimates that the utilisable water of the Brahmaputra system is just four per cent of the total discharge. This is a reflection of the very high speed of the discharge and its sheer volume. That's to say even a 10 per cent or 20 per cent cut in the Brahmaputra's water flow is unlikely to cause water scarcity of any nature in the Indian part of the basin.

Quite clearly, the "water wars" scenario is unfounded in the case of Brahmaputra. We need to think of ways to harness more of the mighty Brahma-putra for power and agriculture to help the people of India (and Bangladesh), rather than let 96 per cent of it to just flow into the Bay of Bengal. We must work with Bangladesh closely rather than just keep pointing fingers at China.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

LETTERS

ELURU ILLNESS

The sudden rise of patients with a mysterious illness in Eluru is a cause for concern. The silver lining is that the symptoms are self limiting and the illness is not contagious. Though the cause is yet to be established, the pattern is strongly suggestive of contaminated food or water with some heavy metal like mercury, lead, etc. The incident needs thorough investigation by experts. The political parties and media should observe self-restraint from sensationalising the issue.

Dr D.V.G.Sankararao
Vizianagaram

ROTTING VEHICLES

It is a gross misconduct not to use cycles, tractors and garbage collection vehicles that were bought by the previous government. The present government cannot turn a blind eye. They can put them to use with a new scheme name. The present government has started several welfare schemes. I hope the government will use such rotting vehicles.

Kantichand Rampuria Jain
Srikalahasti

LOCAL ELECTIONS

In the ongoing tussle between the AP government and the State Election Commissioner on Local body elections, it seems the governor is getting sandwiched daily (*YSRC objects to SEC letter to gov on Assembly, DC, Dec. 7*). In this situation the governor should strictly follow the rule book or consult constitutional experts if he cannot take a decision of his own. CM is not uttering a word on the issue but using Botsa Satyanarayana as a proxy.

N.S. Sharma
Visakhapatnam

Plea to include temple lands in Tenancy Act

BY A STAFF REPORTER
HYDERABAD, Dec. 7

Several Opposition members of the State Assembly today urged the Government to bring tenants of temple lands within the purview of the Andhra Area

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Tenancy Amendment Bill. During the general discussion on the Bill, as reported by the Joint Select Committee, several Opposition members, including a Ruling Congress member, criticised the provision relating to the exemption sought to be given to temple lands.

Aakar Patel



Will Centre be forced to give in to the farmers?

Once again, the Narendra Modi government has shown that it will ignore the concerns of large numbers of Indians till it becomes a national crisis. Exactly a year ago, after a series of threats from the Union home minister to India's minorities, the government passed legislation that Amit Shah said would be the first step of his chronology on citizenship. We know what happened immediately after that — protests by those whom the laws were victimising, no support for them from India's internal democratic structure, international condemnation of India's actions, and then violence instigated and encouraged by the ruling party.

Earlier this year, the government passed, by ordinance during the Covid-19 pandemic, a set of laws that would change the way that agriculture would be done, especially in the northwest. Nobody had asked for these laws, no farmers' groups were consulted and there was no explanation on why these had been brought into force

through the ordinance route. Of course, this government follows the adage of "never apologise, never explain". It has never apologised, and it has never explained.

For most of the media, which is urban and middle class, the farmers' laws made no sense. Google will throw up dozens of reports, often from the same publication, with the headline "farmers bills explained". Few of us have seen a mandi, know what APMC stands for or does and what the issue of MSP means to the average Punjabi. For this reason, the issue was off the headlines very soon.

Predictably, the farmers began a protest that soon developed into a mass movement but appeared small because it was ignored by the national media and was localised in a couple of states. The government in New Delhi also ignored it and in fact escalated its confrontation by disallowing the Indian Railways from operating trains to Punjab even after the protesters had said they would not disrupt traffic. No railway property was damaged in the peaceful protest, but for two

months no train went through even after the protesters had left the railway tracks.

It was clear that the government was not going to back off its legislation unless it was forced to. At this point, the farmers began their march to besiege the national capital. The BJP made a few attempts to hold them back in Haryana, a state that it controls, but was unable to because of the resolve of the farmers. We are now seeing the consequences of arrogance and hard-headedness. The government has no option but to negotiate with the farmers. It is about to rewrite the laws that it should have written up after consulting them in the first place. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will say that he means well and wants to double the farmers' incomes, but he will not concede that he needs to consult them before coming up with his genius idea that will help them do this.

Notice the similarities between the farmers' movement and the protests across the country against the citizenship amendment laws. First, that these laws were passed

without anyone having asked for them. Second, that the minorities they affected went on to protest immediately because they sensed the danger to them that the rest of the population did not, and third, that the rest of us did not care about the laws and had little or no empathy for those who were affected. It was the Muslims in the lead in the protests against being sent to concentration camps, and it was the Sikhs in the lead on the issue of the controversial farm laws. Fourth, that the government recklessly and deliberately demonised the protesters, calling them terrorists, separatists and "Khalistanis".

Fifth, that the rest of the world was alarmed by what the government was doing and intervened. India does not like to be lectured by other nations but if you do something dumb then you have to face the consequences. The European Union's members of Parliament wrote up a very strong motion against India's citizenship laws, and India was able to only delay the tabling of the motion with difficulty. Canada, which has a large and

influential Sikh population, told India that it was "concerned". India objected to this interference but could do little because we have no real leverage. If thousands of Canadians were migrating to India monthly instead of the other way around, we might have had some say.

The sixth thing that will likely be common to both these issues is that they will end in the same way. Mr Modi made Amit Shah eat his brave words on his chronology and said that the issue of the National Register of Citizens had not been discussed. That lay the matter to rest. On the issue of the three farm laws, something similar will come. The government has used all the tricks it has on the farmers. But they are still standing there blockading Delhi, prepared to be there for months. Their demands will have to be met, of course, and this government will move on to the next great idea, without an apology or an explanation.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	45,426.97	0.77
Nifty 50	13,355.75	0.73
S&P 500*	3,695.77	-0.09
Dollar (₹)	73.90	-0.14
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.85	1.66
Euro (₹)	89.36	0.47
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,703.104	0.21
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	49.16	-0.09
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.924	0.026
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.939	-0.030

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Hindalco to set up ₹730 cr plant in Silvassa

Aditya Birla group firm Hindalco Industries said it plans to set up a 34,000-tonne aluminium extrusion plant at Silvassa, in Dadra and Nagar Haveli, at an investment of Rs 730 crore. In a regulatory filing, it said the new plant will service the fast-growing market for extruded aluminium products in the western and southern regions. It said the project signals a big step forward in Hindalco's downstream strategy.

IndiGo to refund all passengers by January 31



IndiGo said it will refund all customer credit shells, which were created when flights were cancelled due to the coronavirus lockdown earlier this year, by January 31. The airline said it has processed close to Rs 1,000 crore of refunds, which is about 90 per cent of the total amount it owed to its customers. CEO Ronojoy Dutta said, "As our incoming cash flow dried up, we were unable to immediately process refunds."

NSE starts weekly F&O contracts in 3 currency pairs

The NSE launched weekly futures and options contracts on three currency pairs-- euro-rupee, yen-rupee and pound sterling-rupee. "NSE is launching a weekly futures contract for the first time, while we have already seen market acceptance in weekly options contracts across asset classes," the exchange's MD and CEO Vikram Limaye said. The weekly derivatives on currency pairs will reduce time-related costs, he said.

Nissan receives 5,000 bookings for Magnite

Nissan Motor India said it has received 5,000 bookings for its newly launched compact SUV, Magnite in five days. The firm also received over 50,000 enquiries for the vehicle launched on Dec. 2 at an introductory price of Rs 4.99 lakh, with over 20 variants. Over 60 per cent of the bookings have been received for the top 2 grades (XV and XV Premium), and more than 30 per cent are for CVT Automatic, Nissan said.



■ Growth in tier-I cities and metros came to 20% Online festive sales double in small cities

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 7

Smaller cities played a key role in driving e-commerce festive season sales this year. Online sales almost doubled in volume terms in smaller cities this festive season.

The tier-II and III cities have been growing way faster than metropolitan cities and its impact is visible in the festive season sale as well, finds Unicommerce, e-commerce focused SaaS platform. Tier-II and beyond cities have witnessed a growth of 99 per cent as compared to last year's festive season. The growth in tier-I and metropolitan cities remained around 20 per cent.

According to Amazon, initial days of the festive season saw 91 per cent of new customers coming



from smaller cities.

However, states like Delhi, Maharashtra and Karnataka with metropolitan cities continued to dominate e-commerce sales. These three states contribute 55 per cent of India's e-commerce volume in the festive month.

Personal care category emerged as the biggest gainer, with 176 per cent

order volume growth over last year's festive month. Beauty and wellness reported 52 per cent order volume growth.

Fashion and accessories witnessed an order volume growth of 71 per cent. Electronics continued to be the highlight of festive sales, with all market-places extensively promoting discounts and offers on

electronic products. The segment saw a substantial growth of 65 per cent in order volume. RedSeer Consulting too found that mobiles and appliances remained strong this year driven by new launches, discounts, bank offers and smart upgrade plans of brands.

Returns remained a concern for e-tailers despite automation, though the industry overall observed a 35 per cent decrease in return orders this season compared to last year. Fashion and accessories remained the category with maximum return orders.

This year brands got serious about online selling by developing own websites. Brand websites witnessed 77 per cent order volume growth compared to 60 per cent for marketplaces.

PSU insurers go slow with crop insurance

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

Major general insurers, especially public sector players, are learnt to be shying away from insuring their crops through the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, or PMFBY, scheme. They feel the current crop insurance scheme is not lucrative enough for them to focus on it.

However, a few private players have been looking at the scheme for widening their market reach. For

instance, Bajaz Allianz General Insurance Company has increased its presence in the segment and has gone ahead of its peers. Its exposure to the sector currently stands at Rs 1,700 crore.

"All the major players, who are active on the non-life insurance space in the country, have reportedly reduced their exposure to the crop insurance, as they don't find the PMFBY scheme lucrative any more in its revised form. Therefore, they are slightly

pushing away from this scheme to avoid losses," a senior official of a public sector general insurance company told *Financial Chronicle* on condition of anonymity.

Data with sector regulator Irdaai shows private insurer's exposure to crop insurance stands at Rs 1,615 crore for HDFC ERGO, Rs 1,605 crore for Reliance General Insurance, Rs 1,370 crore for SBI General Insurance and Rs 843 crore for Iffco Tokio. In contrast, the

exposure of the largest state-run non-life insurer, New India Assurance, is Rs 675 crore.

Ashish Agarwal, head-agri business & CSC, Bajaz Allianz General Insurance, said the firm has been participating in the PMFBY scheme from its launch in 2016. "We have been authorised to enrol farmers under the PMFBY by the governments of Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan during the kharif 2020 season."

Dip in wages of informal workers: ILO

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 7

While the pandemic saw workers' wages shrinking, informal workers in India experienced a sharper fall than formal workers, finds the International Labour Organisation. ILO also found that the gap between real and nominal minimum wages of unskilled workers in India has become significantly wider in the past 10 years.

Post-pandemic, formal workers' wages have been cut by 3.6 per cent in India, while informal workers have experienced a much sharper fall in wages of 22.6 per cent, finds ILO's Global Wage Report. Around two-thirds of countries whose short-term statistics are available showed



decreasing wages or slower average wage growth.

In India, delayed increase or freeze in minimum wages because of the Covid-19 crisis have taken place at the local or sectoral level. For example, in the Punjab region, the local government reversed its order announcing a minimum wage increase, says the report.

Further, the report also found that the gap between

CEO of fashion retailer quits to prioritise wife's career

Berlin, Dec. 7: The chief executive of online fashion retailer Zalando is stepping down to focus on his family, saying his wife's career should take priority in the coming years.

Rubin Ritter, one of three co-chief executives at Zalando, has been in the job since 2010.

Tasked with overseeing strategy and communications, the 38-year-old helped turn the Berlin-based start-up into one of the world's top online fashion retailers with 14,000 employees and net profit of almost 100 million euros (\$121 million) in 2019.

In a statement, Zalando said Ritter had informed



Rubin Ritter

the company on Sunday of his decision to step down in 2021, more than two years before his contract ends.

"I feel that it is time to give my life a new direction," Ritter was quoted as saying.

I want to devote more time to my growing family, he added.

My wife and I have

agreed that for the coming years, her professional ambitions should take priority.

The head of Zalando's supervisory board, Cristina Stenbeck, said the company regretted Ritter's decision but we have the highest respect for the underlying personal motivation.

Last month, Ritter published the company's first report on diversity and inclusion, saying these should be seen as an opportunity rather than a challenge.

The company has been criticised for currently having only men on its five-member management board.

—AP

Franklin seeks investors nod to wind up schemes

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 7

The Trustee of Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund in India has sought unitholders consent for the orderly winding up of the six fixed income schemes, abiding with the December 3 interim order of the Supreme Court.

"Voting 'Yes' will allow schemes to monetise assets without resorting to distress sales and will maximise value to Unitholders," the fund house said in a release. Voting will take place during December 26-28.

Santosh Kamath, CIO, Franklin Templeton Fixed

Income India, said, "From April 24, 2020 to November 27, 2020, the six schemes under winding up have received Rs 11,576 crore from maturities, pre-payments, and coupons. Four out of the six schemes are already cash positive and have close to Rs 7,226 crore available to return to unitholders, subject to fund running expenses. All of this cash has been received without any secondary market sale (active monetisation) of the securities in these six schemes."

He said of the Rs 11,576 crore received, nearly half has come from securities rated 'A'.

KOTAK LAUNCHES FIRST REIT MF

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 7

Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company has launched India's first diversified REIT Mutual Fund. Kotak International REIT Fund of Funds is an open-ended mutual fund scheme that will invest in units of SMAM Asia REIT Sub Trust Fund. This mutual fund scheme will have a diversified investment portfolio comprising listed REITs which will invest in real estate projects like residential, office, data centres, warehousing, retail and hospitality. The new fund offer (NFO) opens on December 7 and closes on December 21.

ICICI BANK LAUNCHES INTEROPERABLE APP

Mumbai, Dec. 7: ICICI Bank launched a new mobile payment app that is interoperable and allows payments and other services to customers of any other bank. Through iMobile Pay, customers of other banks can link their accounts to it.

DLF TO EQUIP OFFICES WITH AIR FILTRATION

New Delhi, Dec. 7: DLF will invest Rs 30 crore over the next six months to install new air-filtration technology, MERV-14, in all its office buildings to ensure safe re-entry of tenants and their employees in its office buildings, the company said.

LEAD SCHOOL TO HAVE AI-LED ASSESSMENT

Mumbai, Dec. 7: LEAD School, an EdTech player in K-12 education, has acquired QuizNext, an AI-powered gamified student assessment and practice platform. Commenting, LEAD School co-founder and COO Smita Deorah said, "Beyond online classes, students need a lot of support in a remote learning environment for a full schooling impact."

HIGH-TECH ASSISTANCE Pilot project running across 100 locations in MP, Maharashtra

Voda, Nokia team up for SmartAgri solution

New Delhi, Dec. 7: Vodafone India Foundation, the corporate social responsibility (CSR) arm of Vi, has, in partnership with Nokia, deployed a smart agriculture solution that aims to enhance farming practices and improve productivity of farmers.

Vodafone Idea CSR has deployed Nokia's World-wide IoT Network Grid (Wing) solution to equip farmers in the country with precise and practical data to help them achieve better yields.

"Deployment of the smart agriculture-as-a-service solution includes soil probes, weather stations, insect traps and crop cameras to help drive productivity of soy



and cotton crops," a press release said.

A pilot project, being implemented across 100 locations in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, aims to benefit over 50,000 farmers in the region by enhancing their productivity and income.

"The SmartAgri project aims to enhance the liveli-

hoods of small farmers through sustainable farming approaches, deployment of IoT (Internet of Things) solutions and by improving their access to information, using technology," it added.

Under the project, over 400 sensors have been deployed over 1,00,000

hectares of farmland to collect various data points, which are then analysed by a cloud-based and localised Smart Agriculture app.

The app offers local language support as well as weather forecast and irrigation management information.

"The sensors generate insights that is helping to improve soy and cotton crop yields. Crop management through Wing can include smart irrigation, smart pesticide control, and proactive information sharing frameworks on crops and weather, as well as a platform for commodity exchange," the release added.

The use case can also employ Remotely Piloted

Aircraft System (RPAS) technology, or drones, instead of traditional sensors for crop management.

"To demonstrate the impact of technology in transforming agricultural practices in India, Vi CSR chose the agri-heartlands of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, and onboarded Nokia as the IoT solutions provider, and Solidaridad for field implementation," it said.

The CSR initiative will be showcased at the Voda Idea booth during India Mobile Congress 2020 from December 8 to 10. Telecom operator, Vodafone Idea, offers products and services to its customers under the brand name 'Vi'. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Reds join Spurs at top of EPL

London: Liverpool turned on the style for their returning fans on Sunday, beating Wolves 4-0 to join Tottenham at the top of the Premier League after another episode of the Son Heung-min and Harry Kane show. Jurgen Klopp's men had not had the chance to play in front of their supporters since they ended their 30-year wait to be crowned English champions but made up for lost time. "You'll Never Walk Alone" rang out around Anfield as 2,000 home fans — the maximum allowed under coronavirus rules — witnessed strikes from Mohamed Salah, Georginio Wijnaldum, Joel Matip and an own goal. Liverpool have now won 31 of their past 32 home league games, scoring 93 goals while conceding just 25. Earlier, Jose Mourinho's Spurs beat faltering Arsenal 2-0 at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium and Leicester, who ended the day in fourth spot, struck late to beat rock-bottom Sheffield United 2-1. — *AFP*

Milan pip Samp to maintain lead

Rome: AC Milan kept hold of their five-point lead at the top of Serie 'A' on Sunday after a hard-fought 2-1 win at Sampdoria, while Napoli moved third after strolling to victory over bottom side Crotone. Franck Kessie's penalty on the stroke of half-time and Samu Castillejo's 77th-minute strike were just enough for the seven-time European champions, who were without injured talisman Zlatan Ibrahimovic, to move up to 26 points and keep second-placed local rivals Inter Milan at arm's length. Napoli are six points back in third after goals from Lorenzo Insigne, Hirving Lozano, Diego Demme and Andrea Petagna earned the away side a 4-0 win at Crotone. Ivory Coast midfielder Kessie coolly struck home his spot-kick after Jakub Jankto unluckily handled while challenging for the ball with Theo Hernandez. — *AFP*

Sociedad held, cede La Liga lead

Madrid: Real Sociedad were unable to regain first place in La Liga on Sunday night when they were held to a goalless draw at Basque rivals Alaves. Deprived of injured captain Mikel Oyarzabal, top scorer in La Liga with seven goals, Sociedad were unable to breach the home defence. The draw dropped them one point behind Atletico, who on Saturday beat Valladolid 2-0 for a seventh straight Liga victory. Earlier on Sunday, Villarreal also lost ground with a 0-0 draw at home to Elche. Villarreal regained third place but fell five points behind Diego Simeone's league leaders. Sociedad and Villarreal have both played two games more than Atletico and one more than Real Madrid. Real Madrid reversed a recent slide with a 1-0 victory at Sevilla on Saturday. — *AFP*

Jamshedpur halt Mariners' sail

Goa: A fine brace from Nerijus Valskis ensured Jamshedpur FC bagged their first win in the Hero Indian Super League Season 7 as they beat early pace-setters ATK Mohun Bagan 2-1 at the Tilak Maidan Stadium, here on Monday. Valskis (30', 66') scored in either half for Owen Coyle's side, while Krishna pulled a late goal back for ATKMB. The result also meant ATKMB's perfect run in the campaign came to an end following the defeat. — *Agencies*

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Bengaluru vs NorthEast United from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Champions League: Zenit vs Dortmund from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Barcelona vs Juventus from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2; Chelsea vs Krasnodar from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Six; Leipzig vs Manchester United from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 1; PSG vs Istanbul Basaksehir from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 3

Regd No./JM-RNP/72
Printed and Published from Visakhapatnam by
K. Sudhakar
on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings
Limited at Deccan Chronicle Press,
Survey No. 1/3A, Beach Road,
Near Kailasagiri Rope Way,
Sector-9, M.V.P. Colony,
Visakhapatnam-530017
Phones: 2552333/2552334/2552306.
Fax: 2755285. Grams: CHRONICLE.
Editor: Kaushik Mitter.
RNI Registration No.44813/85.

India eye clean sweep

Kohli's men look to extend unbeaten run in last T20 against Oz

Sydney, Dec. 7: The series pocketed and their confidence restored, India would eye nothing less than a clean sweep when they take on an Australian side significantly weakened by injury blows, in the third and final T20 International here on Tuesday.

Skipper Virat Kohli and his main protagonist of the white-ball leg, Hardik Pandya, will feel a sense of *deja vu* given that the script has panned out exactly like 2016 when the team got walloped in the ODIs but came back strongly to rout the Aussies 3-0 in the T20 International series.

After a couple of crushing defeats in the first two ODIs, the Indians have turned a corner starting with the final ODI in Canberra.

Even the absence of a white-ball pro like Ravindra Jadeja didn't have an impact during their convincing six-wicket win in the series-clinching second T20 on Sunday.

What will boost the Indian team's morale manifold is the fact that it had the confidence to rest both Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah, relying on a troika of pacers, who between them haven't played even 40 games collectively.

India's new white-ball sensation Thangarasu Natarajan has had a superb initiation in international cricket with Australian batsmen still finding it difficult to read him.

As Pandya so rightly put it, Natarajan's spell and the 10 runs that Australia failed to score became the difference between winning and losing on Sunday.

The difference between India and Australia during the last game was the batting of the two teams during the middle overs.

Australia lost a bit of momentum after stand-in skipper Matthew Wade was dismissed while his opposite number Kohli played some outrageous shots after the Powerplay to up the ante. — *PTI*



Members of the Indian team celebrate their T20 series victory over Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday. India are leading the three-match series 2-0. — *AFP*

Umesh, Ashwin impress in warm-up

Sydney, Dec. 7: Senior pros Umesh Yadav and Ravichandran Ashwin staked strong claims to be included in India's playing XI for the first Test with impressive performances against Australia A, who scored 286 for 8 on the second day, riding on Cameron Green's unbeaten century.

Australia now have a 39-run lead after India A declared their innings at 247 for 9 in the first hour of the second day, with

skipper Ajinkya Rahane remaining unbeaten on 117.

With Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah being automatic choices, Umesh (18-3-44-3), fighting for third pacer's slot, certainly looked more penetrative compared to Mohammed Siraj (19-4-71-2) with the new ball.

Yadav removed both rival Test team openers Will Pucovski (1) and Joe Burns (4) in his third and fourth over with the new

ball to make initial inroads.

Ashwin (19-2-58-2) also did his Test chances no harm as he reminded old timers of Australian off-spinner of 80's Greg Mathews (hero of 'Madras' tied Test) bowling with his cap on.

Only that Mathews was protecting himself from Chennai heat while Ashwin was reluctant to give it to fellow fielders.

For Australia A, the giant all-rounder Green

continued his rich vein of Sheffield Shield form with an unbeaten 114 off 173 that had 10 fours and a six. He showed good temperament against the Indian attack while adding 104 runs for the sixth wicket with his national skipper Tim Paine (44) after being reduced to 98 for 5. — *PTI*
Brief scores: Indian A 247/9 decl. (Rahane 117*, Pujara 54) vs Australia A 286/8 (Green 114*, Paine 44, Yadav 3/44, Ashwin 2/58).

Jaddu may miss first Test

New Delhi, Dec. 7: Indian all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja is likely to miss the opening Test against Australia owing to the concussion and a hamstring injury that he sustained during the opening T20 International in Canberra.

The 32-year-old, who is on the cusp of his 50th Test, is likely to be out for at least three weeks which certainly rules him out of the first Day/Night Test in Adelaide starting December 17.

In case it turns out to be a hamstring tear, it could well rule him out of the second Boxing Day Test in Melbourne from December 26.

"As per ICC's concussion protocols, after any head injury, a player needs to be rested for 7 to 10 days, which effectively rules Jadeja out of the three-day day/night warm-up game at the SCG from December 11," a BCCI source said on



conditions of anonymity.

"Therefore, it is next to impossible that the Indian team management would field Jadeja, without any warm-up game time ahead of the opening Test," the

source added.

However, more than concussion, it is understood that the hamstring injury is likely to keep Jadeja out of action for at least one Test if not two. — *PTI*

PAK SQUAD CLEARS 5TH COVID TEST IN NZ

Christchurch, Dec. 7: The touring Pakistan squad has returned negative in a fifth round of Covid-19 tests and will now be able to leave their managed isolation on Tuesday, subject to clearance from the health ministry, New Zealand Cricket said on Monday.

The 53-member Pakistan team was denied the right to train while in managed isolation in New Zealand after eight members of the touring squad had tested positive for Covid-19.

"This is to advise the Pakistan squad's fifth and final day 12, Covid-19 tests have all been returned as negative," NZC said.

"As a consequence, and pending final Ministry of Health approval, the squad will leave managed isolation tomorrow and fly to Queenstown, where they will train ahead of the T20 and Test series against the BLACKCAPS."

Pakistan are scheduled to play three T20Is, beginning in Auckland on December 18 followed by two Tests starting December 26.

Six members of the Pakistan team had tested positive on arrival, while two more returned positive later and all eight are now in quarantine. — *PTI*

Anju won medals with one kidney

Kochi, Dec. 7: Olympian Anju Bobby George, who secured a historic bronze medal in the 2003 World Athletics Championship in Paris, on Monday said she achieved success and reached the top with a single kidney.

In a tweet, the ace athlete, a gold medallist in the IAAF World Athletics Finals (Monaco, 2005), said she had many limitations, including being allergic to even a painkiller, but still made it.

"Believe it or not, I'm one of the fortunate, among very few who reached the world top with a single KIDNEY, allergic with even a painkiller, with a dead takeoff leg... Many limitations...Still made it. Can we call, magic of a coach or his talent," Anju tweeted.

Her career blossomed under the coaching of husband Robert Bobby George. Anju said she chose the pandemic season to make this revelation to "motivate" all the sportspersons in the current generation, who are missing their practice and competitions due to the spread of the deadly virus.

"The general perception of the people is that I have a perfect body. But the fact is that I achieved all the success in my field by overcoming all difficulties. I hope that sharing of my experience will help motivate all aspiring sportspersons," she said.

She said she complained of fatigue while in Germany for a competition in 2003 and doctors there advised her rest for six months and not to even think about sports "It was just 20 days ahead of the Paris World Athletics Championship. I overcame all the issues and won a medal in Paris," she said.

Anju came to know she was living with a single kidney during an overall health check-up in Bengaluru 2001 due to some health issues before starting her international career. "It was shocking news for me. But Bobby (husband) motivated me to continue my career and achieve success. He even offered his kidney if I face any problem," she said.

Anju said she was now mature enough to handle



Anju Bobby George

● **In a tweet, the ace athlete, a gold medallist in the IAAF World Athletics Finals (Monaco, 2005), said she had many limitations, including being allergic to even a painkiller, but still made it.**

the situation brought about by her health issues.

"If I had gone public with my health then, the situation would have been different," Anju said.

Responding to her tweet, Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said she brought laurels to India through her hard work, grit and determination. "Anju, it's your hard work, grit and determination to bring laurels for India, supported by the dedicated coaches and the whole technical backup team. We are so proud of you being the only Indian so far to win a medal in the World Athletic Championship!" the minister said in his response to her tweet.

The Athletics Federation of India said as India's only medallist at the IAAF World Championships (Paris, 2003), a gold medallist in the IAAF World Athletics Finals (Monaco, 2005) and a remarkably consistent performer, Anju is among the country's most inspirational track and field stars.

She finished sixth at the 2004 Olympics with a personal best leap of 6.83m, but was elevated to fifth place in 2007 when USA's Marion Jones was disqualified for a doping offence. — *PTI*

England tour off after Covid strike

Johannesburg, Dec. 7: England's cricket tour of South Africa has been called off after a Covid-19 outbreak in the England touring party, both countries said on Monday.

The joint announcement from the two boards, which alluded to the "mental and physical health" of the players, came after the rearranged first match in the three-match series on Sunday was cancelled after two members of the England touring party tested positive for the virus.

England will return home having played all three matches in the T20 series but none of three scheduled ODIs.

"Cricket South Africa and the England and Wales Cricket Board have agreed

to postpone the remaining matches in the current ODI Series. The decision was taken jointly by the two Boards to ensure the mental and physical health and welfare of players from both teams," a joint statement said.

Many of the England players spent long stretches during the summer in a bio-secure bubble and some were also confined during the Indian Premier League in the Emirates which followed.

Two of the younger members of the squad, Tom Banton and Tom Curran have pulled out of contracts in Australia's Big Bash League in the last week, citing the pressure of living in the bio-secure bubbles. — *AFP*

Jadeja absence throws conspiracy theories out of window



Hemant Kenkre

Silly Point

The Australians don't take defeat on their chin and move on. Their last setback, in the first Twenty20 match (T20) coming on the back of another loss in the final One Day International (ODI) at Canberra has put them in a bit of a spot. The reactions of their cricketers, both current and former, to the losses, shows that the confidence they had gained after wins in the first two ODIs has been shaken and that's good news for India.

The concussion substitute issue, which has

opened debates across platforms, where Yuzvendra Chahal replaced Ravindra Jadeja and bowled India to a win in the first T20 saw responses from the hosts which affirmed their discomfiture. Coach Justin Langer's head-shaking argument with match referee David Boon during the innings break was followed by Aussie all-rounder Moises Henriques doubts whether Chahal's was a 'like-for-like' replacement for the injured Jadeja.

Former Aussie international Tom Moody commented that he had no

issues with the substitution but raised a question if the correct 'protocol' was followed since no physio or doctor came on to the middle when the Indian left-hander was struck on the helmet by a Mitchell Starc bouncer. Though these reactions were aimed at officials (match referee and umpires — as the decisions would ideally remain in their domains) they did lead to the perception that the replacement by India wasn't 'fair dinkum' to put it in Aussie lingo.

The 'issue' unnecessarily raised by the Aussies was because Jadeja suffered a hamstring injury after he was hit on the head and their reactions were bordering on that fact. Coming back, the questions one could ask Moody will be about protocols that need to be followed.

Would coach Langer's act of arguing with match referee Boon, a veteran cricketer and an Australian to boot, in full public with cameras focussed on them be considered as correct protocol? Would Moody have done the same while coaching a team in the Indian Premier League?

As someone who has been a frontline coach Moody should know what is and isn't part of cricketer's covenant. It just maybe that the former coach may have suffered a moment of 'brain fade' just the way former Aussie skipper Steve Smith did while touring India in the 2017 series.

Cricketers were always taught to respect the umpires decisions as final and any argument about the same was abhorred upon. In today's parlance, arguments with referees

and umpires are taken as part of cricket's changing scenario which makes for great viewing and juicy stories but is terrible if looked at from the point of view of the spirit of the game.

Looking back, Chahal replacing Jadeja wasn't exactly a major achievement by India but a mere opportunity for them to get a leg spinner in a game that was helping that genre of bowling. Calling it a masterstroke by India would be a misnomer. Indian captain Virat Kohli was honest enough to admit that there were no plans to play Chahal in the match and the decision they took worked for them this time and may not work in the future. Also, Jadeja being ruled out of the remainder of the T20 series and put under medical observation throws all

conspiracy theories out of the window.

The reactions from the Australians will now put Kohli and team India in a better frame of mind as they approach the crucial Test series. They know that the Aussies are riled after two consecutive losses and have given them a foot in the door. The host team's decision to rest their star bowler Pat Cummins and all-rounder Marcus Stoinis showed that they missed their opportunity for a clean sweep and gave the visitors a much needed lifeline.

The Aussies hate for anyone to get under their skin. We saw how former Indian skipper Sourav Ganguly irritated his counterpart Steve Waugh (by keeping him waiting for the toss) in 2001 taking Waugh away from his objective of beat-

ing India and conquering the last frontier. This time, they have inadvertently allowed the Indians to affect their psyche. Their adverse reactions to a superficial incident shows that they got complacent, effectively masking their failure to keep dominating over the visitors.

If India do keep up the momentum and win the T20 series (this is written before the second T20 match at Sydney) it will put them in a great position for the Test series. With Ajinkya Rahane's century and Cheteshwar Pujara's fifty for India 'A' against Australia 'A' in the ongoing practice match at the Drummoyne Oval in Sydney, the mood in the team India's camp will be upbeat and more positive than it was a week ago — a great build up for the Test series.