

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
VISAKHAPATNAM | TUESDAY | 15 DECEMBER 2020



**NATION | 4**

**India ready for any China eventuality**



**WORLD | 5**

**Master of espionage John le Carre dies at 89**

**SPORTS | 6**

**Finch tells Aussies not to provoke Kohli**



Vol. 36 No. 201 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES | ₹6.00

**WEATHER**  
Max: 30.0°C  
Min: 17.4°C  
RH: 86%  
Rainfall: NIL  
Forecast: Fog.  
Max/Min temp.  
30/18 °C

**COVID-19 COUNTRIES**

CASES	DEATHS
(+22,114)	(+359)
99,06,463	1,43,745

covid19india.org

**STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS**

(+573)	(+4)
TS: 2,77,724	1,493
(+506)	(+5)
AP: 8,75,531	7,057

**CASES AROUND THE WORLD**

7,28,93,236

**DEATHS**

16,23,425

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

**ASTROGUIDE**

**Sarvari:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Margasira Shuddha Padyami till 7.10 pm  
**Star:** Mula till 9.33 pm  
**Variyam:** 8.05 pm to 9.33 pm; then from 6.35 am (Wednesday)  
**Durmuhurtam:** 8.54 am to 9.37 am; 10.53 pm to 11.45 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 3 pm to 4.30 pm  
**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
**Rabbi-ul Akhir 29, 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 5.24 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.20 AM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 6.48 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 6.08 PM**

**COUNTER POINT**

**I don't need a farmer... I am strictly non-vegetarian!**

**IN BRIEF**

**Tatas, Interups to bid for Air India**

**New Delhi:** Salt-to-software conglomerate Tata Group and US-based fund Interups Inc were among "multiple" entities that on Monday put in preliminary bids for buying loss-making carrier Air India. A group of 219 Air India employees submitted an expression of interest (Eoi) for the carrier in partnership with Interups at the close of the deadline on Monday.

**Google suffers global outage**

**New Delhi:** Gmail and a host of other Google services faced disruptions on Monday evening. The company is yet to specify a reason for the outage. On the G Suite status dashboard, Google said it is "aware of a problem with Gmail affecting a majority of users. The affected users are unable to access Gmail".

**IIT-Madras shut due to Covid**

**Chennai:** The Indian Institute of Technology-Madras here has been hit by the Coronavirus outbreak with over 100 people, a majority of them students, testing positive for the contagion, a top health official said on Monday. A total of 104 students and others have contracted the disease and all were doing well in a hospital.

## Jagan in Delhi today, set to meet Amit Shah

### Major judicial developments likely in a few days

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 14**

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will leave for New Delhi on Tuesday. Though his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi is yet to be confirmed, sources said Reddy would meet Union home minister Amit Shah to discuss the crucial rehabilitation and resettlement of Polavaram oustees apart from other pending issues of bifurcation.

The meeting with Shah gains significance in the backdrop of rumours of major developments on the judicial front in next few days.

Alleging bias against his government, the Chief Minister complained to

the Centre against a few judges besides writing to Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde.

The Union finance ministry put the state government in a fix over the Polavaram project funding by proposing to downsize the assistance.

The state government immediately acted and made the Polavaram Project Authority to recommend the state's view on approving the revised cost estimate.

"Water impounding is largely dependent on the submergence area and the R&R package," a senior official said adding that the project potential could not be fully utilised if water is impounded at lower levels.

Though the government will initially impound

water at a level of 41.5 meters to assess the dam stability and other safety parameters, it has to eventually raise the level to 45.72 meters and to achieve this, the Centre has to release about ₹26,000 crore, the official pointed out.

The Chief Minister on Monday visited the Polavaram project site and reiterated that neither the project's height or the storage level would be decreased as propagated falsely by the Opposition and a section of media.

He, however, indicated that the storage level would be enhanced in a phased manner and directed the officials to complete the R&R works for the submergence area at 41.5 mtr level.

## CENTRE RELEASES NORMS FOR VACCINE ROLLOUT

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 14**

The Centre has released guidelines for the distribution of the vaccine once it becomes available. As per the new guidelines issued by the Centre, vaccinating 100-200 people in each session per day, monitoring them for 30 minutes after administering the shots for any adverse event and allowing only one beneficiary at a time. States can fix the days for vaccination.

Monday on petitions filed by Devineni Rajasekhara and T. Srinivas, challenging regulations and notifications by several departments on sand mining, said that no act of sand mining in the guise of desilting or dredging is to be permitted in the river, reservoir, lakes and pond beds.

The NGT directed the AP to conduct regular survey of sediment deposit on the water bodies.

■ Page 3: State told to follow Central guidelines

## NGT tells AP to stop illegal sand mining

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 14**

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) directed the AP government to take action against persons involved in illegal sand mining or exploitation of mines and minerals, by launching prosecution, imposing penalty and collecting royalty.

The NGT, Southern Zone, Chennai comprising Justice K. Ramakrishnan and expert member Saibal Dasgupta, while issuing an order on

## SC to study if Emergency in '75 is unconstitutional

**PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, DEC. 14**

The Supreme Court on Monday said that it will consider the "feasibility or desirability" of examining a plea seeking to declare the 19-month-long national Emergency that was declared in June 1975 and had witnessed a large scale preventive arrests and the freezing of the fundamental rights as unconstitutional.

The 19-month long emergency was declared by the then prime minister Indira Gandhi.

Issuing notice to the Centre, a bench comprising Justice Sanjay Kishan

Kaul, Justice Hrishikesh Roy and Justice Dinesh Maheshwari after expressing reluctance to embark on examining the validity of the 45-year-old event, agreed to consider whether it was feasible or desirable to examine the plea that the Emergency was unconstitutional and was an abuse of power and a fraud on the Constitution.

"We would not be disinclined to see whether probing such a proclamation after such a long time would be feasible or desirable," said Justice Kaul in the order after two rounds of consultations with Justice Roy and Justice

Maheshwari. The Supreme Court permitted senior counsel Harish Salve to amend the petition and remold the prayers by December 18 as per the course that the court has decided to embark on.

Appearing for a 94-year-old woman petitioner Veera Sarin who has sought the declaration that emergency was unconstitutional and also sought a compensation of ₹25 crore, Salve told the court that such an abuse of power that had taken place in the history had to be corrected so that they don't get repeated in the future.

## Farmers intensify stir over Centre's agri laws

### Highways blocked; Centre trying to fix new date for meet

**SANJAY KAW | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 14**

As the protesting farmers intensified their agitation against the Centre's three agricultural "reform" laws and went on a day-long fast on Monday, Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar said Centre was trying to engage with farmers' leaders to decide the next date of talks.

"The meeting will definitely happen. We are engaging with farmers," Mr Tomar said. "The government is ready for discussions anytime. The farmers' leaders have to 'decide and convey' when they are ready for the next meeting," he added.

The contentious farm laws also led to a Twitter spat between Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab CM Capt. Amarinder Singh, with the two accusing each other of "playing politics" over the sensitive issue.

Mr Kejriwal lashed out at Capt. Singh for criticising him for notifying one of the three farm laws passed by the Centre. The Delhi government on November 23 notified the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance 2020.

Mr Kejriwal said: "Punjab CM has made allegations against me that I've passed the black laws in Delhi. How can he do such low-level politics in this fragile situation? It's not up to the state govt to implement it. Had it been so, why would farmers of the country hold talks with the Centre?"

Mr Kejriwal asked Capt. Singh if he was accusing the Delhi CM in a bid to form friendship with the BJP. He said: "So, is it (due to) the pressure of these



Volunteers serve food for farmers and security personnel at the Ghazipur border during Delhi Chalo protest against the new farm laws, at Ghaziabad-Delhi Border on Monday.

— PTI

**PUNJAB CM alleged that I have passed black laws in Delhi. If that were so, why are farmers of the country trying to hold talks with the Centre?**

**ARVIND KEJRIWAL Delhi Chief Minister**

**AT A time when farmers are braving the Delhi winter and dying, all you can think of is to use the opportunity to promote your political interests**

**AMARINDER SINGH Punjab CM**

people that you are putting allegations against me? Are you doing it for friendship with the BJP or are you under pressure as the Enforcement Directorate has filed a case against your family?"

Capt. Singh hit back, saying: "At a time when our farmers are braving the winter cold on the roads outside your city and many of them are dying fighting for their rights, all you can think of is how

to make the most of the opportunity to promote your political interests."

While the farmers stayed adamant on continuing their agitation until the three laws were repealed, minister of state for agriculture Parshottam Rupala claimed most farmers in the country were in favour of the new laws and there was no need to bring the MSP under purview of the law as demanded by them. The minister urged

the protesting farmers to return to the discussion table and find an amicable solution to the deadlock.

The protests against the new laws kept growing. A large number of farmers from Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and UP on Monday turned up at Delhi's borders to express anger over the new laws. The massive protests led to huge traffic jams in and around Delhi-NCR with commuters forced to use alternate routes to reach their destinations.

This was the second nationwide protest in less than a week after national highways were blocked last Tuesday as a part of countrywide shutdown call backed by the Opposition. The Rajasthan farmers continued to block the Delhi-Jaipur highway at Shahjahanpur in Alwar district for the second day on Monday.

## Fishermen pelt stones at RS MP

**DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, DEC. 14**

Tension prevailed and police pickets have been placed in Vodarevu area of Prakasam district after some fishermen pelted stones at the convoy of Rajya Sabha member Mopidevi Venkataramana on Monday.

Agricultural market committee director Kanaparthi Bajjibabu and YSR Congress leader Kagitla Satish, following the MP in a vehicle of the convoy, were injured. Police had a tough time

● **POLICE HAD tough time in controlling the fishermen who initially raised slogans**

controlling the fishermen, who initially started raising slogans against the MP but later hurled stones at his car and vehicles that were following it.

Venkataramana had come to the area for sorting out the ongoing tussle between fisher folk of Katariyapalem and Vodarevu folk villages over use of fishing nets called "Ballavala".

Earlier, addressing the fishermen at Katariyapalem, the MP asked them not to believe rumours over their rivals preparing to attack them. He assured that he would find a lasting solution to the dispute between the two villages. He visited the government hospital in the area to console a person injured in the recent clashes between the two villages.

Chirala MLA Karanam Balaram, former legislator Amanchi Krishna Mohan and MLC Pothula Suneetha were present

with the MP. Locals said separate political affiliations within fishermen of two villages, who are followers of MLA Karanam Balaram and his arch rival Amanchi Krishnamohan, could be reason for stone pelting and ongoing disputes between the two villages.

Prakasam district additional SP B. Ravichandra, camping at Vodarevu, said they have posted police pickets in the troubled areas. He maintained that the situation is well under control.

**PROJECT | MISINFORMATION**

**Jagan reiterates height of Polavaram dam will not be decreased even by a millimetre**

## Need Polavaram water by '22 Kharif, CM tells officials

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 14**

Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed officials to adhere to the schedule of completing Polavaram Irrigation Project by end of 2021. He wishes to ensure that the project's water is supplied before farmers start cultivating crops during the 2022 Kharif season.

After inspecting spillway works on the project, the CM reiterated his statement in State Legislative Assembly that height of the Polavaram Dam will not be reduced even by a millimetre. His assurance came after "misinformation campaign" that the project's full reservoir level will be reduced from

55 metres to 45.72 metres.

Member secretary of Polavaram Project Authority also announced that height of the dam will be as approved by the Central Water Commission (CWC) and will never be decreased. On resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) of project-affected people, the Chief Minister instructed officials to first resettle those affected once the water level reaches 41.5 metres. The next to be resettled will be those affected after water level reaches 45.72 metres. He said ₹3,330 crore will be spent on rehabilitation, which must be completed by February or March, 2021.

■ Page 2: CM unhappy bills not cleared



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy inspects the Polavaram project works at Polavaram in West Godavari on Monday.

## Jaggaiiah mandal land in resurvey

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 14**

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will launch the resurvey of lands from Sher Mohammad Peta of Jaggaiiah mandal in Krishna district on December 21.

The state government will take up resurvey of lands in the first phase in about 5,461 villages from December 22 covering one village in each mandal in order to complete the exer-

cise by July. The revenue department published the relevant gazette notification on November 30 and accordingly, the district collectors are also publishing notifications in their respective districts.

Local volunteers will inform the schedule of land resurvey to their owners by serving them notices.

■ Page 2: Officials to visit property, fix boundaries



## SHORT TAKES

AID UNDER AMMA  
VODI PHASE-II  
ON JAN. 9DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 12

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to give away financial assistance in phase-II under Amma Vodi scheme for the academic year 2020-21 on January 9, 2021.

Minister for education Adimulapu Suresh told media persons here on Monday that they had already taken up the registration of the names of parents and guardians of the eligible students to get financial assistance under the scheme and added that the list of eligible students to be displayed at ward/village secretariats on December 16.

The minister said that as the CM noted that no student should be deprived of the opportunity to pursue education due to poverty, the state government was implementing the scheme for the poor students pursuing first standard to intermediate education in government schools and colleges, aided and unaided institutions and also in government Gurukula schools to get annual financial assistance of ₹15,000 per head.

CM UNHAPPY  
BILLS NOT  
CLEARED

FROM PAGE 1

The CM expressed concern that project bills pertaining to year 2018 were still pending. At this, officials informed him that they need some funds as advance for getting funds from the Centre. Jagan Mohan Reddy assured that he will make all efforts to ensure no dues from the Centre are pending.

Later, officials informed the Chief Minister a committee comprising officials from Water Resources, Polavaram Project Authority and CWC will be set up to resolve any issues arising in models, designs or construction of the dam.

OFFICIALS TO  
VISIT PROPERTY,  
FIX BOUNDARIES

FROM PAGE 1

A team of officials comprising village secretary, revenue officer and village surveyor will visit the property and fix boundaries based on the village map and collect data. Later, based on government guidelines, the borders of the property would be marked and photographed. It is likely to take four months to complete land resurvey in each village.

At the time of land resurvey, proper owner or anyone authorised by him or her would have to be present with all requisite details of the property.

Earlier, the state government had carried out land resurvey on an experimental basis at Thakkellapadu of Jaggaiahpetta mandal in Krishna district for properties located in 152 survey numbers in 180 subdivisions.

MAOISTS KILL  
ADIVASI IN VIZAG  
AGENCYDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 14

The outlawed CPI (Maoist) allegedly killed a tribal farmer in Vakapalli village in G Madugula mandal in Visakhapatnam, after branding him as a police informer. The incident reportedly happened just before midnight on Sunday.

The deceased has been identified as one Gemmili Krishna Rao. Local reports said that around 20 to 30 Maoist cadres picked up the deceased from his home and hacked him to death at a place close to the village. The Maoists also left a letter at the spot, wherein they branded him as police informer.

Claiming responsibility, the Maoists in the letter stated that Krishna Rao was killed as he was actively playing a role in all the community policing initiatives taken up by the district police in the agency area.

They further mentioned in the letter that the deceased was forcing the tribal youth to take part in the 'Jana Maitri' programme launched by the police and also asking them to take part in the volleyball tournaments being conducted by the police for the tribal youth.

The Maoists also stated that Krishna Rao had given shelter to a police informer, who had allegedly played a role in the aiding the police.



Candidates of Group-1 examination coming out of the examination centre after writing the test at One Town in Vijayawada on Monday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

BJP to fight for Amaravati  
as only capital: Veerraju

We will develop AP across spheres if voted to power in '24

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 14

State BJP president Somu Veerraraju assured the agitating farmers that his party would fight for the continuation of Amravati as the capital city.

Lauding the efforts of the farmers at a meeting organised by small and medium farmers in Thullur on Monday, he said that his party was committed to establishing the capital in Amravati and there was no second thoughts over it. He demanded the government to issue pattas to 64,000 farmers and develop the remaining 9,000 acres in the capital region.

Stating that BJP would build its party office in Vijayawada, Mr Veerraju said Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had



● Lauding the efforts of the farmers at a meeting organised by small and medium farmers in Thullur on Monday, he said that his party was committed to establishing the capital in Amravati and there was no second thoughts over it.

● He demanded the government to issue pattas to 64,000 farmers and develop the remaining 9,000 acres in the capital region.

promised to build the capital in Amravati soon after assuming power but later changed his mind and announced three capitals.

He said the previous government claimed that it had spent around ₹72,000 crore on the capital. Of this, the Union Government had sanctioned ₹2,500 crore and ₹800 crore for Amravati Smart city project and a ₹4,000 crore loan was given by Hudeco.

"The TD wants that the Prime Minister should intervene in the capital issue but did not mention where he should intervene," Mr Veerraju said.

He said even if the capital is proposed to be shifted, the Centre has been going ahead with its projects.

He said AIIMS was being built at a cost of ₹1,800 crore and many more like agriculture university and other institutions

were coming up. The Centre helped in the construction of Kanakadurga flyover, two flyovers at Benz circle, defense establishment at Avanigadda and Nimmalur, six-lane road to Machilipatnam while many more projects are in the pipeline, he said.

"We will develop the state across spheres if BJP is voted to power in AP in 2024," Mr Veerraju said.

Likely recognition of tribal  
villages creates tension in EGDC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, DEC. 14

A view is gaining ground that nearly 50 villages in East Godavari district should be treated as tribal villages and be included in the agency area. This stems from the fact that there is a mix of tribal and non-tribal population in these villages, and they are adjacent to the agency area. The tribal people in the villages want them included in the agency in order to be entitled to all the corresponding benefits.

But, there is a resistance from non-tribal farmers and non-tribal people in general, as their properties will come under the 1/70 Act. They cannot sell their properties or purchase lands. Therefore, they are opposing the move and a debate is rising in the villages whether they should be an agency or not.

According to sources, though tribes for a majority of the population, most of the properties are in the hands of non-tribal people, who are not willing to give up their rights on those lands.

Officials conducted grama sabhas and resolved not to merge the villages under agency. But

● The tribals in the villages want them included in the agency in order to be entitled to all the corresponding benefits

● There is a resistance from non-tribal farmers and non-tribal people

many tribal unions strongly condemned it and they said that some political leaders are influencing officials and passing resolutions without conducting grama sabhas.

In some villages, they alleged that officials told the people that they would get more schemes and took their signatures.

"We are not accepting the resolutions as it has been unilateral. The grama sabhas should be conducted again and opinions of the people should be taken," said Fifth Schedule Sadhana Committee member L. Subba Rao.

He said that tribals in these villages are demanding that the villages be declared as scheduled areas and all tribal rights be extended to them. Another member of the committee K. Rajendra said that Samatha Organization has been demanding that

Pedamallapuram be declared as 'girijan mandal' since 1985.

The BJP has lent its support and toured the villages. The party's Kakinada Parliament district president C. Rankumar said that they would fight for the rights of the people. BJP State General Secretary Lokula Gandhi submitted a representation to the Superintendent of Police, seeking to focus on law and order as there a possibility of a showdown between tribal and non-tribals.

However, Prathipadu MLA Parvatha Purnachandra Prasad said that in some villages tribals are in majority, but lands belong to non-tribal people, who are worried about losing their rights under 1/70 Act, if these villages are merged with agency area.

He said that he would respect both sections of people. But, if the government takes a decision, nobody can oppose it.

Meanwhile, according to sources, officials are likely to conduct another grama sabha in the sub-plan areas. It is said that if the 1/70 Act is not applicable, even non-tribal farmers also may accept the merger.

SIT constituted by YSRC  
govt focussed on Sec. 22ADC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 14

The second phase of Special Investigation Team (SIT), constituted by the YSRC government mainly focussed on the amended Section of the 22(A) Registration Act, which prohibited registration of land and had become a bane for the people. Due to lack of subdivision of land, it was not possible to identify which land fell under the purview of the government order.

Talking to this correspondent, chairman of the SIT and former Visakhapatnam joint collector K. Vijay Kumar said the team had a review meeting with the 13 tahsildars and suggested they speed up the sub-division process using mandal surveys since people are suffering.

Around 110 acres of land have been locked under Section 22(A), he said and added that people who were preparing for their

children's marriage and other emergency needs were the worst sufferers.

Similarly, the team has focussed on the Urban Land Ceiling issue under which more than 450 applications were submitted for regularisation and issue of GO from the government. The applications are pending since 2017. Until the government issues GO for regularisation, the lands cannot be registered under section 22(1D).

The ULC issue is an entirely local issue which could be sorted out by the district administration, the chairman said.

Regarding encroachment of government lands, essentially for which the SIT was constituted, the chairman said around 400 acres of government land had been encroached by the private people, and key documents have tampered. The team will suggest the government on how to get back the land and identified around 20 revenue

officials who played a key role in the encroachments.

He said AP Housing Corporation has also been asked to file FIR against those who encroached into the government lands. Two such cases have been filed under Section 140 of CrPC.

He announced that final touches were being given to the report which might be submitted to the government in another fortnight.

The SIT received 1,380 petitions and of them, 679 were referred to the concerned tahsildars who in turn returned 420 reports and of them, 342 were disposed.

Former BJP MLA P. Vishnu Kumar Raju, who was responsible for the constitution of the first SIT by the then Telugu Desam government, said he hoped that this government would take the report to the logical end and put an end to the encroachment of government lands.

## Festive lights



Steps way of Padmanabha Swamy temple illuminated with earthen lamps by the devotees alongside Padmanabha hills as part of Deepotsavam to mark the conclusion of Karthika month, at Padmanabham in Visakhapatnam district on Monday.

— DC

CBI submits report to  
HC on doctor caseDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 14

The CBI submitted its report to the AP High Court on the arrest of Dr K. Sudhakar, the former anaesthetist

at Narsipatnam area hospital in Visakhapatnam on Monday. But since the report was not incorporated in the registry, the High Court judges sought the report to be submitted to them and adjourned the case to March 21.

The order was delivered by judges Rakesh Kumar and J. Uma Devi.

It may be recalled that Dr Sudhakar had abused the prime minister and the chief ministers of Telugu states on the National Highway in Visakhapatnam city in May this year following which the local police had arrested him.

He was allegedly dragged by the police before the arrest. Former MLA of Paykaraopeta V.

Anitha sent the video clip to the High Court along with a letter with an attachment of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's morphed video on Naidu. The High Court accepted the letter as a suo motu case and ordered the CBI to inquire into the mode of arrest of the doctor.

The High Court also ordered the CBI to submit the report on the social posts made against the judicial officers.

## ILLEGAL | ACTIVITY

Police to continue combing, warned of stern action against smuggling  
4 tonnes of red sanders logs seized in 3 daysDC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, DEC. 14

The Red Sanders Anti-Smuggling Task Force (RSASTF) have seized around four tonnes of red sander logs during its ongoing combing operation being held in the Seshachalam forests for the past three days. In a fresh catch, the task force team seized 30 red sanders logs on the outskirts of Tirupati and 32 logs in on

Monday.

Disclosing the details to media RSASTF SP G. Anjaneyulu said, acting on a piece of credible information that Tamil Nadu based woodcutters have ventured into Seshachalam forests, the task force team led by RSI Vasu have been carrying out intensive combing operations in the forests and also conducting vehicular checking at all the entry and exit points of

● The task force team seized 30 red sanders logs on the outskirts of Tirupati and 32 logs in on Monday

● In another catch, the task Force teams have seized 32 red sander logs in Ramapuram of Kadapa

Srivari Mettu area and Bakarapeta ghat road for the past three days.

"In the early hours on Monday, the task force team had encountered a group of 30 woodcutters carrying logs in the forest area near S.V. Zoo park in Tirupati. On noticing the task force personnel, the woodcutters fled away from the spot, leaving behind nearly 30 logs. The teams have intensified the combing operation to nab the escaped woodcutters," the SP said.

In another catch, the task

Force teams have seized 32 red sander logs in Ramapuram of Kadapa district. RI Ali Basha and Ramapuram Police led this operation. A case was registered at the Ramapuram police station in this regard, SP Mr Anjaneyulu said.

The SP appreciated the efforts of Task Force DSP's K.C. Venkataiah, V.V. Giridhar, RI Bhaskar, Circle Inspector Subrahmanyam and oth-

ers for taking part in the combing operation, which led to the seizure of nearly 4 tonnes of logs in the past three days.

The SP informed that they would continue the combing operation and warned of stern action against the smugglers and the woodcutters. He said that they would not hesitate to slap the PD Act against repeated offenders involved in smuggling activity.







SHORT TAKES

MODI, HASINA TO HOLD VIRTUAL SUMMIT ON DEC. 17

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

India and Bangladesh will hold a crucial virtual summit on Thursday (December 17) that will be co-chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina during which the “two leaders will hold comprehensive discussions on the entire spectrum of the bilateral relationship, including further strengthening cooperation in the post-Covid era”, New Delhi announced on Monday. This is likely to include the progress of development projects, sharing of river waters including the Teesta issue, the Rohingya migrants issue, border security, Covid-19 vaccines as well as the forthcoming golden jubilee celebrations of the 1971 war of liberation.

The summit will take place at a time when India is making a renewed bid to reach out to its immediate neighbourhood and also when Pakistan is trying its best to improve relations with Bangladesh.

On Monday, New Delhi said, “India and Bangladesh have continued to maintain regular exchanges at the highest level. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid an official visit to India in October 2019. Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a video message on the historic occasion of Mujib Borsho in March 2020. Both leaders have remained in regular touch during the Covid pandemic.”

“Mujib Barsho” refers to birth centenary celebrations of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman — popularly known as Bangabandhu — who had led the Bangladesh freedom struggle in 1971.

GMAIL, OTHER GOOGLE SERVICES FACE OUTAGE

New Delhi, Dec. 14: Gmail and a host of other Google services faced disruptions on Monday evening and the tech major is in the process of fully restoring the services. The company, which faced a similar outage in August this year, is yet to specify areas on for the outage.

In an update on the Google work space status dashboard at 18:17 hours, Google said Gmail service has already been restored for some users, and “we expect a resolution for all users in the near future. Please note this time frame is an estimate and may change”.

At around 17:25 hours, Google had said it was “aware of a problem with Gmail affecting a majority of users” and that the affected users are unable to access Gmail.

As per the dashboard, other Google services like Google Calendar, Google Drive, Google Docs and Google Meet have also been affected. Down detector, which detects outages and interruptions on networks, also showed that services like YouTube (Google’s video platform) and Gmail were facing disruption. Netizens turned to Twitter to express their emotions.

MAHA GOVT OFFERS HELP TO PRESERVE INS VIRAAT

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, DEC. 14

Claiming that the Maharashtra government is willing to help restore and preserve “the historical ship” *INS Viraat*, Shiv Sena MP Priyanka Chaturvedi on Monday said she has written a letter to the defence ministry seeking a no-objection certificate to preserve the decommissioned aircraft carrier.

The Shiv Sena leader in her letter addressed to defence minister Rajnath Singh has stated that the government of Maharashtra was happy to cooperate in restoring and preserving the historical ship. She has also requested Singh’s immediate intervention to grant No Objection Certificate (NOC) to preserve the aircraft carrier. *INS Viraat* is being dismantled at the Alang ship-breaking yard in Gujarat.

According to Mukesh Patel, chairman of the Shree Ram Group which bought *INS Viraat* as scrap, “About 5 per cent of the ship has already been broken.”

In her social media post she has stated that *INS Viraat* served as India’s aircraft carrier for nearly 30 years. “It has been the pride of our seas and our Indian Navy. To see it sold as scrap and dismembered will be a huge disservice to our naval legacy. With RM’s NOC, a memorial on *INS Viraat* will be a reality,” she said.



People witness the launch of GRSE-built first Project 17A stealth frigate Himgiri in Kolkata on Monday.

— PTI

India geared up for any China build-up: Rawat

CDS says armed forces can counter PLA’s constant moves

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, DEC. 14

In a veiled warning to China amid a prolong stand-off, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat on Monday affirmed that the Indian armed forces, undertaking steps on this side of the Line of Actual Control to counter the People Liberation Army’s military build-up on the other side, would leave no stone unturned to protect the nation’s interests from land to air to sea.

“We are in a stand-off situation in Ladakh and based on that there is some development activity which has been ongoing in Tibet Autonomous Region of China. Every nation will continue to prepare for ensuring it’s security based on its strategic interests. I do not

think there should be much concern in that because we, on our side, are also carrying out similar activity. China’s attempt to change the status quo on the LAC along the northern border amidst the Coronavirus pandemic necessitates high-level preparation on land, in air and at sea. I am fully confident that Indian armed forces will leave no stone unturned to safeguard our frontiers be it on land, in air or at ocean. We are fully prepared for any eventuality we may be faced with,” Gen Rawat said at the launch of *INS Himgiri*, the first GRSE-built P17A stealth frigate in Kolkata.

Referring to the Doklam stand-off between the two sides, Rawat elaborated, “A situation had evolved in Doklam in 2017. Ever since we have taken meas-

ures to ensure that the situation does not escalate. The PLA on the other side has been carrying out certain activity. We, on our side, have also been watching this activity very carefully. We have also taken necessary action to counter anything that could be a cause of concern to our national security.”

Underlining the importance of technology in military, he added, “What we are looking at is getting technology. Time has come to look at the future of warfighting imbining technology into systems. We have adequate force and reserves available to counter any threat or challenge that we may face on the northern border.”

On the Navy’s push for a third aircraft carrier vis-a-vis submarines, Gen

Rawat observed, “Both have their advantages and disadvantages.

Submarines have their separate place in naval warfare in domination of the sea. So does an aircraft carrier. I am no way saying the navy does not need it’s air wing. Yes it does. But how to manage air wing and how to ensure the security and sanctity of the sealine of our communication is something we are thinking about. I think we also need to look at our Island territories that we have in large numbers. We can leverage the island territory to our advantage. Then we can balance whether these can be used for launching our naval aircraft or do we need an aircraft carrier. Once we study all that and we understood in detail, we will take a call on that.”

UK FOREIGN SECY ON 4-DAY VISIT TO INDIA

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab is beginning a four-day visit to India from Monday and will hold ministerial-level talks with his Indian counterpart External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Tuesday. This comes just days after media reports that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been invited by India to be the chief guest at the Republic Day parade next month.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had recently evaded questions from the media on the reported invitation, saying earlier that in such matters, “the announcement is made closer to the event”.

In a statement on Monday, meanwhile, the MEA said, “The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP, secretary of state for foreign, commonwealth and development affairs, United Kingdom, will pay an official visit to India from 14-17 December 2020. During his stay in New Delhi, Raab will hold talks with Minister of External Affairs

Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on 15 December 2020 on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. He will also have official meetings with the minister of environment, forests and climate change Prakash Javadekar and the minister of education Ramesh Pokhriyal.”

It may be recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had spoken on phone to his British counterpart Johnson last month in which the two “leaders agreed that officials from both sides would continue their work to quickly finalise an ambitious long-term roadmap for the India-UK partnership”.

Heavy voter turnout in last phase of Kerala polls

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC. 14

Heavy polling was recorded in the third and final phase of local body polls in Kerala.

More than 78.62 per cent polling was recorded till 8 pm in four northern districts Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasargod which went to polls on Monday.

Malappuram recorded 78.86 per cent, Kozhikode 78.98, Kannur 77.54 and Kasargod 77.14 per cent.

A total of 89,74,993 voters were eligible to vote in the third phase in 6,867 wards across 354 local bodies. The polling was held strictly complying with Covid safety protocol. Voters turned out in masks, maintained social distancing while waiting in the queues and used sanitisers before and after casting their votes. Barring minor incidents of scuffle between the supporters of rival parties, no major violence was reported from any of the northern districts.

The state had witnessed heavy turnout of voters in all three phases which



Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan casts his vote during the last stage of Kerala local body elections at Cherikkal in Kannur on Monday.

— PTI

clearly indicated the enthusiasm of the electorate.

Leaders of LDF, UDF and BJP are keeping their fingers crossed over the heavy polling with each party trying to interpret the trend according to their respective calculations.

It may be recalled that 72.67 per cent polling was recorded in the first

phase on December 8 southern districts Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Idukki.

A higher voter turnout of 76.38 per cent was witnessed in the second phase when central districts of Kottayam, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad and Wayanad went to polls on December 10.

Rajnath lauds valour of forces deployed at LAC

PAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 14

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said that unprovoked aggression on India’s Himalayan frontiers by China is a reminder of how world is changing and how power is being asserted across Indo-Pacific. He lauded the valour of Indian armed forces deployed along the LAC for standing up to aggression by Chinese troops and said our troops fought the Chinese military with “utmost bravery,” forcing it to go back. On farmer’s issues Singh said there is no question of taking “retrograde steps against our agricultural sector ever”.

“Unprovoked aggression on our Himalayan frontiers is a reminder of how the world is changing, how existing agreements are being challenged, how power is being asserted not just in Himalayas but across Indo-Pacific. How

uncertain the future of the region and world could be in this backdrop,” said Singh while virtually addressing the annual general meeting of apex industry chamber FICCI. Defence minister said that there is a big build up of armed forces at LAC in Ladakh. “In these testing times, our forces have shown exemplary courage and remarkable fortitude. They fought the PLA with utmost bravery and forced them to go back,” said Singh. He said that the coming generations will be proud of what our forces have managed to achieve this year.

Defence minister pointed out that whenever there is a situation at LAC the most obvious outcome is comparison between India and China’s military strength.

“There can be a serious debate on who owns more military might but when it comes to soft power there is no scope of ambigui-

ty India is far ahead of China when it comes to leading the world with ideas,” said Singh. “If one looks at East-Asia from Burma to Thailand to Indonesia and Malaysia and even Japan “there is a huge Indian cultural impact on these countries,” he added “Buddhism had a monumental impact on China to the extent that before the 1949 revolution almost 80 per cent of China population followed Buddhism,” said Singh.

He added that famous Chinese thinker Hu Shih, who was also the vice-chancellor of Peking University had said that: “India has culturally dominated and controlled China for more than 2,000 years without sending a single soldier.” “This statement by Hu Shih underlines the fact that India as a civilisation state has been inspiring and influencing the world through its cultural and soft power for centuries,” he said.

Kamal Nath hints at political retirement

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, DEC. 14

Former chief minister and Madhya Pradesh Congress president Kamal Nath has created a ripple in the political circle here when he hinted at retirement from politics.

Nath who is facing growing resentment in the party following the poor show by Congress in the November 3 by-elections to 28 Assembly constituencies in Madhya Pradesh, said, “I am ready to take some rest. I have no ambition or greed for any position or power. I have served in various posts at Centre. I have already achieved a lot. I am ready to stay at home”.

He was addressing a rally in his Assembly constituency of Sasaur in Chhindwara on Sunday evening.

Nath’s statement comes in the wake of reports of his running feud with veteran Congress leader and former chief minister Digvijay Singh.

“Nath is responsible for the drubbing of Congress in November 3 Assembly by-elections. The party suffered a setback in the

by-polls because Nath sidelined Singh in the Assembly by-elections”, Congress MLA Baburam Jandela said.

Jandela is considered close to Singh. Congress spokesman Narendra Singh Saluja, however, sought to underplay the development, saying, “Nath has several times in the past said he has achieved a lot and has no greed for power or position”.

Nath who holds dual posts of Madhya Pradesh PCC president and Congress Legislature Party chief is under pressure by a strong section of the party to leave one of the posts in the wake of party’s poor show in the November 3 Assembly by-elections.

Congress could win only nine out of 28 Assembly constituencies which had gone to by-elections on November 3.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan took a jibe at Kamal Nath for reportedly weighing the option of retiring from politics, saying, “It is up to him to decide whether to retire or sit at home. It is his affairs. If charges and counter-charges are made, he should come up with clarifications”.

— PTI

Centre upgrades Vijayvargiya’s security with bullet resistant car

New Delhi/Kolkata, Dec. 14: BJP leader Kailash Vijayvargiya’s VIP security has been upgraded with the addition of a “bullet resistant” car in his convoy during his West Bengal tour, official sources said on Monday.

The Union home ministry has issued an order directing the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to include an armoured vehicle in the convoy of the 64-year-old national general secretary of the BJP and ensure he only travels in that SUV, they said.

“The security of Vijayvargiya has been upgraded with the inclusion of a bullet resistant

four-wheeler in the convoy. This has been done keeping in mind the security requirements of the protectee in the wake of the recent attack on his vehicle that was part of a convoy of BJP president J.P. Nadda,” an official source said.

The CISF has been providing ‘Z’ category VIP security cover to Vijayvargiya since February last year. The protection includes a mobile team of about six-seven armed CISF commandos as well as a pilot and an escort vehicle. Vijayvargiya’s vehicle was attacked with stones during a visit to Diamond Harbour area in the state’s South 24 Parganas

district on December 10 when he was accompanying the BJP president.

Vijayvargiya confirmed his security upgrade to reporters after he arrived in Kolkata on Monday afternoon to take part in a programme at Mathurapur in South 24 Parganas.

“As per the order of the Union home ministry, I have been provided with a bulletproof vehicle,” he told the media at the airport. On December 10, several vehicles in Nadda’s cavalcade were damaged in the attack. Sources in the BJP said its leaders, including Vijayvargiya and vice president Mukul Roy, sustained injuries in the melee.

— PTI

Bill gives death penalty, ₹10 lakh fine for crimes on women, modelled after AP

WOMEN | SAFETY

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC  
MUMBAI, DEC. 14

In a historical move, the Maharashtra government on Monday tabled the Shakti Bill in the Vidhan Sabha that provides a death penalty and a fine up to ₹10 lakh for crimes against women and children in the state.

State home minister Anil Deshmukh tabled the Maharashtra Shakti Criminal Law (Maharashtra Amendment) Act, 2020, as well as Maharashtra Exclusive Special Court (for certain

offences against Women and Children under Shakti Law) on the first day of the two-day winter session of the state legislature.

Based on the Disha Act in Andhra Pradesh, the bill has proposed strict punishments for crimes such as rape, acid attack and derogatory material on social media against women and children.

It has also proposed special courts ensuring speedy trial in cases of crimes against women and children, amendments in sections of Indian Penal

● BASED ON the Disha Act in Andhra Pradesh, the bill has proposed strict punishments for crimes such as rape, acid attack and derogatory material on social media against women and children.

Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) to sternly deal with such crimes.

The bills have assured to bring down the investigation period from two months to 15 days, the trial period from two months to 30 days, and appeal period to 45 days from the present

six months. It is expected to be cleared by the House on Tuesday.

The new law will have a separate judicial system to fast-track the cases that come under the Act’s purview with at least one special court in each of the districts. It has the provision for special public prosecutors and special police teams, which will have at least one woman

officer. It also aims to establish institutions for providing services to victims, including medical or psychiatric support and care, counselling, facilitating legal and financial aid, and rehabilitation.

Deshmukh said the legislation proposes to complete investigation, trial and sentencing within a stipulated time frame. “The offences against women and children, especially heinous and sexual offences have increased many fold in the state. The proposed law will also

have provisions to tackle threats and messages on social media platforms. It is an important legislation and provisions have been made to ensure that the accused are booked and sentenced at the earliest,” he added.

Several women’s groups had earlier urged Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to not table the Shakti bill, calling it draconian legislation that is fundamentally anti-women with the potential to negate the very offence of rape.



## SHORT TAKES

RAWALPINDI  
BLAST: 3 ULTRAS  
HELD IN PAKISTAN

**Lahore, Dec. 14:** Three Taliban terrorists, involved in a blast in Rawalpindi, were arrested on Monday by Pakistan's security agencies.

At least 25 people, including women and children, were injured in the grenade attack in the Ganj Mandi area near a police station in the garrison city of Rawalpindi on Sunday.

The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of the Punjab police said in a statement on Monday that a CTD Rawalpindi team got information that three terrorists were hiding on Adyala-Kharakan Road along Swan River Rawalpindi. "On this information and evidence collected from Pir Wadhai crime scene, CTD raided the place on Monday and arrested three terrorists. Explosives, detonators, cell phones and other articles recovered," it said.

U.S. REMOVES  
SUDAN FROM  
TERROR LIST

**Khartoum, Dec. 14:** The United States has formally removed Sudan from its state sponsor of terrorism blacklist, its Khartoum embassy said Monday, less than two months after the East African nation pledged to normalise ties with Israel. The move opens the way for aid, debt relief and investment to a country going through a rocky political transition and struggling under a severe economic crisis exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. US President Donald Trump had announced in October that he was delisting Sudan, 27 years after Washington first put the country on its blacklist for harbouring Islamist militants. "The congressional notification period of 45 days has lapsed and the Secretary of State has signed a notification stating rescission of Sudan's State Sponsor of Terrorism designation," the US embassy in Khartoum said on Facebook.

Hackers infiltrate  
US fed networks

Experts suspect Russian hand in attack on FireEye, major cybersecurity player in US

**Washington, Dec. 14:** Hackers broke into the networks of federal agencies including the Treasury and Commerce departments as US government officials said Sunday that they were working to identify the scope of the breach and to fix the problem.

The FBI and the Department of Homeland Security's cybersecurity arm are investigating. The hacks were revealed just days after a major cybersecurity firm disclosed that foreign government hackers had broken into its network and stolen the company's own hacking tools.

Many experts suspect Russia as responsible for the attack against FireEye, a major cybersecurity player whose customers include federal, state and local governments and top global corporations. There was no immediate connection between the attacks, and it wasn't immediately clear if Russia was also responsible for the hack of the Treasury Department, which was first reported by *Reuters*.

National Security Council spokesperson John Ulliot said in a statement that the government was "taking all necessary steps to identify and remedy any possible issues related to this situation." The government's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency said separately that it has been working with other agencies "regarding recently discovered activity on government networks."

CISA is providing technical assistance to affected

Data leak exposes  
China in top firms

**Melbourne, Dec. 14:** Amid simmering tensions between Australia and China, the media here on Monday reported a major data leak containing official records like party position, birthdate, national ID number and ethnicity of nearly two million alleged members of the Communist Party of China (CPC) living and working across the world.

The data leak obtained by 'The Australian' newspaper has revealed how the alleged CPC members are employed with some of the world's biggest corporations in the areas of defence, banks and pharmaceutical giants manufacturing Coronavirus vaccines.

Among the companies

identified as having alleged CPC members as their employees are Boeing and Volkswagen, pharmaceutical giants Pfizer and AstraZeneca, and financial institutions including ANZ and HSBC, according to the reports.

The leak has exposed details of 1.95 million CPC members after being extracted from a Shanghai server by whistleblowers. An investigation by 'The Australian' has found that at least 10 consulates in the eastern Chinese metropolis Shanghai have CPC members employed as senior political and government affairs specialists, clerks, economic advisers and executive assistants. —PTI

entities as they work to identify and mitigate any potential compromises." President Donald Trump last month fired the director of CISA, Chris Krebs, after Krebs vouched for the integrity of the presidential election and disputed Trump's claims of widespread electoral fraud.

Federal government agencies have long been attractive targets for foreign hackers.

Hackers linked to Russia were able to break into the State Department's email system in 2014, infecting it so thoroughly that it had to be cut off from the internet while experts wo-

rked to eliminate the infestation. Reuters earlier reported that a group backed by a foreign government stole information from Treasury and a Commerce Department agency responsible for deciding internet and telecommunications policy.

Intelligence agencies are reportedly concerned that other agencies were hacked using similar tools. The Treasury Department deferred comment to the National Security Council. A Commerce Department spokesperson confirmed a "breach in one of our bureaus" and said "we have asked CISA and the FBI to investigate." —AP

US kicks off Covid-19 vaccine drive as  
Germany returns to partial lockdown

**New York, Dec. 14:** The United States kicked off a mass vaccination drive Monday hoping to turn the tide on the world's biggest Coronavirus outbreak, as the country's death toll neared a staggering 3,00,000.

A nurse in New York became the first person in the US to be vaccinated when she received the Pfizer-BioNTech shot live on television.

"I feel great. I feel relieved," said Sandra Lindsay, a critical care nurse at the Long Island Jewish Medical Center, imploring all Americans to "to do our part" by getting vaccinated.

"I hope this marks the beginning of the end of the very painful time in our history," she added.

The landmark moment comes at one of the darkest phases of the pandemic, with infections in the United States and many other countries soaring, and health experts still struggling against vaccine skepticism, lockdown fatigue and uneven adherence to safety rules.

The US has the world's highest death toll of more than 2,99,000, and the largest number of reported cases, at 16.2 million - including more than 1.5 million new infection in just the past week.

"First Vaccine Administered. Congratulations USA! Congratulations WORLD!" tweeted President Donald Trump.

The start of the US vaccination campaign came as Germany announced a partial lockdown from Wednesday, with non-essential shops and schools to close in a bid to halt an "exponential growth" in infections.

The restrictions, agreed by Chancellor Angela Merkel and regional leaders, will apply through the holidays until January 10.

—AFP

Santa infects 75 at  
Belgian care home

**Belgium, Dec. 14:** A man from Belgium, who dressed up as Santa Claus to spread Christmas joy, ended up being labelled as 'super spreader' after inadvertently infecting 75 people at an old age home with Covid-19.

According to reports, the unnamed man visited the Hemelrijk aged care home in the Belgian town of Mol to entertain its residents and staff. However, he had no idea that he was already infected with Covid-19.

The man was welcomed to spread joy among 150 residents at the care home. While everything went smooth during the visit, he ended up infecting 14 staff members and 61 residents, one of which required oxygen support for breathing.

Fortunately, the other infected people only suffered mild to moderate symptoms, without any breathing troubles.

Just three days after the

visit, the man who dressed up as Santa fell ill and tested positive for Covid-19. The aged care home made it mandatory for residents and staff to wear face masks. But pictures from the Christmas event showed that not all residents wore masks and 'Santa' and his helpers stood very close to the elderly people.

"It was made with the best intent, but it went wrong. It has been a very dark day for the care home. It is a very great mental strain to bear for the man that played Saint Nicholas, as well as for the organisers and the staff," Mol's mayor, Wim Caeyers, told Belgian news organisation VRT News.

"Initially they said that the rules had been followed, but then straight away you receive photos from the families of residents where you can see that this wasn't the case," he added. —Agencies

REMDESIVIR DRUG  
MAY BE HIGHLY  
EFFECTIVE: STUDY

**London, Dec. 14:** Remdesivir may be a highly effective antiviral against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, according to a new single-patient study that contradicts previous research which found the drug had no impact on death rates from the disease.

The researchers from the University of Cambridge in the UK who gave the drug to a patient with Covid-19 and a rare immune disorder, observed a dramatic improvement in his symptoms and the disappearance of the virus.

Scientists had previously pinned hope on remdesivir which was originally developed to treat hepatitis C and subsequently tested against Ebola. However, results from large clinical trials have been inconclusive, and the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced in October that the drug did not significantly reduce mortality rates. —PTI

SOUTH KOREA TO  
OPEN MORE  
TESTING SITES

**Seoul, Dec. 14:** South Korea was opening dozens of free Covid-19 testing sites in the greater Seoul area, as the country registered additional 718 new cases on Monday amid a surge in infections.

The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said the additional cases took the country's total since the pandemic began to 43,484 infections with 587 deaths. —AP

Pak flayed over  
overcrowded jails

**Islamabad, Dec. 14:** A human rights report released on Monday harshly criticised Pakistan's response to the Coronavirus threat faced by tens of thousands of inmates stuck in overcrowded and often unsanitary prisons.

Instead of following through on promises to ease prison overcrowding made when the pandemic first hit, Pakistan's government has actually

increased its inmate population by over 6,000 between April and August, from 73,242 to 79,603. Some of the few who were freed were later rearrested.

The joint report by London-based Amnesty International and Justice Project Pakistan said inmates face a growing risk of infection, and called for renewed efforts to free certain prisoners. —AP

FINANCIAL  
Chronicle

VISAKHAPATNAM | TUESDAY | 15 DECEMBER 2020

quick  
BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	46,253.46 0.34
Nifty 50	13,558.15 0.33
S&P 500*	3,676.49 0.36
Dollar (₹)	73.56 0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.65 1.32
Euro (₹)	89.41 -0.19
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,371▲460 0.95
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	49.72 -0.25
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.946 -0.010
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.921 0.030

\*As of 8:30 PM IST

Hyundai gets  
30,000 bookings  
for i20 in 40 days

Hyundai Motor India said it has received around 30,000 bookings for the all-new version of its premium hatchback i20 in last 40 days. It has already delivered 10,000 units of the model, the firm said. "We are witnessing a truly superlative customer response," director (sales, marketing & service) Tarun Garg said. He said 85 per cent of the bookings are for higher trims. Hyundai launched the new i20 on Nov. 5.

■ Seek 51% stake with each staff putting in ₹1 L  
Employees bid  
for Air India

RAGINI SAXENA  
DEC. 14

A group of 219 Air India Ltd employees submitted a bid to purchase 51 per cent of the loss-making state-owned carrier.

The remaining 49 per cent will be held by a financial partner, said Meenakshi Malik, Air India's commercial director. Each employee will have to contribute at least Rs 100,000 toward the bid, she said.

Air India has been on sale since 2017 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet signed off on a plan to sell all or part of the debt-ridden carrier. The government sweetened the deal earlier this year when it extended the bid deadline to December 14 from October 30, saying potential suitors will be allowed to decide how much of the flag carrier's debt they want to take on as part of the transaction. The rules before that required bidders to take over the carrier's \$3.3 billion of aircraft debt, deterring buyers.

"We always believed Air India can be a profitable set up," said Malik. "The government has removed a huge part of the debt, so we thought who better than us? We know the airline inside out, we know where the problems are. We're not bidding to win or lose, we're doing it because we believe we can run the airline well."

Air India has been unprofitable since its 2007



merger with state-owned domestic operator Indian Airlines Ltd, and has relied on taxpayer money to keep flying, with the bailouts adding to the pressure on already strained government finances.

The airline, which began operations in 1932 as a mail carrier before winning commercial popularity, saw its fortunes fade with the emergence of cut-throat low-cost competition. The state-run carrier's entire debt totals more than \$8 billion. The government didn't find a single bidder when it tried to sell the company before.

That said, the the airline does have some lucrative assets, including prized slots at London's Heathrow airport, a fleet of more than 100 planes and thousands of trained pilots and crew.

Malik said a financial partner had already been found, without disclosing

that entity's name. Employee participation has come from "the most junior employees to the most senior board members," she said, without elaborating.

A local media report on Monday said that US-based Interups Inc plans to bid with the employees. Interups chairman Laxmi Prasad confirmed the development, telling Moneycontrol that he "will be submitting a bid."

Tata Group is also said to have submitted an expression of interest for Air India over the weekend. Its interest was submitted via AirAsia India, in which Tata Sons Pvt Ltd has a significant majority stake. Singapore Airlines Ltd, with which Tata Sons operates full-service airline Vistara, won't be part of the bid in the initial stages, according to a news report.

—Bloomberg

Burger King  
more than  
doubles  
on debut

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, DEC. 14

Burger King India shareholders made a bumper listing gain of 130.67 per cent on the stock's debut on the bourses.

Burger King's shares closed at Rs 138.40 per share against the public issue price of Rs 60 for each share of Rs 10 face value.

The public issue of Burger King, a subsidiary of US-based fast food chain, received overwhelming response from investors, with the Rs 810-crore issue getting subscribed 156.65 times.

The shares listed at Rs 115.35 on the BSE, a premium of 92.25 per cent over the public issue price of Rs 60, and at Rs 112.50 on the NSE. The stock moved up till the market close, indicating more upside as the shares closed at the day's high of Rs 138.40 on the BSE and Rs 135 on the NSE.

The market capitalisation of Burger King stood at Rs 5,282.10 crore, close to Rs 6,624.15 crore m-cap of Westlife Development, McDonald's India franchise.

Torrent to invest ₹5,000 cr  
in Chennai city gas project

**New Delhi, Dec. 14:** Torrent Gas Ltd on Monday pledged Rs 5,000 crore investment to develop infrastructure to retail CNG to automobiles and piped gas to households and industries in Chennai, the biggest city gas licence in its portfolio.

Torrent Gas, part of the pharma-to-energy Torrent Group, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Government of Tamil Nadu for development of city gas infrastructure at an event in Chennai, the company said.

The firm will lay pipelines and other infra-



structure in Chennai and Tiruvallur districts, covering an area of 3,569 sq. km, to provide piped natural gas (PNG) connections to homes, industries and commercial establishments. It will also set up the infrastructure to dispense compressed nat-

ural gas to automobiles. Torrent Gas holds city gas licence for 16 geographical areas spread across 32 districts covering seven states—UP, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana—and the Union territory of Puducherry.

Jinal Mehta, director, Torrent Gas, said, "This investment of Rs 5,000 crore by Torrent Gas in development of CGD infrastructure is expected to have a major impact on the socio-economic development of the region by attracting fresh investment in the state." —PTI

GST shortfall: States,  
UTs get ₹42,000 cr

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, DEC. 14

The central government has so far borrowed and released Rs 42,000 crore to states and union territories to meet the GST compensation shortfall of Rs 1.10 lakh crore.

The amount under seven installments was borrowed through the special borrowing window at an average interest rate of 4.7 per cent. Of the 7th weekly instalment of Rs 6,000 crore released on Monday, Rs 5,516.60 crore has gone to 23 states and Rs 483.40 crore to the three union territories. The interest rate on the amount borrowed this week is 5.13 per cent.

The Centre had set up the special borrowing window in October to meet the estimated shortfall of Rs 1.10 Lakh crore in revenue arising on account of implementation of GST. The borrowings are being done via this window on behalf of the states and UTs.

Karnataka has received the highest amount of Rs 5,668.31 crore, followed by Maharashtra at Rs 5,472.11 crore. North-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur have nil GST compensation gap.

The Centre has also granted additional borrowing permission equivalent to 0.50 per cent of GSDP to the states choosing Option I to meet the GST shortfall.

OLA TO INVEST  
₹2,400 CRORE IN  
E-SCOOTER PLANT

**New Delhi, Dec. 14:** Ride-hailing firm Ola, backed by Japan's SoftBank Group, said on Monday it planned to invest Rs 2,400 crore (\$326 million) to set up a factory in Tamil Nadu to produce electric scooters.

The plant will have an initial annual capacity to produce two million scooters and will create nearly 10,000 jobs, Ola said, as it gears up to launch electric scooters in the coming months.

India needs an investment of over \$180 billion in vehicle production and charging infrastructure until 2030 to meet its EV ambition, says the CEEW Centre for Energy Finance. —Reuters



## SHORT TAKES

## Ex-Reds coach Houllier dies

**Paris:** Gerard Houllier, a Frenchman who won three titles in one season as coach of English club Liverpool, has died. He was 73. Liverpool announced the death on Twitter on Monday. French sports daily *L'Equipe* said Houllier died following heart surgery in France. "We are mourning the passing of our treble-winning manager, Gerard Houllier," Liverpool wrote on Twitter. Houllier had a mediocre stint as coach of France's national team in the early 1990s, his short-lived journey ending with an embarrassing failure to qualify for the 1994 World Cup. His tenure at Liverpool was far more successful, leading the Reds to the FA Cup, League Cup and UEFA Cup treble in 2001. He is one of only three managers along with Alex Ferguson and Pep Guardiola to have won three trophies with an English club in the same season. — AP

## Shuttlers alerted about fake events

**New Delhi:** The Badminton Association of India on Monday again cautioned its players, coaches and technical staff and asked them to stay away from unauthorised tournaments after it came to light that a Goa-based organisation is conducting such an event next month. According to a release issued by BAI, Goa-based organisation Youth & Sports Development Association of India is conducting the third National Federation Cup next month in Madgaon, Goa with the organisers claiming that it will be a selection trial for upcoming international championships. "Neither BAI nor its affiliated unit Goa Badminton Association is aware about such tournaments and organisation," BAI General Secretary Ajay Singhania said in the release. — PTI

## Hockey side for foreign tour soon

**Bengaluru:** His side's Olympic preparation hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic, Indian men's hockey team chief coach Graham Reid is hoping to resume international action from early next year. The Australian said the sooner India gets to play international matches, the better will be their preparations for the Tokyo Games, which has been shifted to next year due to the global pandemic. "With the support of Hockey India, we have planned for matches from early next year. These matches will ideally show us the level we are truly at and the areas that will require work on leading into the Olympic Games," Reid said in a statement issued by Hockey India. — PTI

## Injured Neymar stretchered off

**Rio de Janeiro:** Brazilian star Neymar gave fans a reassuring message on Monday after undergoing tests on the ankle he injured in Paris Saint-Germain's 1-0 Ligue 1 defeat to Lyon at the weekend. Neymar left the field on a stretcher in apparent agony on Sunday but on Instagram he said: "It could have been worse." "These tears, it's the pain, the fear, the worry, the surgeries, the crutches and other bad memories," Neymar wrote on his Instagram story alongside a picture of him in tears clutching his ankle. It was a reference to previous injuries he has suffered — notably twice breaking his foot — since joining the French champions in 2017. — AFP

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**Big Bash League:** Hobart Hurricanes vs. Adelaide Strikers from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

## FOOTBALL

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

**English Premier League:** Wolves vs Chelsea from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, HD

**Italian League:** Udinese vs Crotone from 11 pm, Benevento vs Lazio from 11.15 am (Wednesday) on on Sony Ten 2, HD

Regd No./VM-RNP/72  
Printed and Published from Visakhapatnam by K. Sudhakara 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: 255233/2552334/2553806.  
Fax: 2755285. Grams: CHRONICLE.  
Editor: Kaushik Mitter.  
RNI Registration No.44813/85.

# Finch wary of Virat

## Aaron warns Aussies about 'ruthless' Kohli

**Melbourne, Dec. 14:** Australia limited-overs captain Aaron Finch wants the home team players to strike a "fine balance" when they confront Virat Kohli in the opening Test as he believes, if provoked too much, the India skipper can be "ruthless" against his opponents.

India and Australia have always shared an intense rivalry on the field, filled with verbal volleys, banter and controversies over the years.

The last time the two teams faced off in 2018-19, the Test series saw some heated exchanges between the two captains — Kohli and Tim Paine.

"I think there will be times when things boil over and when you have got strong characters on either team that's going to come to a head at some point," Finch was quoted as saying by *'Sydney Morning Herald'*.

"(But) there is a fine balance there, isn't there? You don't want him (Kohli) to get up and about in the contest. When he does, he can be ruthless on an opposition."

The first Test of the four-game series, a day-night contest, begins on Thursday in Adelaide and it gains prominence since Kohli will be returning home after the match for the birth of his first child.

Finch, who was part of the last home Test series between the two teams, said the Indian skipper looks much calmer the way he goes about his job now.

"I think the change is in the way he goes about it now. I think as a person he is probably a bit more relaxed out on the field and understands the tempo of the game."

Finch, who had played under Kohli in Royal Challengers Bangalore, said he was "surprised" to see the Indian's confidence in this year's IPL.

"What really surprised me was how, he obviously does a lot of planning and preparation himself, and into the opposition, but he never focused more on the opposition than his own team," he said.

"At Bangalore, he was always confident in the XI players that were picked and knew that if you played well, you had every chance of winning.

As someone who had many on-field duels with Kohli, Finch said it was good to learn about his relaxed side.

— PTI



A file photo of India captain Virat Kohli (left) and Australia's Aaron Finch.

— AFP

## HENRIQUES REPLACES INJURED ABBOTT

**Sydney, Dec. 14:** All-rounder Moises Henriques was on Monday added to Australia's injury-hit squad for the opening Test against India while pacer Sean Abbott was ruled out of the match due to a calf strain.

Henriques, who had missed the three-day second practice game due to a hamstring strain, cleared the fitness Test on Monday to return to the Test squad after a gap of four years.

The opening game, a day-nighter, begins on December 17 in Adelaide.

— PTI

after the hosts' camp continues to be hit with injury," a report in *cricket.com.au*, said.

Abbott became the latest Australian player to join the injury list after being picking up the strain during the second warm-up game here. He is, however, expected to be available for the second Test in Melbourne, which begins on December 26.

Abbott, who had taken three wickets in India's first innings, will not travel with the team to Adelaide. "Fast bowler Sean Abbott will not travel to Adelaide with Henriques and the remaining Australia squad members from Sydney

today after picking up a calf strain in the day-night tour match at the SCG on Saturday."

Henriques last played a Test more than four years ago in Sri Lanka. He made a comeback to the national set-up after three years by featuring in the limited-overs series against India. He is the second player after Marcus Harris to be added late to the Test squad.

Harris was included in the squad for the opening Test following a spate of injuries, including David Warner and opener Will Pucovski being ruled out of the first game due to a groin injury. — PTI

## NZ BEAT WINDIES IN SECOND TEST TO SWEEP SERIES

**Wellington, Dec. 14:** New Zealand joined Australia atop world cricket's Test rankings on Monday when they beat the West Indies by an innings and 12 runs in the second Test to sweep the two-match series.

The West Indies resumed their second innings at 244/6 on the fourth day, trailing New Zealand by 85 runs after following on 329 behind.

The tourists were eventually out for 317, their highest innings total of the series.

New Zealand made a positive start on Monday after a short rain delay, dismissing West Indies captain Jason Holder for 61 in the fourth over of the day and ending his 82-run partnership with Joshua Da Silva.

Holder was bowled by Tim Southee with a fuller ball which straightened and beat the outside edge of the bat. — AP

**Brief scores: New Zealand 460 bt West Indies 131 & 317** (Jason Holder 61, da Silva 57, Wagner 3-54, Boulton 3-96).

## INDIAN | SUPER LEAGUE

## Mumbai fail to crack open JFC

**Goa, Dec. 14:** A flurry of missed chances saw table-toppers Mumbai City FC settle for only a 1-1 draw against Jamshedpur FC in the Indian Super League at the GMC Stadium, here on Monday.

Owen Coyle's men took the lead through Nerijus Valskis (9') before Mumbai hit back through Bartholomew Ogbeche (15'). A red card for Aitor Monroy around the half-hour mark saw Jamshedpur reduced to ten-men but some dogged defending and a number of missed chances for Mumbai, saw the former get away with a draw.

Mumbai dominated the early exchanges as Monroy had to dive to block Ogbeche's shot as early as the first minute. But it was Jamshedpur who drew first blood. Just nine minutes had passed when Jackichand Singh found Valskis in the penalty box. The Lithuanian's first-time shot was unerring. Barely three minutes later, Monroy could only find the side netting from a free-kick.

Monroy was in the thick of things a couple of minutes later, hacking Cy Goddard down and getting himself in the referee's book.

Then, Mumbai found their equaliser. Adam Le Fondre made a run down the right before squaring the ball to Bipin Singh. The

## HYDERABAD FACE EB IN TRICKY TIE

**Vasco, Dec. 14:** Hyderabad FC will be keen to continue their unbeaten run when they take on a struggling SC East Bengal in an Indian Super League fixture at the Tilak Maidan here on Tuesday.

Four games into the season, Hyderabad FC are one of just three teams that are yet to lose a game (a win and three draws) and they will be eager to convert their efforts into a victory, against the ISL debutants.

SC East Bengal have not had the best of starts to the season. They are yet to score a goal, but logged first point in the league table in a feisty clash against Jamshedpur last Thursday. They remain bottom of the table but could prove to be one of the biggest tests for Hyderabad so far this season. — PTI

latter found Ogbeche and the Nigerian unleashed a powerful drive past Jamshedpur keeper T.P. Rehenesh. — Agencies



Barcelona's Lionel Messi (centre) vies for the ball with Levante players during their La Liga match at the Camp Nou in Barcelona on Sunday. — AP

## Messi comes to Catalans' rescue

**Madrid, Dec. 14:** Lionel Messi saved Barcelona from another embarrassing result by scoring the decisive goal in a 1-0 win over lowly Levante, while Real Sociedad returned top of La Liga on Sunday.

Messi struck with 14 minutes remaining of a lacklustre display from Barca at the Camp Nou which will do little to ease fan fears following their 3-0 hammering at the hands of Juventus midweek.

Ronald Koeman's side are still way off the pace in the title race, nine points behind Real Sociedad who reclaimed first place despite only drawing 1-1 with Eibar.

Barcelona do however have two games in hand on the Basque outfit.

Atletico are level on 26 points with Sociedad and also have two games in hand while Real Madrid

are now just three points behind the leaders having played one less after beating their local rivals 2-0 on Saturday.

Villarreal are four points off the lead in fourth after drawing 1-1 at Real Betis, who are one point behind Barca in ninth.

Barca managed to force several saves from Aitor Fernandez, with the Levante goalkeeper doing particularly well to push away a stinging shot from Martin Braithwaite in the 16th minute and Antoine Griezmann's header five minutes later.

However the best chance of the opening period fell to Jorge de Frutos in the 12th minute, the Spaniard somehow shooting straight at Marc-Andre ter Stegen after the ball broke kindly for him right in front of goal. — AFP



Leicester's James Maddison (right) celebrates his goal against Brighton in their Premier League match at the King Power Stadium in Leicester on Sunday. — AP

## Leaders Spurs, Liverpool held

**London, Dec. 14:** Tottenham and Liverpool remain tied at the top of the Premier League after both were held to 1-1 draws at Crystal Palace and Fulham respectively, while Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's own goal condemned Arsenal to another shocking home defeat, going down 1-0 to Burnley on Sunday.

Leicester took advantage of slip ups by the top two to close to within one point of the leaders as James Maddison scored twice in a 3-0 rout over Brighton and Southampton are up to fourth as they also comfortably saw off Sheffield United 3-0.

Liverpool and Tottenham

## THE RESULTS

<b>Crystal Palace</b> (Schlupp 81)	<b>1</b>
<b>Tottenham</b> (Kane 23)	<b>1</b>
<b>Southampton</b> (Adams 34, Armstrong 62, Redmond 83)	<b>3</b>
<b>Sheffield United</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>Fulham</b> (De Cordova-Reid 25)	<b>1</b>
<b>Liverpool</b> (Salah 79-pen)	<b>1</b>
<b>Arsenal</b> (Aubameyang 73-og)	<b>0</b>
<b>Burnley</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leicester</b> (Maddison 27, 44, Vardy 41)	<b>3</b>
<b>Brighton</b>	<b>0</b>

face each other at Anfield on Wednesday and, after Chelsea, Manchester City and Manchester United failed to win on Saturday, they both missed the chance to open up a gap at the top in the title race.

The champions needed a Mohamed Salah penalty 11

minutes from time to avoid an embarrassing defeat at Fulham after a dreadful first-half performance left Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp seething on the touchline.

"We needed half an hour to get our feet in the game, that's why I shouted a bit at

them," said Klopp. "I think in the first half an hour we could have lost the game, in the last 60 minutes we should have won it. In the end we get a point and that's it."

Bobby DeCordova-Reid's thunderous finish into the far corner to take the lead was no more than Scott Parker's side deserved as the returning Alisson Becker kept Liverpool in the game before the break. Liverpool dominated the second-half to pin Fulham back, but needed a penalty to salvage a point when Aboubakar Kamara was penalised for handling Georginio Wijnaldum's free-kick. — AFP