

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SATURDAY 5 | DECEMBER 2020

## WEATHER



**Max:** 27°C  
**Min:** 23°C  
**Rainfall:** 5 mm

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Karthigai 20  
**Tithi:** Panchami  
**Star:** Pusam/ Aayilyam  
**Rahukalam:**  
9 am to 10.30 am  
**Yamagandam:**  
1.30 pm to 3 pm  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.00 am  
**Zohar:** 12.03 pm  
**Asar:** 3.14 pm  
**Maghrib:** 5.40 pm  
**Isha:** 6.55 pm

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+35,002)	(+473)
96,06,810	1,39,700

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,391 )  
**TN:** 7,87,554 11,762

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

6,59,21,383  
**DEATHS**  
15,18,657  
**COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES**  
218  
worldometers.info

## Man electrocuted while crossing road in city

**Chennai:** A 40-year-old man was electrocuted in North Chennai's Tondiarpet on Friday. The incident happened when the victim, who was not wearing footwear, was crossing the road when he came in contact with a live electric wire. According to police sources, the deceased identified as Suresh was electrocuted after he walked in rainwater, which was in contact with a live wire on Vaidyanathan street in Tondiarpet. After a preliminary investigation, the police said he was not electrocuted due to snapped wire and it appeared the water must have come in contact with underground cables. Tondiarpet police have registered a case under Section 174 and begun an investigation.

## Nepal records 1,272 new Covid-19 cases

**Kathmandu:** Nepal recorded 1,272 new coronavirus cases on Friday, taking the country's virus caseload to 238,861. The country's COVID-19 death toll stands at 1,567, including 16 fatalities in the last 24 hours. In the same period, 1,575 virus patients were declared recovered. The total number of COVID-19 recovered cases is 221,847. At present, there are 15,447 active cases.

## COUNTER POINT



**Dinner meet of our leaders to discuss the farmers' agitation!**

# Indian-American Gitanjali first TIME 'Kid of the Year'

**New York, Dec. 4:** 15-year-old Indian-American Gitanjali Rao, a "brilliant" young scientist and inventor, has been named by *TIME* magazine as the first-ever 'Kid of the Year' for her "astounding work" using technology to tackle issues ranging from contaminated drinking water to opioid addiction and cyberbullying. "The world belongs to those who shape it. And however uncertain that world may feel at a given moment, the

reassuring reality seems to be that each new generation produces more of what these kids...have already achieved: positive impact, in all sizes," *Time* said.

Rao was selected from a field of more than 5,000 nominees as *TIME*'s first-ever Kid of the Year. She was interviewed by actor and activist Angelina Jolie for the *TIME* special.

"Observe, brainstorm, research, build and communicate," Rao told about her



process during a virtual talk with Jolie from her home in Colorado. She spoke about her "astounding work using technology to tackle issues ranging from contaminated

drinking water to opioid addiction and cyberbullying, and about her mission to create a global community of young innovators to solve problems the world over.

"Even over video chat, her brilliant mind and generous spirit shone through, along with her inspiring message to other young people: don't try to fix every problem, just focus on one that excites you," *Time* said. "If I can do it," she said in the interview, "anybody can do it."

Rao said her generation is facing many problems that they have never seen before.

"But then at the same time, we're facing old problems that still exist. Like, we're sitting here in the middle of a new global pandemic, and we're also like still facing human-rights issues. There are problems that we did not create but that we now have to solve, like climate change and cyberbullying with the introduction of technology," she said.— *PTI* ■ **P5**



### STATE | 4

**HC declines to scale down fees fixed by SRM for MBBS students**



### FINANCIAL CHRONICLE | 7

**RBI ups growth forecast**

### SPORT | 8

**Natarajan shines as India beat Oz by 11 runs**



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# Protesting farmers call for Bharat bandh on Dec. 8

**ANJAY KAW AND BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC**  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 4

Amid the stand-off with the government over the three new farm laws, leaders of 40-odd farmer unions on Friday decided to intensify their stir and called for 'Bharat bandh' on December 8. The farmers' leaders are adamant on their stand and want a complete roll-back of the farm laws.

To press for their demand, the protesting farmers, who faced a brutal police crack-down in Haryana last week before being allowed to hold a peaceful protest, said they will block all roads to the capital, occupy all highway toll gates across the country and not allow the government to collect tolls as part of the December 8 strike. "More people will join our movement," Harinder Singh Lakhwal, a leader of one of the protesting groups, told a news conference.

The All-India Motor Transport Congress, an umbrella body of goods' vehicles operators, had earlier given a call for a strike

● **"More people will join our movement," Harinder Singh Lakhwal, a leader of one of the protesting groups, said**

on December 8 in support of the farmers' agitation.

The decision to call for the nationwide bandh was taken by the leaders at a meeting held at the Delhi-Haryana border on Friday to chalk out their future strategy. The announcement came a day ahead of the crucial third round of talks with the Central ministers scheduled to be held at Vigyan Bhawan on Saturday. At their second round of talks on Thursday, the government had failed to end the deadlock over the contentious farm laws.

"Yesterday, we told the government (at the meeting) that the farm laws should be withdrawn. We have given a call for Bharat Bandh on December 8," Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU-Lakhwal) general secretary Harvinder Singh Ladhkwal said at Singhu Border. ■ **P5**

# Talks today: Govt may present new formula

**New Delhi, Dec. 4:** The government and farmer leaders are scheduled to meet again on Saturday for their fifth round of talks to end the deadlock over the new farm laws.

Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar, food minister Piyush Goyal and minister of state for commerce and industry Som Parkash, who will be present in the meeting, will deliberate on the points that farmer leaders had raised and offer possible solutions.

According to sources, the government has worked out possible solutions to the provisions on which farm leaders have raised objections. It hopes to break the deadlock on Saturday so that the farmers' protest ends at the earliest.

In the previous meeting on Thursday, Mr Tomar

had assured 40 farmer union leaders that the government is open to considering ways to strengthen APMC mandis, create a level-playing field with proposed private markets, and provide a provision for approaching higher courts for dispute resolution, while asserting that procurement at minimum support price (MSP) will continue.

But the other side stuck to their demand of repealing the three "hastily-passed" farm laws, saying that the legislations with several loopholes and deficiencies cannot be amended.

Meanwhile, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait has threatened that the farmers' agitation would intensify if the government fails to meet the demands. *PTI*

# Contactless card payment limit is raised to ₹5,000

**SANGEETHA G | FC**  
CHENNAI, DEC. 4

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to increase the limit on contactless card transactions at point of sale (PoS) terminals and e-mandates for recurring transactions via cards and UPI from ₹2,000 to ₹5,000 from January 1.

This will help customers execute their high ticket recurring payments like utility bills, investments, two-wheeler EMIs, consumer durable EMIs etc. seamlessly.

The RBI has also decided to make the Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) transaction facility available round-the-clock from December 14. RTGS is used for high value transactions. The system will be available for customers and inter-bank transactions round-the-clock. ■ **P7**

## 35 cm rain floods Chidambaram temple



Due to heavy showers, the ancient Nataraja temple at Chidambaram witnesses flooding of its inner corridors on Friday. ■ **Reports on P4**

— DC

# Rains have city inundated; delta sees major crop loss

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, DEC. 4

Heavy rains continued to lash Tamil Nadu on Friday leading to inundation of crops and waterlogging in many rural and urban areas while the deep depression over the Gulf of Mannar near Ramanathapuram is likely to weaken into a depression.

While there was widespread rainfall covering many parts of the state, several

regions reported heavy to extremely heavy showers including Kollidam (36 cm, Nagapattinam district), Chidambaram (34 cm, Cuddalore) while over two dozen areas received rain between 10 and 28 cm rain.

Low-lying city residential areas in parts of Madipakkam, Velachery, Pallikaranai and Kovilambakkam were also flooded.

Crops including paddy and sugarcane were inundated in districts including

Tiruvavur, Thanjavur, Mayiladuthurai, Pudukottai and Ariyalur falling under the Cauvery delta zone.

The IMD tweeted that the deep depression over the Gulf of Mannar remained stationary, about 40 km southwest of Ramanathapuram. It would remain stationary over the same region and weaken into a depression during the next 12 hours and then into a well-marked low pressure area, it said.

# IS IT OUR FAULT?

**The only allegation against Sahara India Pariwar is that our repayments to the esteemed investors are getting delayed. Of course we are also paying the interest of delayed period.**

Nobody is writing the reason.

The reason is -

Owing to the embargo imposed for the last 8 years by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, any money generated through selling or mortgaging our assets of the entire group (including Co-operatives) or from joint ventures will be deposited in the Sahara-SEBI account, as per the directives of Hon'ble Supreme Court. Out of this, we cannot use even a single rupee for organizational work. Not even for repayment to the esteemed investors.

On the other hand, till date, approximately ₹22,500 crore including interest (which will surely come back to us as per Hon'ble Court's order) has been deposited in the Sahara-SEBI account. Whereas, despite giving four rounds of advertisements in 154 newspapers by SEBI in the last 8 years across the country, SEBI has repaid only ₹106.10 crore to the esteemed investors (means only 0.5% payment has been done) and there is no claimant anymore.

Now Sahara should not be required to deposit more money in the Sahara-SEBI account. The embargo on us should be lifted now and the order of verification should come. But all these decisions will be taken by the Hon'ble Supreme Court. On the other hand, due to COVID-19 for the last 10 months, we haven't been able to get a date from the Hon'ble Supreme Court .

We hope that we will soon get a date and everything will be good.

We are working on various sources of money. Everybody's money is totally safe. You are getting the interest of the delayed period.

Do have some patience. We shall all emerge victors by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.







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## SHORT TAKES

## Classical Tamil institute should be in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, DEC. 4

DMK President M K Stalin objected to the Centre's move to shift the Chennai-based Central Institute of Classical Tamil Research to Mysore by merging it with the Bharatiya Bhasha Vishwavidyalala.

Recalling the tradition of the institute, Stalin urged Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami to not keep quiet as he was doing on many other issues and stop the Centre from shifting the institute.

Stalin said the Bharatiya Bhasha Vishwavidyalala is being created by renaming the Central Institute for Indian Languages in Mysore.

## Arrested for land dispute

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, DEC. 4

The city crime branch police here arrested RK Raja alias Padmanabhan, former president of the Tiruchy district unit of film star Vijay fans association, in Chennai on Friday, in connection with a civil dispute.

Police said the arrested was removed from the president post a few months back, following which he was nominated as state president of a political party floated by father of actor Vijay, SA Chandrasekar. However, Raja resigned from that post following actor Vijay's announcement that he has no connection with the party floated by his father.

Based on a complaint given by Sundaravel in connection with a land dispute, the city crime branch police registered a case against Raja, and arrested him. A police team from here went to Chennai and arrested Raja after completion of routine formalities.

Raja will be produced before a competent court and remanded in judicial custody here, police added.



Collector A Shanmuga Sundaram on Friday inaugurates an EVM and VVPAT warehouse at the Vellore collectorate, built at a cost of ₹5.77 crore. The building which can accommodate 9,320 EVMs, 5,040 control units and 4,924 VVPAT gadgets, is equipped with 13 surveillance cameras and automatic fire alarms.

— K. Senthil Nathan

## 10 stolen bikes recovered, one held

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, DEC. 4

Police arrested a notorious two-wheeler lifter and recovered 10 stolen two-wheelers worth Rs 7 lakh from him here on Thursday.

The police in a press release said the arrested V Malarmanan of Ariyalur district, was intercepted riding a two-wheeler by a special police team at the Anna statue in the city here on Wednesday night on suspicion. During interrogation, Malarmanan confessed that he had stolen 10 two-wheelers from Tiruchy and Thanjavur districts. Police seized all the 10 stolen two-wheelers from a hideout, and remanded him to judicial custody, on Thursday.

## Ooty's iconic theatre resumes screening

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, DEC. 4

The 134-year-old Assembly Rooms theatre here, a British legacy and one of the oldest surviving theatres in the country, has resumed screening of movies from Friday after a long lay-off. It also underwent some renovation recently.

Popularly called 'Assems', which is run by Assembly Rooms Trust with Tamil Nadu Governor as its patron and the district collector as ex-officio president of the trust, it has now begun its new innings.

Four years back, a new millennium cinema theatre technology with modern sound system and digital screening devices, were brought to this theatre, which has been carrying on



134-year-old Assembly Rooms theatre.

the cinema culture from the British era till date. Its furnishings carry with it the

olden day British touch. 'Assembly Rooms' was built in 1886 to make it a



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami lays the foundation stone for the ₹1,295.76 crore water supply improvement scheme under the Madurai corporation and unveils 12 projects at the collectorate on Friday. The scheme will provide water supply to residents in all 100 wards by drawing water from lower camp of Mullaiperiyar dam.

— K. Manikandan

## Three girls drown in Palar river

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, DEC. 4

Three schoolgirls, including two siblings, drowned while playing near the Palar river in Kanchipuram district on Thursday evening. Their bodies washed ashore on Friday, the police said.

The deceased were identified as Poornima (14), daughter of Arumugam, and her relatives Jeyasri (15) and her younger sister Subasri (14), all residents of Thumbavanan village in Kanchipuram district.

While Jeyasri was a class eight student, Subasri and Poornima were in the 7th standard. The police said on Thursday

Damodaran, a neighbour, took them to show the gushing Palar river near Vallanthottam.

The three girls were pulled by the current when they stepped into the river to take bath. Police said that Damodaran's attempt to rescue the girls went in vain.

He alerted the Kanchipuram taluk police and district fire and rescue service personnel. The fire and rescue services personnel started a search operation which ended without yielding any results. Meanwhile, the bodies of Jeyasri and Poornima washed ashore on Friday morning. A little later in the afternoon, the personnel also found the body of Subasri.

The bodies were sent to the Kanchipuram government hospital for post-mortem.

The Kanchipuram taluk police registered a case and began an investigation.

Police officials said despite flood warnings issued by the district administration, people continue to visit rivers and lakes to take bath. It may be noted that a week ago, throwing cautions to the wind, three of a family, including two children, who went to see Koundinya river at Gudiyatham in Vellore district, drowned. On the same day, a 24-year-old man slipped into the Palar river while consuming alcohol with his friends on the river bank.

## TN WAITING FOR VACCINE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, DEC. 4

Tamil Nadu was waiting for the Covid-19 vaccine and would carry out the vaccination drive with utmost diligence and when it was made available, P Ravindranath, Lok Sabha member representing the Theni constituency said on Friday.

Speaking at an All-Party meeting, chaired by Prime

Minister Narendra Modi, to discuss the Covid-19 situation in the country as an AIADMK representative, he said the State was fully geared up to continue the Coronavirus control and prevention work.

Suggesting that all States continue with RT-PCR tests as Tamil Nadu had done, Ravindranath wanted the Centre to share with the State governments its plans for administering vaccines to the

Tamilaruvimanian as a 'supervisor' and Arjunamurthy Ra as chief coordinator — were dragged in for discussion.

On old video was circulated in which Tamilaruvimanian is seen running down Rajinikanth, alleging that he was investing all the money that he made in Tamil Nadu elsewhere, making a clear suggestion that he is an outsider. But Tamilarivimanian had been advising Rajinikanth for quite some time and also speaking to media outlets on the actor's entry into politics.

As far as Arjunamurthy was concerned, he was a new face to the media, though he had recently been active in the BJP, taking part in Vel Yatra and attending the meeting of Amit Shah in Chennai. So the media tried to probe into his past and came out with a nugget of information that he worked for 'Murasoli' Maran for six years.

Though the media report did not go into details of his association with the senior Maran, DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran came out with an explicit denial of Arjunamurthy ever working for his father. In a statement on Friday, Dayanidhi Maran said that no such person

worked as advisor to his father and that the news was totally wrong.

**AIADMK reactions:** Otherwise, criticism against Rajinikanth was palpable even outside of social media. He cannot become an MGR, said fisheries minister D. Jayakumar, referring to a comment by a famous BJP supporter on those lines.

Jayakumar was asked by the media about Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam welcoming Rajinikanth into politics when he said it was a 'personal opinion' but did not rule out his party not having anything with the actor.

Even Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami, when asked about it, said 'let him register his party.' Jayakumar was confident that the actor launching a party would impact the votes of AIADMK as he said that those who vote for the 'Two Leaves' symbol would not go anywhere else.

**BJP leaves it high command:** Asked if his party would have an alliance with Rajinikanth, BJP state president L. Murugan said such decision would be taken by his party high command in Delhi. When asked about the switch of Arjunamurthy, who was

technically the president of the BJP Intellectual wing when Rajinikanth introduced him as a top honcho of his party to the media on Thursday, Murugan said, 'men may come an men may go.' He also said that Arjunamurthy came from the DMK and was given a post. Now he had gone and it would not affect the BJP, which was a cadre-based party, Murugan said.

Asked if more people from the party were waiting to leave, he said nobody would go hereafter.

**Who may join Rajini?** Meanwhile, there were speculations, too, about who would join Rajinikanth's new party in the media circles. One big name was of former DMK south zone secretary, M K Alagiri, who is said have spoken to Rajinikanth recently. Another one was Saidai Duraiswamy, who is no more active in the AIADMK, TMC leader G K Vasan and Chegu Tamilarasan.

Owner of a medical college in Chennai, in whose function Rajinikanth spoke about providing MGR rule is another person, is said to be behind the actor's political project.





## SHORT TAKES

## Rains claim 9 lives, submerge crops

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC  
TIRUCHY, DEC. 4

Heavy rains lashed almost all the central districts of Tiruchy, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Pudukkottai, Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam and its neighbouring district of Cuddalore for the third day in succession on Friday, under the influence of cyclone 'Burevi'. The salt yards in and around Vedaranyam were also submerged in water. Standing crops and harvest ready samba and thaladi paddy crops in about one lakh acres were submerged in rain water in these districts, and the rains claimed nine lives so far. Official sources told DC that 9 people lost their lives in rain-related incidents. Rain water entered several houses in low-lying areas in these districts, and Nagapattinam port authorities hoisted the 'number - 3' cyclone alert signal on Friday. Fishermen stayed at home.

## 'Non-peak hours' extended for women on suburban trains

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, DEC. 4

The Southern Railway has revised the peak hour/non-peak hour time-limit for travel in Chennai suburban services. From December 7, the non-peak hours will be from the early hours of the day to 7 am, 9.30 am to 4.30 pm and from 7 pm to the closing hours.

Lady passengers, not coming under the category of essential services staff, are already permitted to travel in Chennai suburban trains during the non-peak hours from Monday to Saturday. On Sundays, lady passengers are permitted to travel throughout the day. Now with the extension of non-peak hours more lady passengers, outside the category of staff engaged in essential services, would be able to travel in the suburban trains. During peak hours there is no restriction of travel for passengers, including ladies, engaged with organisations providing essential services.

Lady passengers can buy single journey tickets at the boarding stations before the commencement of non-peak hours. Children up to the age of 12 years accompanying lady passengers are also permitted to travel during the stipulated non-peak hours. Lady passengers, not coming under the category of essential services staff, should not commence their journeys during the peak hours from 7 to 9.30 am and from 4.30 to 7 pm on all working days from Monday to Saturday.

The Southern Railway has increased the number of suburban services in the Chennai area from 244 to 320 trains per day from December 7.



PWD officials open the sluice gates of Red Hills reservoir to release 500 cusecs of water on Friday.



Greater Chennai Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash inspects a waterlogged area on Friday.



Flooded Narayanapuram in Pallikaranai on Friday.

# 'Brimming with double storage of water than last year's City reservoirs have 95% water

T. SUDHEESH | DC  
CHENNAI, DEC. 4

As a result of recurring rainfall during the last couple of weeks in catchment areas, the major reservoirs in the city now have almost double storage of water compared to last year.

The water level at 140 ft Poondi, the biggest reservoir in the city, has touched 2,867 Mcft (88 per-

cent) against the full capacity of 3,231 mcft (million cubic feet) as of Thursday. The water level on the same day last year was 1,426 mcft.

The Chembarambakkam reservoir is filled with 3,137 mcft water (86 per cent full), against the total capacity of 3,645. The last year water level on the same day was 1,052.

The water level in Red Hill has touched 2,878 (87

percent full) against its capacity of 3,300. The last year storage was 1,868 in the same period.

The water level in Cholavaram now stands over double compared to last year. While it received 201 mcft water in December last year, the water level this year is 590 Mcft (54 percent full) against 1,081 full capacity.

The grant total of water

in the city reservoirs now stands at 9,682 mcft against the total capacity of 11,757. This is double compared to last year's 4,547 mcft.

According to the public works department (PWD) officials, the situation is completely under control as they released water all these days in a controlled manner to maintain the water level as there was a forecast of rain.

T. Prabhushankar, executive director, Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB), told DC that they were happy in terms of storage of water in this monsoon season. "All major reservoirs have almost 95 per cent water now. Compared to last year it is double. So we hope there will not be much trouble in managing the water demand in the city

as summer comes."

Meanwhile, the PWD released 3,000 cusecs of water from the Poondi reservoir and 1,000 cusecs from the Chembarambakkam reservoir from 12 pm on Thursday.

The Poondi reservoir was receiving an inflow of 4,000 cusecs, of which, 3,000 were released into the Kosasthalaiyar river since Thursday.

## Flooded for first time in 43 years

## Four feet of water in Chidambaram temple

A. ARUL PALANI | DC  
CHENNAI, DEC. 4

Steady and consistent heavy rainfall caused inundation in the world famous Nataraja temple for the first time in 43 years. The entire temple looked as though it was built in the middle of a lake.

The Nataraj temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, was constructed during the 10th century when Chidambaram used to be the capital of the Chola dynasty. Although Shiva is the main deity of the temple, it also represents major themes from Vaishnavism, Shaktism and others with all due reverence. The Chidambaram temple complex proudly boasts of being one of the oldest temple complexes in Southern India. As authorities had not desilt the drainage canals built by the Chola dynasty and local administration for several years, rainwater stagnated in the temple on Friday.

The temple set up on nearly 40 acres of land has several water resources such as Sivaganga tank, Paramandha Koobam, Kuyya Theertham, Pulimadu, Vyagraha Theertham, Anantha Theertham, Nagaseri Tank, Brahma Theertham, Shivapiyai temple tank and Thiruparkadal. The temple complex is embedded with four prakaras, halls, nine major gopuram gateways connecting the various courtyards, shrines, mostly related to

### Chola system dumped: Tunnels carrying rainwater blocked

When flood water flows inside the precincts of the temple it automatically drains out to the nearby Sivaganga tank and from there the flood water would flow into the tank of Thillai Amman temple. However, because of the blockade in the tunnel the flow of water from the shrine of Lord Nataraja was choked, according to Baskar Dikshithar (in pic on right), former secretary of the Pothu Dikshithars Association. Ironically, the Chola dynasty, known for their water management practices, had developed a foolproof system in which the impact of floods and drought condition could be effectively mitigated and tackled. In the past this had served as the rainwater harvesting system by enabling

Saivism and with elements of Vaishnavism and Shaktism included. The innermost structures such as the sanctum sanctorum and the shrines all have square plans, but the gateways do not align except the innermost two courtyards.

The precincts of Sri Natarajar Temple witnessed stagnation of rainwater to a depth of four to five feet on Friday as Chidambaram recorded a rainfall of 34 cm during the last 24 hours ended at



rainwater to flow through tunnels to the resources such as temple tanks. This was unearthly when desilting was done at the Sivapiyai tank located on the premises of the Thillai Kali Amman temple six years ago. As a result of official apathy the ancient network became ineffective. Priest Baskar Dikshithar said the temple witnessed a similar situation in 1977. He demanded the Chidambaram municipal officials to take effective measures to clear the water and prevent such incidents in the future.

8.30 am on Friday. The sanctum sanctorum of the temple and the outer parahaas remained in rainwater.

The Cuddalore district including Chidamabaram continued to receive heavy rainfall till late Friday evening. All the lakes, including Perumal lake and Wellington lake, in the coastal district remained full. All arterial roads and paddy raised on several thousand acres of land remained in about four feet deep water.



The flooded Chidambaram Nataraja temple on Friday.

Inundated inner prakara of the temple.



## DoS signs pact with IIT-M start-up for space tech

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, DEC. 4

The Department of Space (DoS) and Agnikul Cosmos Private limited, an IIT-Madras-based launch vehicle start-up company, have signed an agreement under the country's new proposed IN-SPACe programme.

Under the agreement, the Chennai-based Agnikul will become the first private company to work with various Isro centres to get access to technical information and facilities necessary to go forward with their launch vehicle development. This is a significant step by the DoS in mentoring private players to collaborate with Isro.

Addressing the gathering Dr. K.Sivan, Chairman, Isro, said "We encourage new players such as Agnikul to explore disruptive technologies and break away from the conventional methods of manufacturing launch vehicles."

"Isro's support to start-ups at an early stage is a strong sense of encouragement for all of us in India who are looking to build space technology in India," said Mr. Srinath Ravichandran, CEO and co-founder of Agnikul Cosmos.

"It is a happy day for our country, and we are eager to extend our support to Agnikul as they progress along in their journey," said Mr. R. Umamaheswaran, scientific secretary and chair of the interim IN-SPACe empowered committee.

Agnikul co-founder Moin

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SPM said "We are proud to be building this vehicle from India and we will continue to build space technology that will complement Isro's efforts and it would be a "made-in-India-for-the-world" solution and we are proud to be doing our humble parts in enhancing India's self-reliance in space tech as a part of India's Aatma Nirbhar Bharat vision."

"It is great to see a start-up coming out of the National Centre for Combustion R&D (NCCRD), IIT-Madras and a venture that is also a part of our IIT-Madras incubation cell grow to the extent of being able to set a launch date," said Prof. Bhaskar Ramamurthi, Director, IIT-Madras."

Agnikul is a Chennai-based start-up building India's first private small satellite launch vehicle. Their vehicle is Agnibaan, a rocket that will be capable of carrying up to 100 kg of payload to low Earth orbits up to 700 km with a plug-and-play engine configuration.

Among others, the directors of VSSC, LPSC, IISU and IPRC centres of Isro, scientific secretary, Isro, director took part in the function.

## HC declines to scale down fees fixed by SRM for MBBS students

J. STALIN | DC  
CHENNAI, DEC. 4

Declining to scale down the fees fixed by the SRM Institute of Science and Technology (Deemed to be University)/SRM Medical College Hospital and Research Centre for the MBBS students for the academic year 2020-2021, the Madras high court has directed them to pay the fees amount in three installments.

Justice N.Anand Venkatesh gave the directive while disposing of a batch of petitions from M.Sheik Dawood and 80 others.

The judge directed that the pattern of installments suggested by the institution viz., 1st install-



ment of 40 per cent, 2nd installment of 30 per cent and 3rd installment of 30 per cent, is found to be reasonable and the fees can be collected accordingly. For all those students, who can afford to pay the entire tuition fees, they are directed to pay the entire fees on or before December 31, 2020, if not

All those students, whose representations have been considered by the institution and permitted to pay the tuition fee in installments, shall pay the 1st installment of 40 per cent on or before December 15, 2020 without fail

already paid.

All those students, whose representations have been considered by the institution and permitted to pay the tuition fee in installments, shall pay the 1st installment of 40 per cent on or before December 15, 2020 without fail. In so far as the 2nd installment of 30 per cent

fees is concerned, the same shall be paid on or before January 4, 2021. The balance 30 per cent of the fees shall be paid on or before February 8, 2021.

The time granted by this court for the payment of fees in installments will not be extended under any circumstances.

No leverage is granted by this court since the time extended by this court by itself amounts to stretching the limits from the angle of the institution, and in the event of non-payment of fees as per the directions issued by this court, it is left open to the institution to proceed further in accordance with law, the judge added.



Cyclone 'Burevi' which lay 20 kms southwest of Pamban in the Gulf of Mannar on Thursday evening, crossed the land on Friday morning near Pamban, Ramanathapuram, and moved towards Thoothukudi with wind speed of 55 km. Over 25 fishing boats anchored on the Pamban coast were damaged as they dashed against each other in the strong winds. Two boats were carried away and they ran aground on 'Krusadai Island'. Rains continued in the region for the third day with power outages disrupting normal life of people.

— S.P. Loganathan

### 12 flights cancelled for 3rd consecutive day

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, DEC. 4

In the wake of the Cyclone Burevi, Chennai airport cancelled as many as 12 flights from and to Chennai for the third consecutive day due to bad weather on Friday.

As per the sources, in addition to that, at least 20 flights scheduled to depart from Chennai were delayed to take-off due to the weather condition.

Six flights scheduled between Chennai and Thoothukudi have been cancelled. Similarly, flights from Chennai to Thiruvananthapuram and one flight scheduled to depart from Thiruvananthapuram to Chennai has also been cancelled, owing to the cyclone. Two flights between Chennai and Kochi were cancelled and two flights between Madurai and Chennai were also cancelled, sources added.

Airport sources said around 20 domestic and international flights from Chennai to cities such as Mumbai, Kolkata, Pune, Bhuvaneshwar, Ahmedabad, Goa, Hyderabad, Delhi and international flights to Sri Lanka, Dubai, Abu Dhabi were also delayed for an hour.

### Madurantakam lake full, flood warning issued to 18 villages

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, DEC. 4

Chengalpet's largest lake, Madurantakam lake, reached its full capacity, for the second time this monsoon season.

Acknowledging the danger of flooding in Kiliyaru, the district administration officials have issued a flood warning to more than 18 villages.

Madurantakam lake reached its full capacity of 23.3 cubic feet last week, following the continuous rainfall the district received due to the Nivar cyclone. Similarly, due to heavy spells in the district on Thursday and Friday, because of cyclone Burevi, the lake went past the maximum level of 23.3 cubic feet and reached 24 cubic feet on Friday.



## SHORT TAKES

## FRESH LEGAL TROUBLE FOR RANAUT

**Mumbai, Dec. 4:** It was Kangana Ranaut versus not just Diljit Dosanjh but several other Punjabi artistes as well as the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee on Friday with the actor's comments against an elderly participant in farmers protest leading to a bitter war of words and demands for an apology.

Ranaut, who made headlines with her ugly spat with Dosanjh on Twitter, was served a legal notice on Friday by the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee which is seeking an unconditional apology from the actor.

Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee President Maninder Sirsa said Ranaut's tweets tried to portray farmers protest as "anti-national" and were derogatory against the aged mother of a farmer.

This is the second legal notice against the actor, who has already been served a legal notice by a lawyer from Punjab's Zirakpur town on December 2 over her tweet.

Prominent singers and artistes from Punjab, including Mika Singh, Ammy Virk and Jazzy B, meanwhile, have also criticised Ranaut while backing Dosanjh for his war of words with Ranaut.

Dosanjh had taken Ranaut to task for misidentifying the woman farmer as Bilki Bano, a septuagenarian who had attracted international attention for her participation in the anti-CAA protests earlier this year at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh neighbourhood. He had shared a BBC interview that identified the woman farmer as Mahinder Kaur.

## GOVT SHOULD FIND A SOLUTION: DHARMENDRA

**Mumbai, Dec. 4:** Veteran actor Dharmendra on Friday urged the central government to find a solution to farmers' protests over the farm laws, a day after he deleted a similar post on Twitter. On Thursday, the 84-year-old actor had urged the government to resolve the protests soon, citing the growing number of coronavirus cases in Delhi.

"I request the government... please quickly find a solution the farmers' problems... the number of corona cases are on a rise in Delhi... it is painful," Dharmendra had written in a post. However, the veteran actor soon deleted the post, without any explanation.

## GITANJALI IS FIRST TIME KID OF THE YEAR

From Page 1

"I think more than anything right now, we just need to find that one thing we're passionate about and solve it. Even if it's something as small as, I want to find an easy way to pick up litter. Everything makes a difference. Don't feel pressured to come up with something big," she said.

When asked when she knew that science was her passion, Rao said she always wanted to put a smile on someone's face. "That was my everyday goal, just to make someone happy. And it soon turned into, How can we bring positivity and community to the place we live?"

Rao added that she doesn't look like "your typical scientist. Everything I see on TV is that it's an older, usually white man as a scientist. It's weird to me that it was almost like people had assigned roles, regarding like their gender, their age, the colour of their skin."

"My goal has really shifted not only from creating my own devices to solve the world's problems, but inspiring others to do the same as well. Because, from personal experience, it's not easy when you don't see anyone else like you. So I really want to put out that message: If I can do it, you can do it, and anyone can do it," she said.

She said when she was in second or third grade, she started thinking about how she can use science and technology to create social change. She said she was 10 when she told her parents that she wanted to research carbon nanotube sensor technology at the Denver Water Quality Research Lab.

When asked by Jolie if Rao does things that kids her age do, she said "actually I spend more time doing 15-year-old things during the quarantine. I bake an ungodly amount. It's not good, but it's baking. And, like, it's science too." PTI

## PROTESTING FARMERS CALL BHARAT BANDH ON DECEMBER 8

From Page 1

"We need to take this protest forward. The government has to take back the farm laws," said Hannan Mollah, general secretary, All-India Kisan Sabha.

At Thursday's meeting, the farmers' representatives had made a 39-point presentation on the inadequacies of the contentious farm laws, after which the government gave its views.

Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar, who led these talks, had made it clear that the government "has no ego" and that it was discussing the issues raised by farmers with an open mind. He said, "The government will discuss points that emerged at the meeting on Friday and hopes that talks will move towards finality when the next round of discussions is held on Saturday."

With the agitation entering ninth day on Friday, commuters continued to suffer due to the sealing of multiple borders connecting the national capital with the surrounding states. A writ petition, seeking immediate removal of protesting farmers from border areas of Delhi-NCR on the ground that they increase the risk of Covid-19 spread in Delhi, was also moved in the Supreme Court.

The petition filed by Rishabh Sharma, a law student, stated that the protesters were "posing a hurdle for accessing emergency medical services." It also sought a direction that the protesters be asked to shift to the places designated for protest and that they be directed to follow the Covid-19 norms related to social distancing and face-mask wearing.

In Amritsar, newly appointed SGP president Bibi Jagir Kaur said they will be sending portable bathrooms and lavatories for the use of female protestors who are agitating with farmers on the borders of Delhi.

Former national boxing coach Gurbax Singh Sandhu also announced that he would return his Dronacharya Award in support of the agitating farmers. -PTI



Enhanced security to stop farmers during their protest against the new farm laws, at Delhi-Meerut Expressway in New Delhi on Friday.

- PTI

## Didi ups the ante, talks to agitating farmers

Tells farmers to protest till the new laws are withdrawn

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 4

Reaching out to the agitating farmers, West Bengal chief minister and Trinamul Congress supreme Mamata Banerjee on Friday extended her "full support" on phone to their agitation in her desperate bid to encash their growing anger against the BJP in the next year's Assembly Election. She has also instructed her party to organise a three-day dharna at the Gandhi Statue in Kolkata from December 8-10.

Sent by Ms Banerjee, TMC Rajya MP Derek O'Brien and Swaraj India chief Yogendra Yadav facilitated her conversation with a farmer leader Paramjit Singh on mobile in loudspeaker mode at the protest site at Singhu on the Delhi-Haryana border to boost the farmers' morale.

The TMC chief told Mr Singh, "I thank you for leading the farmers' movement. I also observed a 26-day hunger strike against the forcible acquisition of farmers' land. Your movement is our movement. It is a movement of entire Hindustan. We will provide you whatever assistance needed in support of the farmers. We can send our people if you want. These anti-farmer laws should be withdrawn. Until and unless they are withdrawn, you continue the farmers' movement. We stand by you."

"Secondly," she claimed, "The changes brought in the Essential Commodities Act are totally wrong. They (BJP) introduced many laws forcefully thinking that they can now do anything and even sell the country since they got votes. We do not want Modi to sell our country. So we need to work unitedly. Hindustan will have to be made for farmers, youth, labourers and others. Yogendraji knows me. We have worked together a lot and will do more. Our full support is with you. Your movement will be successful."

Mr Singh expressed his gratitude to her for support. Mr O'Brien and Mr Yadav later spoke to more leaders during their four-hour visit.

The TMC chief's move came after several Left leaders, including former CPI(M) MP and All India Kisan Sabha general secretary Hannan Mollah from the state, were found spearheading the farmers' agitation while her party, unlike the Left and Congress, has not hit the streets yet in the state on the issue despite her threat of a nationwide agitation.

On Twitter, the CM said, "14 years ago on Dec 4, 2006, I began my 26 day hunger strike in Kolkata demanding that agricultural land cannot be forcefully acquired. I express my solidarity with all farmers who are protesting against draconian farm bills passed without consultation by Centre #StandWithFarmers"

Banerjee had on Thursday threatened to launch a country-wide agitation if the "anti-farmer" new farm laws were not withdrawn.

Senior TMC MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar alleged that the new farm laws are "unconstitutional" and were passed to help the corporate houses.

"We demand that these laws be withdrawn. These laws were passed not to help the farmers but were done to help the multinational and corporate houses," she said.

While asking the government to accept farmers' demand to repeal the three recent central laws, the Indian National Lok Dal on Friday expressed its willingness to join any front floated by the Shiromani Akali Dal to further the tillers' and other causes.

The party also said it has asked its district presidents and other office-bearers to take party's Kisan Cell members in tractor trollies to Delhi borders to join and lend support to the agitating farmers.

INLD senior leader Abhay Singh Chautala expressed his party's willingness to join any SAD-led front sans the BJP and Congress in response to a query on speculations over forging such a front while addressing a press conference. The SAD and INLD have already fought elections together (in Haryana). They are allies even today. If any such front comes up, the INLD will be part of it, said Abhay Chautala.

While asking the government to immediately accept farmers demand to repeal the three farm laws, Abhay Chautala, the younger son of INLD president and former chief minister Om Prakash Chautala, also asserted that the party is "solidly behind farmers' fighting against the three laws."

The government should not linger on the matter. They should immediately resolve it by agreeing to the farmers' demand to repeal the laws. The government must also give a written assurance on the MSP, he said.

Asserting that his party, founded by farmers' messiah and former Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal is solidly behind the farmers', Abhay Chautala also took a veiled dig at the JJP, led by his elder brother Ajay Singh Chautala with the latter's son Dushyant Chautala being the deputy chief minister in the BJP ministry.

He said the supplies of essential items like milk, vegetables, oxygen cylinder and medicines has been affected, he said. -PTI

## INLD can join any SAD-led outfit: Chautala

**Chandigarh, Dec. 4:** Asking the government to accept farmers' demand to repeal the three recent central laws, the Indian National Lok Dal on Friday expressed its willingness to join any front floated by the Shiromani Akali Dal to further the tillers' and other causes.

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## PLEA IN TOP COURT ON FARMERS' ISSUE

**New Delhi, Dec. 4:** A petition was filed in the Supreme Court on Friday seeking direction to the authorities to immediately remove farmers, who are protesting at several Delhi border points, saying commuters are facing hardships due to the road blockades and the gatherings might lead to increase in Covid-19 cases.

The plea has sought the SC directions to the authorities to open the roads at Delhi borders, shift these protestors to allotted place and provide guidelines on social distancing and use of mask at the protest place.

The petition, by a law student, has claimed that Delhi Police had on November 27 allowed these protestors to hold demonstration peacefully at Nirankari ground at Burari here but despite that they have blocked the borders of Delhi. -PTI

## NADDA BEGINS NATIONWIDE TOUR TO ASSESS PARTY STRENGTH

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 4

BJP president J.P. Nadda on Friday began his nation-wide tour to assess the party's organisational strength, till the booth level, and further strengthen the party machinery before Assembly polls and the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Nadda commenced his tour from Uttarakhand, where Assembly polls are scheduled in 2022 and is also the venue for the religious congregation 'Kumbh' next year. On a four-day visit to the hill state, Nadda visited the Shanti Kunj Gayatri Pariwar in Haridwar on the first day and met saints and seers of the Niranjani Akhara and later participated in the Ganga aarti.

Nadda will be holding meeting with the chief ministers, state office-bearers, MLAs, MPs and cadre to take stock of the party's "real strength on the ground."

During this nation-wide tour, Nadda's priority will also be visiting those constituencies which the BJP lost in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Nadda will take stock of the Assembly election preparations in the states and will also meet eminent citizens in each and every state.

He will also hold meetings with the social media volunteers, who play a key role in conveying the party's messages, including during the election season.

On Sunday, the BJP president will be holding a detailed meeting at the Bijapur House in Dehradun with MPs, MLAs and party leaders.

## 12 infants die in government hospital ICUs in MP; Shivraj reviews situation

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, DEC. 4

As many as 12 infants have died in the intensive care units of a government hospital in a Madhya Pradesh district in the last one week, setting alarm bells ringing in the state administration.

The deaths occurred in the special newborn care unit and pediatric intensive care unit of district hospital in Shahdol.

"Total 12 infants died due to various reasons such as premature birth, underweight and pneumonia in the district hospital

● **THE DEATHS** occurred in the special newborn care unit and pediatric intensive care unit of district hospital in Shahdol.

since November 27", V.S. Waria, civil surgeon in Shahdol district hospital said on Friday.

According to him, four infants died in the hospital in last 48 hours itself.

While one of them died due to premature birth and underweight, 11 other infants succumbed to pneumonia and other cold related diseases in the hospital in the last one week, he added.

He, however, admitted that the only pediatrician in the hospital had earlier tested positive for Coronavirus and was absent in his duty for some time. He joined his duty on Thursday.

He attributed the high infant mortality in the hospital to the late arrival of sick children for treatment. The sick infants were being brought from far off places such as Anuppur and Umaria for admission in Shahdol district hospital.

All the sick newborns admitted in the hospital were found to be in critical conditions, he added.

Death of 12 infants in the government hospital has alerted the state government with Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan convening an emergency meeting here on Friday to review the situation.

Chouhan ordered the local health administration to take urgent measures to check mortality of infants in the hospital.

In a related development, former chief minister and MP Congress president Kamal Nath constituted a 4-member-team of the party to make on-the-spot inquiry into the matter and submit him the report.

NEW | NOTE

Mann has been supporting farmers' agitation for some time now

## Harbhajan Mann refuses to accept award

**Chandigarh, Dec. 4:** Punjabi singer-actor Harbhajan Mann on Friday announced that he will not accept the state government's 'Shiromani Punjabi' Award, expressing solidarity with farmers protesting against the new central farm laws.

The Punjab Languages Department had on Thursday chosen Mann for the award. The department had announced Sahitya Ratna and Shiromani awards for 18 different categories of literature and art.

Though I'm grateful to be selected, I humbly cannot accept the Shiromani Gayak award from the Department of Language. People's love is the biggest award of my career, & all

attention & efforts right now from us all must be dedicated to the peaceful farmers' protest (sic), Mann said on Twitter.

Mann, along with many Punjabi singers and artists, has been supporting the farmers' agitation for the last several months.

The singer-actor had also attended the farmers protest at the Delhi borders.

You had to be there to experience their energy, fervour & optimism. Amidst adversity, they smile & share moments of happiness. Proud of the peaceful & resilient protesters from far & wide, Mann said in another tweet.

He had come out with a



Harbhajan Mann

new song *Murrde ni laye bina haq, Dilliye* (Delhi, we aren't turning back without getting our rights) on Wednesday. The video of the song shows how farmers braved water cannons and broke police barriers en route to Delhi borders.

points. About a month back, Mann had released another song *Anndataa, Khet Saadi Maa, Khet Saadi pagg* (fields are our mother, fields are our pride).

Several Punjabi singers and actors, including Kanwar Grewal, Sidhu Moosewala, Babbu Maan and Harf Cheema, have lent their support to the farmers' cause.

Meanwhile, former national boxing coach Gurbax Singh Sandhu, during whose tenure India secured its maiden Olympic medal in the sport, on Friday said he will return his Dronacharya award if demands of the farmers protesting against new agriculture laws are not

addressed. Sandhu, who served as India's national men's coach for over two decades before guiding women boxers for a couple of years, said it is his way of showing support to the farmers, who are protesting in "bitter cold without any consideration for their own well-being".

"By doing this, I feel a huge morale pressure is off me. I come from a family of farmers, their fears need to be addressed. If the ongoing talks do not yield a result satisfactory to the farmers, I will return the award," Sandhu said. Sandhu was the national coach when Vijender Singh became the first Indian boxer to fetch an Olympic medal back in 2008. -PTI

தமிழ்நாடு அரசு பேருருட்சிகள் துறை		
தாளியுர் சிறப்பு நிலை பேருருட்சி, கோயம்புத்தூர் மாவட்டம்		
Roc No: 262/2020		Date: 23.11.2020
தமிழ்நாட்டிலுள்ள கோயம்புத்தூர் மாவட்டத்தில் தாளியுர் சிறப்பு நிலை பேருருட்சிகள் 2020-21 ஆம் ஆண்டிற்கான பொது நிதி திட்ட நிதித் திட்ட சாலை மேம்பாடு செய்வதில் பணி மேற்கொள்ளுவதற்கான ஒப்பந்தப்பள்ளி அறிவிப்பு.		
வ. எண்.	பணியின் பெயர்	மதிப்பீடு இலட்சத்தில்
1	தாளியுர் பேருருட்சிக்குட்பட்ட வார்டு எண்:5 கலிக்குறையக்கல் பாளையம் கீழ்த்தித்தினைசாலை பிரதான தாள்சாலைவலை பஸ்ப்படுத்துதல்.	60.39
மொத்தம்		60.39
1. தாளியுர் சிறப்பு நிலை பேருருட்சியில் மேற்கொள்ளும் பணி மேற்கொள்ள செயல் அனுமதிக்காக, தகுதியான ஒப்பந்ததாளர்களைப்பிடித்து ஒப்பந்தப்பள்ளிகள் வார்ப்பெற்கப்படுகின்றன. ஒப்பந்தப்பள்ளி தெருட்டாள் விலாசுகளை பஸ்ப்படுத்தப்பட்ட பேருருட்சிகளில் பெற்றுக் கொள்ளலாம்.		
2. பணி ரூ.60.39 இலட்சம் மதிப்பில்ள்ளது.		
3. ஒப்பந்தப்பள்ளி நடுமனாவின்னா <a href="https://tntenders.gov.in">https://tntenders.gov.in</a> மற்றும் <a href="http://townpanchayats.tn.gov.in/tender">http://townpanchayats.tn.gov.in/tender</a> என்ரு இணையதள முகவரிக்களிலிருந்து இலாசைகாக எடுத்துக் கொள்ளலாம். இந்த இணையதள முகவரிக்களிலிருந்து ஒப்பந்தப்பள்ளிகள் குறித்த முழு விபரங்களும் பெறலாம்.		
4. பொதுவான நேரம் மற்றும் தாள். (அனைத்து பேருருட்சிகளுக்குமே பொதுவானது) அ) ஒப்பந்தப்பள்ளி நடுமனா: 16.12.2020 மாலை 3.00 மணி வரை		
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இ) ஒப்பந்தப்பள்ளிகள் திறத்தல்: 16.12.2020 மாலை 3.30 மணி		
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# DECCAN Chronicle

5 DECEMBER 2020

## BJP real winner in Hyd, though TRS stays No. 1

A municipal election so *sui generis* it grabbed the attention of an entire nation has finally ended with a verdict that will be a watermark moment in the history of Telangana politics. The ruling TRS managed to narrowly edge out all challenges to slip past the ribbon with a wafer-thin margin, to manage to hold on to the GHMC mayoral seat. The AIMIM, player number three and factor X in the polls, held its fortress unscathed.

But the real political winner of the battle and narrative is the BJP, which has succeeded in managing to seed its narrative of being a challenger for power for Telangana, reducing the Congress to an insignificant naught in Telangana politics. The BJP juggernaut has only strengthened from Nizamabad in Lok Sabha elections, 2019, to Dubbaka a few weeks ago to Greater Hyderabad on Friday; promising to keep aggressively surging ahead, with Nagarjunasagar as the next episode.

By holding the TRS far from increasing its tally of 99 to a century or more, to even denying the pink party a clear majority of 76 in popular vote for 150 divisions to bring it below 60 divisions, the BJP has scripted an exceptional win. What is more significant is that it has managed to surpass the AIMIM as the second largest party.

The TRS now has an additional immediate problem of having to formally enter into some alliance or agreement with the MIM to resolve the impasse of the numbers of a hung municipal council. This will further give the BJP an additional benefit of having portrayed the TRS as a clandestine partner of the MIM.

What surprised nobody is that the Congress party has been reduced to a big zero in its ability to impact the politics of the state. The party was the principal Opposition less than two years ago when the results of the December 2018 Assembly elections came out. The TRS has used many a Machiavellian tactic to weaken the Congress, thus losing its advantage of two incompatible national parties splitting the anti-incumbency vote. Like a snake biting its own tail, the TRS is now paying a price for its strategic blunder. The anti-TRS sentiment was reflected early in the day when postal ballots revealed a strong verdict amongst government employees.

While parties win or lose, the state election commission under the stewardship of a retired IAS officer, C. Parthasarathi, has not covered itself in glory with several controversial decisions, one passed late last night after midnight being stayed by the high court. The perception that SEC was hardly Caesar's wife will go down as a sad day in the otherwise illustrious story of Indian election commissions being the highest upholders of the core values of our democracy.

Finally, now that elections for GHMC are over, it is a fair expectation that the winners will forget politics and apply their minds to addressing the problems of people and bettering the civic amenities of the city. Three cheers to that hope.

## Innovate to glory

She is just 15 years old, but this Indian-origin scientist from Lone Tree, Colorado, is making history as *Time*'s first-ever "Kid of the Year". Leadership it is that helped Gitanjali Rao make the cut out of 5,000 other talented teenagers. After Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg who was last year's *Time* "Person of the Year", she is now the youngest kid on the role model block. Gitanjali uses her intellectual prowess to tackle some of the world's pressing concerns like cyber bullying and opioid addiction. She is exercised by the gender pay gap and climate change, for both of which she matter-of-factly holds older generations responsible. But she does not believe in big fixes, doing, as she says, what she can and taking on one urgent question at a time.

Surprisingly or not, this isn't the first time Gitanjali has been feted. In 2019, the teenage innovator was included in the Forbes' list of 30 under 30, when she was way below that age bar. Two more years back, at 12, she was named the United States' top young scientist for creating a device that detects lead in water. Gitanjali had been inspired by the drinking water crisis of 2014 that hit Michigan to design the gadget. She has worked in refugee camps and conducts global innovation workshops wherein she has mentored 30,000 students. Her amazing aptitude ranges from artificial intelligence to carbon nanotube sensor technology, while including more commonplace activities such as baking. The Stem School Highlands Ranch student is preparing to pursue genetics and epidemiology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This generates promise: Perhaps, she will be the one to save the planet from the next pandemic.

To diaspora Indians, Gitanjali's feat though is the latest one in a long line of academic laurels that youngsters from the community have been bringing home. The question then is about how to have more people emulate her achievement. Gitanjali's personal experience has been that students just don't know where to start. But if one can give them that spark that they can then build off of, then that changes everything, and may mean that one more person in this world wants to come up with ideas to solve problems. A point to ponder, and take a leaf from, for parents, teachers and child-raisers.

Subhani



## Pivot or perish: India's heartland sends signal

Shikha Mukerjee

Twenty-first century India's farmers have written themselves into the history of the country and into the international chronicles of historic protests. It's an irresistible force that is finally giving voice. Just as the 250 million who joined the nationwide strike by the trade unions had articulated the anger and distress of the working poor.

The solidarity, scale and pared-down simplicity of their call, that is, for the repeal of the three laws rushed through without consultation by the Narendra Modi government in September, as a confirmation of stealthily issued ordinances, is imperative and compelling. The farmers' protest has called out the Modi government as essentially autocratic, and the BJP as unrepresentative of the farming poor, who are the predominant sector of India's population and economy.

The protest has established that if dissent or disagreement is ignored, the discontented will make their presence felt. It proved that brutality against dissenters and the discontented cannot be used as a solution. The use of violence by the State against people is especially dangerous, when the individuals deployed to unleash the violence belong to the same rural base as the protesters. The inadequacy of the Modi government is stark, because it failed to realise the reality of the umbilical connection between the law enforcers and fighting forces and the *kisan*, even as it plagiarised Lal Bahadur Shastri's slogan of "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan".

The Modi government, described by the ordinary protesting farmers from Punjab as "arrogant," can now do one of two

things: pivot or perish. The swelling numbers of farmers representing the collective discontent are a fact that cannot be fictionalised as a conspiracy or as anti-national.

Pivoting will require trashing the three laws – Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, and the Essential Commodities Amendment Act – legislating the minimum support price mechanism into law for government and private buyers in agricultural markets, and rewriting the law on commercial rates for power consumed by farmers, cancelling fines for stubble burning. If the Modi government does what is being asked, peacefully and unanimously by the 40 representatives who attended the second round of meetings with agriculture minister Narendra Tomar, then it can save face.

To defy the demands by India's farmers is as politically risky for the BJP as it would be reckless for the Modi government. If the BJP were an urban phenomenon, it could try and confuse its constituents about the character of the protest and the position of the farm union leaders who have virtually surrounded New Delhi. But it is not. The politics of an ephemeral Bharat Mata has been overturned by the reality of farmers, men and women, precisely articulating their problems, their clear-eyed understanding of how their protest shall continue and what is the minimum outcome they are waiting for.

The remarkably controlled and peaceful farmers, especially from Punjab, as the Modi government ought to understand, have quit their fields at the beginning of

the rabi crop season. The winter wheat, rice, pulses, oilseeds, is a commercial crop, sold to sustain the permanently indebted farmer. As every economist and cultivator-politician like Narendra Singh Tomar and Rajnath Singh is well aware, farming is a zero-profit and negative profit sector the world over. Generation after generation a few farmers barely break even, that is, zero profit, while the rest remain in debt, that rolls over, season to season. The cash they make is not profit.

Having harvested the kharif crop, which for the 86 per cent marginal and small farmers of India, is the crop they stock to feed their families and sell only the tiny surplus that is left over, missing the rabi season, which is irrigation and therefore power intensive, means that they are impoverishing themselves in order to change the rules enacted by the Narendra Modi government.

Recent reports indicate that around 40 per cent of the rabi crop has been sown in Punjab. Without the 60 per cent that remains to be sown and cannot be sown without the men, who are joining the protest in increasing numbers from Punjab, western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra, the Indian economy could be looking at an unprecedented crisis, deeper than the current level of contraction and recession.

India is the third largest producer of wheat, rice, pulses, cotton, peanuts in the world. Its trade in agricultural commodities is around \$40 billion. The states that produce the surplus which keeps the Indian economy ticking, including Karnataka, where farmers have called a seven-day protest

from December 7, have all registered their solidarity by joining the protests that surround the national capital. This is not conspiracy or a blockade masterminded by terror outfits; it is farmers who have reached the end point.

Nine days of protesting out on the highways in the coldest weeks in 70 years is a visual document drawing attention to the land alienation of farmers who once owned the tiny plots they cultivated, to the thousands of farmers who have committed suicide because they had lost hope in dealing with the accumulated debt. India's marginal and small farmers never expect to the debt free; they hope to keep their debts within manageable limits.

Around 500 have committed suicide, according to reports, in Punjab between June and September. Farmers, men and women, are clear that the new laws will deepen the crisis, unless they are cancelled.

The demand is clear and simple; and new laws are needed. The new laws must be drafted in consultation with the farmers' organisations, who know what they need and what is due to them as the backbone of India's economy, as the backbone of its law enforcing machinery, its fighting forces, its cheap, unprotected labour force, the source of the endless army of domestic workers who ease the lives of India's middle class. To negotiate for anything less, by breaking up the totality of the demands, as the farm leaders point out, would be a sellout.

Good faith as a negotiating principle has been rejected by the farmers' unions. The farmers are seeking structural changes that would shift the paradigm within which agriculture and farmers have been perceived by the "modern" State. It is the Narendra Modi government's hard luck that it finds itself in the mess which is as much of its own making as it is an accumulated mountain of grievances.

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist in Kolkata

### LETTERS

#### RAJINI'S POLITICAL PLUNGE

It's thrilling to note that actor Rajinikanth would launch a political party in January 2021. The political air in Tamil Nadu is so polluted that it demands a clean party to purify it, notwithstanding Edappadi K. Palaniswami's good governance in critical circumstances. But the question is whether Rajinikanth can foot the bill or not. He has said that his party will usher in a 'spiritual politics' and would put an end to corruption, caste and religious bias and so on.

These all conjure up a utopian state! In a polarised country such as ours (especially in the last three decades or so), it's indeed a tall order. And the superstar's remark that he will not be the chief ministerial candidate for the 2021 Assembly elections is not wise.

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

#### FARMERS' STIR

FARMERS' STIR against three farm bills in the national capital which the BJP led government at the Centre touted as a watershed moment in the Indian agriculture sector has no sign of abating with second round of talks between Union agriculture minister Narendra Tomar and representatives of 35 farmers group ending without breaking the stalemate. The apprehensions of farmers that the three farm laws will sound a death knell to existing minimum support price (MSP) mechanism as there was no mention of it in the farm laws and lead to corporatisation of agriculture in the absence of regulations are legitimate. The concerns that more than 80 per cent of farmers are in the small and marginal farmers' category and therefore vulnerable to exploitation by corporates cannot be taken in lighter vein. It is time the union government pays heed to one of the key demands of protesting farmers that the word 'MSP' must be written into the farm law as a first step to break the logjam.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

#### WHIMSICAL AWARDEES

FORMER PUNJAB chief minister Parkash Singh Badal has returned his Padma Vibhushan award as he feels that the Centre has 'betrayed' the farmers. Ex-Union minister Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa is also reported to have decided to follow suit to register his protest. National awards are conferred on individuals in recognition of their meritorious contribution. If they return the awards at their whim, it's tantamount to dishonouring the nation. In future, therefore, the awardees should be told well in advance that such dishonouring of the nation would invite penal action. Whatever be the grouse, let them not think that conferment of national awards is child's play.

P.G. Menon, Chennai

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Farrukh Dhondy  
Cabbages & Kings



"They say it's not over till the fat lady sings  
That final and fatal aria  
And in that moment stumbles and clings  
To the neck of the lover who'll carry her  
Off the stage and into the wings  
Without having promised to marry her!"  
— From **Showcase Mein Itna Tho Godown Mein Kitna** by Bachchoo

## The empire strikes back! Secret plan is unveiled

My demented second cousin twice removed (each time by the deportation authorities), "Rusty" Immoralearningswalla, would always boast of his intention to balance history by striking back at Britain's imperial past. He's been reading these books by Shashi Tharoor and William Dalrymple and has become obsessive. One of his mad schemes was to start a restaurant in London called "The Revenge of the Empire". He would import a substance we were aware of in our short and happy childhoods in Poona (now Pune), called *jamal gota*, a strong horse purgative fed to the

poor animals who pulled tongas before rickshaws infested the city's streets. Russi would poison bits of the food served to the British clientele of his restaurant, inducing in them the relentless symptoms of Delhi-Belly — or worse.

I attempted in vain to point out that no one would eat at a restaurant called Revenge of the Natives. Better to call it Memories of the Raj. He simply said that the clientele he was aiming at wouldn't notice what it was called — they'd just stagger in after the pubs closed, muttering "I could murder an Indian!" and wouldn't remember where they ate that night.

Rustum's efforts to raise capital for his restaurant came to naught. When he was deported, he left this sack of *jamal gota*, the horse purgative, in my study. I have advertised it on e-bay and other Internet sites but have had no buyers rushing to avail of the low asking price.

At first, I thought nothing of Rustum's deportation. With all his activities and schemes, he was asking for it. But then one day it struck me as extremely odd that he hadn't been

deported to Mumbai but had been sent to Canada and was making a good life there in his usual trade. And when he began sending me, under cover, envelopes marked "Miss Let Up" to be delivered, unopened, by hand, to an address in the posh part of London, I became suspicious.

Who could this mysterious "Miss Let Up" be? I couldn't resist the temptation. Though strictly a betrayal of his trust, I opened one of the missives he had sent under cover of an envelope to my address. "Step up deportations, first of criminals and when the public begins to accept these as routine, then all useful personnel of non-British vintage." Russi does pride himself on rather stylish vocabulary.

I resealed the envelope and delivered it and waited on the opposite side of the road, sitting on a blanket, pretending to be a homeless beggar, a sight that is very common in London. Sure enough, a big black car drove up flying the Union Jack and a lady stepped out of the house and was driven away. Did I recognise the lady? Jesus, Joseph and Mary, the realisation dawned. "Let Up" spelt back-

wards? Putel? Yes, it was she!

Then the whole glorious scheme fell into place when I recalled that after Rustum's plan for his revenge restaurant fell through, he didn't seem in the least despondent. He would disappear for what he said were walks in Crystal Palace, but he'd be gone for hours and why call for an Uber to go for a walk? Then there were the phone calls he shielded from me. Only once I caught him saying "Yes, Canada would be ideal". The next day two immigration fellows called and carried him away.

Now, gentle reader, I am not one to believe in conspiracy theories, but the evidence is overwhelming, and these are my conjectures. Russi has consolidated his attack on the Empire at the highest level. Consider the facts:

Several individuals with an ex-colonial ancestry infiltrate the Tory Party and diligently rise to high positions and begin their work of dismantling the British economy, its social fabric and work unflinchingly towards its ruin. First of all, they pretend to be ardent advocates of Brexit, knowing that it will leave Britain isolated and poorer for decades.

Then, having achieved high office, they begin the ruinous policy of "borrow and sorrow", and then "Free ports and deport's".

Rishi Sunak has compelled the Bank of England to print, in this year, £500 billion in inflationary borrowing to pay for wild schemes — ten times as much as a Labour government did in ten years. Now he proposes 10 "free ports" which will turn Britain into Bringapore — the world's leading money-laundering and tax dodging drug haven destroying what's left of its manufacturing base.

And here, gentle reader, I must apologise for consistently calling home secretary "Pritti" Patel "Clueless". I now realise that as part of Russi's plan, she is grooming the great liberal British public to jail and deport the non-Brits on whom several sectors of the economy and social fabric rely. I can only speculate that the last batch of deportees will include "Miss Let up" who will thus, at the state's expense, be given a free ride to Canada or Uganda and anyway away from a failing, flailing Britain. The Empire strikes mercilessly back!



## IN BRIEF Indian wins \$3M in Dubai raffle draw

**Dubai:** A 51-year-old Indian expat in Dubai has won a whopping over \$3 million in a raffle draw, according to a media report. George Jacobs, a medical equipment salesperson, was announced the winner in the Big Ticket draw held in Abu Dhabi on Thursday, the Khaleej Times reported. Jacobs, who lives in Dubai with his wife, daughter and son, said that the lucky draw has come as huge blessing as he was suffering from financial difficulties.

## Rains cause havoc in Indonesia

**Medan:** Torrential rains in Indonesia's third largest city caused four rivers to overflow, flooding thousands of homes and killing at least two people, officials said Friday. The local disaster mitigation agency said rescuers were searching for six missing people, including a toddler, after the heavy rains in Medan, the capital of North Sumatra province. At least two people were found dead after being swept away by the floods, which began on Thursday evening, the agency said in a statement.

## France threatens to veto Brexit deal

**Brussels:** European doubts over a post-Brexit trade deal with Britain boiled over on Friday with France threatening a veto as tricky negotiations entered what could be their final hours. EU and UK negotiators Michel Barnier and David Frost were locked in last-minute debates over fishing rights, fair trade rules and an enforcement mechanism to govern any deal. But, with time running out for the accord to be ratified before the end of the year and ahead of Britain's departure from the EU single market, EU capitals are getting cold feet. — AFP

# Britain defends vaccine decision amid criticism

UK plans to distribute initial batch of 8 lakh doses next week

**London, Dec. 4:** Britain's medicines regulator insisted on Friday its world-first approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech Coronavirus vaccine met all safety standards, after officials in Europe and the United States queried the rapid process.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) on Wednesday announced emergency approval for the vaccine's general use against Covid-19, and the government plans to start rolling it out next week.

Any vaccine "must undergo robust clinical trials in line with international standards", the MHRA said in a statement. "No vaccine would be authorised for supply in the UK unless the expected standards of safety, quality and efficacy are met."

Leading US infectious disease scientist Anthony Fauci on Thursday said the MHRA had "rushed through that approval", but later apologised.

"I have a great deal of confidence in what the UK does both scientifically and from a regulator standpoint," Fauci, who leads the US National Institute of Allergy and

## German firm's super-coolers to send vaccines around the world

**Wurzburg, Dec. 4:** At first sight, they look like regular containers. But the rectangular boxes made by German company Va-Q-Tec will in fact play a key role in keeping life-saving Covid-19 vaccines ultra cool as they are shipped across the world.

After Britain this week became the first country to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for general use, other medical authorities around the world could in the next days or weeks decide on similar applications by a host of pharmaceutical companies developing Coronavirus vaccines.

There will be an enormous logistical challenge to transport billions of

Infectious Diseases, told the BBC.

"Our process is one that takes more time than it takes in the UK. And that's just the reality," he said. "I did not mean to imply any sloppiness even though it came out that way."

MHRA chief executive

● **GLOBAL CORONAVIRUS** infections passed 65 million on Friday and countries doubled down on restrictions, even as plans to roll out vaccines gathered pace.

● **JOE BIDEN** said he would ask Americans to wear masks for 100 days when he takes over as president of the United States, the world's worst-hit country from a pandemic that has now killed more than 1.5 million people across the planet, more likely to be victims of other types of property theft.

doses at the right temperature across the globe, maintaining the so-called "cold chain" from a vaccine manufacturer into a patient's arm.

Pfizer/BioNTech's vaccine for instance, must be stored at a frigid minus 70 degrees Celsius (minus 94 Fahrenheit).

The Va-Q-Tec containers will serve this purpose of

keeping the vaccines cool enough, the company's founder and chief executive Joachim Kuhn said, describing them as "big thermos flasks".

In the company's factory in the Bavarian city of Wurzburg, workers were assembling panels with glue or making vacuum-packed linings.

— AFP

June Raine previously insisted that "no corners had been cut" in vetting the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

With Britain transitioning out of the European Union, the UK regulator obtained an exemption from the EU's medicines

agency, which has stressed it prefers to wait for further review and consultations across the 27-nation bloc.

Britain plans to distribute an initial batch of 8,00,000 doses starting next week, prioritising care homes.

— AFP

## Bangladesh relocates 1,600 Rohingya

**Dhaka, Dec. 4:** Bangladesh on Friday relocated the first batch of 1,600 Rohingyas to a remote island in the Bay of Bengal for a "better abode" amid reservation from rights groups fearing the place's vulnerability to tropical cyclones and climate change.

Rohingyas, who are Myanmar's ethnic minor-

ity Muslim community, fled their homeland to evade a ruthless military clampdown since August 25, 2017 and after initial reluctance Bangladesh offered them the refuge on humanitarian grounds.

"The Rohingyas onboard six navy and one military ship reached the Bhashan Char (island) this afternoon," Refugee

Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Shah Rezwana Hayat told the media.

A batch of 1,600 Rohingyas were the first group of people who agreed to move to a "better abode", while 19 more ships were kept ready to ferry fellow refugees to the island in the next few days.

Officials earlier said that Bangladesh spent \$350 million in the recent past to build the facilities to accommodate 1,00,000 refugees of over 1.1 million Rohingyas living in crammed makeshift camps in south-eastern Cox's Bazar, which borders their homeland in Myanmar's Rakhine state. — PTI

# Iran's N-plan on track despite scientist killing

In an online chat with **Mohammed Anas**, Dr Foad Izadi, head of the department, International Relations, at Tehran University, tries to explain Iranian response to the assassination of its top nuclear scientist, Dr Mohsen Fakhrizade. Apart from teaching and articulating Iran and its relations with the world, Dr Izadi also advises Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif at times. Excerpts:

**Q How big a setback is the assassination of nuclear scientist Dr Mohsen Fakhrizade to Iran's nuclear programme in particular and Iranian scientific development in general?**

**A:** Dr Mohsen Fakhrizade was a renowned nuclear physicist in Iran. He was known throughout the country for his efficiency. Apart from being a good scientist, he was believed to be a good manager. He was attached to Iran's defence ministry and was overseeing several defence projects. In addition to that, he was working on research for Covid vaccine and was instrumental in developing a handy test kit, which was perhaps the only one manufactured in the Middle East. Iran's "peaceful nuclear programme" is extensive and doesn't depend on any individual. However, the loss of a scientist of Dr Fakhrizade's stature is difficult to make up for and Iran will miss him a lot.

However, to think that the absence of Dr Fakhrizade will hamper the Iranian nuclear programme is hogwash. Rather, the Iranian Parliament has passed a Bill this week to enhance the pace of the nuclear programme. So, Iran is



Dr Foad Izadi



Dr Foad Izadi

now determined more than ever to achieve its nuclear targets.

**Q Does Iranian government admit to security and intelligence failure for such a daring attack in the vicinity of its capital in Tehran? If yes, then what is their assessment of this failure?**

**A:** Yes, many government officials, including the secretary of Iranian Security Council, have said that it was a serious security lapse. Dr Fakhrizade was a target of foreign enemies for the last 20 years and there had been previous attempts on his life. Iranian security services managed to save this scientist for all these years but this particular lapse cost his life. As we are talking, the Iranian security establishment is investigating all contours of this assassination. They have discovered that no human being was used in this assassination and that only remote-controlled technology was put to use. It was not done ever before by even Israeli intelligence service.

That's why the Irani security apparatus was bamboozled. But, I am sure Irani security services will learn from this mistake and will brace up for future threats more carefully.

**Q Will it impact travel and stay of non-Iranians in Iran for a while?**

**A:** No, there is no indication from the Iranian regime that it will curb the movement of non-Iranians. They will not have any difficulty in travelling to or from Iran. Iran will continue to be friendly towards people from outside.

**Q Iran has alleged that Israel is behind this gruesome assassination. Do you see any direct conflict emerging between Iran and Israel in near future?**

**A:** It's not just Iran that has blamed Israel for this assassination. The American and western sources have clearly suggested that it was the handiwork of Israeli intelligence agency. The Zionist regime (Netanyahu government) plotted it thoughtfully. As far as Iranian response is concerned, the reply will come. If Iran doesn't respond, it will embolden the other side and it will continue to attack more often. However, Iran will respond in its own way, at a chosen moment and in a measured extent.

**Q If Iran chooses to indirectly respond to its enemies instead of going into direct conflict, what possible steps will Iran take?**

**A:** Iran will not disclose how it will respond. Neither has the Iranian regime hinted any such thing. Even experts like us are not privy to any such detail. Early in the year 2020, when Gen. Qasem Soleimani was killed, Iran had attacked American bases in Iraq. It was a quick and open response. But, this time, there is complete secrecy.

# FINANCIAL Chronicle

SATURDAY | 5 DECEMBER 2020 | COIMBATORE

## quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	45,079.55 +1.00
Nifty 50	13,258.55 +0.95
S&P 500*	3,690.32 0.64
Dollar (₹)	73.79 0.17
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.50 -0.42
Euro (₹)	89.79 -0.26
Gold (₹)	48,813 -0.27
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	49.21 1.03
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.898 -0.556
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.941 +2.172

\*As of 9:30 PM IST

## Zydu Cadila gets DGCI nod for phase 3 trials



Zydu Cadila said it has received the approval from the drugs controller to start phase 3 clinical trials with its biological therapy PegiHep in Covid-19 patients. The firm had completed the phase 2 clinical trials with PegiHep last month. The trials, which will start this month, will be conducted on 250 patients across 20-25 centres. Sharvil Patel, MD, said, "we are encouraged by the results of phase 2 study."

## ■ Status quo on rates; GDP contraction seen at -7.5% RBI ups growth forecast

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, DEC. 4

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) monetary policy committee (MPC) on Friday unanimously decided to keep policy rates unchanged while continuing with the accommodative policy stance "as long as necessary—at least through the current financial year and into the next year," despite higher-than-expected inflation and growth outturns. This means the equated monthly instalments (EMIs) on home loans, auto loans and personal loans will remain more or less steady for borrowers.

The RBI revised its current fiscal real GDP growth from a decline of 9.5 per cent to a decline of 7.5 per cent; retail inflation (CPI) inflation is projected at 6.8 per cent for Q3, and 5.8 per cent for Q4 FY21.

Contrary to market concerns of measures to withdraw the abundant liquidity in the system, RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said the flush liquidity conditions will be kept up while flagging that the RBI is increasingly looking to sterilise its forex interventions keeping in mind the liquidity and inflation dynamics. The RBI announced extended liquidity support to 26 stressed sectors.

"Our expectation on inflation which we had over the last two months has not materialised. And we have to keep in mind that we are dealing with an extraordinary situation, a once in 100 years kind of event that and the kind of impact it has produced on the economy and on

### Highlights of RBI's monetary policy statement

- ▶ Benchmark rate kept unchanged for third time at 4%
- ▶ Economy to contract 7.5% against 9.5% projected in October
- ▶ Economy to clock growth of 0.1% in Q3; 0.7% in Q4, FY21
- ▶ Retail inflation projected at 6.8% in Q3, 5.8% in Q4
- ▶ Inflation to remain elevated, barring transient relief in winter
- ▶ Fiscal stimulus helping growth-generating investment



- ▶ Private investment slack, capacity use not fully recovered
- ▶ RBI to ensure ample liquidity is available in the system
- ▶ RBI to maintain accommodative monetary policy stance
- ▶ central bank committed to preserving depositors' interest

## Contactless card limit raised to ₹5K

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, DEC. 4

The RBI has decided to increase the limit on contactless card transactions at Point of Sale (PoS) terminals and e-mandates for recurring transactions via cards and UPI from Rs 2,000 to Rs 5,000 from January 1.

This will help customers execute their high ticket recurring payments like utility bills, investments, two-wheeler EMIs, consumer durable EMIs etc. seamlessly.

The RBI has also decided to make the Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) transaction facility available round-the-clock from

December 14.

The RTGS system is used for high value transactions. The system will be available for customers and inter-bank transactions round-the-clock, except for the interval between 'end-of-day' and 'start-of-day' processes, whose timings would be duly broadcasted through the RTGS system.

RBI also has proposed to allow settlement files of payment systems like AePS, IMPS, NETC, NFS, RuPay and UPI to be posted to the RBI all days of the year. This measure will reduce build-up of settlement and default risks and enable better management of funds by banks.

human lives not only in India but across countries which is huge and we have

to respond to that situation," Das told reporters at a virtual press conference.

This was the fourth bi-monthly policy for the fiscal and the third consecutive policy where the MPC decided to keep the repo rate (the rate at which RBI lends funds to banks) unchanged at 4 per cent. The policy stated that while growth has begun to recover, it was not yet broad-based and the RBI's objective remains to support growth. Inflation, while sticky, is largely a supply-side phenomenon, with little evidence of demand-side pressures.

The RBI expects a faster economic recovery and has revised upwards its outlook for GDP growth for FY21. At the same time, its outlook for inflation has turned adverse leading it to raise its outlook on prices levels. In its monetary policy statement, Das said, "The MPC was of the view that inflation is likely to remain elevated, with some relief in the winter months from prices of perishables and bumper kharif arrivals. This constrains monetary policy at the current juncture from using the space available to act in support of growth."

"At the same time, the signs of recovery are far from being broad-based and are dependent on sustained policy support... The MPC decided today to maintain status quo on the policy rate and continue with the accommodative stance as long as necessary—at least during the current financial year and into the next financial year—to revive growth on a durable basis and mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the economy, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target."



## Burger King IPO get subscribed 156 times

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, DEC. 4

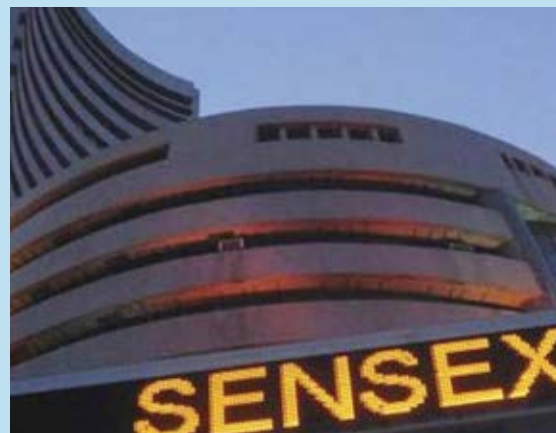
Burger King India's Rs 810-crore initial public offering received huge response from all categories of investors and was subscribed over 156 times.

As per NSE data, overall the issue was subscribed 156.65 times, with the issue receiving over 24.15 lakh applications.

Qualified institutional buyers turned up on the last day and their quota of shares was subscribed 86.64 times, non-institutional investors or high net worth individual's portion was subscribed 354.11 times as per sources close to the merchant bankers.

Retail individual investors' portion was subscribed 68.14 times. Burger King India is among the top-3 most-subscribed IPO this year along with Happo-iest Minds Technologies and Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders.

## Sensex crosses 45000-mark



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, DEC. 4

Equity benchmark Sensex rose above the 45000-mark for the first time ever and touched a new all-time high of 45,148.28 as the RBI raised the GDP growth projections for the current fiscal to 7.5 per cent contraction from 9.5 per cent contraction projected in October and positive global cues in expectation of a stimulus package by the new US administration.

The Sensex closed at 45,079.55, up 446.90 points while the Nifty-50 gained 124.65 points, or 0.95 per cent, to close at a new all-time high of 13,258.55.

The BSE's market capitalisation hit a new high of over Rs 179.48 lakh crore. Rate sensitive bank, realty, capital goods and auto stocks led the gains as the overall accommodative stance of the Reserve Bank to support economic growth boosted sentiments.

"The MPC expectedly kept the policy rates

unchanged but this was accompanied by strong accommodative guidance and assertive market signaling of lower-for-longer. The MPC reckoned the inflected growth momentum, while also stressed that the case of an eventual fall in inflation with easing supply shocks is yet to play out," said Emkay Global Financial Services.

The BSE Bankex index gained 2.14 per cent and Nifty Bank index gained 2.05 per cent while BSE Realty index gained 1.00 per cent. The top gainers among the banks included ICICI Bank (4.20 per cent), SBI (2.77 per cent), Axis Bank (1.98 per cent), IndusInd Bank (1.96 percent), Kotak Mahindra Bank (1.34 per cent) and HDFC Bank (0.59 per cent).

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 2,969.59 crore while the domestic institutions were net sellers of equities worth Rs 1,971.60 crore.



