


# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
ANANTAPUR | FRIDAY | 18 DECEMBER 2020




## WEATHER

 **Max:** 27.0°C  
**Min:** 17°C  
**RH:** 75%  
**Rainfall:** Nil  
**Forecast:** Cloudy sky. Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 27/17 9C

## COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+26,688)	(+342)
99,77,760	1,44,829
<i>covid19india.org</i>	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+509)	(+3)
TS: 2,79,644	1,505
(+534)	(+2)
AP: 8,77,348	7,069

## CASES AROUND THE WORLD

 **7,49,30,920**  
**DEATHS**  
 **16,62,532**  
**COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES**  
 **218**  
*worldometers.info/coronavirus*

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Margasira Shuddha Chavithi till 2.28 pm  
**Star:** Sravanam till 7.08 pm  
**Variyam:** 11.14 pm to 12.53 am (Saturday)  
**Durmuhurtam:** 8.55 am to 9.39 am; 12.34 pm to 1.18 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 10.30 am to 12 noon  
**HJRI CALENDAR**  
**Jamadi-ul-Aakhir 2, 1442 AH**  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.08 am  
**Zohar:** 12.05 pm  
**Asar:** 4.11 pm  
**Maghrib:** 5.47 pm  
**Isha:** 7.02 pm  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.17 AM**  
**SUNSET TODAY 5.49 PM**  
**MOONSET 7.04 AM**  
**MOONRISE 7.06 PM**

## COUNTER POINT



Before you give it to me, test it on my bodyguard!

## SHORT TAKES

### Weapons worth ₹28K cr okayed

**New Delhi:** The defence ministry on Thursday approved procurement of weapons and military equipment worth ₹28,000 crore for the three services, officials said. The officials said almost all the weapons and military hardware approved for procurement will be acquired from domestic industry. "The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh approved proposals to procure equipment worth ₹27,000 crore from domestic industry," the defence ministry said in a statement.

■ Full report on Page 4

### People report low taxable income

**Mumbai:** Advance personal income tax on the year-on-year basis this quarter declined 5.6 per cent to ₹31,054 crore from ₹32,910 crore, a source at CBDT said, adding the same so far this fiscal stood at ₹60,491 crore, down 10.4 per cent from ₹67,542 crore. Advance tax payment by companies, however, has shown a 49 per cent growth to ₹1,09,506 crore in Q3 this fiscal. The increase is primarily due to the low-base last fiscal when corporation tax rates were cut to 25 per cent in the Q3.

■ Full report on Page 4



## NATION | 4 Centre transfers Bengal IPS officers

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## WORLD | 5 French prez tests positive for Covid

## SPORTS | 8 India lose advantage after Kohli runout



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## Panchayat polls won't hit vaccination, SEC tells HC

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 17

The State Election Commission filed a counter-affidavit asking the Andhra Pradesh High Court to strike down the petition filed by the state government against the conduct of gram panchayat polls on the grounds that the administration would be involved in Covid-19 vaccination programme.

In the affidavit filed on Thursday, the SEC stated that it would take three to six months for Covid-19 vaccine to reach AP as the Centre would distribute the vaccine on a priority basis. It informed the court that elections in Bihar, Rajasthan and Hyderabad were held successfully.

The SEC said that it had decided to conduct gram panchayat polls in February after taking opinions of all stakeholders and added that at present, the situation in Andhra Pradesh was suitable for conduct of gram panchayat polls as planned in February.

The SEC's affidavit was in response to the state government's petition challenging the poll panel's decision to conduct gram panchayat polls in February.

The petition, filed by panchayat raj and rural development principal secretary Gopala Krishna Dwivedi, stated that the

SEC had taken a unilateral decision to conduct the polls.

The petitioner said the government was according top priority to protect the health of the people from Covid-19, and the State Election Commission had taken the decision without consulting the government despite a Supreme Court direction to do so.

The principal secretary said that by November 29, AP had registered 8.67 lakh Covid-19 positive cases and on an average, 1,000 positive cases were being reported per day in the state and informed the court that the entire administration in the state was preoccupied to contain the spread of the virus.

## BCs are backbone, says Jagan

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 17

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday said that for the first time in the social history of the country, BCs have been empowered through BC Corporations and asked their chairpersons to work as liaisons between the BCs and the government.

He was addressing a gathering of the BC Sankranti Sabha at Indira

Gandhi Municipal Stadium here in Vijayawada, in which 56 BC Corporation chairpersons took oath of office.

Reddy declared that BCs are not 'backward classes' but 'backbone classes' of the society.

The Chief Minister said that they had created women empowerment history by earmarking half of the posts to them.

He said that empowerment of weaker sections socially, economically,

and politically has been taken up as a movement and nowhere in the country was such emancipation reported.

The Chief Minister cautioned the newly sworn-in persons that the position was a responsibility and not power.

He sought them to uplift persons who are left out and make them part of welfare programmes.

■ Page 2: We took welfare to doorstep, says Jagan

## TIRUPATI TO GET BIGGEST NATURAL SEWAGE PLANT

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUPATI, DEC. 17

The Municipal Corporation of Tirupati (MCT) has recently taken up an eco-friendly project — Natural Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) of five million litres per day (MLD) capacity. It is the biggest in the country after the 3 MLD natural STP in Delhi.

The civic body has proposed to recycle sewage — using natural materials and aquatic plants, and re-use it for a number of non-potable purposes.

Recycling and reuse of the treated wastewater are the suggested alternatives to bridge the gap between water demand and supply, and to reduce pressure on water resources.

According to reports, almost 80 per cent of the water supplied to a household is being discharged as wastewater and it has become a potential pollutant of groundwater because it is untreated. In Tirupati, only 30-40 per cent of sewage is being recycled, as of now.

■ Page 3: Treated water to be used for horticulture

## 42nd comm satellite in orbit



**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NELLORE, DEC. 17

India's 42nd communication satellite CMS-01 was placed in its designated spot in space after a flawless mission by a PSLV rocket from the spaceport in Nellore district on Wednesday. The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle

(PSLV) C50 took off from the second launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota range as scheduled at 3.41 pm. After a flight of 20 minutes and 12 seconds, the rocket released the CMS-01 into its designated orbit.

■ Full report on Page 3

## SC says go slow on farm laws, Centre is lukewarm

### CJI says farmers have right to protest; floats panel to end row

**SANJAY KAW AND PARMOD KUMAR | DC**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

Acknowledging the right of farmers to hold non-violent protests, the Supreme Court on Thursday suggested that the Centre put on hold the implementation of its new agricultural laws, putting forward the idea of setting up an impartial and independent committee to end the impasse. The Centre said the farmers would not come forward for negotiations if the implementation of the farm laws was put on hold.

The Centre told the court it was not possible to hold implementation of the laws. While solicitor-general Tushar Mehta said it couldn't be done, attorney-general K.K. Venugopal said he would come with the response of the government on the proposition.

Chief Justice S.A. Bobde asked Mr Venugopal to give an assurance that the laws will not be implemented in the interim period "till we hear the matter".

The A-G, however, said this could stall the negotiations. To this, the CJI said a statement to this effect

by the Centre could only enable the discussions with the protesting farmers and resolve the stand-off.

Mr Venugopal then asked for time to discuss it with government officials and come back during the vacation, when the CJI indicated a bench will be set up to hear the matter even during the winter break. Friday is the last working day for the court before its 15-day winter recess, that ends on January 3.

The Supreme Court also refused to order eviction of farmers from Delhi's borders, where they are camping for 22 days, without hearing them. The court said farmers have the right to protest, but without inconveniencing other people.

The court said it would ask the Centre if the manner of protest could be slightly altered so it doesn't affect citizens' right of movement. "Farmers have the right to protest. We won't interfere with it, but we will look into the manner of protest ... and slightly alter it so that it doesn't affect the citizens' right of movement," the judges said.

## Docs perform surgery in dark at Kurnool GH

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
KURNOOL DEC. 17

The delivery ward in Kurnool General Hospital is in shambles. Lives of pregnant women who visit the hospital are in peril as oxygen cannot be supplied because of shortage of regulators fixed to the central oxygen supply apparatus.

Monkeys have allegedly cut off cables making ACs dysfunctional. Doctors perform surgery in pitch-darkness as head focus lights are not working.

There are no medicines to stop heavy bleeding, leaving the patient in further pain while life-saving drugs are in short supply.

These horrific revelations came to light when KGH Deputy Superintendent Prof. Prabhakar Reddy visited the delivery ward on Thursday. He said the condition was

appalling and contractors were immediately asked to supply oxygen regulators and indents were put to APMSIDC stores to make available Vitamin-K, Methergine, Anafortan and Urosac bags.

Gynaecologists have been reportedly suturing patients in darkness in the absence of lighting systems in the ward.

A gynaecology professor said "these are minor problems and we are habituated to it. Patients are often told to get their own tablets and other medicines if they are not available in the stock room," he said.

The neonatal ward has at least 30 occupants in the ward any given day. Sometimes it could be more than 40 also, said the Deputy Superintendent. Keeping their requirement, he said, medicines

have been ordered to meet requirements of at least three months, he added.

Hospital Superintendent Dr Narendranath Reddy said patients need not wait for a long time to receive blood reports.

He said the labs in the hospitals were directed to send these reports by WhatsApp, SMS, and email. In this way the patients will save a lot of time, he added.

He further said all the department heads were asked to put an indent for their materials. He said no patients should suffer from want of medical facilities. "Outpatients are also given priority and facilities are improved."

Regarding moving out pigs, dogs and donkeys from the hospital, he said Kurnool Municipal Corporation was asked to help them out.

## CONG ATTEMPTS COMPROMISE WITH DISSENTERS

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

As the Congress' internal elections draw close, the top leadership wants to bridge the gap with the 23 letter writers demanding a change in the party's working style and an "active and present" leadership.

Insiders claim a meeting between Congress president Sonia Gandhi and some of the letter writers was expected by the coming weekend. Acting as a bridge between the two sides is former Madhya Pradesh CM Kamal Nath, who has in the last couple of days met the letter writ-

ers as well as Mrs Gandhi in a bid to find a middle path.

The parleys between the leadership and the letter writers had come to an abrupt end when senior leader Ahmed Patel passed away in late November.

■ Full report on Page 4

## WAIT 'N | WATCH

### ■ Survey finds people are in no hurry to get themselves immunised for Covid

## Many Indians develop vaccine hesitancy

**Mumbai, Dec. 17:** Many Indians appear hesitant to get vaccinated for Covid-19 as infections have fallen sharply since a mid-September peak and some people are worried about possible side-effects here, according to a survey of 18,000 people released on Thursday.

India reported 24,037 new infections on Thursday — fewer than 30,000 for a fourth straight day — taking its total to 99.6 lakh, the second highest in the world. More than 1.44 lakh

people have died. Until early last month, India had looked set to overtake the infection tally of the United States but the gap between them has since widened significantly. The cases in the US have now risen to more than 1.6 crore.

The government says it could soon approve some of the vaccines that have sought emergency use authorisation, including the Oxford-AstraZeneca one and the Pfizer/BioNTech shot, which is

■ ABOUT 69 PER CENT of respondents in a survey saw no urgent need to get immunised because of limited information about side-effects and efficacy levels.

■ A LARGE of people also believe that Covid-19 cannot affect them because of high levels of immunity.

■ MANY PEOPLE believe that the country is moving towards herd immunity and therefore they do not need to get vaccinated.

already being used in the United States and Britain. India wants to roll out vaccines in a few weeks, initially focusing on people more exposed to the virus

and over 50, but a survey by New Delhi's citizen-survey platform LocalCircles found that about 69 per cent of respondents saw no urgent need to get immunised.

"It appears some of the key reasons for the hesitancy are limited information about side-effects, efficacy levels and a growing belief in parts of the population that Covid cannot affect them because of their high immunity levels," LocalCircles said in a statement.

Many people in the survey, which had responses from nearly a third of India's districts, said they believed "we are moving towards herd immunity". Jiaul Haque, a software

engineer from the eastern state of Assam, said he thought he had already developed some kind of immunity to Covid-19 and would like to see how the various vaccines work on other people before he signs up for one.

"The vaccine has not passed the regular duration of testing," the 36-year-old said.

"All vaccine companies are in a race against each other, so I'm also concerned about that," Haque said.

— Reuters

demands of the farmers," he said.

He said the Centre should not be under the impression that the farmers camping at the protest sites will simply return to their homes, adding that in 1907, a farmers' protest continued for nine months till the British rulers repealed some laws.

"When asked about the benefit of the laws, every BJP leader says farmers can sell their produce anywhere in the country... But where should farmers go to sell their crop at minimum support price (MSP)?" the CM asked. He also claimed that due to the three new laws "big capitalists will sell produce at a higher price", which will lead to price rise.

After the Assembly passed the resolution with a voice vote, AAP MLAs trooped into the well of the House, tore off copies of the laws.

—PTI

## YOUTH SETS NURSE ON FIRE IN CHITTOOR

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUPATI, DEC. 17

A 22-year-old nurse suffered burns after her sister's husband poured petrol and set her on fire. The incident took place in Gattukindapalli village of Mulakalacheruvu in Chittoor on Thursday. Her marriage is scheduled in a week.

According to circle inspector Suresh Kumar, the victim, Kadiri Sumathi, 22, was rushed to the government hospital in Madanapalle and then referred to the SVRR Government General Hospital in Tirupati for further treatment. Doctors said she sustained about 40 per cent burns and her condition was stable. The accused, Venkatesh, 33, who is the husband of the victim's sister, entered the house of Sumathi and set her on fire.

■ Page 3: Accused miffed with victim's parents

## YOUTH FEARED DROWNED IN PENNA RIVER

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
KADAPA, DEC. 17

Seven youngsters from Tirupati were feared drowned in the Penna river at Siddavatam on Thursday evening. The bodies of two of them were found at around 8 pm during a search operation conducted by police and swimmers, who rushed to the spot immediately after the incident was reported.

The two bodies were identified to be those of Somasekhar and Rajesh.

According to police, the youngsters were studying in Tirupati and had come to Siddavatam to attend the first death anniversary of their friend Shiva's father. After the ceremony, they went for a swim in the Penna river, where they were swept away.

The bodies of five others still remained untraceable.



## POLAVARAM PROJECT

ERECTION OF  
HYDRAULIC CREST  
GATES STARTEDDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 17

Water resources authorities have taken up erection of hydraulic crest gates following completion of construction of spillway at a height of 55 metres of Polavaram irrigation project at Polavaram in West Godavari on Thursday.

Water resources authorities said that there were a total of 48 crest gates and each gate to be supported by eight arm girders and four horizontal girders, 384 arm girders and 192 horizontal girders to be installed.

At present, assembling arm girders was being taken up, they added.

Each arm girder measures 16 metres and after assembling of arm girders and horizontal girders, skin plate to be installed. The arm girders will help movement of skin plates up and down as per need. Each gate will be having six skin plates and hydraulic cylinders will be used for lifting the gates.

So far, 46 cylinders reached the project site while the remaining cylinders out of a total number of 96 cylinders to be imported from Germany. Each crest gate measures 20.835 metres height and 15.96 metres width.

Nearly 18,000 tonnes of steel to be used for fabrication of the gates and each gate weighs 275 tonnes.

FISHERIES DEPT  
BANS USE OF  
RING NETS IN BAYDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 17

The State Fisheries Department has banned use of purse seine ring nets in Bay of Bengal with immediate effect to prevent traditional catamaran fishermen and mechanised boat owners.

Joint director of fisheries Dr K. Phani Prakash in a release here on Thursday said that in a survey conducted recently it was found that 83 mechanised boats have been using purse seine ring nets in the district. Except for two boats, the Department has banned the 81 boats from using the ring nets.

He also banned the mechanised boats fishing within 8 km from the shore in the interest of the traditional fishermen.

He said the use of ring nets and fishing in the close range has been creating tension among the fishermen leading to the breakdown of law and order.

Issuing guidelines, the joint director said boats using less than half-inch nets would not be allowed for fishing as per AP Marine Fisheries Regulation Act of 1995, boats should not venture into the sea without registration and licence and announced the ban on the use of mechanised boats in eight km area as per the Act.

HC DISMISSES  
PLEAS ON LOCAL  
AREA CRITERIADC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 17

The Andhra Pradesh High Court dismissed a batch of petitions from the students seeking admission in MBBS/BDS courses claiming to be local candidates and clarified on 'local area criteria' in its verdict issued recently.

A Division Bench comprising justice Ch. Praveen Kumar and justice D. Ramesh said that as the Presidential Order was clear on local candidate, it could not give any order in contravention of the Presidential Order.

The court said that if an applicant seeking admission to pursue the course should study in local educational institutions for not less than four successive years and these four years should be concluded including two years of qualifying examination which is intermediate education or plus two. Only such applicants could be considered as local candidates, the court said.

Several students hailing from Guntur, Kadapa, Krishna and other districts approached the High Court urging it to issue an order considering them to be local. They informed the court that except for two years of study outside the state, they stayed in AP for a period ranging from seven to 10 years. They also said that as their parents moved to other states by part of their work, they too moved along with them.

Naidu making desperate bids  
to protect benami lands: CM

TD not kept even 10% of 118 promises it listed to the BCs: CM

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 17

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday said that TD supremo and former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu was spearheading the Amaravati movement to protect assets belonging to his benamis and associates who purchased with insider trading.

Addressing the BC Sankranthi Sabha meeting at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Stadium in Vijayawada on Thursday, the Chief Minister further stated that Naidu was upset with the falling land values and hence leading the movement.

Taking a dig at Naidu, Jagan Mohan Reddy said that while empowerment of the BCs has started, a parallel meeting is being organised by the rejected chief minister only in the interest of his coterie.

Terming BCs as 'backbone classes', the Chief Minister said that the previous TD government had betrayed them. "During 2014 elections, the TD government had listed 118 promises to the BCs. Not even 10 per cent of the promises were kept.

"They (the TD) promised to spend ₹10,000 crore every year towards BC welfare but spent only ₹19,329 crore in the entire five years. In contrast, our government had spent ₹38,519 crore on BCs alone during the last 18 months, benefitting over 2.88 crore people. For all BC, SC, ST and minority population, the state government had spent ₹59,317 crore in the last 18 months for 4.45 crore beneficiaries,"

162 POETS TO  
ATTEND IN VIRTUAL  
AMARAVATI PRISMDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 17

The sixth edition of the Amaravati Poetic Prism 2020, an International multilingual virtual poets' meet, is being organised by the Cultural Centre of Vijayawada and Amaravati (CCVA) here on December 19 and 20 in which as many 162 poets from across the world would participate. The event is organised in association with the state department of language and culture and the department of language and culture, Telangana.

Addressing a press meet here on Thursday, CCVA chief executive officer Dr E. Sivanaji Reddy said that the meet will be virtual due to the prevailing pandemic situation in the world. "We wanted to postpone the event but then decided to use the digital platform as virtual distancing is gradually becoming a reality," Reddy said.

Poets from 31 countries including Albania, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Austria, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Canada, China, Croatia, Cuba, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Nepal, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sri Lanka, UK, US, Uzbekistan and Vietnam will be participating.

## OFFICIAL | APATHY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 17

Lack of separate irrigation and drainage canals and mixing of water from both sources and usage of such polluted water for cultivation of crops, especially in Godavari and Krishna delta areas, are said to be the major factors for the presence of residues of heavy metals and pesticides in crops like paddy and vegetables in Andhra Pradesh.

As several Central agencies including AIIMS,



ABOVE: A woman puts on kumkuma to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the BC Sankranthi Sabha at IGMC Stadium in Vijayawada on Thursday. BELOW: The participants.



Jagan Mohan Reddy said.

The Chief Minister also listed out the welfare schemes which benefited BCs including Amma Vodi, Rythu Bharosa, housing, YSR Nethanna Nestham, YSR Matsakara Bharosa, Jagananna Chedhodu, YSR Aarogyasri, YSR Pension Kanuka, YSR Aasara and so on.

Deputy Chief Ministers

Dharmanna Krishnadas

and Amzad Basha, ministers

Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy, Chelluboyina

Venugopala Krishna, Bot

sa Satyanarayana, Gum

manuru Jayaram, Anil Kumar Yadav, M. Sankara Narayana, Muttamsetti Srinivas, Vellampalli Srinivas, Kodali Venkateswara Rao, Perni Venkatamaiah, Kurasaala Kanababu, Adimulapu Suresh, Seediri Appalaraju, MPs Pilli Subhash Chandra Bose, Mopidevi Venkataaramana, Gorantla Mahav, Margani Bharat, MLA Janga Krishna Murthy, Pondicherry minister Malladi Krishna Rao and other leaders and party members were present at the event.



A person donned as Haridasu seeks offerings from devotees who were in a queue line to offer special prayers at Kanaka Mahalaxmi Temple during the first Margasira Laxmivaram special prayers at Burujupeta in Visakhapatnam on Thursday.

Muslim assns object to Somu's  
remarks against dargah visitsDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 17

Muslim Associations alleged that BJP AP chief Somu Veerajulu is causing communal differences by objecting to visits of endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas to dargahs.

Addressing a press meet here on Thursday, Muslim

Associations convener Al

taf Raza stated that Veer

ajulu terming Srinivas as

'minister of dargahs was

highly objectionable. He

also objected Veerajulu's

statement that the minis

ter must not visit dargahs.

"People from all faiths vi

sit dargahs which reflects

the culture of unity in

diversity culture of our

WE TOOK WELFARE  
TO DOORSTEP,  
SAYS JAGAN

From Page 1

The Chief Minister said, "Setting up 56 BC corporations and appointing 728 BC leaders, from 139 castes, in the posts of directors and chairman, is history scripted by the Andhra Pradesh government. I am happy to note that 29 of the 56 chairpersons and 336 of the 672 directors are women. We have made laws for implementing 50 per cent reservation for BC, SC, ST, minorities and women in all nominated posts and contracts. Even during the composition of the state Cabinet, 60 per cent posts were given to BC, SC, ST, and minority leaders, and we have sent two BC leaders to Rajya Sabha."

Jagan Mohan Reddy said that the previous government had debilitated corporations and welfare schemes were only given to TD members through Janmabhoomi committees.

"Unlike the TD government, the incumbent government has ensured that welfare schemes were given to all eligible persons, irrespective of their political affiliations, and took welfare to the doorstep of beneficiaries," the Chief Minister said.

He asserted that the development of the state happens only by such efforts, by empowering women in all fields and safeguarding farmers' interests.



Amaravati Parirakshana Samiti JAC leaders, former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, Congress, BJP and CPI leaders show their solidarity at the public meeting at Uddandarayuni Palem in Guntur district on Thursday.

Naidu challenges Jagan for  
referendum over AmaravatiDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 17

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday threw a challenge to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to withdraw his proposal to form three capitals or go for a referendum seeking public opinion on Amaravati as the only capital of Andhra Pradesh.

He offered to quit politics if the Chief Minister's three capitals' plan received public support.

Addressing the 'Jana Bheri' public meeting organised by the Amaravati Parirakshana JAC in the capital city area, Naidu said that without any credibility, Jagan Mohan Reddy is telling the BC Sankranthi meeting that the Amaravati agitation was being run by businessmen with real estate interests.

Naidu accused the Jagan Mohan Reddy regime of targeting Dalit farmers and residents of Amaravati just to stop them from joining the agitation. He claimed that the people voted the YSRC to power only because of the hysteria for which all sections of society are paying a heavy price.

Naidu said, "The fake Chief Minister (Jagan) planted kisses on voters' cheeks and now he planting blows on them. He is ignoring that in course of time, Amaravati will have a potential to create wealth up to ₹2 lakh crore for the people of the state. No sane person would take the decision to shift the capital from Amaravati to Visakhapatnam."

APCC working presidents N. Tulasi Reddy and Sk Masthan Vali, CPI state secretary K. Ramakrishna, Jana Sena leader Pothina Mahesh, former minister Vadde Sobhanadreeswara Rao, TD state president K. Atchannaidu, former MLA Vangaveeti Radhakrishna, BJP leader Paturi Nagbhushanam, TD MP Galla Jayadev and others addressed the gathering and demanded cancellation of the three capitals' decision and continuation of Amaravati as only capital of AP.

Meanwhile, extending support to the farmers' protest, TD politburo member Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy said that the YSRC's conspiracies against Amaravati will fail and the farmers' agitation will not stop. He demanded that the government continue Amaravati as the state capital.

Kadapa district Congress president Neeli Srinivasa Rao demanded that the only capital of the state should be Amravati. He alleged that Jagan Mohan Reddy, who as the Leader of the Opposition said that he fully supported Amravati as the capital

YSRC ministers  
demand TD MLAs to  
seek fresh mandateDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 17

Ministers Perni Venkatamaiah and Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao alleged that Chandrababu Naidu created fake Amaravati with graphics and cheated the farmers.

Addressing press meets here on Thursday, the duo ridiculed the challenge of Naidu about quitting politics if he faces defeat in the referendum on Amaravati. They said that the age of Naidu is 70 years hence there is no use to people with his continuation in politics and suggested him to stop illusions.

Both the ministers alleged that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy decided to give house sites to 50,000 people belonging to weaker sections in Amaravati but Amaravati JAC promoted by the TD went to the court against the house sites and stalled the process through stay order which exposes TD's real face towards welfare and development of weaker sections of the society. They demanded that the TD explain people why they opposed house sites to people in Amaravati.

The two ministers

demanded Naidu to stop heedless demands like referendum and further demanded Naidu to go for elections by asking his MLA quit their posts for Amaravati to know the facts.

Both the ministers alleged that Naidu had released fake graphics in the name of Amaravati, grabbed 33,000 acres of farmlands from farmers and cheated them. They further alleged that Naidu and his coterie were benefitted from Amaravati as they purchased lands before the announcement of capital place and committed inside trading. They lamented that Naidu had forced the farmers onto the road with his graphics and illusions.

Recalling the terming of YSRC leaders as Dussasans and Duryodhans by Naidu, the two ministers said that the TD leaders turned as Dussasans and Duryodhans during their government as the then MLA of TD Chintamani Prabhakar harassed tahsildar Vanajakshi by snatching her sari and other leaders of TD sexually harassing women in call money sex racket at Vijayawada.

Naidu wants to create  
clashes, says SucharitaDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 17

AP home minister Mekathoti Sucharita on Thursday stated that Telugu Desam president N. Chandrababu Naidu had planned to create a law and order problem by violating route norms in Amaravati while going to the Jana Bheri meeting.

The meeting was called to mark the completion of 365 days of the farmers' and residents' agitation against the state government's move to shift the capital out of Amaravati.

Initially, Naidu tried to join the protest but police refused permission which

was poisoning it after coming to power.

TD politburo member Reddeppagari Srinivasa Reddy said that Jagan Mohan Reddy at least now must realise his mistake and withdraw the decision to shift the capital and issue a public apology to Amravati activists. He alleged that the Chief

led to a ruckus.

Sucharita said that the police had given a route chart for Naidu and his convoy and the security was also tightened on the marked route. However, Naidu changed his route in order to create clashes and law and order disturbances.

Terming the act of Naidu as that of a fox, the home minister said that Naidu should cooperate with the police in maintaining law and order.

Naidu after having a darshan at the Kanaka Durga Temple atop Indrakeeladri Hill, proceeding to take part in the pro-Amaravati Jana Bheri meeting.

Minister who continues to rule with the aim of looting was writing an obituary for Amravati for his own selfish purposes.

Meanwhile, TD leaders held a huge rally in Kadapa in support of the Amaravati farmers' movement on the occasion of the completion of 365 days of the agitation.

## Lack of separate irrigation and drainage canals leading to pollution of water, causing diseases

## Focus on pollutants that damage crops: Agri scientists

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 17

Lack of separate irrigation and drainage canals and mixing of water from both sources and usage of such polluted water for cultivation of crops, especially in Godavari and Krishna delta areas, are said to be the major factors for the presence of residues of heavy metals and pesticides in crops like paddy and vegetables in Andhra Pradesh.

As several Central agencies including AIIMS,

IICT, NIN, CCMB, NEERI, NCDC, NIN and others have come with their findings on the mystery illness, suspected to be due to presence of pesticides in samples of tomato and brinjal, mercury in raw rice and also finding presence of heavy metals like lead and nickel in the blood samples of the affected persons and nickel in milk, it is believed that contaminated water used for raising crops like paddy and vegetables, was the main culprit.

For want of proper main

**Scientists suggest taking up a project mode study in select places to find out the varied sources of pollutants and the manner in which they are finding their way into food crops.**

**They advocate separate maintenance of irrigation and drainage canals in order to avoid water from the two sources getting mixed up.**

**In tail-end areas, people use drainage water both for cultivation of crops and for drinking because of improper water supply.**

tenance of both irrigation canals and drainage canals and as they go parallel in some parts of the

state, untreated industrial effluents, domestic sewage, runoff water from fields where chemicals

were used for cultivation of crops and sources of pollution, find their way into the drainage canals and get mixed with irrigation canals, thereby polluting them.

Scientists from Acharya NG Ranga Agriculture University and YSR Horticulture University and from other research centres opine that unlike in the earlier days when usage of fertilisers and pesticides was promoted to boost production of food grains, they are supposed to concentrate more on

pollutants finding their presence in food crops.

A scientist from Acharya NG Ranga Agriculture University said, "It is time the thrust of research should be more on pollutants than on nutrients, given the situation where food crops are getting polluted from various sources and affecting the health of the consumers."

Scientists state that earlier they used to concentrate on addressing deficiency of micronutrients like iron, copper and zinc in food crops as such

deficiency used to make the crops vulnerable for pests having a major impact on the quantum of yield.

Underlining the importance of industrialisation and urbanisation for development of any city or town or village, the scientists recommend paying more attention on the negative impact of such developmental activities in the backdrop of recent Eluru mystery illness so that it helps avoid recurrence of such illness in any part of the state.



## OTHER STORIES

## Farm labourer electrocuted

**Nellore:** In a tragic incident a 35-years-old farmhand, Kanupuru Ramanaiah of Gurrakonda village in Ogili mandal electrocuted after he accidentally stepped on a power cable while spraying pesticide to a farm in the village on Thursday. His family members squarely blamed the owner of the farm for arranging power cables with joints without any permission from the electricity department. Ogili Sub-Inspector Sekhar Babu rushed to the village and shifted the body to the government hospital in Naidupeta after conducting an inquest in the village.

## 4 held, 10 kgs of ganja seized

**Nellore:** Kavali rural police have seized 10 kgs of ganja from four persons involved in the illegal transportation of the substance near Musunuru village in Kavali rural mandal on Thursday. According to the DSP of Kavali, Prasad, their team has also seized 2 cars, ₹45,000 cash and 4 mobile phones, all worth ₹11.20 lakh from the accused. The offenders are being sent to remand.

## 1 dead, 5 others hurt in road mishap

**Kurnool:** One person died and five others were severely injured in a road accident at Panchalinga gala cross road on National Highway 44 near Tungabhadra River bridge on Thursday evening. The deceased was identified as Maheswari (33), native of Thakkasila village in Mahabubnagar district of Telangana. According to police, the incident occurred after a van smashed into an autorickshaw while the van was crossing near Tungabhadra River bridge. Six persons were going to Nandikotkur of Kurnool district to attend the marriage function.

## 3 ARRESTED, 32 RED SANDER LOGS SEIZED

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
KADAPA, DEC. 17

Interstate Red Sanders smuggler Bodde Srinivasulu and two other smugglers arrested by Ontimitta of Kadapa district police on Thursday.

Total 32 red sanders logs, one truck, one car and one motor bike seized.

Kadapa district Superintendent of Police Karur Karunapathi Nagendra Kumar Anburajan held a press conference at the District Police office on Thursday and revealed the details. The district police kept a vigil on the old criminals as per the instructions of the superiors.

In the Chintarajupalle forest area in the Rajampeta mandal, the Ontimitta police seized the red sander cut by the Tamil labourers and kept ready for transport. Police arrested the Bodde Srinivasulu and seized the vehicle used to transport the logs. 20 red sandalwood logs were seized.

## STATE RECORDS 534 COVID CASES, TWO DEATHS

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 17

AP registered 534 new Covid-19 cases and two deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin on Thursday reporting that out of 63,821 samples tested, 534 persons were found infected with Coronavirus. Out of a total 1,10,65,297 samples tested, 8,77,348 persons were found infected with Covid and out of them, 8,65,825 infected patients were recovered while 4,454 patients are still active with the virus.

Among the daily cases of confirmed Covid-19 cases, Chittoor topped the state with 130 followed by 74 in Krishna, 54 in Guntur, 51 in West Godavari, 45 in East Godavari, 39 in Srikakulam, 31 in Visakhapatnam, 27 in Kadapa, 21 in Nellore, 19 in Prakasam, 16 in Anantapur, 14 in Vizianagaram and 13 in Kurnool.

Krishna registered the highest number of cumulative Covid-19 active cases with 838 followed by 699 in Guntur, 571 in Nellore, 505 in Chittoor, 442 in East Godavari, 291 in West Godavari, 231 in Prakasam, 212 in Visakhapatnam, 190 in Srikakulam, 149 in Anantapur, 142 in Kurnool, 111 in Kadapa and 73 in Vizianagaram.

Two cases of death of Covid-19 infected patients were reported with one each at Anantapur and West Godavari.

## SEB FILED 67 NDPS CASES IN 2020

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VISAHPATNAM, DEC. 17

Additional deputy commissioner of police, Special Enforcement Bureau Ajitha V. on Thursday said the Bureau registered 67 NDPS cases and seized 2,233 kg of dry ganja in the Visakhapatnam city in 2020.

She told reporters that under the directions from Narcotics Control Bureau, an anti-drug drive on NDPS activities had been launched from December 15 that would continue till December 22. As a part of the drive, the SEB personnel raided an apartment in Pendurthy area and arrested two women, Panchadi Vasundhara and Kangu Sireesha, both aged 21 and seized one kg of hash oil made from ganja from them. They were arrested on Wednesday late evening.

In another incident on the same day, Duvvada police arrested four persons.

## PSLV places satellite in orbit after perfect launch

CMS-01 to replace GSAT-12; will be directed to space home in 4 days

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NELLORE, DEC. 17

India's 42nd communication satellite CMS-01 was placed in its designated spot in space after a flawless mission by a PSLV rocket from the spaceport in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday.

The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) C50 took off from the second launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) at Sriharikota range as scheduled at 3.41 pm.

After a flight of 20 minutes and 12 seconds, the rocket released the CMS-01 into its designated orbit. The solar panels of CMS-01 were automatically deployed and ISRO's Master Control Facility at Hassan assumed control of the satellite. In the next four days, the satellite will be raised to its permanent orbit about 36,000 km above the earth.

Isro chairman Dr K. Sivan said after the mission that he was "extremely happy" with the success and appreciated the efforts of the satellite and launch vehicle teams in realising this mission amidst the pandemic.

The CMS-01 will replace the GSAT-12 that weighed 1,410-kg and was launched on July 11, 2011. According to Isro, CMS-01, which has a seven-year life span, is meant to provide services in the Extended C Band to cover the Indian mainland, Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands.

The PSLV-C50 is the 52nd flight of the PSLV and 22nd of PSLV in the XL configuration with six strap-on motors. This was the 77th launch from the SDSC. No more



PSLV-C50 zooms into space with Communication Satellite CMS-01 on board leaving orange flames behind from India's Spaceport at Sriharikota on Thursday.

## Guv, CM congratulate ISRO scientists

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 17

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy congratulated the Indian Space Research Organisation scientists for the successful launch of PSLV-C50. He wished the Isro team success in all their future endeavours here on Thursday.

Similarly, AP Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan hailed the Indian Space Research Organisation scientists for the successful launch of PSLV C-50 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota and placing the communication satellite CMS-01 in geosynchronous transfer orbit.

He said that the Isro's second successful launch of PSLV after Covid-19 lockdown period demonstrated the dedication of the scientists and added another feather to the cap of India's robust space programme.

Under the new scheme, Isro is nameings its earth observation satellites 'EOS' and communication satellites 'CMS'.

March 5 this year but it was postponed because of technical reasons a day before the launch. The GSLV was dismantled. Now Isro is planning to launch the GISAT-1 on board a GSLV rocket which is being readied again.

## Patients services hit as sr docs fight for positions

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
KURNOOL, DEC. 17

The internal struggle among doctors affects patients' treatment as the recently removed Kurnool Medical College (KMC) principal was accused of fomenting trouble.

Caste-based organisations pressed into service to lobby for the reinstatement of Prof P. Chandrasekhar as the KMC Principal.

The Kurnool Government General Hospital (KGGH) superintendent Dr Narendranath Reddy and P. Chandrasekhar are at loggerheads and the functioning of the hospital is paralysed due to the pressure tactics mounted to oust the KGGH superintendent.

A doctor said, "Right now the atmosphere is polluted in the hospital.

We are young doctors and we were appalled at the dishonest attitude of senior doctors who were hanging out for positions."

Unsettling the incumbents has become the norm at KMC, and the teaching hospital attached to it said a senior doctor. The internal fight between doctors is only helping the corporate hospitals as they are snatching away patients, pointed out another doctor.

Medical College professors have a huge private practice, and they hardly spent time in the hospital, said another.

Patients who come for fasting check-ups have a harrowing experience as the doctors turn up only at lunchtime, he explained. An inquiry was ordered into the

irregularities and fraud committed by Prof P. Chandrasekhar when he acted as the superintendent of the hospital. The inquiry was conducted by Kakinada Rangaraya Medical College Principal Prof Bobji.

Finance minister Bugganarajendranath Reddy, the minister hailing from Kurnool, was keen on improving the facilities and image of the hospital. The doctors here were accused of diverting Aarogyasri patients to private corporate hospitals and had private treaties with them. If KGGH which has all the state infrastructure performs those operations, it gets incentives also from the government which could be utilised for hospital development, said deputy superintendent Prabhakar.

## GGH IN ONGOLE DE-NOTIFIED AS COVID HOSPITAL

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NELLORE, DEC. 17

In view of considerable drop on Covid cases in the district, Prakasam district collector Pola Bhaskar announced that they have decided to de-notify the Government

General Hospital in Ongole from the tag of Regional Covid Centre.

Addressing the officials of the medical and health department at Ongole on Thursday, he told them to earmark 110 beds on the third floor of GGH to treat

Covid patients henceforth.

Similarly, the Prakasam collector instructed them to keep 20 beds in Chirala, 8 beds in Kandukuru and 22 beds in Markapuram government hospitals for Covid patients.

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
KADAPA, DEC. 17

The impact of corona seems to be gradually declining in the district. Despite conducting thousands of tests every day, the authorities state that only two-digit cases are being registered since November. The current situation looks much better than the over thousand cases registered every day from July to September.

The number of cases has been very low since the beginning of

● THE NUMBER of cases has been very low since the beginning of November.

November. In terms of deaths, 490 people died as of October 15, while it has been 34 after that. The number of recovered patients in the district is also high, when compared to the new cases. Interestingly, those who test positive are preferring medication at home. Consequently, many beds are available

in Covid hospitals and care centres

The overall cases till Wednesday stands at 54,891 while 54,319 have been discharged after full recovery.

The positive cases reported on December 11 was nine while from December 12 to 14 it was 12, on 15 it was 34 and on Wednesday the positive cases were 19. The medical and health department is collecting around 4,000 samples. Till Wednesday the total samples collected in the district was about 7,52,804

## ISRO TO LAUNCH AN EARTH OBSERVATION SATELLITE SOON

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NELLORE, DEC. 17

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch an earth observation satellite that has been built by a private start-up.

"The forthcoming PSLV-C51 mission will be a very special mission not only for ISRO but also for India as the rocket will be carrying an earth observation satellite 'Anand' made by an Indian start-up called Pixxel," said Isro chairman Dr K. Sivan.

He was speaking after the successful launch of the PSLV-C50 rocket carrying the CMS-01 communications satellite on Thursday.

Dr Sivan said Anand was the first satellite produced by a start-up after the government opened the space sector for private players eight months back by setting up the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe).

"It is the first of a series of satellites the start-up company is going to launch," said Dr Sivan adding that PSLV-C51 will also carry a communication satellite built by students from Space Kidz India apart from a satellite built by consortium of three Indian universities.

The primary payload for PSLV-C51 rocket will be a Brazilian satellite weighing between 600 kg and 700 kg.

## PRIORITY IS TO SPREAD SANATANA DHARMA: TTD

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUPATI, DEC. 17

As directed by the AP CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, our top priority is to propagate Hindu Sanatana Dharma, said TTD chairman Mr Y.V. Subba Reddy on Thursday.

He participated in the foundation stone laying ceremony for development works worth ₹159.50 lakh at Karvetinagaram in the presence of Dy CM K. Narayana Swamy. The works included the construction of a Nirali Mandapam in Skanda Pushkarini costing ₹1 crore, CC Road from Sri Venugopal swamy temple to Pushkarini costing ₹42 lakh, beautification of Pushkarini and other works at ₹17.50 lakh.

Addressing the media persons, the TTD Chairman said under the aegis of HDPP Srivari temples were being built in weaker sections colonies of both AP and Telangana. Also, TTD is organising Gudiko Gomata program all over the country and already launched in AP and Karnataka during the holy month of Kartika, he added.

## Treated water to be used for horticulture

From Page 1

Though the MCT is working on the new 25 MLD large conventional STP, the apathy with regard to this plant lies in the fact that it needs a large infrastructure network and high cost. Instead of relying only on such STPs, the civic body has now planned for the non-conventional STP, which can treat the wastewater in a natural way with less maintenance and minimum cost.

"Natural STPs have sustainable results, as the maintenance of the plant is very easy and cost-effective. The treated water would have BOD (Biological Oxygen Demand) and TSS (Total Suspended Solids) values of 10 each. We are now building a 5 MLD natural STP". MCT Commissioner P.S. Girisha told this correspondent.

The project cost is estimated to be around ₹14.97 crore and it is expected to be completed in 12 months. The plant will recycle sewage flowing through drains, starting from the upstream areas and passing through areas on the north side of the city, and join the escape drain close to Vinayak Sagar lake.

The working process of natural STP is that the sedimentation tank allows the sewage to stand for a long time and the total suspended

● Natural STP allows recycling sewage using natural materials and aquatic plants, and reuse it for non-potable purposes.

● Tirupati's natural STP with 5 MLD capacity will be the biggest after Delhi's 3 MLD natural STP.

● The treated water would have BOD (Biological Oxygen Demand) and TSS (Total Suspended Solids) values of 10 each.

ed solids will settle down. Thereafter, the water is passed through chambers and compartments which have beds of pebbles of various sizes, which filters the sewage. At least four species of fast-growing aquatic plants feed on the organic matter in the water.

"What goes into the natural STP is black and grey-coloured highly polluted sewage water. And what comes out is clean water with a reduced level of BOD. The water isn't potable, but it will be routed into the Vinayak Sagar Lake and in future, it could be routed to other water bodies, for horticulture or recharging groundwater", the Commissioner said.

## ACCUSED MIFFED WITH VICTIM'S PARENTS

From Page 1

The incident occurred when the victim was sleeping in her room, while her parents were in the other room.

On hearing the victim's screams, her parents rushed in, put off the flames and shifted her to the hospital. The accused is still at large and the police have launched a manhunt for

him. A case has been registered and the police are investigating the incident.

Police said that Venkatesh's wife was suffering from some medical ailments. The victim's parents reportedly promised Venkatesh that they would get Sumathi married to him but made arrangements for get her married with another person.

## AITUC DEMANDS REINSTATEMENT, PAYMENT OF PENDING SALARIES OF HEALTH WORKERS

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUPATI, DEC. 17

The All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) leaders along with the workers including the sweepers and scavengers worked at the Padmavathi Covid-19 care centre near Tiruchanoor demanded the government to immediately reinstate the sacked workers and release

them the pending salaries. Staging a protest in front of the Sub-Collector office here on Thursday, the district general secretary of AITUC Mr P. Murali alleged that the sweepers and scavenger workers, who were deprived of their salaries for the last four months, were sacked by the authorities after Covid-19 cases were declined.

## ARRANGEMENTS BEING MADE AS PER COVID GUIDELINES FOR VAIKUNTA DWARA DARSHAN

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUPATI, DEC. 17

TTD executive officer K.S. Jawahar Reddy said that all arrangements are being made as per Covid-19 guidelines for providing Vaikunta dwara darshan to devotees for ten days at Tirumala temple, starting from December 25 to January 3.

Briefing the media persons on TTD's arrangements for Vaikunta dwara darshan here on Thursday, the EO said that devotees with online or offline darshan tickets for the day will alone be allowed to reach Tirumala after stringent

checking on these ten days. "Due to the prevailing Covid-19 situation, darshan will be provided to pilgrims only in limited numbers every day. Offline tickets will also be issued to Tirupati locals at five centres in the city from Dec. 24, round the clock till the prescribed quota for ten days exhausts", he added.

On December 25, protocol VIPs will be given preference only if they come in person with family members and 1+5 darshan tokens will be issued. On these 10 days, break darshan for Srivani devotees will be priced at ₹1,000, he informed.

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SHORT TAKES

ADHIKARI LOYALIST  
TIWARI QUILTS TMC,  
TO JOIN BJP

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, DEC. 17

Former West Bengal minister Shubhendu Adhikari and his loyalist Jitendra Tiwari, also Pandabeshwar MLA, severed their long ties with the Trinamul Congress in a span of few hours on Thursday, over their revolt against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

After dealing the double blow to their party, the duo, along with two-time Burdwan East TMC MP Sunil Mondal, is now set to join the BJP in the presence of Union home minister Amit Shah at a rally in Midnapore on December 19 upon his arrival on a two-day state tour this weekend.

Adhikari, who resigned as an MLA of Nandigram on Wednesday, wrote to Banerjee politely in a letter, “I am writing to tender my resignation as a member of All India Trinamul Congress as well as from all other positions held by me in the party and its associate organs with immediate effect. I am thankful for all the challenges and opportunities that has been afforded to me and I will always value my time spent as a member of the party.”

NCB ISSUES NOTICE  
TO KARAN JOHAR  
OVER VIRAL VIDEO

Mumbai, Dec. 17: The Narcotics Control Bureau has issued a notice to Bollywood filmmaker Karan Johar over a viral video allegedly showing drugs being consumed at a party at his house last year, NCB sources said on Thursday.

The notice has been sent to Johar to check the video’s veracity, an NCB official said.

The central agency is conducting an anti-drugs probe that began in connection with the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput in June this year.

The video, which also shows several top stars, is being investigated as part of NCB’s probe, the official said.

The NCB had received a complaint regarding the video of a party, which was attended by top Bollywood stars last year, the official said.

The complaint was about movie stars apparently seen in a ‘drugged’ state in the video.

CONG LEADERSHIP  
WORKING TO END  
INTERNAL TIFF

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

As the internal elections in the Congress draw close the top leadership wants to bridge the gap with the 23 letter writers who were demanding change in the working style of the party and an ‘active and present’ leadership. Insiders claim that a meeting between Congress president Sonia Gandhi and representatives of letter writers is expected as soon as coming weekend.

Acting as a bridge between the two sides is the veteran party leader and former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath. In the last couple of days he has met with the letter writers and also with the Congress president in a bid to find a middle path to the internal strife going on.

The parleys between the leadership and the letter writers had come to an abrupt end when senior leader Ahmed Patel had contracted Covid in early October and finally passed away in late November.

SC UPHOLDS HC  
ORDER ON  
KAHEEL KHAN

New Delhi, Dec. 17: The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to interfere with the Allahabad High Court verdict which had quashed the detention of Dr Kafeel Khan under the National Security Act (NSA) and ordered his immediate release, saying it is “a good judgement”.

“We will not interfere in the judgement. However, the observation will not impact any other proceedings,” said the bench comprising Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian. The bench was hearing the Uttar Pradesh government’s plea challenging the high court’s September 1 verdict. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the state, told the bench that observation made by the high court exonerates Khan in the criminal proceedings. “Criminal cases will be decided on their own merits,” the bench observed.

Chilling out



Workers warm themselves around a bonfire amid the snow-laden area at Sonamarg in Ganderbal district of Central Kashmir on Thursday. The minimum temperature across Kashmir plummeted several degrees below the freezing point on Thursday owing to a clear sky as the valley reeled under cold conditions, with Srinagar experiencing the coldest night of the season -6.4.

— PTI

Modi to join Hasina in  
March for ‘Bijoy Dibosh’

SRIDHAR  
KUMARASWAMI | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday held a virtual summit with his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina that included “comprehensive discussions covering all areas including connectivity and trade, development cooperation, border management and rivers water sharing” after which it was announced that PM Modi would be visiting Bangladesh in March next year to “join the celebrations on the occasion of 50th anniversary of Bangladesh’s Independence and 50 years of Bangladesh-India diplomatic relations”.

It may be recalled that the Pakistan Army had surrendered to the Indian Army in Dhaka on December 16, 1971, marking the liberation of the erstwhile East Pakistan which emerged as an independent nation Bangladesh.

In response to a question at a special MEA briefing on the summit in the evening regarding Sheikh Hasina’s recent reported statement that Bangladesh can never forget or forgive Pakistan for the atrocities committed in 1971 and also on demands for an apology from Pakistan, India

also took a dig at Pakistan, with New Delhi saying, “There is no denying that at state-sponsored oppression against Bangladesh’s just war of oppression led to the death of more than 3 million, more than 2 lakh women were raped and tortured. We deeply respect and understand the sentiments expressed by PM Sheikh Hasina.”

In his remarks, Modi told Sheikh Hasina, “Following the Victory Day, our meeting today is of even more special significance. It is a matter of pride for us to celebrate the historic victory of Bangladesh over Anti-liberation forces as the Victory Day with you. Today, when Bangladesh is celebrating forty nine years of independence, I pay homage to the martyrs of both the countries who sacrificed their lives. On the occasion of Victory Day, yesterday I paid tributes at the National War Memorial in India and lit a ‘Golden Victory Torch’. These four ‘Victory Torches’ will tour all over India and will be taken to all the villages of our martyrs. Since 16 December, we are celebrating the ‘Golden Victory Year’, during which many events will be organised across India.”

The two Prime Ministers “jointly unveiled a commemorative postal stamp issued by the Government of India on the occasion of birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, while PM Modi also “thanked the Government of Bangladesh for issuing a stamp in honour of Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of Gandhiji’s 150th birth anniversary celebrations earlier in September 2020”.

In all seven agreements were signed at the virtual summit between the two countries in the areas of hydrocarbon, culture, agriculture, high-impact community development projects. A decision was also taken “to expeditiously conclude the ongoing joint study on the prospects of entering into a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement”.

The joint statement said, Modi also “assured that (Covid) vaccines would be made available to Bangladesh as and when produced in India”. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina “highlighted the need for early signing of interim agreement for sharing of the Teesta waters, as agreed upon by both the governments in 2011” and Modi “reiterated India’s sincere commitment and continued efforts in that regard”, a joint statement said.

DAC APPROVES  
11 OFFSHORE  
PATROL VESSELS

PAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by defence minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday in a meeting granted Acceptance of Necessity (AoNs) for proposals worth ₹28,000 crore including airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) systems for the Indian Air Force.

These airborne early warning and control systems will be designed and developed by DRDO. These are reported to be deployed on six Airbus aircraft to be acquired from Air India. AEW&C which are airborne help in detection and tracking of attacking enemy aircraft, missiles and drones much before ground based radars. They also provide crucial inputs during dogfights with the enemy fighter jets and give information on troops deployment by enemies on ground.

DAC also approved proposals for 11 next generation offshore patrol vessels for the Indian Navy and modular bridges for the Indian Army.

In a major push to Make-in-India, six proposals out of seven for which AoNs were granted will be sourced from the Indian industry.

MHA transfers 3  
WB IPS officers

Mamata Banerjee govt refuses to accept the  
Centre’s order; likely to challenge it legally

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, DEC. 17

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has accused the Narendra Modi government of “colourable exercise of power” after the Union home ministry ordered the central deputation of three IPS officers of her government on Thursday. The Trinamul Congress supremo also refused to accept the Centre’s order which her government, according to sources, may challenge legally.

Banerjee, who is now in North Bengal, Tweeted, “GoI’s order of central deputation for the three serving IPS officers of West Bengal despite the state’s objection is a colourable exercise of power and blatant misuse of emergency provision of IPS Cadre Rule 1954. This act is nothing but a deliberate attempt to encroach upon state’s jurisdiction & demoralise the serving officers in WB.”

● **BANERJEE SAYS** Centre’s order despite the state’s objection is a colourable exercise of power and blatant misuse of emergency provision of IPS Cadre Rule 1954.

She added, “This move, particularly before the elections is against the basic tenets of the federal structure. It’s unconstitutional & completely unacceptable! We wouldn’t allow this brazen attempt by the Centre to control the state machinery by proxy! West Bengal is not going to cow-down in front of expansionist & undemocratic forces.”

The IPS officers are Rajeev Mishra, inspector general (South Bengal), Praveen Kumar Tripathi, deputy inspector general (Presidency Range) and Bholanath Pandey, superintendent of police (Diamond Harbour Police District) in South 24 Parganas.

In August last year a video of Mishra, touching

the feet of the CM at Digha in East Midnapore went viral.

The Centre has assigned Mishra, a 1996 batch officer, to the Indo-Tibetan Border Police. Tripathi, of the 2004 batch, has been sent to Sashastra Seema Bal while Pandey, from the 2011 batch, has been deputed to the Bureau of Police Research and Development. All the three organisations are under the ministry of home affairs headed by Amit Shah. The officers came under the MHA’s scanner for security lapses after Trinamul workers attacked the convoy of BJP president J.P. Nadda last week at Diamond Harbour.

The MHA, the nodal controlling authority of the IPS cadre, requisitioned them for central deputation while asking the state government for their release. Furious, the Chief Minister then held them back which only prompted the MHA to act this time strongly.

PM to address MP  
farmers’ today

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually address farmers in Madhya Pradesh on Friday even as some farmer unions have been protesting at Delhi borders against the three recently passed farm sector-related legislations. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will also distribute relief amount for crops loss to around 35 lakh farmers during the event which will be attended by around 20,000 farmers across the state.

Meanwhile, Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar, home minister Amit Shah, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and railways minister Piush Goyal held a meeting with some BJP general secretaries at the party headquarters on farmers issue.

During the meeting, sources said, Shah reviewed the party’s out-

● **CHIEF MINISTER** Shivraj Singh Chouhan will distribute relief amount for crops loss to around 35 lakh farmers during the event.

reach programme through press conferences and “chaupals” across all districts of the country to allay fears on the new farm laws. The party has been holding chaupals at all districts across the country highlighting the three legislations and how they are aimed at benefiting farmers, mainly small and marginal farmers and countering the propaganda by some farmer unions and opposition parties against the legislations and how MSP and APMC will continue to exist.

The meeting at the BJP headquarters was held on the day the Supreme Court heard a plea related to the farmers’ protests against the Centre’s three new agriculture laws.

CORONAVIRUS  
CASELOAD  
CROSSES 99.56L

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 17

With 24,010 fresh cases in a day, the country’s Covid-19 caseload crossed 99.56 lakh, while the number of people who have recovered from the infection surged to 94.89 lakh. According to the Union health ministry, the total Coronavirus cases mounted to 99,56,557 and the death toll rose to 1,44,451 with 355 new fatalities in a day.

As per the health ministry data, active recoveries outnumbering new cases on a daily basis have ensured a high recovery rate among patients. The total recovered cases are nearing 95 lakh (94,89,740). The recovery rate has improved to 95.31 per cent on Thursday. The gap between recovered cases and active cases is also increasing consistently, and presently stands at 91,67,374. The Covid-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.45 per cent.

Modi, like RSS, is not dogmatic on economy. But, he is  
close to a Gandhian socialist, claims author Sitapati

SRIRAM KARRI  
HYDERABAD

The economics of the Sangh parivar and of Prime Minister Narendra Modi are not based on dogmas or ideology; the RSS is actually like a rainbow coalition of all kinds of economic views. Modi takes his decisions based more on politics than economics, per se, argues Vinay Sitapati in this concluding part of this interview.

● **Everybody today tries to guess the deep rooted economic policy impulse, inclination and instinct of Narendra Modi. Some argue he is pro-free markets or pro-corporates. The farmer bill agitation currently hinges on it. You explore the evolution of RSS, the Jan Sangh and now BJP for hundred years. Is RSS, and consequently Modi, socialist or pro-free market?**

As I trace in my book, the RSS is a loose umbrella coalition when it comes to economics. They do not have a fixed ideological view on it. Throughout its history Hindu nationalism has articulated so many different views of economics. In Deen Dayal Upadhyaya’s work, *Integral Humanism*, which is very core to RSS thinking, a vast welfare scheme and

uplift of the downtrodden is strongly articulated. You have free market supporters like Balraj Madhok and Dr. Subramanian Swamy as much as centrists like Vajpayee. It also included someone like Nanaji Deshmukh, whose personal honesty was peerless and who would raise funds from businessmen, including say Nussli Wadia, grandson of Jinnah.

Even though Prime Minister Vajpayee was one of the greatest economic reformer we ever had, he only continued the economic direction that P.V. Narasimha Rao started.

In essence, the Hindu nationalist ideology was around organising and uniting the Hindu society but had little view on the modern state, or issues that we refer to as ‘governance’. The Sangh looks at economics as a flexible tactical political issue, in which the quest for votes is more significant. So Modi’s assertion that least governed is best governed is his slogan rather than an RSS ideology.

Modi has a certain view of economics, certainly, but it is that state must play a role and it is crucial. A visceral Gandhian socialist view. In contrast to Modi’s economic policies, you can see ideological fervour in Modi’s changing of Article 370 or the Citizenship Bill. These are in the ideological realm, with a long genealogy.

Incidentally, they have no strong ideological view on foreign affairs either. Yes, there are vague assertions like Vasudeva Kutumbikam or a goal of becoming a Vishwa Guru, but they are not substantial. And arguments of Akhand Bharat mean nothing in modern geopolitics.

● **Why does it look today that Modi’s BJP with the backing of the RSS is so hard to defeat in elections?**

They win for many reasons, but a big one is teamwork and unity. This RSS teamwork is a response to the history lesson that Indians are terrible team players. They fight among themselves and split into factions. RSS uses this simple but deep insight to create organisational unity. Only one other man did it before them — Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. The RSS has created in a sense a very Indian ideal of unifying Hindus, to habituate them into team work as an ideal.

BJP leaders too have lots of internal bickering and differences, but they rarely divorce and split the party.

Vajpayee was able to use this trait to get rid of two of his earliest rivals — Madhok and Subramanian Swamy — who were very individualistic and unafraid to air their differences in public.

Even Veer Savarkar was an opinionated individual, whereas Hedgewar and Golwalkar were committed to the sangh above all. This is what I call Hindu fevicol, and it is a hard bond to break.

Congress in that sense is typically Indian organisation. They fight it out in the open and sabotage their own larger cause for a pettier goal. Congress is not a uniquely nepotistic party but a typically Indian-minded family party. Every Indian wants to hand over their power to their son or daughter. In that sense there is a Nehru-Gandhi in all of us.

In contrast, when Indians see Narendra Modi, a man without a family to benefit, they are in respectful awe but it is so unlike them. That sense of sacrifice is what puts Modi above others in the minds of common Indians.

● **Talking of Gandhi, we can see a strand of commonality between him and Vajpayee and Modi... idea of Brahmacharya, extending the logic of sacrifice of family and material concerns, at least in perception. Does this favour a Yogi Adityanath to inherit the mantle from Modi?**

It is a very powerful appealing idea, the old Hindu tradition of adopting Brahmacharya. Our psyche puts those who accept the monastic life in

position of reverence. This is the appeal of Yogi Adityanath also. It obscures many legitimate criticisms of his politics. It definitely gives him an upper-hand if he enters the race to become prime minister one day.

● **Many say that despite being from the RSS, Vajpayee was a moderate acceptable to all whereas Modi is a Loh Purush (iron man). Did the incarceration in Emergency play a role in giving the BJP leaders like Advani and Vajpayee a different experiential perspective in the issue of personal liberties?**

Yes, while Modi was underground in Gujarat during Emergency, Vajpayee and Advani (and a plethora of others), developed a strong view about personal liberties because they were the worst victims of state atrocities during Emergency. Had Modi been arrested then, who knows what kind of a different viewpoint he would have had?

But it was also about the coalitions. The participation of Vajpayee-Advani in the Janata Party government and their later leadership of NDA shows they were willing to engage with a range of people — from a socialist like George Fernandes to aristocrat like Jaswant Singh. Modi has been electorally

freed from the need for a coalition.

● **Coming to Vajpayee Qand Advani, your jugalbandi book, how did their relationship evolve?**

Advani began as a fan to the star Vajpayee. Their personal backgrounds were very different — Vajpayee was a communicator, poet, orator, very Hindi heartland, lower middle class, whereas Advani was from Karachi, highly cosmopolitan, very English, but introverted and serious.

Vajpayee, like Syama Prasad Mukherjee before him, had charisma and magic. He could mean different things to different people. Advani was also under-confident but he had other strengths. He was loyal, disciplined, always willing to make a self-sacrifice. He was for most part underrated. They were great friends too. They are the kind who would go watch Bollywood movies, cry over some scenes and eat pani puri on the roadside.

● **Did Advani stick to Vajpayee through thick and thin because he was too scared by Partition and even the idea of a separation was very heavy on him?**

(Hmm). I wish we had spoken before writing the book. Could be. But to answer another question of yours, Advani, the rich

scion was comfortable with jail life and never complained of difficulties whereas Vajpayee despite being from a poor background found it hard — because of Partition. Advani lost everything, his home, his comfort and material wealth, his beloved Sindh... all in one go. Partition was an event for Vajpayee but a lifelong trauma for Advani.

● **In the end, What’s your appraisal of Vajpayee and Advani? How do they differ from the Modi-Shah duo?**

At heart, Vajpayee and Advani were both romanticists, even children at heart. No one would say that about Modi and Shah. Their jugalbandi is very different. They won’t be seen eating pani puri in public or crying while watching Bollywood movies.

The other difference is their understanding of India. Unlike Vajpayee or Advani, Modi and Shah have never served for a single day before taking power in 2014. They have no background of compromising with smaller and regional parties in Parliament. They were also not shaped by Partition or Emergency. They have been shaped by caste and religious politics in the Hindutva crucible of Gujarat. But the two jugalbandis share more than we imagine. All four of them are team players. That’s why the BJP wins.



## SHORT TAKES

## '21 BERLIN FILM FEST MAY GO VIRTUAL

Los Angeles, Dec. 17: The Berlin International Film Festival might be held virtually for its upcoming 2021 edition.

Sources told *Variety* that the festival organisers are expected to delay the festival due to resurgence in Coronavirus cases in Germany. They will be announcing their plans later this week. As of now, the 71st edition of the film gala is scheduled to run as a physical event from February 11-21, but the organisers are now rethinking their strategy.

The festival is now looking to stage a competition section in a virtual format in early March, with the European Film Market running as a digital event at the same time. The organisers are also thinking of holding a mini-festival with a series of onsite world premieres for early June.

## US JOINT CHIEFS CHAIRMAN MEETS TALIBAN

Kabul, Dec. 17: The top US general held unannounced talks with Taliban peace negotiators in the Persian Gulf to urge a reduction in violence across Afghanistan, even as senior American officials in Kabul warned that stepped-up Taliban attacks endanger the militant group's nascent peace negotiations with the Afghan government. Army Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met for about two hours with Taliban negotiators in Doha, Qatar, on Tuesday and flew Wednesday to Kabul to discuss the peace process with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

Milley's meetings came amid a new drawdown of US troops, although under current US policy a complete pullout hinges on the Taliban reducing attacks nationwide. "The most important part of the discussions that I had with both the Taliban and the government of Afghanistan was the need for an immediate reduction in violence," Milley said.

## CYCLONE YASA: FIJI IMPOSES EMERGENCY

Suva, Dec. 17: Fiji imposed a nationwide curfew Thursday after urging people near the coast to move to higher ground as the island nation prepared for a major cyclone to hit.

Cyclone Yasa was expected to hit the two main islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu later Thursday or early Friday. Authorities imposed an overnight curfew and declared a state of natural disaster. The National Disaster Management Office warned the cyclone could bring waves as high as 16 metres (52 feet) in some places and sustained winds of up to 250 kilometres per hour (155 mph), with gusts hitting 350 kph (217 mph).

In the capital Suva, many residents were experiencing power cuts.

Michael Cheer, who owns the Samabula Cake Shop, was moving cakes into his car so he could take them home and put them into a cooler, rather than driving them across the island to deliver them to another town.

## CHINA PROBE BRINGS HOME MOON SAMPLES

Beijing, Dec. 17: China's Chang'e-5 probe successfully touched down on Earth in the early hours of Thursday, bringing home the first samples of the moon in over 40 years. The spacecraft landed in Siziwang Banner in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region at 1:59 AM (local time), according to the China National Space Administration (CNSA).

Zhang Kejian, head of the CNSA, declared the Chang'e-5 mission a success. It marks a successful conclusion of China's current three-step lunar exploration programme of orbiting and landing, and bringing back samples which began in 2004, state-run *Xinhua* news agency reported.

President Xi Jinping congratulated scientists on the complete success of the Chang'e-5 mission. As China's most complicated space project, President Xi in his message to the CNSA said, the Chang'e-5 mission "is another major achievement in overcoming difficulties by giving full play to the advantages of the new system of pooling national resources and strength, marking a great step forward in China's space industry".

## Record cases, deaths in Calif. Most of state's 40 mn residents under stay-at-home orders

Los Angeles, Dec. 17: California has reported more than 53,000 new Coronavirus cases and 293 deaths, setting new records as hospitals struggled to keep up with the surge.

State health officials said Wednesday a change in data processing added 15,337 previous cases to the count, but the new virus cases remained a daily record. The state has been grappling with soaring cases and hospitalisations. Most of California's 40 million residents are under stay-at-home orders because of dwindling intensive care unit capacity.

Hospitals are filling up so fast that officials are rolling out mobile field facilities and scrambling to hire more doctors and nurses. —AP

## 2 health staff develop allergic reactions to Pfizer's Covid vaccine

New York, Dec. 17: Two healthcare workers, who received Pfizer's Coronavirus vaccine, developed "concerning reactions", even as the US rolled out the vaccine to frontline healthcare workers and high-risk individuals amid increasing Covid-19 infections across the country. A report in *The New York Times* said the two health care workers at Bartlett Regional Hospital in Alaska developed concerning reactions just minutes after receiving Pfizer's Coronavirus vaccine this week.

One staff member was hospitalised for a few days. One of the healthcare workers, a middle-aged woman, had no history of allergies but had an anaphylactic reaction 10 minutes after receiving the vaccine. She experienced a rash over her face and torso, shortness of breath and an elevated heart rate, the *NYT* report said adding that anaphylaxis can be life-threatening, with impaired breathing and drops in blood pressure. The second worker received his shot on Wednesday and developed eye puffiness, lightheadedness and a scratchy throat 10 minutes after the injection, the hospital said. —PTI

## RO KHANNA IS DEM VICE CHAIR OF INDIA CAUCUS

Washington, Dec. 17: Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna, who represents the Silicon Valley in the US House of Representatives, has been named as the Democratic Vice Chair of the Congressional India Caucus. The seat has been created for the first time since its formation in 1994.

Khanna, 44, who was recently elected for a third consecutive term from the congressional district representing Silicon Valley, is being considered as a potential contender to fill the US Senate seat from California that will fall vacant in January after Kamala Harris is sworn in as the country's vice president. "I believe Ro Khanna would be an outstanding Democratic Vice Chair," Congressman Brad Sherman, Democratic Co-Chair of the Caucus, said in an email. —PTI

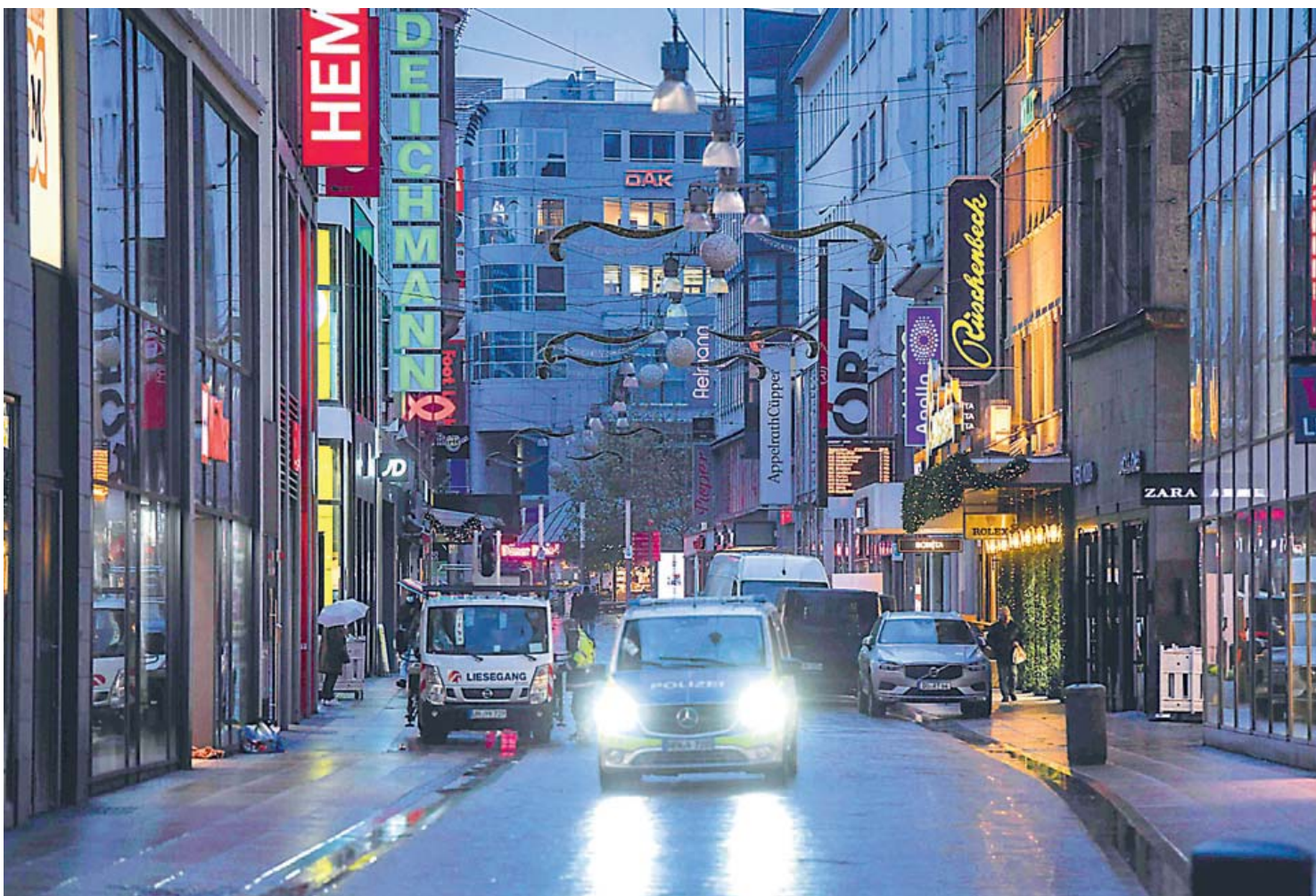
## UN | PRIZE

## Vidyt Mohan helps farmers earn extra by converting waste farm residues into value-added chemicals

## Indian among 'Young Champions of the Earth' winners

United Nations, Dec. 17: A 29-year-old Indian entrepreneur is among the seven winners of the prestigious "Young Champions of the Earth" 2020 prize given by the UN environment agency to global change-makers using innovative ideas and ambitious action to help solve some of the world's most pressing environmental challenges.

Vidyt Mohan, an engineer, is the co-founder of "Takachar", a social enterprise enabling farmers to prevent open burning of their waste farm residues and earn extra income by converting them into value-added chemicals like activated carbon on-site, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) said in a statement on Tuesday.



A police car drives at the empty pedestrian zone at early morning in Dortmund, western Germany, on Thursday, at a partial lockdown to curb the spread of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. —AFP

## Macron latest to test +ve for Covid

Paris, Dec. 17: French President Emmanuel Macron is the latest world leader to test positive for Covid-19, joining a growing list of others just as inoculation drives against the illness are beginning in a number of countries.

Macron, 42, has repeatedly said he is sticking to strict sanitary protocols during the pandemic, including not shaking hands, wearing a mask and keeping distance from other people. The Elysee Palace announced on Thursday that Macron would be isolating for seven days.

President Donald Trump announced in October that

he and his wife, first lady Melania Trump, tested positive for the Coronavirus. At 74, the US president was the oldest head of state to become infected with the virus to date, and his age put him at higher risk of serious complications from Covid-19.

British PM Boris Johnson was the first major world leader confirmed to have Covid-19, after facing criticism for downplaying the pandemic. Prince Charles, the heir to the British throne, also tested positive in March and showed mild symptoms.

Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro announced his

illness in July and used it to publicly extol hydroxy-chloroquine, the unproven malaria drug that he'd been promoting as a treatment for Covid-19 and was taking himself.

Honduras' president Juan Orlando Hernandez announced in June that he had tested positive, along with two other people who worked closely with him. Hernandez said he had started what he called the "MAIZ treatment," an experimental and unproven combination of microdactin, azithromycin, ivermectin and zinc. He was briefly hospitalised and released.

The president of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, who dismissed concerns about the virus as "psychosis" and recommended drinking vodka to stay healthy, said in July he had contracted it himself but was asymptomatic.

Others who were infected include Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, Prince Albert II of Monaco, Guatemalan president Alejandro Giammettei, Bolivian interim president Jeannine Anez, president of the Dominican Republic Luis Abinader. —AP

## Despite US sanctions, Turkey not to step back on Russian S-400s

Ankara, Dec. 17: Turkey won't step back from its decision to deploy Russian air defence systems despite US sanctions imposed on the country over the purchase, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Thursday.

In an interview with Turkey's 24 TV television, Cavusoglu also said Turkey was mulling steps it would take to reciprocate against the US sanctions, but did not say what the steps could entail. The US announced sanctions earlier this week over Turkey's procurement of Russia's advanced S-400 system, under a US law known as CAATSA, aimed at pushing back on Russian influence. The sanctions target Turkey's Presidency of Defence Industries, the head of the presidency and three other senior officials. The penalties block any assets the four officials

## GREECE TO PAY \$2.8 BN FOR FRENCH RAFALE JETS AMID TURKEY TENSION

Athens, Dec. 17: Greece's government said on Thursday that it will pay 2.32 billion euros (\$2.8 billion) for the purchase of French-made Rafale fighter jets and an upgrade of compatible missiles, under a major military overhaul amid tensions with neighbouring Turkey.

Delivery of the 18 jets will begin in mid-2021 and be completed over two years, government spokesman Stelios Petsas said.

als may have in US jurisdictions and bar their entry into the US. They also include a ban on most export licences, loans and credits to the agency.

It is the first time that CAATSA has been used to

penalise a US ally. "If we were to step back we would have done so before now," Cavusoglu said in response to a question on whether Turkey would cancel the S-400 deal with Russia. Cavusoglu added:

"Now we are assessing the impact of these sanctions in great detail...and will take steps accordingly."

The minister also described the sanctions as "wrong both legally and politically," arguing that Turkey's purchase of the Russian system in 2017 predated the CAATSA law. Cavusoglu said that an improvement of relations between Turkey and the United States would be conditional on President-elect Joe Biden's ability to address Ankara's grievances.

Ties between the two have been plagued by numerous disputes, including the jailing of American citizens and local consular staff, US support for Syrian Kurdish fighters considered to be terrorists by Turkey and the continued US residence of a Muslim cleric accused of masterminding the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey. —AP

## VACCINATION IN ASIA-PACIFIC BY MID/LATE '21: WHO

Jakarta, Dec. 17: The World Health Organisation said Thursday that countries in the Asia-Pacific region are not guaranteed to have early access to Covid-19 shots and urged them to adopt a long-term approach to the pandemic. "The development of safe and effective vaccines is one thing. Producing them in adequate quantities and reaching everyone who needs them is another," WHO Regional Director Dr Takeshi Kasai told reporters in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. —AP

## Navalny poisoning: No role, says Putin

Moscow, Dec. 17: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday rejected allegations that the Kremlin was behind the poisoning of his top political foe, opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and accused US intelligence agencies of fomenting the claims. Speaking via video call during an annual marathon news conference, the Russian leader countered the accusations by saying that if the Kremlin wanted to poison Navalny it would have pressed the attack home.

"If there was such a desire, it would have been done," Putin said with a chuckle. Navalny fell sick on Aug 20 during a domestic flight in Russia, and was flown while he was in a coma to Germany for treatment two days later. Labs in Germany, France and Sweden, and tests by the Organization for Chemical Prohibition of Chemical

## CHARLIE HEBDO HIT: 30 YRS' JAIL FOR I.S. WIDOW

Paris, Dec 17: The fugitive widow of an Islamic State gunman and a man described as his logistician on Wednesday were convicted of terrorism charges and sentenced to 30 years in prison in the trial of 14 people linked to the January 2015 attacks in Paris against the satirical Charlie Hebdo newspaper and a kosher supermarket.

The verdict ends the three-month trial linked to the three days of killings across Paris claimed jointly by the Islamic State group and al-Qaida. During the proceedings, France was struck by new attacks, a wave of Coronavirus infections among the defendants, and devastating testimony bearing witness to bloodshed that continues to shake France.

All three attackers died in police raids. The widow, Hayat Boumedienne, fled to Syria and is believed to still be alive. The two men who helped her out of France were tried in absentia, may be dead, though one received a sentence of life in prison. —AP

## '88 LOCKERBIE BOMBING: NEW CHARGES BY U.S.

Washington, Dec. 17: The Justice Department plans to unseal new charges in the coming days in connection with the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jet that exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270 people, according to a person familiar with the case.

The bombing of Flight 103, whose victims included dozens of American college students, spurred global probe and produced sanctions against Libya, which surrendered two intelligence officials for prosecution before a Scottish court sitting in the Netherlands. The New York-bound flight exploded over Lockerbie less than an hour after takeoff from London on Dec. 21, 1988. —AP





# DECCAN Chronicle

18 DECEMBER 2020

## Covid not a good reason to scrap Winter Session

While the Opposition parties have cried foul, and complained of not being consulted by the government on the decision to not hold the Winter Session of Parliament this year, the Constitution is clear that they cannot demand discussion or consultation as a matter of right. That right belongs to the government alone, and the President summons Parliament to meet when advised to do so by the government. The Narendra Modi government is absolutely in the clear on this score.

There is only one constraint under which the government labours, constitutionally speaking. It must ask the President to summon Parliament at least once every six months. While recently announcing that there would no Winter Session in 2020, the government has hinted that the Budget Session would be commenced in January. There is nothing out of the ordinary about that.

The minister for parliamentary affairs, Pralhad Joshi, has claimed that he has consulted leaders of the leading Opposition parties on the scuttling of the Winter Session, and there was general agreement that the session be given the

go-by in view of the Covid pandemic. Apparently, MPs were chary of travelling to Delhi. Jairam Ramesh of the Congress claims no consultation was held with his party. None of this matters, however, since the decision rests with the government alone.

Nevertheless, giving Covid as the reason for skipping the traditionally three-week long Winter Session is hardly a persuasive argument. The government and the BJP had seemed eager to hold the Bihar election when it was due recently,

rather than respect the sentiment of the Opposition parties to defer it by a few months. The election to the Hyderabad Municipal Corporation was also held recently. Covid-related considerations did not come in the way. The pandemic is raging in America but the US stuck to the schedule for its recently concluded election for President. The US Congress and the British Parliament have met as scheduled. The British Parliament did not skip meetings even during the Second World War. In November 1962, our Parliament was in session when the Chinese invaded in NEFA.

It is the widest impression today that the government has run away from the Winter Session because questions will be raised about the three-week old farmers' protest on Delhi's borders. Moreover, the Modi government has set a precedent in this regard. Future governments may also act similarly — skip a session whenever expedient. And this is hardly good for our democracy where important questions crop up all the time, often unexpectedly. A bloody-minded government may hold a session of Parliament only when it wishes to pass laws, not otherwise. This is the best way to avoid noisiness in Parliament and be an "orderly" country.

Even if the pandemic was seemed a matter of serious concern, the Winter Session could have been held online. This was done in Britain recently. MPs who could not be physically present attended on-line. India is technologically capable and this could have been organised if the government had the mind to make it happen.

While the Winter Session stands scuttled, the government can still attest to its bonafides by holding a brief session of two or three days to go over proposals for "reform" of the farm sector with which all may be invited to engage. Whatever the outcome, it is not unlikely that the farmers' protest may be defused through such a denouement.

## Post-pandemic bonding

The choice of Boris Johnson to be the chief guest at India's Republic Day celebrations is interesting, not the least because he will be the first British Prime Minister to be bestowed the honour since John Major in 1993. Much water has flowed down the Ganga and the Thames since the time India was just emerging as a fledgling player in the free markets after pathbreaking economic reforms. It might appear the UK needs its old friends as trading partners much more now as it seeks to exit the EU as soon as possible, deal no deal. The time to strike a trade deal with the UK in the form of a FTA is ripe enough.

The world has changed post-pandemic and the shared experiences of grief and economic woes should form a sombre backdrop to what should be more sober festivities in the coming R-Day. Johnson is not the dominant figure he was projected to be when he had just staged a notable coup in the Tory Party and emerged as the champion in British eyes who would steer the island on an independent course. Just as the shadow of Covid-19 on Christmas celebrations as the UK struggles to tamp down a second coronavirus surge, the Indian Prime Minister is challenged by striking farmers who expect a "fair deal" at home.

It would be presumptuous to believe mighty geopolitics is guiding the choice of guest at this time back to Britannia and the land of colonial masters. But, in a new world order shaped by the blows of the pandemic, of which BoJo has experience since he was personally pushed to the very brink, it would be realistic to examine ways of promoting ties, particularly as India might have much to contribute in IT and ITeS. Britain as well as India's ardour for Chinese goods and 5G technology has also dampened considerably and so even this crisis-ridden time smells of opportunity to get ties right.

### DECCAN CHRONICLE

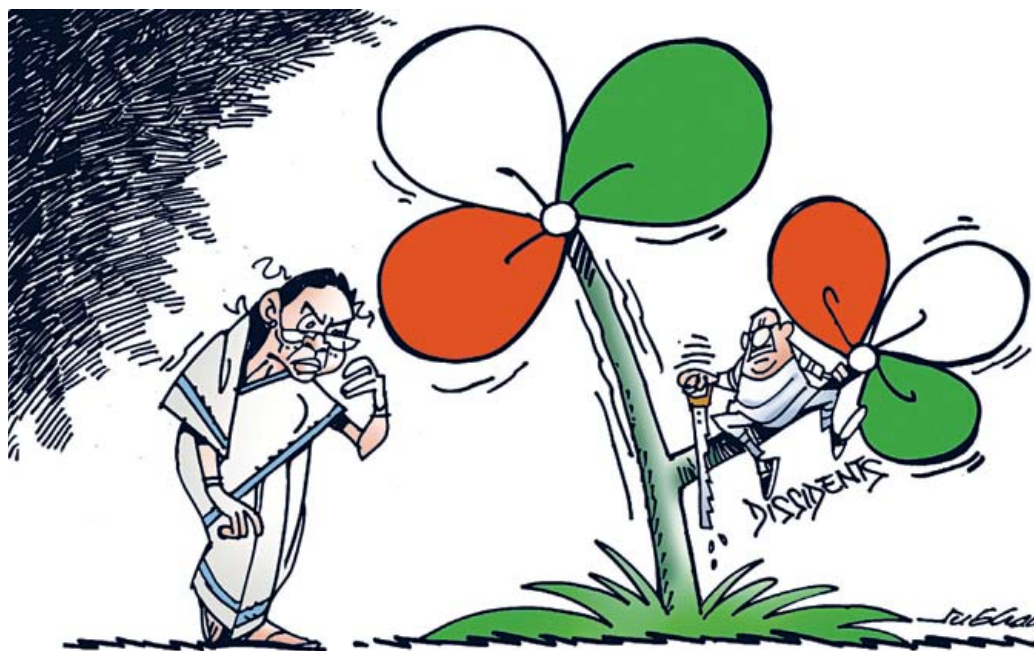
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Subhani



## How rise in inequality distorts Indian society



Mohan Guruswamy

In 2013 the French economist Thomas Piketty released *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, a magnum opus on income inequality. It was an event book very much like Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*. Hawking's book sold as many as 10 million copies, by comparison Piketty's tome had 2.4 million buyers so far. Such event books are more often than not read by only a fraction of the buyers. Speaking for myself, I still have somewhere a slightly read copy of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, still considered by the cognoscenti as the foremost work of modern literature. It is said that an analysis of Kindle readers of the Piketty book revealed that a typical reader got through 26 of its 700 pages. But have no fear, those first 26 pages have all you need to know. They encapsulate the rationale and results of Piketty's monumental work.

I once asked a well-known economist who had reviewed Piketty's *Capital* about what the main proposition of the book was. He encapsulated it quite brilliantly. He just said that Piketty had set out to prove that R was greater than G, where R is the return on capital and G is the growth of the economy. There is much empirical evidence to back this up. In the eight years between 2006 and 2014, the US benchmark index S&P 500 gained 45 per cent, an average simple growth rate of 5.6 per cent, four times higher than the average GDP growth rate of around 1.5 per cent. The consequence of this, of course, is the explosion in income inequality, which is the hallmark of the post-World War II era, and particularly after the

advent of globalisation. Oxfam has informed us that in the past two decades 73 per cent of the growth has been cornered by just one per cent of the population. Oxfam has a known tendency to exaggerate a bit to prove its point, but this proposition, that few people benefitted the most during this period of huge economic expansion, is undisputable.

Paul Krugman wrote: "What excited them was Piketty's novel hypothesis about the growing importance of disparities in wealth, especially inherited wealth, as opposed to earnings. We are, Piketty suggested, returning to the kind of dynastic, 'patrimonial' capitalism that prevailed in the late 19th century." We only need to look around us to see that most of the wealthy today are inheritors, and without doubt many of them are building on those inheritances to further accentuate the income inequality. What is really troubling about this growing concentration of wealth is the concentration of political power in the hands of very few who are able to influence politics and policies.

According to Marx an individual's position within a class hierarchy is determined by their role in the production process and argues that political and ideological consciousness is determined by class position. He saw a class as those who share common economic interests and are conscious of those interests. Classes, according to Marx, were inherently antagonistic and in a state of constant struggle.

In his new book *Capital and Ideology*, Thomas Piketty argues, with far greater validity, that inequality is driven by human institutions, which in turn reflect the

**The nature of the institutions determines outcomes, not the means of production or processes**

dominant ideology. Piketty defines his thesis very succinctly thus: "Inequality is neither economic nor technological: it is ideological and political. In other words, the market and competition, capital and debt, skilled and unskilled workers, natives and aliens, tax havens and competitiveness — none of these things exist as such. All are social and historical constructs, which depend entirely on the legal, fiscal, educational, and political systems that people choose to adopt and the conceptual definitions they choose to work with. These choices are shaped by society's conception of social justice and economic fairness and by the relative political and ideological power of contending groups and discourses."

Does this mean Marx was wrong? The times in which Marx and Piketty lived are very different. Marx saw the distortions and inequity in society and wondered why? He came up with explanations. His prescriptions were limited by the knowledge and evidence available to him then. The world has moved on and moved very far since then. When Karl Marx began writing his first three volumes of *Das Kapital* (1867-1883), it was the early days of electricity. Marx couldn't contemplate the massive leaps of productivity made possible in the 1900s, when the world witnessed a monumental expansion of knowledge and, with it, capital. Piketty's study relates to how both capital and knowledge came to be inequitably allocated because of the institutional arrangements within societies. To understand how institutional arrangements determine outcomes, just

think of India's educational system. We now have two or possibly three parallel educational streams. The two urban upper classes largely benefit from a higher standard and quality of education imparted in English in schools with high quality teaching and facilities. This is the stream that produces India's managerial classes (both government and industrial). The working class stream flows out of our government schools, with its emphasis on vernacular education and indifferent standards. There is a third stream of rural education from which escape even into the next higher class becomes even more difficult, if not impossible. The flow into the upper reaches of Indian society from these three streams is vastly unequal. What Piketty is saying is just this. The nature of the institutions determines outcomes, not the means of production or processes.

*Capital and Ideology* is rich in references to India and draws inferences about the institution of castes (*varnas*) and the rising role of brahmins, after the advent of Muslim rule, leading to the diminution of the role of Kshatriyas. The role of the brahmins expanded to an even more dominant status under the British. Piketty lauds the determined "affirmative action" policies after Independence that vastly increased the upward mobility of the lower castes, like most of us do. He also notes that the benefits could not be fully realised due to the low standards of education and its unevenness in towns and the hinterland and between regions. So, what's new? Most Indians with even an elementary understanding of post-independence India know this. The question is — what is to be done now?

*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 reason being attributed to the Eluru illness is rather strange in the sense that it has affected just one town and its surroundings. The presence of lead or organochlorine or mercury or something else in the food consumed by the people is mostly due to the excessive use of pesticides by the farmers. That means all areas in which these agricultural products were retailed should have been affected. Probably a particular batch of pesticides is responsible for the cause of the illness.

**Govardhana Myneedu**  
Vijayawada

#### COVID-19 VACCINE

The latest data from the NFHS-5 is worrisome and a cause for concern. The poor state of nutrition security of the children is stark and downright (*Child nutrition crisis may derail India's aspirations, DC, Dec. 17*). In fact, it was unsatisfactory prior to the onset of the pandemic that affected so many lives and livelihoods. The author has rightly mentioned that children are India's future and they are paying the price for adult bungling and apathy. It is a cogent analysis by the author. Effective steps need to be taken with earnest intent to control malnutrition.

**Dr C. Ghanshyam**  
Visakhapatnam

### 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

#### VENUS-7 TRANSMITTER SILENT

MOSCOW, DEC. 17.

According to latest reports the Venus-7 transmitter shut off after 35 minutes and there was no indication that it still could function.

The Soviet news agency Tass said Venus-7 sent data that was being processed and studied but gave no indications of any findings.

The Venus-7 entered the planet's atmosphere at 8.02 am Moscow time and on command from ground controllers, the descent craft was separated.

After a sky entry into the thick atmosphere, the descent module had slowed to a speed of 820 feet a second. Ground crews then popped open its parachute system.

appropriated for political purposes throughout the past two centuries, and serves today as the European Union's official hymn.

Not surprisingly, the German Nazi regime picked Beethoven as an avatar (despite concluding that he was mixed race). However, a century earlier Friedrich Engels had waxed eloquent about the Fifth Symphony, and some six decades later Vladimir Lenin declared he could listen to the Appassionata sonata every day. "What astonishing, superhuman music," he is quoted by Maxim Gorky as saying. "It always makes me proud ... to think that people can work such miracles."

But perhaps the pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim summed up Beethoven best a few years ago by pointing out that "he freed music from hitherto prevailing conventions of harmony and structure", and that much of his work could be paraphrased "by saying that suffering is inevitable, but the courage to fight it renders life worth living".

*By arrangement with Dawn*

Mahir Ali



## On 250th birth anniversary, Beethoven still holds his own

If music be the food of love, play on; Give me excess of it..." The opening lines of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night might have entered the thoughts of the uniquely privileged Viennese audience that witnessed Ludwig van Beethoven premiering his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies in the Austrian capital on Dec 22, 1808.

For good measure, the artistic showcase also featured the first performances of his Piano Concerto No 4 and Choral Fantasy. A 20th-century equivalent would have entailed The Beatles, say, unveiling 'Sgt Pepper' and 'Abbey Road' simultaneously in a live performance. Incidentally, the latter album's Because is based on reversing the chords of the Moonlight Sonata. It wasn't the only time turned up in the pop pantheon.

By 1808, Beethoven was already viewed as the most fascinating composer of his age. He was born in Bonn, probably precisely 250 years ago today. He first visited Vienna as a teenage prodigy, and may have been tutored by Mozart. He was obliged to return to Bonn

to attend to his dying mother, but went back to Vienna at Haydn's invitation five years later and remained there for the rest of his life.

I cannot claim to be an aficionado of Western classical music — the temporal investment it requires has always been a hard slog. Yet there are compositions that insinuate themselves into the subconscious, from Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik to Strauss's Blue Danube, Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake, Ravel's Bolero and Chopin's etudes.

I would make a particular exception, though, for Beethoven. It dates back, perhaps, to a presentation on the weekly Disney show featured on PTV in the early 1970s, where a dramatised biography of Beethoven showed the opening chords of the Fifth Symphony being inspired by a debtor banging on the door of the composer's rented accommodation. Those dramatic notes are more often described as the knocking of Fate.

The show was possibly more accurate in its depiction of a deaf Beethoven being swung around by

a soloist after inaugurating his Ninth Symphony to witness the rapturous response. The Ninth came almost a decade after the Eighth, which had been unveiled before an audience of international leaders at the Congress of Vienna in 1814.

That particular segment, now the official anthem of the European Union, has stood the test of time in more ways than one. Beethoven's death centenary in 1927 was widely commemorated across Europe, from Britain to the Soviet Union. As a German, though, he was also appropriated by the Nazi regime, which continued to honour him despite determining that he was 'mixed race'. Based on Beethoven's looks, the suspicion of African ancestry has persisted, albeit without any firm foundation.

His politics have also served as the basis of much conjecture. Beethoven famously rescinded the dedication of his Third Symphony, Eroica, to Napoleon after the latter emerged as a potential tyrant. And there is a tale, possibly apocryphal, about how he, while out for a walk

in a park with Goethe, encountered a royal party and strolled right through it, even as Goethe stepped aside to bow and scrape.

For all his antipathy towards authority, Beethoven relied for much of his life on the sponsorship of European nobles, and many of his compositions were dedicated to princes, counts and barons. But he regularly fell out with patrons, and occasionally detested royals. Yet his Symphony No 8 was unveiled before the crowned heads of Europe at the Congress of Vienna in 1814.

He never compromised his art, though, confessing at the turn of the century that his devotion to music had prevented him from suicide. His personal life was a shambles, littered with unrequited love or romances doomed by the social rules of the era. Yet, despite a handful of detractors, few who heard his compositions could fail to be moved by them.

And the legend only grew after his demise in 1827, just three years after he had inaugurated his magnificent Symphony No 9, whose glorious final movement, a setting for Schiller's Ode to Joy, has been



quick  
BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	46,890.34	0.48
Nifty 50	13,740.70	0.42
S&P 500*	3,717.43	0.44
Dollar (₹)	73.58	0.01
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.96	0.50
Euro (₹)	89.98	-0.15
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,455▲194	0.39
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	51.38	0.30
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.952	0.008
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.895	-0.025

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Economy seems  
bottoming out:  
Credit Suisse

After years of downgrades to the country's medium-term growth outlook, the estimates are likely to be upgraded now, Credit Suisse said in a report. The country's economy is showing signs of bottoming out, it said. The consensus forecasts of GDP growth for FY22 over FY20 stopped falling after October 2020 (currently at (-) 1 per cent). Analysts at Credit Suisse expect these estimates to be revised upwards.

Puravankara to  
get ₹556 crore  
from IFC, EAF

IFC, a member of the World Bank group, and IFC Emerging Asia Fund (EAF) will invest Rs 556 crore in an affordable housing platform of Puravankara Ltd to develop up to four projects. IFC and IFC EAF have partnered with the Puravankara Group to invest in the development of up to four residential projects under the Puravankara group's affordable housing brand 'Provident'. Two of these four projects are planned in Kochi and Bengaluru.

Redmi 9 Power  
smartphone sales  
from next week

Redmi India unveiled Redmi 9 Power which will be sold online from Dec. 22. Redmi said the new smartphone comes with a 6,000 mAh battery that last for two days after a single charge. Redmi business head Sneha Tainwala said the year has been phenomenal for Redmi India, and the company is further pushing boundaries with Redmi 9 Power. Redmi 9 Power's two variants are priced at Rs 10,999 and Rs 11,999.

Blockchain-led  
solar power  
trading in UP

US-based tech services firm Abjayon Inc has partnered with India Smart Grid Forum (ISGF) to support the integration of blockchain platform with UP Power Corporation's (UPPCL) billing system. UP has launched India's first blockchain-enabled peer-to-peer trading of rooftop solar power on a pilot basis in Lucknow. UPPCL, Madhyanchal Vidut Vitran Nigam and UP New & Renewable Energy Dev. Agency will host the project.

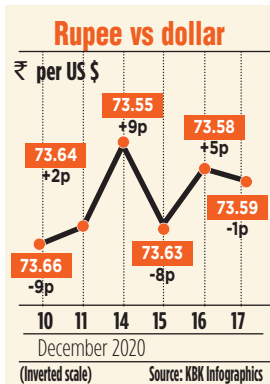
■ Fallout of US placing India on watchlist  
RBI may go slow on  
forex interventionsFALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, DEC. 17

The US adding India to the watchlist for currency manipulation could keep the Reserve Bank of India guarded on aggressive forex intervention and may help the rupee gain, according to experts.

The United States Treasury report once again included India in its monitoring list of countries with potentially "questionable foreign exchange policies" and "currency manipulation" after the RBI relentlessly bought dollars to forcibly keep the rupee weak to boost exports.

Abheek Barua, chief economist at HDFC Bank told *Financial Chronicle*, "The RBI will have to consider the ramifications of continuing with their action (of massive dollar buying), what possible penalties or the cost of ignoring the US altogether be? It's a difficult call but I believe that the RBI will have to take their foot off the intervention pedal a little going forward given this new development."

"This is rupee positive and bond yields should go down theoretically, but sentiment is a critical factor in the very short term and let's see how that is perceived. There will be pressure on the RBI to stop buying dollars at the rate they have been both in the spot and in the forward market...So we will just have to see. I don't think it will have a major



impact but certainly it will have some near-term impact from tomorrow onwards," added Barua.

Ashutosh Khajuria, executive director at Federal Bank told *FC*, "In case the RBI takes the development seriously then it will reduce or stop the intervention and so the rupee may have a tendency to appreciate against the dollar unless the foreign flows reduce or stop."

The rupee is headed for the third yearly decline against the US dollar. So far this year, the rupee has depreciated 3 per cent to 73.52 a dollar, the worst performance among Asian currencies.

The underperformance was on the back of the central bank's dollar buying and weaker domestic economic activities following the Covid outbreak.

India's forex reserves have increased by \$117.4 billion to a record high of \$ 574.82 billion from April till date against the previous year's \$457.47 billion.

Part of this increase can be attributed to dollar weakness against other currencies such as sterling, euro, yuan and yen.

In the first nine months of 2020, the RBI bought a whopping \$57 billion just in the spot market. Its purchases through forward contracts are around \$12.6 billion. The US Treasury Department's report said that the Indian central bank's interventions added up to 2.4 per cent of the country's GDP, breaching one of the thresholds that the US monitors.

India was last included in the currency watchlist in October 2018, but removed from the May 2009 list. A currency manipulator tag is given by the US to countries that deliberately keep their currency low against the dollar to gain export advantage. The treasury report, published twice a year, warns of any unfair currency practices. The US has included India, Taiwan and Thailand to its monitoring list.

## IFC invests \$30 million in Biological E

**New Delhi, Dec. 17:** International Finance Corporation, a member of the World Bank Group, on Thursday said it is providing a loan of up to \$30 million (around Rs 220 crore) to Biological E Limited.

The loan will support the pharmaceutical firm's expansion of low-priced, generic vaccines for routine immunisation of children and to boost capacity for manufacturing any future Covid-19 vaccine, it added.

An investment in one of India's top vaccine manu-

facturers, BioE, will expand access to low-cost vaccines for children in developing countries and help increase the production of a Covid-19 vaccine when developed, a key step in saving lives and restarting economies, IFC said in a statement.

The IFC financing package aims to support the production of new vaccines and boost the company's capacity for manufacturing any future Covid-19 vaccine, the statement said.

IFC interim managing director and executive

vice president, and chief operating officer Stephanie von Friedeburg said vaccines are one of the most critical and cost-effective means of improving health outcomes in emerging markets like India.

Welcoming IFC's long-term financing, Biological E Ltd managing director Mahima Datla said it has come at a crucial time when the company is gearing up to expand its vaccine-products portfolio for routine immunisation.

—PTI

## HFCL begins production of FTTH cables

**Hyderabad, Dec. 17:** HFCL on Thursday said it has begun the commercial production of fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) cables from its new facility in Hyderabad, involving a fresh outlay of Rs 40 crore.

So far the company has invested Rs 300 crore in the Hyderabad facility as part of its expansion road map.

HFCL said it has become the largest manufacturer of FTTH cables in India.

With this new facility, HFCL along with its subsidiary company HTL Limited has become the largest manufacturer of FTTH cables in India with a capacity of 6 lakh kms per annum.

The company had earlier invested Rs 260 crore in the Hyderabad plant, for manufacturing optical fibre, that was commissioned in January 2020.

"This new...automated high-speed FTTH cable

facility has come up with a fresh outlay of Rs 40 crore to ensure high throughput, economies of scale and highest quality standards," it said.

Mahendra Nahata, MD, HFCL said, India is seeing buoyant FTTH activity, driven by private telcos and government's thrust on rural network deployment. Expanding FTTH rollouts will boost 4G connectivity and prepare for 5G launch, he said. —PTI

UK's largest Rolex retailer lifts  
forecast as demand improvesCORINNE GRETHER  
DEC. 17

Watches of Switzerland Group Plc raised its revenue forecast after a stronger-than-expected first half, providing a glimmer of hope for the battered Swiss watch industry.

The company, which is the UK's largest watch retailer, forecast full-year sales of 900 million pounds (\$1.2 billion) to 925 million pounds. Demand was better than anticipated in the six months ended October as well into the start of the Christmas holiday period. The stock rose as much as 10 per cent Thursday morning in London.

The upbeat outlook reflects some improvements for the Swiss watch industry as it suffers from store closures and a virtu-

al standstill in travel. Swiss watch exports slipped 3.2 per cent last month, continuing a gradual moderation of declines caused by the coronavirus pandemic that's led to a slump of 24 per cent so far this year.

"There is more demand," Watches of Switzerland chief executive officer Brian Duffy said in an interview. "That gives us the luxury of being able to conduct our business a fair bit better than others."

The company's previous sales forecast was for 880 million pounds to 910 million pounds.

The number of people working in Switzerland for the watch industry dropped by about 1,550 in the year through September, an industry group said Wednesday. —Bloomberg

Mrs Bectors  
Food IPO  
subscribed  
198 timesRAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, DEC.17

After the grand listing success of initial public offerings by Burger King India and Gland Pharma in the recent past, Rs 540-crore public issue of biscuits and bread maker Mrs Bectors Food Specialities has also received overwhelming response, getting subscribed over 198 times on the last day of the public offer.

In fact, the public issue got oversubscribed on the very first day after opening for subscription on Tuesday.

As per details made available by stock exchanges and sources working closely with the merchant bankers, total subscription as per the last update was 198.02 times shares on offer.

The qualified institutional buyers portion has been subscribed 176.85 times, non-institutional investors or high net worth investor portion was subscribed 621 times and the retail individual investors portion was subscribed more than 29 times.

Earlier on Monday, the company raised Rs 162 crore from the anchor investors.

The price band for Mrs Bector Food Specialities public offer has been fixed at Rs 286-288 per share of Rs 10 face value.

Soaring LNG prices worsen  
gas crunch in Asian nationsJESSICA JAGANATHAN  
SINGAPORE, DEC. 17

Surging spot prices for liquefied natural gas (LNG) are exacerbating a gas supply crunch in key fast-growing emerging markets in Asia just as a cold spell in other parts of the region boosts demand for the fuel.

Companies from Pakistan to China have cancelled a flurry of LNG tenders this week, several trade sources said, as lofty prices risk pushing up the input costs of industries, which could make energy more expensive for consumers.

Benchmark Asia spot LNG prices have soared seven-fold since May to six-year highs, driven by production losses in Australia, Malaysia, Norway and Qatar combined with accelerating use in China, India and elsewhere.

"Buyers with no alternatives are now paying top-dollar for prompt cargoes in January," said Chong Zhi Xin, a director at consultancy IHS Markit. The state buyer for Pakistan—one of the

In rare move, Japan sells  
gold to fill budget holeTETSUSHI KAJIMOTO  
TOKYO, DEC. 17

Japan has sold 80 tonnes of gold used for minting coins to another arm of the government to fund part of its huge stimulus package to combat the coronavirus crisis, government officials told Reuters.

Saddled with public debt twice the size of its economy and tax revenues hit by the pandemic-induced recession, the finance ministry is under pressure to find non-tax revenues to cover the rising cost of spending to deal with the health crisis.

The ministry usually taps reserves set aside as special accounts, and profits the Bank of Japan (BOJ) and other agencies return to state coffers after they close their annual books.

This time, the ministry resorted to a rare



arrangement involving the central bank.

Under the move, the ministry's division in charge of international affairs sold a portion of dollar reserves to the BOJ. With the yen it received, the division bought gold from another division of the ministry in charge of debt management.

From the gold sale, the division in charge of debt management gained proceeds worth 500 billion yen (\$4.84 billion) that would be used to finance a

new fund aimed at boosting research and development at universities, two officials told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

The BOJ announced on Wednesday it would buy dollars from the ministry as a precaution against any market disruptions caused by the pandemic.

But some analysts say the arrangement may have been initiated by the finance ministry, which wanted to avoid issuing too much debt or using taxpayers' money for the fund.

"From the standpoint of fiscal consolidation, this deal may be described as effective use of state property," said Yoshimasa Maruyama, chief market economist at SMBC Nikko Securities. "It sounds reasonable for the BOJ to top up dollar funds. But it was probably the government, not the BOJ, that pulled the trigger," —Reuters

## Smartphone market up 42% in Oct.

**New Delhi, Dec. 17:** India's smartphone market grew 42 per cent, with shipments of 21 million units in October—the second highest for a month—driven by multiple online sale events, research firm IDC said on Thursday.

IDC said it expects the smartphone market to see a single-digit decline in final consumer sell out in 2020 on a full-year basis.

According to IDC, the growth in October was driven by multiple online

sale festivals and continuing pent up demand from the third quarter of 2020..

"This is the highest ever October shipments and second highest for a month, following 23 million units in September 2020, an all-time high for a single month," it added.

Online platforms accounted for 51 per cent share of the shipment, and the channel grew 53 per cent year-over-year (YoY). Offline channels, especially in smaller

towns and cities, also saw a healthy 33 per cent YoY, IDC said.

The low-mid range segment (\$100-200) grew by 60 per cent YoY and its share increased to 58 per cent of the total market in the said month, it added.

The premium segment (\$500-700) witnessed multi-fold growth with high shipments of the iPhone XR, 11 and OnePlus 8 driven by affordability schemes/offers.

—PTI

Antony Waste's  
₹300-crore IPO  
from MondayRAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, DEC. 17

Antony Waste Handling Cell's Rs 300-crore IPO opens on December 21 in the price range of Rs 313 to Rs 315 per equity share of Rs 5 face value.

Antony Waste Handling is the second largest player in the Rs 5,000-crore municipal solid waste management industry, with a 19-year track record.

The company has undertaken more than 25 projects, of which 18 were ongoing as at November 15, including projects for the municipal corporations of Greater Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Thane, Pimpri Chinchwad, Nagpur, North Delhi and Mangaluru, besides Noida and Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority.

The company had a fleet of 1,147 vehicles and close to 7,400 full time employees to handle municipal solid waste management.

The public issue comprises a fresh issue of Rs 85 crore and an offer for sale worth Rs 215 crore by financial investors.

—Reuters

## VIRUS | FATIGUE

## Ticket sales in Japan have reached pre-Covid levels in last 3 months

## Imax doubles down on China as theatres buzz again

SHIRLEY ZHAO  
DEC. 17

Imax Corp sees the potential to add at least 400 theatres in China by 2023, as the cinema chain operator looks to expand its footprint in a country that's emerged as the largest movie market this year.

The Ontario, Canada-based firm known for massive screens in its movie halls, has signed a deal with its Chinese partner Guangzhou Jinyi Media Corp for five new locations and upgrades at seven existing ones, it said in an email. Imax, which has about 700 theatres in China, sees the possibility of expanding its network by 50 per cent over the next three years, it added.

The theatre chain is stepping up its commitment in China as the Asian country rebounds strongly from the coronavirus pandemic-induced slowdown while the outbreaks continue to ravage the US and Europe. While both US and China contributed about a third of Imax's global box office in 2019, the latter has surpassed the US as the world's top film market this year, underscoring its importance for movie hall operators.

"One big vote of confidence in the Chinese market is that a number of our Chinese leading exhibitors are adding more theatres to their Imax footprint," Imax chief executive officer Rich Gelfond



said in an interview. The company has also "been on a trajectory to release more local language Chinese films," he said. China's box-office gross revenues touched 16.4 billion yuan (\$2.5 billion) this year, compared with about \$2 billion ticket sales in the US, according to data from ticketing platform Maoyan Entertainment

and market tracker Box Office Mojo.

"Imax's exposure to China's quick box office rebound gives it a leg-up against regular theatres that have a greater presence in North America and Europe, where the recovery has been tepid," Bloomberg Intelligence analysts Geetha Ranganathan and Amine Bensaid wrote in a Nov. 17 note.

Box office revenues in China are now at 75 per cent of the levels seen last year, owing to local-language blockbusters such as "The Eight Hundred," —also the world's top-grossing movie this year — Gelfond said. The pandemic has also accelerated the company's commitment to releasing more Chinese-

language films, he said.

While China has become an increasingly important movie market, it has also become a tricky one as it witnesses a heightened sense of nationalism.

As people get fatigued with social distancing and vaccine initiatives become more widespread, Imax expects movie watchers to return in hordes. And not just in China.

Ticket sales in Japan in the past three months have reached the same level in the year before while South Korea too has seen a strong comeback, according to Gelfond.

"When people feel safe going to the movies, they are coming back in very large numbers," he said.

—Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

## Australian Open moved to February

**Melbourne:** The Australian Open was pushed back to February 8 on Thursday after weeks of negotiations as coronavirus disruption hits a second Grand Slam tennis season. Men's qualifiers will be held in Doha but Australia will host a series of build-up events including the flagship ATP Cup, the men's ATP Tour said, announcing its early 2021 schedule. The three-week delay to the season's opening Grand Slam comes after this year's Wimbledon was cancelled — for the first time since World War II — the French Open was postponed and the US Open was played behind closed doors. Fans are expected to be allowed at Melbourne Park, the tournament's venue, as the coronavirus is under control in Australia, but players will need to undergo 14 days of quarantine. — *AFP*

## Silva, Chhetri propel Bengaluru

**Goa:** Bengaluru FC piled on further misery on Odisha FC with a 2-1 win in the Indian Super League at GMC Stadium, Bambolim, on Thursday. Cleiton Silva (79') scored the match-winner for Bengaluru after Steven Taylor (71') had cancelled out Sunil Chhetri (38') first-half lead for the Blues, who remained unbeaten in their six matches this season. Bengaluru were dominant from the start but were lucky not to fall behind early in the game. Diego Mauricio played a delightful through ball for Manuel Onwu, who managed to get the ball past Gurpreet, but his celebrations were curtailed, as the assistant referee signalled it offside. Odisha had their moments in the game with Onwu and Jerry Mawihmingthanga creating problems for the Bengaluru defense but failed to test their keeper.

## Cavani charged by FA over racist post

**London:** Edinson Cavani has been charged with misconduct by the Football Association for a now-deleted social media post containing a Spanish phrase that is offensive in some contexts and for which the Manchester United star apologised. The 33-year-old Uruguayan striker's Instagram post thanked a friend for his congratulations after scoring twice as United came from 2-0 down to beat Southampton 3-2 last month and included the Spanish word "*negrito*" (small black person). He later deleted the post and apologised when it was pointed out the meaning that could be attached to it. Both United and the player said at the time that the word was clearly used in an affectionate manner and has different connotations in South America. — *AFP*

## Lakers edge Suns in pre-season bow

**Los Angeles:** LeBron James and Anthony Davis eased into the NBA's pre-season on Wednesday as the Los Angeles Lakers scored a 112-107 victory over the Phoenix Suns. James, who barely two months ago led the Lakers to their NBA Finals triumph in Orlando, bagged 11 points with two rebounds and two assists during 15 first half minutes in Phoenix. Davis added 10 points with four rebounds in 18 minutes on court. Both James and Davis were rested for the second half. New Lakers signing Marc Gasol added three points in a 21-minute appearance. Kyle Kuzma led the scoring for the Lakers with 23 points. The coronavirus-interrupted 2019-2020 campaign — which shut down for four months between March and July — eventually wrapped up in Florida in October. With the new season tipping off on December 22, it means teams will have the shortest off-season in NBA history. — *AFP*

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**Australia vs India:** First Test — Day Two from 9.30 am on Sony Ten 1, 3, Sony Six, HD

**Big Bash League:** Sydney Sixers vs Adelaide Strikers from 5.40 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

## FOOTBALL

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

## WWE

**Smackdown:** Bouts from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Son Ten 1, HD



Australia's Mitchell Starc (third from right) celebrates with teammates after bowling out India's Prithvi Shaw on the opening day of their first Test at the Adelaide Oval in Adelaide on Thursday.

— AP

## AUSTRALIA GET A GRIP

## India end Day One at for 233/6

**Adelaide, Dec. 17:** Virat Kohli's enduring love affair with Adelaide Oval resulted in a classy 74 but his untimely run-out triggered a batting collapse as India ended the opening day at 233/6 against Australia in the first Day/Night Test here on Thursday.

Kohli, who looked in complete command, was run out when his deputy Ajinkya Rahane backed out after calling for a single and it happened just before the second new ball was taken.

From a comfortable 188/3, India slumped to 206/6 as Rahane and Hanuma Vihari (16) found the pace and swing generated by the pink ball under lights too hot to handle. Ravichandran Ashwin (15 batting) and Wriddhiman Saha (9 batting) saw off the final few overs and also got a few runs.

In conditions, which can't exactly be called batting friendly, Kohli blended the right amount of caution and aggression in his 180-ball innings, showing one and all that he is a few lightyears ahead of his peers when it comes to quality batsmanship.

If Cheteshwar Pujara (43 off 160 balls) let bowlers dictate terms with an ultra-defensive approach, his skipper gave opposition the respect it deserved but also from time to time, played those shots to drive home a point. His

## SCORECARD

**India 1st Innings:** Prithvi Shaw b Starc 0, Mayank Agarwal b Cummins 17, Cheteshwar Pujara c Labuschagne b Lyon 43, Virat Kohli run out 74, Ajinkya Rahane lbw Starc 42, Hanuma Vihari lbw Hazlewood 16, Wriddhiman Saha (not out) 9, Ravichandran Ashwin (not out) 15. Extras (b-2, lb-7 nb-7, wd-1) 17. **Total (For 6 wkts, in 89 overs) 233.**

**FoW:** 1-0, 2-3, 3-100, 4-188, 5-196, 6-206.

**Bowling:** Mitchell Starc 19-4-49-2, Josh Hazlewood 20-6-47-1, Pat Cummins 19-7-42-1, Cameron Green 9-2-15-0, Nathan Lyon 21-2-68-1, Marnus Labuschagne 1-0-3-0.

## NUMBERS GAME

## KOHLI'S SECOND RUN OUT IN TESTS

● On the opening day of the first Test against Australia at Adelaide, India skipper Virat Kohli was run out for the second time in 146 innings of 87 Test match. He was dismissed run out for the first time against the same opponent at the same ground in January 2012.

● It was also Kohli's maiden run out in 91 innings of 56 Test matches as skipper.

● Kohli became the eighth Indian batsman to make 12 or more fifty plus scores against Australia in Tests. His 74 was his 12th fifty plus innings in 35 innings of 20 Test matches against Australia.

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

88-run partnership with Rahane (42 off 91 balls) during the final session nearly put India on even keel but fortunes tilted once Kohli was back in

the pavilion.

Rahane was soon snapped with the second new ball by Mitchell Starc (2/49).

Earlier, Pujara's ultra-defensive approach became his own undoing as India literally crawled during the first two sessions.

So intent was Pujara on blocking anything and leaving everything for the better part of his innings, that a 68-run stand for the third wicket with Kohli couldn't release pressure going into the second break of the evening.

In the morning, Prithvi Shaw's (0) poor technique was once again exposed by Starc while Mayank Agarwal (17) got a beauty from Pat Cummins.

The Australian pace trio of Starc (2/49 in 19 overs), Josh Hazlewood (1/47 in 20 overs) and Pat Cummins (1/42 in 19 overs) bowled a very steady line comprising mostly of fuller deliveries.

— PTI

## WRESTLING | WORLD CUP

## Grappler Anshu bags silver as biggies flop

**Belgrade, Dec. 17:** Young Anshu Malik was the lone Indian woman wrestler to win a medal at the individual World Cup, grabbing a silver in the 57kg category, here.

Anshu, who is coming up from the junior ranks, clinched her third medal at the senior level from as many tournaments. She lost the gold medal bout 1-5 to Moldova's Anastasia Nichita on Wednesday night.

She had won a bronze at the Asian Championship early this year in New Delhi and a silver at Mattio Pellicone event in Rome in January.

She is gradually making the 57kg category her own despite presence of World championship medallist Pooja Dhanda and experienced Sarita Mor in the same weight class.

Anshu began with a 4-2 win over Azerbaijan's Alyona Kolesnik and followed it up with 3-1 victory over Germany's Laura Mertens in the quarterfinals.

In the semi-final, she outplayed Russia's Veronika Chumikova, recording a

## PANGHAL MAKES FINAL OF BOXING WORLD CUP

**New Delhi, Dec. 17:** Amit Panghal (52kg) stormed into the final after three other Indian boxers were assured of medals at the World Cup in Cologne, Germany on Thursday even as a positive Covid-19 case among the support staff caused some anxiety in the contingent. Asian Games champion Panghal defeated Frenchman Billal Bennama, a bronze-

medallist from the world championship 5-0 in the semi-final clash.

Earlier, three Indian women were also assured of medals after finding themselves in semifinals when draws were unveiled.

Pooja Rani (75kg), Manisha (57kg) and Simranjeet Kaur (60kg) made the last four due to the small size of their respective draws.

— PTI

victory by fall.

Another Indian grappler Pinki also did well to reach the 55kg semi-finals, where she lost to Belarusian Iryna Kurachkina.

She later lost the bout for bronze to Russia's Olga Khoroshavtseva by technical superiority.

Sarita (59kg), Sonam Malik (62kg) and Sakshi Malik (65kg) could not go beyond quarterfinals in

their respective categories.

Veteran Gursharanpreet got a repechage round in the 72kg but lost that by technical superiority to Evgeniia Zakharchenko.

Nirmala Devi (50kg) and Kiran (76kg) fizzed in the Qualification round, losing 6-9 to Poland's Anna Lukasiak and Canada's Erica Elizabeth Wiebe respectively.

— PTI

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In this Feb. 23, 2014 file photo the Russian national flag (right) flies after it is hoisted next to the Olympic flag during the closing ceremony of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

— AP

## No Russia flag at next two Games

**Geneva, Dec. 17:** Russia was banned on Thursday from using its name, flag and anthem at the next two Olympics or at any world championships for the next two years.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport's ruling also blocked Russia from bidding to host major sporting events for two years.

Russian athletes and teams will still be allowed to compete at next year's Tokyo Olympics and the 2022 Winter Games in Beijing, as well as world championships including the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, if they are not implicated in doping or covering up positive tests.

The punishments are

less than the four-year ban the World Anti-Doping Agency had proposed. One small win for Russia is the proposed team name at major events. The name "Russia" can be retained on uniforms if the words "Neutral Athlete" or "Neutral Team" have equal prominence, the court said.

Still, the court's three judges imposed the most severe penalties on Russia since allegations of state-backed doping and cover-ups emerged after the 2014 Sochi Olympics.

The CAS process was formally between Wada and the Rusada.

Rusada was also ordered to pay \$1.27 million to Wada. — *AP*

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