

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
KARIMNAGAR | WEDNESDAY | 23 DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER

Max: 29.4°C  
Min: 10.4°C  
RH: 29%  
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.  
Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 29/11 °C

COVID-19

COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+23,942)	(+324)
1,00,99,021	1,46,458

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+617)	(+3)
TS: 2,82,347	1,518
(+402)	(+4)
AP: 8,79,339	7,082

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

7,80,61,507
DEATHS
17,16,170

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvati; Dakshinayana

Tithi: Margasira Shuddha Navami till 8.40 pm  
Star: Revati till 4.32 am (Thursday)  
Variyam: 3.05 pm to 4.52 pm  
Durmuhurtam: 11.53 am to 12.36 pm  
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

HILARI CALENDAR

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 7, 1442 AH  
PRAYERS  
Fajar: 5.37 am  
Zohar: 12.25 pm  
Asar: 4.12 pm  
Maghrib: 5.54 pm  
Isha: 7.07 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.42 AM

SUNSET TODAY 5.47 PM  
MOONSET 12.39 PM  
MOONRISE 12.06 AM

COUNTER POINT

Double bonanza... you will get party ticket and Cabinet berth if you bring 2 MLAs along with you!

SHORT TAKES

Ramcharitramanas

course in MP

**Bhopal:** Even as the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh is expected to commence on January 15, a university in Madhya Pradesh is all set to spread the story of 'Ram' across the globe through a short-term online and offline course. The first of its kind initiative by an educational institution in India, Vikram University in Ujjain has launched a 6-month certificate science and culture course on *Ramcharitmanas*, the poem narrating the story of Lord Ram by the 16th century poet Tulsidas.

Shah to visit Bengal again in January

**New Delhi:** After his recent visit to the poll bound West Bengal when former TMC heavyweight Suwendhu Adhikari along with more than a dozen of ruling party's MLAs joined the BJP, senior BJP leader and Union home minister Amit Shah is expected to visit the state again on January 12, which is Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary. In West Bengal, where an aggressive BJP is countering TMC's poll plank of 'Bengali pride' with its vision of 'Asol poribortan,' Shah is expected to address a public meeting and a 'yuva rally' in Howrah during his two day long visit when he will also deliberate poll strategies with the party leaders.

NATION | 4

Devolopment can't wait, says Modi

WORLD | 5

Biden receives Covid shot publicly

SPORTS | 8

Raina sorry after being held for Covid violations

deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle

Vol. 22 No. 121 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

## Kishan: Farm laws meant to make agri profitable

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, DEC. 22

Union minister of state for home affairs G. Kishan Reddy on Tuesday said the three farm laws brought in by the BJP government at the Centre are aimed to transform agriculture into a profitable profession and bail out farmers from the clutches of middlemen.

While addressing a meeting to create an awareness about the farm laws, Kishan Reddy criticised Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu for opposing the new farm laws.

“Why did the CM sell his turmeric and capscum produced at his farm to corporate companies for higher profits while denying the same for other farmers,” the minister asked. He said the farmers in the CM’s Gajwel constituency



Minister of State for home G. Kishan Reddy being presented with a memento of a bullock cart in Adilabad on Tuesday.

have entered into an agreement with top seed firms for producing seeds. “So why does Rao oppose the same for the farmers in other areas.” He said people have decided to bring about a change in the politics of Telangana.



Farmer leaders address a press conference regarding their protest against the new farm laws at Singhu border in New Delhi on Tuesday.

## Farmers to tell UK leaders to stop Boris’ R-day visit

SANJAY KAW | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

The farmers’ leaders protesting against the Centre’s three agriculture-related laws have decided to write to British political leaders and MPs to ask them to stop Prime Minister Boris Johnson – who has been invited to be the chief guest at next month’s Republic Day celebrations – from travelling to India till their demands are met.

“The UK Prime Minister is scheduled to visit India on January 26.

We are writing to British MPs asking them to stop him from visiting India till the time the farmers’ demands are not met by the Indian government,” one of the farmers’ leaders, Kulwant Singh Sandhu, said.

Mr Johnson has accepted India’s invitation to be the chief guest. He will become the second British PM at the event, after John Major in 1993. Mr Johnson has invited India to join the G-7 summit in Britain next year.

The agitating farmers have so far given a sense that they will not accept

anything other than a complete rollback of the three laws. The farmers’ leaders on Tuesday decided to take a call on the Centre’s letter inviting them for another round of talks after a meeting on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, at the Singhu border, a group of farmers wrote a letter with their blood to the Prime Minister urging him to immediately repeal the new laws. The letter said: “Good morning Narendra Modi ji, we are writing this letter with our blood. You are the Prime Minister of our

## Mahesh Bank elections row spills on to the road

Officials hint at political pressure; protests staged for counting

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC  
HYDERABAD DEC. 22

Stalemate continued for the second day over the suspension of vote counting in the elections for the board of directors of Hyderabad-based AP Mahesh Cooperative Bank even as the supporters of incumbent bank chairman Ramesh Bung staged a protest in front of the office of commissioner of cooperatives.

Though the counting of votes — polled on Sunday — began on Monday, returning officer Esther Rani John abruptly stopped the counting later in the day after Bhagwati Baldewa lodged a complaint against the panel headed by Ramesh Bung.

Senior officials of the cooperative department claim objections raised by both the sides were serious in nature and they are being looked into. Sources in the department, however, hint at pressure mounting on senior officials from highly-influential political forces in the state and at the Centre.

“We have conducted several elections to cooperative banks and societies in



Supporters of AP Mahesh Cooperative Bank Ramesh Bung stage a protest at the office of the Cooperative Society Commissioner at Nampally on Tuesday, against the returning officer's decision to suspend the counting of votes. The poll was conducted to elect a new board of directors of the bank.

the past, but we have never faced this kind of pressure,” said a senior officer in the cooperative department on the condition of anonymity. The returning officer suspended on Monday evening after the counting of around 60 out

of the 70 EVMs were completed.

With the returning officer failing to resume counting on Tuesday, the supporters of Ramesh Bung staged a protest in front of the office of the commissioner of co-operative societies at

Gagan Vihar on Tuesday afternoon.

The Abids police reached the spot and detained 39 men and set them free later on.

■ Page 2: Legal action planned on returning officer

### INCOME-TAX MEN RAID YASHODA HOSPITALS, CHIEFS

ATHER MOIN | DC  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Income-Tax officials are conducting raids on offices of Yashoda Hospitals in Hyderabad and Secunderabad, in addition to its corporate office at Nagarjuna Hills in Punjagutta.

Income-Tax sleuths have further raided homes of Yashoda’s three directors Dr G. Surendar Rao (in-charge, Somajiguda branch), G. Ravinder Rao (in-charge, Secunderabad branch) and G. Devender Rao, chartered accountant (in-charge, Malakpet branch).

Included in the ambit of raids are several senior doctors of the hospitals.

More than 20 separate teams are involved in the multiple raids at several locations. Income-Tax officials were not allowing employees of the Yashoda Group to enter residences of their directors.

When *Deccan Chronicle* tried to contact officials of Yashoda for their reaction, none was available.

■ Page 2: Details of I-T raids awaited

## US confers ‘Legion of Merit’ honour on Modi

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

Sending a strong signal to China, US President Donald Trump on Tuesday conferred the “Legion of Merit”, America’s highest military decoration, on three leaders of the “Quad” countries, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The other two were Australian PM Scott Morrison and Japan’s former PM Shinzo Abe.

It is a prestigious decoration bestowed by the President, mostly to heads of state or government. In a statement Tuesday, the MEA said: “The President of the United States of America conferred the highest decoration, the Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander, to Prime Minister

The award was received on the PM’s behalf by India’s ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu. Earlier, in September, it had been conferred on the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Prior to that, the honour was last conferred nearly decades ago, in 1991.

This comes at a time when President Trump has just about a month left in office, after which he will be succeeded by President-elect Joe Biden.

It is a prestigious decoration bestowed by the President, mostly to heads of state or government.

In a statement Tuesday, the MEA said: “The President of the United States of America conferred the highest decoration, the Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander, to Prime Minister

Narendra Modi on 21 December 2020. The award is in recognition of the Prime Minister’s steadfast leadership and vision for India’s emergence as a global power, and exemplary contribution made by him for the advancement of the India-US strategic partnership.”

The Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander, is a “domed five-pointed American white star plaque of heraldic form bordered in purplish-red enamel 215/16 inches circumscribing diameter with 13 white stars on a blue field emerging from a circle of clouds; backing the star, a laurel wreath with pierced, crossed arrows pointing outward between each arm of the star and the wreath”. The reverse is engraved with the words “United States of America”.

## HC: Allow one more for MBBS counselling

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

The Telangana High Court on Tuesday directed the Kaloji Narayana Rao University of Health Sciences to allow another NEET ranker for the phase-2 counselling into first year MBBS course.

The court had already given directions with regard to one ranker on Monday. A division bench comprising Justices M.S. Ramachandra Rao and T. Amarnath Goud gave the interim direction in this regard based on the plea of the rankers that they were denied opportunity to participate in the phase-2 counselling following their admission in Siddhartha Medical College, Vijayawada, a state-wide institute, where Telangana has quota for 10 years after

● THE COURT had already given directions with regard to one ranker on Monday.

● DC FILED reports on faulty approach of KNRUHS, NTR varsity bifurcation. Counsel for the rankers Vedula Srinivas brought to the notice of the court that the varsity had communicated to all rankers on Monday that the allotments made during the phase-2 counselling were cancelled. *Deccan Chronicle* had filed reports highlighting the faulty approach of KNRUHS and NTR University of Health Sciences, with regard to students taking admission in state-wide institutes.

■ Page 2: Students denied opportunity for counselling

### TS SANCTIONS ₹2,931.18 CR FOR AASARA PENSIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

The state government has accorded administrative sanction for release of ₹2,931.18 crore towards payment of Aasara pensions.

Panchayat raj minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao said Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu has released these funds to ensure that old age people, physically challenged and other beneficiaries do not face hardships particularly when the Covid-19 pandemic is on.

The minister pointed out that 38,72,717 people, including old aged, physically challenged, destitute, beedi and handloom workers, toddy tappers, apart from filariasis and HIV patients, will benefit from Aasara pensions.



## IN BRIEF

**Masaipet to become a mandal HQ: CMO**

**Hyderabad:** Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao has agreed to form a new mandal in Medak district. According to Chief Minister's Office (CMO), responding to a request by Narsapur MLA Chilumula Madan Reddy, CM gave his consent for formation of Masaipet as a new mandal in the Toopran revenue division of Medak district. As per the CMO, the new Masaipet mandal will have three villages from Chegunta mandal and six from Yeldurthi mandal. Orders to this effect will be issued shortly.

**In TS Covid-19 tests now for ₹500**

**Hyderabad:** With increased availability of testing kits, Telangana government has reduced the rates of RT-PCR tests to ₹500 in laboratories and ₹ 750 for home testing. An order to this effect has been issued on Tuesday by Directorate of Health and Family Welfare. Earlier, the RT-PCR test was costing ₹850 while ₹1,200 was being charged for home testing. The state government has issued instructions to all accredited laboratories, hospitals and institutes to charge only the revised amounts of ₹500 in laboratories and ₹750 for home testing. District Medical and Health officials have been asked to monitor rates being charged and take action against those not complying with government's orders.

**STUDENTS DENIED OPPORTUNITY FOR COUNSELLING**

From Page 1

It is a norm that students who take admission in the phase-1 would move to a better college in sliding in phase-2. But Kaloji University authorities treated students who took admission in Siddhartha in the "not joined anywhere" category and denied them an opportunity to take part in phase-2 counselling. "The court directions shall be an eye-opener to the university authorities. Its a grave injustice done to Telangana students because the NTR University is allowing students from Andhra and Rayalaseema to slide to better college in AP even after they took admission in Siddhartha while the same is denied by Kaloji University to students from Telangana," a parent pointed out.

**MAN HELD FOR RAPING A MINOR IN HYDERABAD**

**Hyderabad, Dec. 22:** The Telangana police arrested a 21-year-old man in Shamshabad, Ranga Reddy district, for allegedly threatening and raping a minor girl, police said Tuesday.

In October, the complainant, along with her husband and their son, went to their native place in Assam, leaving her two daughters at her brother-in-law's house in Shamshabad, according to an official police statement.

They went down to Shamshabad on 11 December and took their two daughters to their rented home. On December 18, her elder daughter told her that one afternoon, in their absence, one Gopi, who lives on the fourth floor of her uncle's rented house in Shamshabad, called her and took her to the room where he tried to rape her.

He repeated the gruesome act several times, and the minor stayed silent out of fear and did not disclose the same to anyone, read the document. Under the POCSO Act, the police registered a case and launched an investigation into the case.

The accused was arrested on 20 December and sent to judicial custody. There were no photographs or videos found in the mobile phone confiscated from the accused's custody, police added. The accused Gopi Upadhyay is a resident of the Uttar Pradesh State Bahraich District. — *INN*

● **THEY WENT** down to Shamshabad on 11 December and took their two daughters to their rented home. On December 18, her elder daughter told her that one afternoon, in their absence, one Gopi, who lives on the fourth floor of her uncle's rented house in Shamshabad, called her and took her to the room where he tried to rape her.

# 358 recent UK returnees identified in Telangana

## Will undergo Covid tests in view of new virus strain from UK

**KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 22**

Around 358 persons who have flown in from the United Kingdom between December 15 and 21 have been identified in Telangana.

Covid-19 tests will be conducted on them and those who test negative will be kept in quarantine for a week while those testing positive would be offered institutional isolation.

According to the surveillance team, their test samples will be sent to the National Institute of

Virology for genome sequencing. In view of the new virus strain from UK SARS-Cov 2 – VUI-202012/01, contact tracing and containment will be carried out aggressively again. Dr Ramesh Reddy, director of medical education, said, "Mutations are common in new viruses. If there is a new variant, it will be treated separately. So far there has not been any report on the new corona variant."

Meanwhile, surveillance officials on the ground are back on the tracing and tracking job where they

are reaching out to people who have returned from the United Kingdom.

A senior health official in the surveillance team explained, "Safety protocols followed in SARS-Cov 2 have to be followed in the new variant."

There is nothing to panic and people must not stigmatize them. However, it is important that protocols of masks are followed strictly. People have given up on masks thinking that corona is gone but that is not true. Old and new variants both require one to abide by safety protocols."

Testing at airports has been increased and surveillance will be carried out across the state too. This is to ensure that if anyone has the new strain it can be identified and treated. Controlling its spread is very important to protect everyone and for that reason testing has to be intensified. The State government has stated that they will test 55,000 persons every day.

The Health department has asked all those who have returned from the UK to voluntarily contact them on 040-24651119.

## TS REPORTS 617 NEW COVID-19 CASES, 3 DEATHS

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 22**

Telangana has reported 617 new cases of Coronavirus, apart from three deaths. With this, the active cases in the state have reached 6,569.

Among the new cases, 103 have been reported from within the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits.

Following a new strain of SARS-CoV 2 emerging, Health Department officials have advised people to avoid participating in festivities that involve a large number of people. Safety protocols, including wearing of masks, must be strictly followed. People must ensure that proper care is taken when they are going out and returning home.

Authorities have collected 45,227 new samples for testing. This number will be increased to 55,000.

# British diplomat hails 'vibrant' UK-TS relations

**HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 22**

British Deputy High Commissioner Andrew Fleming speaks during a press conference at his residence in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

A month ahead of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's visit to India as the guest for Republic Day celebrations, British Deputy High Commissioner Andrew Fleming met reporters at his residence here on Tuesday. The focus of the briefing was on climate change and health.

Fleming spoke extensively on cooperation between India and the UK on issues related to Covid-19 pandemic and works undertaken in 2020.

On the mutual cooperation during the Coronavirus outbreak, he appreciated India's efforts to maintain the flow of medical goods for British citizens.

He said that the UK received 11 million face-masks and three million packets of paracetamol from India, and that the two countries continue to work together to keep the vital supply chains open.

"As the 'pharmacy capital of the world', India supplies more than 50 percent of the world's vaccines, and indeed Hyderabad currently manufactures the bulk of them. Over a billion doses of the UK's Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine are being manufactured at India's Serum Institute in Pune", he said.

On the efforts made specifically by the British in Hyderabad, he recalled the response to the pandemic by his team of 20 officials in the state, saying that getting British nationals within India and repatriating those wanting to return safely was a huge challenge.

"Telangana and Andhra Pradesh had relatively few British nationals, compared to Punjab and Gujarat, but the exercise to identify all who wished to head home and bring them from across the

region to join flights out of Hyderabad during the lockdown was a challenge that my small team rose to", he added.

He mentioned the recent purchase by UK-based pharma company, ZNZ Parma of a controlling stake in Hyderabad based Celon Laboratories worth ₹559 crore.

"These kind of figures underline the scale of confidence British companies have in the ecosystem in this region both to do business and invest, and equally the confidence of the Telugu speaking states with regard to business in the UK", he said.

On the trade and investment front, he said that the British Prime Minister's visit to India will boost cooperation in areas that matter to the UK, from trade and investment, to defence and security, and health and climate change, and these will be prioritised for international engagement throughout 2021.

He focused on the emerging tech partnership between the two countries in new-age industries. He said that sectors like pharma and life sciences, which are a natural strength for both Hyderabad and the UK, have seen a consolidation of the partnership.

"Indian companies continue to partner with their

UK counterparts in order to adopt the best of British technologies be it in sectors like deep tech, infrastructure or life sciences. Companies from the Telugu region have benefited by adopting UK tech and services to the tune of 45 million pounds this financial year. Similarly, companies from the Telugu region continue to benefit and expand their global reach using UK as the preferred destination.

Companies from the region invested 55 million pounds in the UK to grow their global footprint and those from Hyderabad to make a mark in the EU region", he said.

Fleming mentioned the education ties between India and the UK saying Indians were among the fastest growing nationalities of students in the UK.

During 2019-20, close to 50,000 Indian students successfully received Tier 4 visas to pursue higher education in the UK, an increase of 136% from the previous year, he said.

He also indicated the work being undertaken in the emerging Ed-tech sector between Telangana government and the UK representation in Hyderabad, saying that while more details cannot be divulged at this point, a meeting was held between the education department and his office on Monday.

# Bharat Biotech set for phase-III Covaxin trials

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 22**

There has been an overwhelming response from volunteers for human trials of Covaxin produced by Bharat Biotech against Covid-19. Within December, as many as 13,000 volunteers have come forward, including from small cities and towns in India, for trials of the vaccine. The target of the company is to enrol 26,000 volunteers.

The Pharma company states that getting so many people within a month is an achievement and the target of 26,000 volunteers will be met soon. It said volunteers have come forward from small towns like Bhopal and Nagpur. The company had to stop enrolling volunteers from these places as their number exceeded the limit set.

Hospitals, where vaccination is already taking place, have found that

● **BHARAT BIOTECH** has signed a binding letter of intent to co-develop Covaxin with OcuGen Inc for the United States. OcuGen will be responsible for clinical development, registration and commercialisation of the vaccine in the US.

vaccine-induced neutralising antibodies have been reported in two divergent strains of SARS-CoV-2.

Covid-19 strains have been collected by National Institute of Virology and developed in collaboration with Indian Council of Medical Research.

Bharat Biotech joint managing director Suchitra Ella said, "This is an unprecedented vaccine trial ever to take place in India. We are overwhelmed with the steady rise in participation. Support from pro-vaccine public health volunteers is a morale booster for us."

Bharat Biotech stated that Haryana minister Anil Vij, who received the first dose, will not be given the second one as he has acquired Covid-19 disease.

But his health is improving. They are frequently tracking the minister's medical development and evaluating his progress.

there is pain and swelling during vaccination, which is a minor reaction. After the first dose, volunteers have to wait for 30 minutes before leaving the hospital premises.

A peer-review article published in medrxiv.org on Covaxin safety and immunogenicity has noted that immunity response creates protection against the virus. The TH1 response of the cell for protection has been aggressive. The inactivated vaccine is evoking an intra-cellular response. The article concludes that

# Now nodal heads not to act on oral orders

**MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 22**

The nodal government agencies in the state capital have decided not to act on oral instructions from higher authorities in the state government. The decision has come after top bureaucrats have conveniently taken "U" turn on their oral instructions once something acquires political overtones.

Lower-rung officials too have been asked to act only on official instructions that too given in writing.

According to highly placed sources, a top bureaucrat has been orally instructing officials to resume Dharani Survey and focus on property tax collection. Ever since the outbreak of Covid-19, this bureaucrat has been bypassing higher ups of nodal agencies and directly giving instructions to low-rung officials. This way, he got involved in

demarcation of containment zones, Dharani survey, floods, GHMC elections and various other vital issues. This has led to unhappiness among top officials of all departments related to running and maintenance of the state capital.

Sources said that the top bureaucrat, without informing the GHMC commissioner, directly released through a close aide figures of financial assistance provided during the recent floods. When there was a huge public outcry over not all eligible getting the financial assistance, the bureaucrat chose to remain mum.

As a result, all heads of departments had to bear an earful from flood victims and politicians.

Very recently, during a recent review meeting, the top bureaucrat orally asked civic authorities to embark on Dharani survey, which had been put

on hold during October due to floods. Wizen by now, heads of departments asked him to send an official communiqué in a written form, before they start implementing these instructions. Heads of departments have also made it clear to lower-rung officials to act only upon formal instructions and ignore all informal ones.

Significantly, officials have not set any property tax collection targets.

They have also asked their staff not to touch any controversial subject until formal instructions are received from the state government.

Incidentally, the state government itself has issued oral instructions to officers that they avoid interactions with media to the extent possible. The government further asked them to not give interviews on any issue related to city development.

# Raids on loan app offices, 11 arrested

**NAVEEN KUMAR | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 22**

Following repeated complaints from victims in the last few weeks about harassment from loan apps, Cyber Crime Police of Hyderabad conducted raids at two places in Udyog Vihar of Gurgaon and three places in Hyderabad and arrested 11 individuals for running call centres.

The call centers were being run on behalf of four companies, Liufang Technologies Pvt. Ltd., Hotful Technologies Pvt. Ltd., Pinprint Technologies and Nabloom Technologies Pvt. Ltd., having registered offices in Bangalore. Their directors were identified as Jeevan Jyothi, Selvaraj Singi, Ravi Kumar Mangala and

● **Pinprint Technologies and Nabloom Technologies Pvt. Ltd.,** having registered offices in Bangalore.

Venkat, added the police.

The cops seized nearly 700 laptops, servers, computer systems among other things from the firms. Further investigation is on to find out the web of financial transactions, funding and technology base etc.

"The centres at Hyderabad employed nearly 600 telecallers and the one in Gurgaon had nearly 500. The heads and important members of these calling centers were arrested and identified as Bindu Rani, HR manager, Jyoti Malik, Sr manager, Amit,

Ramandeep Singh, manager, Prabhakar Dhangwal, director, Madhu Babu Singi, centre head, Manoj Kumar Singi, asst. manager, Mahesh Kumar Singi, admin, Tharun, centre head, Pavan Kumar, technical head, and Jeevan Jyothi, HR manager," police said.

"We have registered 16 FIRs in the last few weeks pertaining to issue of loans by alleged unauthorised loan apps and harassment of the victims", said the Police Commissioner of Hyderabad, Anjani Kumar, adding that the telecallers were following instructions from their heads in Indonesia. "The entire operation of these loan apps appears to be run with Chinese national- at the helm," said the official.

## Encroachment in progress



Kiosks come up on the footpath meant for pedestrians right in front of the HMDA office in Tarnaka.

— Gandhi

# DRDO, ESIC pact to boost healthcare system in state

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 22**

The Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) will continue its collaboration with ESIC Hospital and Medical College here in the city, a partnership that has seen many innovations in patient care systems developed, particularly on the Covid-19 treatment front.

The partnership between the two organisations, according to DRDO chairman Dr G. Sateesh Reddy will actively seek ways to put to use DRDO's research expertise in various fields, and the ESIC's health care experience and imperatives in developing equipment and systems aimed at reducing medicare costs for people.

Dr Reddy was at the ESIC Hospital at Sanathnagar on Tuesday

● **THE COLLABORATION** also saw development of protective equipment for doctors and nurses, Covid-19 safety enabled neo-natal incubators, among other things.

where he spoke with students and recalled how, since the outbreak of Covid-19, the two organisations have developed several systems, including Bio Safety Level 3 mobile virology, diagnostic and research labs.

It also saw development of protective equipment for doctors and nurses, Covid-19 safety enabled neo-natal incubators among other things.

The mobile labs, according to ESIC Hospital Dean Prof. M. Srinivas said the mobile labs have helped in conducting 60,117 Rt-PCR tests since their inauguration a few months ago.

## 55 STONES REMOVED FROM WOMAN'S KIDNEY USING ADVANCED NDOSCOPY

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 22**

Doctors of Aware Global Hospitals have removed 55 stones from the kidney of a 60-year-old woman using minimal invasive surgery and advanced endoscopy.

The patient had come with acute pain in abdomen, nausea and vomiting, apart from reporting pain during urination. Dr

P. Naveen Kumar, senior consultant urologist, said: "New technology helped us find small and medium-sized stones, which were creating obstruction at the pelvic ureteric junction. Minimal invasive technology helped us remove these stones without any complications."

The patient has recovered very well after the surgery.

## Emaar scam accused seeks quashing of FIR

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 22**

One of the accused in the Emaar - APIC properties scam, Koneru Pradeep, son of Koneru Rajendra Prasad, the kingpin in the Emaar scam and a director of Emaar Hills Township Project Limited, approached Telangana High Court seeking to quash the FIR registered against him by Enforcement Directorate

(ED) on charges of money-laundering.

The ED had filed a case against him in 2012, based on a confession statement by Tummala Ranga Rao MD of Stylish Homes Pvt Ltd, the marketing firm which sold 134 villas in Emaar projects to high-profile persons at a lesser price.

Pradeep says in his petition that he has nowhere connected to Emaar Properties.







SHORT TAKES

BOARD EXAMS ON HOLD TILL FEB. 2021: MINISTER

New Delhi, Dec. 22: Union minister of education Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' on Tuesday ruled out conducting board examinations for classes 10 and 12 till February next year in view of the Covid-19 situation.

Usually, the practical exams are conducted in January and theory exams begin every year in February and conclude in March. The minister said a decision about when the exams will be conducted will be taken later after assessment of the situation and consultation with stakeholders.

"Keeping the current situation in mind, it has been decided that the board exams for classes 10 and 12 will not be conducted till February next year. CBSE is making necessary preparations for conducting the 2021 examinations. A decision on the exam schedule will be taken later after assessment of situation and more consultations with stakeholders," Nishank said in an online interaction with teachers.

With no clarity on the board exam dates yet, several schools have already conducted pre-board exams online to keep the students prepared. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) had earlier this month announced that board exams in 2021 will be conducted in written mode and not online.

Schools across the country were closed in March to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. They were partially reopened in some states from October 15.

However, a few states have decided to keep them closed in view of a spike in the number of infections. The board exams had to be postponed mid-way in March. They were later cancelled and the results announced on the basis of an alternative assessment scheme.

VIT STUDENTS GET 7,403 JOB OFFERS DESPITE COVID-19

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Though it is Coronavirus pandemic times, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) has emerged as the top educational institution in India getting 7,403 job offers at campus recruitments conducted by 382 companies. All campus recruitments at the institute's four locations have been conducted virtually and 4,503 students have received multiple offers.

IT majors Cognizant, Infosys, Wipro and TCS held their annual campus recruitments at VIT's four campuses in Vellore, Chennai, Amaravati and Bhopal. Results of the recruitments were announced by Dr. G. Viswanathan, chancellor of VIT. Other IT service companies like Virtusa, Hexaware, CapGemini and Mindtree also recruited in big numbers from VIT.

TCS and Wipro, like earlier, have recruited students with high CTCs ranging over ₹6.5 lakh to ₹10 lakh per annum. Microsoft has recruited several students with a highest CTC of ₹44 Lakhs per annum.

Wipro and VIT hold Limca Book of Records for highest number of Dream offers (278 offers from 2020 batch). Wipro and VIT broke their own record by having 419 offers from the 2021 graduating batch. VIT has already entered into Limca Book of Records 10 times for highest number of placements. VIT started its campus placements with post graduate (PG) internship and placements in May 2020. 144 companies have already completed their remote hiring process and have selected 1,028 PG students from 2-year M. Tech, MCA and M. Sc courses.

Maoists force Odia family to flee home

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC  
BHUBANESWAR, DEC. 22

A family of Totaguda village, part of Swabhimani Anchal in Odisha's Malkangiri district on Tuesday left their home after the Maoists threatened them to leave the village suspecting them to be police informers. According to reports, Maoists suspected Manu Galeri as a police informer and asked him to leave the village along with his wife and daughter in a praja court held on Monday.

The extremists alleged that Manu is passing information to the police about their move-

India must work for Naya Bharat, says PM

Modi claims nation is on a path today where everyone is assured of their constitutional rights

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that for the sake of development, ideological differences should take a back seat and these should not be seen through a political prism.

Addressing the Aligarh Muslim University's centenary celebrations via video conferencing, Modi said that the nation was on a path today where everyone, irrespective of reli-

gion, was assured of their constitutional rights and their future, and where no community was left behind.

The government's schemes for the poor were reaching all sections of the people "without any religious bias", he claimed.

"Whatever religion we are born in, it is important to see how to blend our aspirations with national goals. There can be ideological divides in society but when it comes to the



nation's development, everything else is secondary. When it comes to the nation, there is no question of ideological differences. It is logical for me to

**WHATEVER RELIGION** we are born in, it is important to see how to blend our aspirations with national goals. There can be ideological divides in society but when it comes to the nation's development, everything else is secondary. When it comes to the nation, there is no question of ideological differences.

— NARENDRA MODI  
Prime Minister

say this here because AMU produced many freedom fighters — they had their ideological differences but they set that aside for freedom. Like freedom united

them, we have to work on a common ground for 'Naya Bharat'," he said.

The PM said that "when our thoughts are focused on a new India foremost,

then such elements will have diminished space. Politics and society can wait, but the country's development cannot wait. In the last century, a lot of time has been lost over differences. There is no more time to lose".

Modi also referred to the law banning triple talaq. "There was a time when the dropout rate of our Muslim daughters was over 70 per cent. This was a big impediment to the development of Muslims. For 70 years, over 70 per

cent of Muslim daughters were forced to drop out. The government got toilets made in schools. The Muslim girls' dropout rate is now reduced to 30 per cent," he said.

The AMU, which was known as the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College initially, was renamed Aligarh Muslim University on December 1, 1920. However, it was formally inaugurated as a university on December 17 that year.

Japan backs India against stand-off with China

PAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

In a message to China, India and Japan on Tuesday strongly opposed any attempts to unilaterally change the status quo in the region by coercion or any activities that escalate tensions, during defence minister Rajnath Singh telephonic conversation with his Japanese counterpart Nobuo Kishi.

This is seen as a strong backing of India's position that China should restore status quo at the line of actual control (LAC) in Ladakh where both armies are involved in a military stand-off from last eight months.

In recent years there has been an increase in defence co-operation between India and Japan both of which are dealing with an aggressive China in the region. India and Japan are part of the Quad which Beijing sees as an anti-China alliance. Indian and Japanese navies have been conducting exercise bilaterally and were also part of "Malabar Naval exercise" along with US and Australia.

During the conversation, Singh and Kishi shared their views on highlighting the importance of a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law, said a statement by Japanese defence ministry.

The two ministers also exchanged views on regional situations, including the East China Sea and the South China Sea, and reaffirmed their continued close cooperation. "In this context, the ministers affirmed their intention to continue

Underground hosp. along China border

RAJNISH SHARMA | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

In a first and an unprecedented ramping up of security infrastructure development along the Indo-China border, security agencies are constructing underground state-of-the-art bunker hospitals complete with operation theatres, weather proof dormitories and storage for arms, ammunition and other equipments.

What is significant is that all these facilities will be in underground "explosion proof bunkers" that are being constructed all along 3,500 km long Indo-China border. Sources claim what makes this hugely strategic project even more unique is that these "bunker facilities" will not be easily traceable by enemy surveillance. So far bunkers are normally used on other borders like along with Pakistan and Bangladesh for merely surveillance duties at forward location.

But the security infra-

structure being developed along the China border is going to be unique and different as not only will it be extremely state-of-the-art but also would be underground so that these "assets and the security personnel using them can be well protected from enemy forces."

Considering the highly strategic nature of the entire project it is being kept as a closely guarded secret, specially the location of these bunkers, so that they cannot be targeted.

Even the implementation of the entire project is being monitored at the highest levels in the Government with senior officials from multiple security forces personally supervising it.

These all weather bunkers will also provide much needed respite to the troops who have to face harsh and adverse weather conditions, with temperature at times dropping to -30 degrees, in forward locations at high altitudes.

exchanging views in light of the current events occurring in the region and concurred in sending a clear message that they strongly oppose any attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by coercion or any activities that escalate tension," said the statement issued by Japanese defence ministry.

Singh and Kishi affirmed that they would continue to vigorously promote defense cooperation and exchanges to uphold and reinforce the free and open Indo-Pacific while maintaining close communication between respective defense authorities, said Japanese defence ministry statement.

Kerala Gov. turns down spl session on farm Laws

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC. 22

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan has declined permission to convene special session of Assembly to discuss Centre's new farm laws.

The Governor rejected the Cabinet's recommendation saying that there is no urgency for convening a special session on December 23. The state government was planning to pass a resolution against the farm laws.

Earlier, the Governor asked the state government

to furnish reasons for convening the session at such a short notice. Even though the reasons were conveyed to him, the Governor reportedly denied permission for second time.

Agriculture minister V.S. Sunil Kumar said that the Governor's action was highly unexpected. He said the Punjab and Delhi governments had convened special sessions of Assembly to protest against the farm laws. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had even torn the copies of the bill on the floor of the House in protest.

The opposition Congress

led UDF has also criticised the Governor's decision to decline permission for the special session of Assembly.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan who was on a tour to Kollam and Pathanamthitta district, returned to Thiruvananthapuram in the evening. However, instead of insisting on the session, the ruling LDF is planning to fight the Governor's action politically.

Earlier, Speaker P. Sreeramakrishnan also sent a communication to the Governor listing out the reasons for convening the special session.

POLL RESULTS

Gupkar alliance poised to win big in DDC polls

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC  
SRINAGAR, DEC. 22

The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), a conglomerate of J&K's mainstream regional Opposition parties and their allies from the national Left parties, is poised to win big in the Union Territory's first-ever District Development Council (DDC) elections.

However, its arch-rival, the BJP, has also performed well, mainly in the Jammu region. What is also spectacular for the saffron party is that it has won an election for the

first time from any seat in the predominantly Muslim Kashmir Valley.

The PAGD led by former chief minister Farooq Abdullah won 70 of the 177 seats the results of which were declared till this report was filed and is leading in over 40 seats. A total of 48 seats have gone to the BJP, while its candidates have a comfortable lead over their rivals in over 30 seats.

The Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP), known in local political circles as the BJP's tacit ally, has bagged seven seats and the

Congress 14 seats. One seat has gone in favour of the National Panthers Party. The Independents — some known to be proxies of the BJP — and others too have made a mark by winning as many 38 seats so far.

Former chief minister Omar Abdullah termed the results an eye-opener for the BJP and its "proxy political party" (an obvious reference to JKAP), and said the people had rejected the Centre's move to strip J&K of its special status and splitting it up into two Union territories in August last year.

Earlier, in a tweet, he also said: "The trends that have emerged in the DDC polls in J&K are very encouraging for the @JKPAGD. The BJP had made this election a prestige issue about Art 370 & J&K's special status. The people have now spoken & it's for those who believe in democracy to pay heed to these voices"

Among the PAGD winners is Waheed Ur Rehman Parra, a youth leader of its constituent People's Democratic Party (PDP), who was arrested by the National Investigation Agency on

charges of helping separatist militants on November 25, a day after he filed his nomination papers from home district Pulwama.

Parra polled 1,323 votes, defeating his nearest BJP rival Sajad Ahmad Raina by a margin of 1,002 votes. PDP president and former CM Mehbooba Mufti tweeted: "Couldn't be prouder of PDP's @parawahid who won his maiden election by a huge margin of votes. Despite being arrested on baseless charges right after filing his nomination people have shown their love &

trust for Waheed. Hope justice prevails."

The BJP's victors from the Valley are Aijaz Hussain (Khomoh-II seat in DDC Srinagar), Aijaz Ahmad Khan (Tulail seat in Bandipora district) and Minha Latief (Kakapora (Pulwama).

After being declared winner, Hussain told reporters outside the counting centre: "This is a win for the BJP. The propaganda has been bust as people have shown their faith in the Prime Minister and his policies. This is a message that nationalists are prospering in Kashmir."



A health worker guides passengers to a quarantine centre on their arrival from the United Kingdom, at the Chennai International Airport on Tuesday. — PTI

8 passengers found Covid +ve on arrival from Britain

VINEETA PANDEY | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

Eight passengers were found to be Covid-19 positive upon their arrival from Britain in late Monday night flights in different Indian cities. These passengers had arrived on different flights from London in Delhi (5), Kolkata (2) and Chennai (1), and have been sent for institutional quarantine. The Central health agencies are closely monitoring their health and their samples have been picked up for genome sequencing to see if they are infected with the new mutated virus detected in the United Kingdom. Several states have quarantined all those with recent travel history to the UK and collected their swabs for testing.

India has intensified its airport surveillance in view of the new, fast-spreading mutated strain of the Sars-CoV-2 (Coronavirus) detected in the United Kingdom. The Centre on Tuesday also issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) for Epidemiological Surveillance and Response in the context of a new SARS-CoV-2 virus variant detected in the UK.

The new SOPs say that all positive cases of incoming passengers have to be sent for genome sequencing, and if the report of the sequencing is consistent with the current SARS-CoV-2 virus

Maha govt issues SOP for arrivals from Europe

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC  
MUMBAI, DEC. 22

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday issued an SOP (Standard Operating Protocol) for the passengers arriving from Europe, South Africa and Middle East countries and flights coming from the airports of these countries. As per the SOP, The passengers, who do not have symptoms, will have to undergo 14 days of 'mandatory paid' institutional quarantine at arrival city.

Even while going to quarantine centers, the passengers need to pay for the transportation facilities. These passengers shall not be allowed outside the designated quarantine facility before 14

days in any condition. The state has also asked municipal commissioners to appoint a nodal officer in order to ensure the implementation of the SOP in a letter and spirit.

The SOP also mentioned that an area at the far end of the airport terminal should be identified and prepared for receiving these flights. The designated area should have adequate air-bridges, so as to receive the flights in a staggered manner, to avoid overcrowding.

The SOP, which has been issued by Maharashtra's chief secretary Sanjay Kumar, stated, "Sudden emergence of a fast-spreading variant of Covid-19 in UK, believed to be up to 70% more transmissible than the original strain is

a cause of concern. In view of this, the Government of Maharashtra has formulated SOP, which will come into effect immediately."

It further said, "Municipal commissioner of the city where an airport is located shall identify different category hotels as institutional quarantine facility and shall also earmark a dedicated health care facility for identified suspects. He shall also appoint a nodal officer to see implementation of these SOPs."

The state has instructed the Airport authorities that the designated area should have adequate separate, immigration, luggage and custom centers/areas for managing these flight passengers.

protocol will be given, the patient shall be tested on the 14th day, after having tested positive in the initial test. In case the sample is found positive on the 14th day, further samples may be taken until his two consecutive samples taken 24 hours apart are tested negative," the SOP said.

Niti Aayog member (health) V.K. Paul said on Tuesday that though the mutation found in the UK

is an "adverse development" as it enhances the transmissibility or the spread of the Covid-19 virus by 70 per cent and acts as a super spreader, the mutated virus is of no immediate threat in terms of affecting the disease's severity or increasing deaths of Covid patients.

He added there was no need to panic as the mutated virus was yet to be traced in India.



## SHORT TAKES

### PLANE CRASHES ALONG TEXAS ROAD, 1 KILLED

**Grand Prairie, Dec. 22:** At least one person was killed when a small plane crashed along a highway service road in North Texas shortly after taking off Monday afternoon, authorities said.

The Federal Aviation Administration said the single-engine Wheeler Express CT crashed about 1 miles (1.61 kilometres) west of the Grand Prairie Municipal Airport, located in the city just west of Dallas.

Grand Prairie Fire Chief Robert Pite said witnesses said the plane came down rapidly, hit a telephone pole and then struggled another 500 feet (152.40 metres) hitting the concrete multiple times before hitting a pickup truck traveling on the service road.

Pite said the person in the truck was slightly injured and was taken to the hospital.

## RIVER SURGE HITS CANYON GROUP, 4 DEAD

**Mexico City, Dec. 22:** Rain unleashed a surge of water that swept away most of a 21-member group on a canyoning expedition in southern Mexico, killing at least four people and leaving three missing, authorities said Monday.

The civil defence office of Veracruz state said five more people were injured in the Rio Oro canyon, near the Gulf of Mexico. The accident occurred Sunday, and the office said searches continued Monday with police, volunteer rescue groups and firefighters participating.

The office did not release the names or nationalities of the victims, but such expeditions are popular among young Mexican tourists.

Canyoning involves hiking, climbing, rappelling and swimming through river canyons. The Rio Oro canyon includes waterfalls and relatively narrow rock passages.

## CABINET RESHUFFLED IN INDONESIA

**Jakarta, Dec. 22:** Indonesia's president announced a Cabinet reshuffle Tuesday following the arrest of two of his ministers on corruption charges and his administration's lackluster pandemic response.

The Cabinet shake-up comes amid surging Coronavirus cases in the world's fourth most populous nation. Indonesia's economy has fallen into recession for the first time since the Asian financial crisis more than two decades ago as the country struggles to control the pandemic.

Four ministers lost their jobs, including Health Minister Terawan Agus Putranto, and two others were rotated to more important positions, ending weeks of speculation about the possible changes. President Joko Widodo chose the mayor of Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, to become the social affairs minister, replacing Juliari Batubara, who was detained by anti-corruption commission on December 6. Batubara was accused of taking bribes related to the government's COVID-19 aid distribution.

## U.S. POST OFFICE NAMED AFTER SLAIN SIKH COP

**Washington, Dec. 22:** US President Donald Trump on Monday signed into law a legislation to name a Texas post office after slain Sikh police officer Sandeep Singh Dhaliwal, who was gunned down in the line of duty during a routine traffic stop in Houston a year ago.

Trump signed H R 5317, which designates the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 315 Addicks Howell Road in Houston, Texas, as the Deputy Sandeep Singh Dhaliwal Post Office Building, the White House said in a statement.

The post office named after Dhaliwal in Houston is only the second US post office to be named after an Indian American. The first one was named after the first Indian American Congressman Dalip Singh Saund in Southern California in 2006. The House of Representatives and the Senate had recently passed the legislation in this regard. In his remarks on the Senate floor, Texas Senator Ted Cruz had said that Dhaliwal was a hero and a trailblazer whose commitment to his faith will inspire generations of Sikhs and other religious minorities.

# Vax may work on UK virus: Pharma

## But CEO of BioNTech says further studies are needed to be completely certain

**Berlin, Dec. 22:** German pharmaceutical company BioNTech is confident that its Coronavirus vaccine works against the new UK variant, but further studies are needed to be completely sure, its chief executive said Tuesday. The variant, detected mainly in London and the southeast of England in recent weeks, has sparked concern worldwide because of signs that it may spread more easily. While there is no indication it causes more serious illness, numerous countries in Europe and beyond have restricted travel from the UK as a result.

"We don't know at the moment if our vaccine is also able to provide protection against this new variant," CEO Ugur Sahin told a news conference the day after the vaccine was approved for use in the European Union. "But scientifically, it is highly likely that the immune response by this vaccine also can deal with the new virus variants." Sahin said that the proteins on the UK variant are 99% the same as on the prevailing strains, and therefore BioNTech has "scientific confidence" that its vaccine will be effective.

"But we will know only if the experiment is done and we will need about two weeks from now to get the data," he said. "The likelihood that our vaccine works ... is relatively high." Should the vaccine need to be adjusted for the new variant the company could do so in about 6 weeks, Sahin said, though regulators might have to approve the changes before the shots can be used.

Having to adjust the vaccine would be a blow for the rollout of immunisation campaigns and rein in the pandemic that has so far killed more than 1.7 million people worldwide. BioNTech's vaccine, which was developed together with US pharmaceutical company Pfizer, has been authorised for use in more than 45 countries, including Britain, the United States and the EU.

Hundreds of thousands of people have already received the shots. The companies submitted data to regulators showing the vaccine, which goes by the brand name COMIRNATY in Europe, is 95 per cent effective in preventing infection with Covid-19.

"All countries across the EU that have requested doses will receive them in the next five days, the very initial supply, and that will be followed up next week with further supplies," said Sean Marett, BioNTech's chief commercial officer. Several EU countries have said they plan to start vaccinating on Sunday.

Germany's health minister, Jens Spahn, said he expects the country to receive more than 1.3 million doses by the end of this year. Germany is among European countries that have banned flights from the UK because of the new variant there.

We don't know at the moment if our vaccine is also able to provide protection against this new variant. But scientifically, it is highly likely that the immune response by this vaccine can deal with the new virus variants.

— UGUR SAHIN  
BioNTech CEO



US President-elect Joe Biden receives a Covid-19 vaccination from Tabé Mase, Nurse Practitioner and Head of Employee Health Services, at the Christiana Care campus in Newark, Delaware on Monday. — AFP

## Probe finds Trump officials attacked CDC virus reports

**Washington, Dec. 21:** Trump administration political appointees tried to block or change more than a dozen government reports that detailed scientific findings about the spread of the Coronavirus, a House panel investigating the alleged interference said Monday.

Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C., said his Coronavirus committee investigators have found evidence of a "political pressure campaign" to "bully" professionals at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in what may have been an attempt to "cripple the

● **INVESTIGATORS HAVE** found evidence of a "political pressure campaign" to "bully" professionals at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in what may have been an attempt to "cripple the

nation's Coronavirus response in a misguided effort to achieve herd immunity.

## Spain holds Christmas lottery

**Madrid, Dec. 22:** Children from Madrid's San Ildefonso school have begun calling out prize-winning numbers in Spain's bumper Christmas lottery known as "EL Gordo" (the fat one), which is being held under tight conditions because of the Coronavirus

pandemic. The lottery will shell out 400,000 euros (\$489,000) or some 325,000 euros after tax, to holders of 20-euro tickets bearing the top-prize number.

The incredibly popular lottery dishes out a total of 2.4 billion euros in prizes

ety can be best protected by allowing younger people to get infected and develop natural immunity until vaccines are widely available.

Accusing Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield of stonewalling his investigation, Clyburn issued subpoenas compelling them to turn over reams of documents and emails by Dec. 30. The committee's findings were detailed in a letter to Azar and Redfield that centred on the actions of two political appointees earlier this year. — AP

## Spain holds Christmas lottery

this year, much of it in small prizes. Other lotteries have bigger individual top prizes but Spain's Christmas lottery, staged each year on Dec. 22, is ranked as the world's richest for the total prize money involved.

— AP

## Congress okays \$900 bn relief bill

**Washington, Dec. 22:** Congress passed a \$900 billion pandemic relief package that would finally deliver long-sought cash to businesses and individuals and resources to vaccinate a nation confronting a frightening surge in Covid-19 cases and deaths.

Lawmakers tacked on a \$1.4 trillion catchall spending bill and thousands of pages of other end-of-session business in a massive bundle of bipartisan legislation as Capitol Hill prepared to close the books on the year. The bill approved Monday night went to President Donald Trump for his signature, which was expected in the coming days.

The relief package, unveiled Monday afternoon, sped through the House and Senate in a matter of hours. The Senate cleared the massive package by a 92-6 vote after the House approved the Covid-19 package by another lopsided vote, 359-53. The tallies were a bipartisan coda to months of partisanship and politicking as lawmakers wrangled over the

relief question, a logjam that broke after President-elect Joe Biden urged his party to accept a compromise with top Republicans that is smaller than many Democrats would have liked. The bill combines Coronavirus-fighting funds with financial relief for individuals and businesses. It would establish a temporary \$300 per week supplemental jobless benefit and a \$600 direct stimulus payment to most Americans, along with a new round of subsidies for hard-hit businesses, restaurants, and theatres and money for schools, health care providers and renters facing eviction.

The 5,593-page legislation — by far the longest bill ever — came together Sunday after months of battling, posturing and post-election negotiating that reined in a number of Democratic demands as the end of the congressional session approached. Biden was eager for a deal to deliver long-awaited help to suffering people and a boost to the economy. — AP

# Scientists probe virus variant's spread in kids

**London, Dec. 22:** Scientists in the UK are investigating the impact of a new mutant variant of Coronavirus, named VUI-202012/01, on children and whether its faster transmission in parts of England is down to the younger segment of the population.

The government's New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (Nervtag) is monitoring the data to analyse this arc of the variant,

which has led over 40 countries, including India, to suspend travel to and from the UK in order to try and contain the more infectious mutation.

Earlier strains of Coronavirus found it harder to infect children than adults, with one explanation being that children have fewer of the doorways called the ACE2 receptor the virus uses to enter a human body's cells.

Professor Wendy Barclay,

● **EARLIER STRAINS** of Coronavirus found it harder to infect children than adults, with one explanation being that children have fewer of the doorways called the ACE2 receptor the virus uses to enter a human body's cells.

from Nervtag and Imperial College London, said the mutations to the virus appeared to be making it easier

to breach those doorways. "Therefore children are equally susceptible, perhaps, to this virus as adults, and therefore given their mixing patterns, you would expect to see more children being infected," she explained.

Experts do not believe that the new version is any greater threat to children's health and the scientist behind the world's first approved vaccine against Covid-19 has said the

Pfizer/BioNTech jabs will work against the strain, though further investigation remains underway.

"The likelihood that our vaccine works is relatively high," said Ugur Sahin, chief executive of the German co-developer of the vaccine BioNTech.

Speaking on Bild TV in Germany, Sahin said his company would investigate the mutation in the coming days and that he viewed the matter with a

degree of soberness.

His message of some confidence comes as the UK reached the half a million milestone for vaccinations of the jabs, delivered to the elderly and most vulnerable sections of the country's population.

"I can today announce that over half a million people, more than 500,000 people in the UK, have now received their first dose," Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced. — PTI

## EDUCATION | AFFECTED

## Drop in kindergarten enrolment is 30% of total reduction across the 33 states

# Covid-19: Enrolment in US public schools dips

**Washington, Dec. 22:** Fearful of sending her two children back to school as the coronavirus pandemic raged in Mississippi, Angela Atkins decided to give virtual learning a chance this fall.

Almost immediately, it was a struggle. Their district in Lafayette County didn't offer live instruction to remote learners, and Atkins' fourth grader became frustrated with doing worksheets all day and missed interacting with teachers and peers. Her seventh grader didn't receive the extra support he did at school through his special education plan and started getting failing grades. After nine weeks, Atkins switched to home

schooling.

It got to the point where it felt like there was no other choice to make, she said. I was worried for my kids' mental health. By taking her children off the public school rolls, Atkins joined an exodus that one state schools chief has warned could become a national crisis. An analysis of data from 33 states obtained by Chalkbeat and *The Associated Press* shows that public K-12 enrolment this fall has dropped across those states by more than 500,000 students, or 2%, since the same time last year.

That is a significant shift considering that enrolment overall in those states has typically gone up by

● **AN ANALYSIS** of data from 33 states obtained by Chalkbeat and *The Associated Press* shows that public K-12 enrolment this fall has dropped across those states by more than 500,000 students, or 2%, since the same time last year.

around half a percent in recent years. And the decline is only likely to become more pronounced, as several large states have yet to release information. Chalkbeat and AP surveyed all 50 states, but 17 have not released comparable enrolment numbers yet.

The data, which in many states is preliminary, offers the clearest picture yet of the pandemic's devastating toll on public school enrolment a decline that could eventually have dire consequences for school budgets that are based on headcounts.

But even more alarming, educators say, is that some of the students who left may not be in school at all. I would like to hope that many of them are from homes where their parents have taken responsibility on their own to provide for their education, said Pedro Noguera, the dean of the University of Southern California's Rosier School of Education, adding that affluent fami-

lies will have an easier time doing that. My fear is that large numbers have simply gotten discouraged and given up. So far, many states have held off on making school budget cuts in the face of enrolment declines. But if enrolment doesn't rise, funding will be hit.

We've been trying to scream from the hilltops for quite some time that this is happening, Kirsten Baesler, North Dakota's schools superintendent, said of the enrolment declines. And it could be a national crisis if we don't put some elbow grease into it.

The declines are driven by a combination of factors brought on by the pandemic. Fewer parents enrol-

led their children in kindergarten, and some students left public schools for other learning environments. At the same time, students who are struggling to attend classes, as many are right now, may have been purged from public school rolls for missing many days in a row. That is a typical practice, though there is some more flexibility now.

The Chalkbeat/AP analysis shows that a drop in kindergarten enrolment accounts for 30% of the total reduction across the 33 states making it one of the biggest drivers of the nationwide decline. Kindergarten is not required in over half of states.

— AP

## 4.6K FROM UK QUARANTINED IN TURKEY

**Ankara, Dec. 22:** Turkey has identified and quarantined 4,603 airline passengers who arrived from the United Kingdom on and after December 14, Turkish Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said Tuesday.

Flights from the UK, South Africa, Denmark and the Netherlands were suspended on Sunday evening in response to a new strain of Coronavirus said to be circulating there. Koca tweeted that 335 passengers flying from those countries at the time of Sunday's announcement were tested for the virus on arrival in Turkey and isolated.

— AP



# DECCAN Chronicle

23 DECEMBER 2020

## Act quickly to stave off new virus strain threat

The decision of the Union government to take pre-emptive steps against the spread of a mutated version of SARS-CoV-2 that plunged Britain into an unprecedented crisis and the rest of the world into the fear of another wave is welcome. The stoppage of the air traffic to and from Britain till December 31 and the strict conditions on those who travel to India after a visit to that country should be able to help India save itself from another devastating attack of the virus. Several other European nations, which are already into the second phase of national lockdown due to surge in the Covid numbers, are also taking early steps to keep the new virus off its limits by virtually stopping all contacts with the island nation.

India has of late been witnessing a steady decrease in the daily number of caseload though states such as Maharashtra and Kerala show no signs of a thaw. In fact, Maharashtra, which has the highest total caseload, has imposed night curfew and tightened some other controls. Kerala, which managed to contain the virus in the initial stages and has kept the fatality rate low even now, has already warned of a major spike in the coming days. The state government fears that the elections to the local bodies held last week could turn a super spreader event. Delhi government has already imposed a slew of controls and augmented the healthcare facilities to successfully ward off a major outbreak. Fortunately, India looks like having averted a major outbreak which experts feared would visit us after the festival season.

It is in this background that the new threat has emerged. The mutant version, now referred to as VUI (Variant Under Investigation) 202012/01 or known as B.1.1.7, is not more dangerous than the original one but can spread faster, according to experts. Scientists are yet to decode the virus, first noticed in Southern England in December, whether the mutation makes it spread faster. According to Public Health England, the executive agency of the British department of health and social care, the mutations in the spike protein of the virus can change how the micro-organism interacts with human cells. Scientists insist that the vaccines, which have been given emergency authorisation, and those which are in the pipeline, will work against the new variant, too.

While science and scientists grapple with the pandemic and its causes, the non-medical measures come into the focus more than ever. Public health experts insist on the importance of Covid-appropriate protocols such as social distancing, wearing of masks and washing of hands to keep the virus away. The governments should not hesitate to impose restrictions on gatherings wherever necessary before it gets too late; political, social and religious events and festivals offer no excuse to be lax. The message the mutated virus would like to pass on to humanity is that no amount of caution is too much until such time when vaccines have been made available and a sufficient number of people are inoculated to attain herd immunity.

## Tumble and roll

The reports of the emergence of a new highly-transmissible strain of coronavirus in the United Kingdom and a resultant suspension of air connectivity to London by several countries, including India, sent shockwaves across the global financial world. Being a part of the global financial system, India's key stock market indices — the Sensex and the Nifty — too suffered blow-backs, wiping out over ₹6.5 lakh crore worth investor wealth in just one day.

For the general public, the market reaction may appear insane. Having grown phenomenally after the worst crash during the pandemic, one may wonder as to

**While the world's toughest lockdown had wiped out nearly a quarter of economic productivity in the April-June quarter, the economic growth showed a robust recovery in September.**

ended the talk of doomsday scenarios since the economy is largely driven by domestic consumption. While the developments in the UK may not have an immediate impact on India, full economic recovery, however, is predicated on the successful containment of coronavirus. Until normal economic activity remains unchecked in the country, external developments may not have a lasting impact on the economy. The government and people, therefore, must not lower their guard against the highly-transmissible pathogen.

### DECCAN CHRONICLE

**KAUSHIK MITTER**  
Editor

**K. SUDHAKAR**  
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

**Hyderabad:** 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax: 040-27805256  
**Vijayawada:** No.C-3 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234

**Visakhapatnam:** Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P.), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285

**Rajahmundry:** Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208

**Anantapur:** Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904

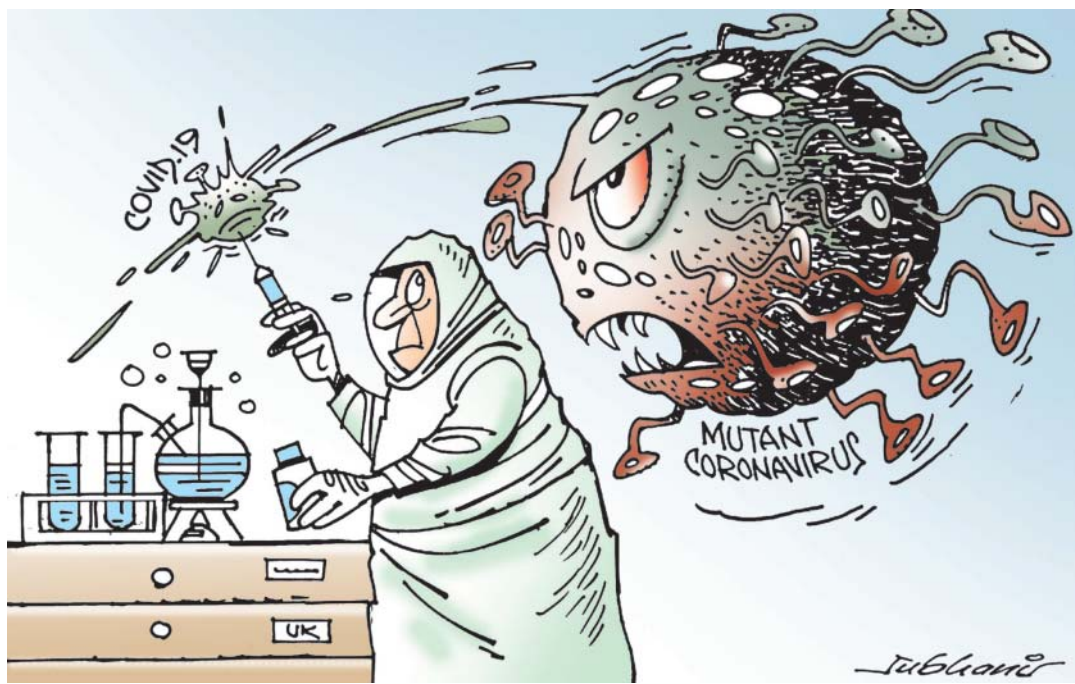
**Karimnagar:** Survey No.1341, Vavilalpalay Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433

**Nellore:** Survey No.527/2, Burrupur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemmudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580

**Chennai:** SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325

**Coimbatore:** 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255  
Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Subhani



## Bhoomi putra for Bengal: Has BJP made a mistake?



Shikha Mukerjee

The man for all election seasons, Amit Shah, Union home minister and the BJP's craftiest leader, came to West Bengal and radically revised the strategy for conquest. The state's saffronisation has been Mr Shah's goal for years. With the acquisition of a "bhoomi putra" — an experienced, violence-hardened, mass leader with charismatic appeal in Suwendu Adhikari from Trinamul Congress, Mr Shah has found a face to challenge Mamata Banerjee. Bengali identity, Mr Shah has had to acknowledge, transcends all the different ways in which the BJP slices and splices Hindutva issues to produce electoral victories with remarkable regularity.

It's a belated realisation that neither the communal card, nor polarisation, nor verbal assaults against dynastic politics, would pose a serious threat to the fiery, feisty political war veteran Mamata Banerjee, who has charisma in loads and local knowledge that can outmatch the collective brains of the BJP machine. It's also an admission that lightweight Bengalis as proxies for Narendra Modi would be dismissed with contempt by a culturally and politically fanatically proud people.

From one visit to the next in the space of a month, Mr Shah has finally realised that he has to back away from two issues he had identified as bestsellers in the West Bengal election market. The first is aggressively selling the Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens as a cleanup mechanism to weed out Muslim illegals on the plea that it will be "considered" for action only after the Covid-19 vaccines are rolled out. The second is shooting down the idea that President's

Rule was being seriously considered before the West Bengal elections. Pulling no punches, Mr Shah seems to have told BJP state party chief Dilip Ghosh and West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar to pipe down. These are sure signs that Mr Shah is only now beginning to gauge that West Bengal is the most complex undertaking he has ever had to handle. There is no template in the BJP's playbook that can be copied and pasted over West Bengal.

To convince the voter that the BJP is not indeed an "outsider", Mr Shah had to roll out Mr Adhikari and set him to work, the day after Christmas. The speed with which Mr Shah and the home ministry approved "Z" category security for Mr Adhikari even before he was formally inducted into the party at the Midnapore rally is an indication that it has a lot of catching up to do.

If the BJP was too complacent that its formula of communal polarisation, identity politics, homogenisation and mainstreaming within the Hindutva fold would be enough to convert the Bengali into a loyalist and thus reliable voter, the Trinamul Congress was just as smug. Obviously Mamata Banerjee can read the pulse of the people better than the BJP, which has inadequate leaders in West Bengal and out of state bosses who are clueless about the fiercely proud Bengali.

For both the TMC and the BJP, the defection of Suwendu Adhikari and nine other MLAs and MPs, as well around 100 lesser functionaries, is a turning point. As a young leader who led the Nandigram movement against the CPI(M)-led Left Front's strategy for industrialising West Bengal, Mr Adhikari shot into the limelight. He became known for his capacity to

**Bengalis can be a fanatically proud and snooty people. Suwendu Adhikari may be too local, too small time as a CM face. Every chief minister of West Bengal has been a national leader first and a local leader as well. Most were at loggerheads with the Centre, including Siddhartha Shankar Ray on occasion. Has the BJP made a mistake in stooping to conquer?**

match violence with violence and for his capacity to mobilise, equip and deploy the small army of TMC loyalists. He was rewarded for his work and elevated as a youth leader, as part of the successor generation to be groomed for the party after Mamata Banerjee. So indispensable was he, that in the 2016 Assembly elections, when Mamata Banerjee needed a robust organisation to win her seats in Purulia, Bankura and Jhargram and she felt Mukul Roy, now with the BJP, would not be as effective, Mr Adhikari was given responsibility for 60-plus seats. It was also her way of placating Mr Adhikari after the induction of Abhishek Banerjee, her nephew. The move angered many, including Mr Roy, who saw it as heaping favours on the Adhikari clan. Regardless of how her preference annoyed others in the TMC, Ms Banerjee continued to pamper Suwendu with greater responsibilities, like observer for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls for crucial districts in Malda and Murshidabad, long considered Congress bastions.

The network that Mr Adhikari built across at least seven districts out of a total of 23 in West Bengal, and his popularity, made him an asset for the Trinamul Congress. The BJP's gain is thus the TMC's loss. To capitalise on this, Mr Shah has drastically revised the BJP's campaign content and strategy.

The plan is crude, and the BJP hopes it will be effective — luring Mamata Banerjee into a personal fight against Mr Adhikari, who she was wont to see as a loyalist turned disgruntled defector with an insider's knowledge of how the TMC government and organisation failed, its corruption, its depen-

dence on a partisan bureaucracy and the police. It would challenge Mamata Banerjee's credibility and her legitimacy as a leader.

The other advantage of a Mamata Banerjee versus Adhikari fight would mean there would be two foes against the lone chief minister. It would serve to situate the BJP's best star campaigner, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, above the fray, with a solution to the problems of West Bengal by mainstreaming the marginalised, deviant locals.

The insider-outsider game set up by the BJP is theoretically neat. The question is — will it be effective? West Bengal has always seen itself as a leader in national politics. To sink to the ranks of laggard followers could be unsatisfactory. The state's chief ministers have always punched way above their weight, as they were politically important national leaders to begin with. Even though Mamata Banerjee was not a member of the social elite to which all her predecessors in office belonged, she was still a national leader, the successful leader of a party that she had founded, when she became chief minister. In contrast, Mr Adhikari is a local, perhaps too local.

The localisation of the BJP is far from complete. Adding a "bhoomi putra" is a design element and does not indicate a structural transformation. If localisation has indeed begun, it was difficult to find it, when Mr Shah's roadshow snaked through Bolpur, with a DJ managing the event, and dancers and bands preceding the leader as though it was a carnival, and not a political rally.

**Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist based in Kolkata**

### LETTERS

#### PROPERTY TAX

GHMC bill collectors duping the civic body should make everyone alert (*Property in GHMC to be reassessed, DC, Dec. 22*). To end this corruption, property owners should pay taxes only at GHMC offices in their jurisdiction and insist on an official receipt. Manual collection and remittance of tax has to be done away with in a phased manner. The duties of Bill Collectors should be redefined while punishing the errant collectors.

**N.R. Raghuram**  
Hyderabad

#### DEFECTION JIHAD

It seems the BJP is trying Defection Jihad all over India whether in MP, Rajasthan or West Bengal (*Battleground Bengal: Didi faces huge test, DC, Dec. 22*). With full financial support they are encouraging defections from other parties. Like the law against 'Love Jihad' there should also be a law against Defection Jihad.

**Dr Mohammed Abdul Mujeeb Siddiqui**  
Hyderabad

#### CONGRESS FUTURE

Unless the Congress comes out of the protective Nehru-Gandhi umbrella, it will continue to face the criticism of being a family party. Though it is not possible overnight, a beginning can be made by appointing second rung leaders as working president. A new look is expedient for the party to take on BJP as a viable alternative. Also, instead of attacking the BJP with communalism stick, it should focus on people's problems.

**S. Nageswara Rao**  
Hyderabad

### 50 YEARS AGO IN

## DECCAN Chronicle

### Da Vinci award for Concorde men

LONDON, Dec. 22.

The Concorde supersonic jetliner, now being flight tested in readiness for airline service at the end of 1973 had won an international award for its contribution to the development of civil aviation.

The Leonardo da Vinci prize awarded annually by the Italian Air Transport Development Centre, was presented in Rome on Monday to the builders of the Concorde — the British Aircraft Corporation (BAC) and Aerospatiale of France.

Dilip Cherian  
Dilli Ka Babu



## Centre spars with Mamata in bid to turn Bengal babus into stool pigeons

The battle for the West Bengal Assembly elections looms ahead but skirmishes have already started. After the attack on BJP president J.P. Nadda's convoy in the state, the Centre retaliated against the Trinamul government by recalling three IPS officers from the state on Central deputation. Further, to perhaps underline the "message", the ministry of home affairs summoned state chief secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay and director general of police Virendra to Delhi to explain the law and order situation in Bengal.

A defiant chief minister Mamata Banerjee refused to comply with the summons. Also, she declined the Centre's demand to send the three IPS officers — Bholanath Pandey, Rajeev Mishra and Praveen Kumar Tripathi — on deputation saying there was a dearth of good officers in the state, and the state could not spare the

three officers.

There is a precedent here. The then chief minister of Tamil Nadu J. Jayalalithaa had similarly denied the Centre in 1991 when the state police had conducted a raid on the house of former state chief minister and DMK leader M. Karunanidhi, her archrival. The Centre had asked the Tamil Nadu government to relieve the three officers involved for Central deputation. Like Mamata now, she had refused to spare those officers. Apparently, there is little the Centre can do against civil service officers who are posted under the state government. For any action to be taken on an officer, the state and the Centre both need to agree.

#### REBELS FOR A CAUSE?

Outliers are far and few between in the civil service, which runs on obedience rather than resistance. But sometimes momentous events reveal "rebels" with a cause.

Punjab DIG (Prisons) Lakhminder Singh Jakhar has resigned from service in support of farmers who are in Delhi protesting against the three new farm laws. There are politicians, sports people, even defence forces officers who have renounced their awards and medals in protest, but an IPS officer resigning from service for the farmers' cause is a first in the state.

Of course, IAS officer Kannan Gopinathan resigned from the service to protest against the restrictions imposed in Jammu & Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370. Similarly, Shah Faesal, the young IAS officer from J&K resigned from the service in 2019 to start a political party. And just a few months ago, the DGP of Bihar Gupteshwar Pandey opting for VRS in a bid to contest the state Assembly poll (his position his still vacant), but that was not for a public cause.

Meanwhile, Jakhar who had served the Army joined the IPS as a 1994-batch officer and was slated to superannuate in August 2022. Interestingly, he had been suspended in May earlier this year on alleged corruption charges but was reinstated within a month. Clearly, outliers defy easy definition!

#### TN WON'T LET GO OF CHIEF SECY

By seeking the extension of the tenure of Tamil Nadu chief secretary K. Shanmugam, the state government has stirred up a hornets' nest in the upper echelons of the administration. An extension of tenure for Shanmugam could mean that several senior Tamil Nadu cadre officers eligible to succeed him may find their chances fading.

According to sources, Shanmugam, a 1985-batch IAS officer, has already received two

extensions.

Meanwhile, there are 30 IAS officers in the state in the additional chief secretary rank, including four who are secretaries to the Central government. For them, the third extension for Shanmugam seems to indicate that the state government doubts their abilities to handle the top job.

Interestingly, when chief minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami first sought an extension of tenure for Shanmugam, it was for one year, but the Centre granted approval only for three months. The second extension was for another three months. Now the state government has requested a six-month extension for the babu who reportedly is playing a "critical role in Covid management in the state". Will the Centre oblige again?

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



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	46006.69	0.99
Nifty 50	13466.30	1.03
S&P 500*	3,692.94	-0.05
Dollar (₹)	73.84	-0.05
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.31	-1.81
Euro (₹)	90.28	-0.48
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,936*480	0.95
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	50.21	-0.70
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.951	-0.005
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.923	-0.018

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

Trust AMC eyes ₹10,000 cr AUM in next 2 years

Trust Asset Management Company, the latest to enter the already cluttered ₹30-lakh-crore mutual fund industry with 44 payers, plans to launch its maiden fund within a couple of weeks and garner an AUM of around ₹10,000 crore in the first two years of operations, says a top official. The fund house, which had announced a soft launch earlier this month, is awaiting the Sebi nod for its maiden scheme.

Gold prices fall amid weakness in global mart



Gold prices fell ₹243 to ₹49,653 per 10 gram in Delhi on Tuesday, reflecting the weakness in global price of the precious metal. In the previous trade, the yellow metal had closed at ₹49,896 per 10 gram. Silver prices also declined Rs 216 to ₹67,177 per kg from ₹67,393 per kg in the previous trade. In the global market, gold and silver were trading lower at \$1,868 per ounce and \$25.70 per ounce, respectively.

Manappuram raises ₹400cr via issue of bonds

Manappuram Finance on Tuesday said it has raised ₹400 crore by issuing bonds on private placement basis. The Financial Resources and Management Committee of the board of directors of the company has approved the allotment of 4,000 rated, secured, redeemable non-convertible debentures aggregating to ₹400 crore, Manappuram Finance said in a regulatory filing.

Reliance Capital gets 10 more bids for subsidiaries

Reliance Capital Ltd, part of the debt-ridden ADAG Reliance Group, has received 10 more bids, including from SBI Life, for its subsidiaries, sources said. Earlier this month, the Committee of Debenture Holders had extended the last date for submission of expression of interest to December 17. Following this, 10 new bids have come in for Reliance Capital's assets, taking the total number of bids to 70.



Apple eyes car rollout by 2024

iPhone maker's self-driving car will have battery with better technology

New York, Dec. 22: Apple Inc is moving forward with self-driving car technology and is targeting 2024 to produce a passenger vehicle that could include its own breakthrough battery technology, people familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The iPhone maker's automotive efforts, known as Project Titan, have proceeded unevenly since 2014 when it first started to design its own vehicle from scratch. At one point, Apple drew back the effort to focus on software and reassessed its goals. Doug Field, an Apple veteran who had worked at Tesla Inc, returned to oversee the project in 2018 and laid off 190 people from the team in 2019.

Since then, Apple has progressed enough that it now aims to build a vehicle for consumers, two people familiar with the effort said, asking not to be named because Apple's plans are not public.

POWER BATTERY

Central to Apple's self-driving car strategy is a new battery design that could radically reduce the cost of batteries and increase the vehicle's range.

The tech major plans to use a unique "monocell" design that bulks up the individual cells in the battery and frees up space inside the battery pack by eliminating pouches and modules that hold battery materials.

The company is also examining a chemistry for the battery called or lithium iron phosphate, which is inherently less likely to overheat and is thus safer than other types of lithium-ion batteries.

Central to Apple's strategy is a new battery design that could "radically" reduce the cost of batteries and increase the vehicle's range, according to a third person who has seen Apple's battery design.

Apple declined to comment on its plans or future products.

Making a vehicle represents a supply chain challenge even for Apple, a company with deep pockets that makes hundreds of millions of electronics products each year with

parts from around the world, but has never made a car. It took Elon Musk's Tesla 17 years before it finally turned a sustained profit making cars.

"If there is one company on the planet that has the resources to do that, it's probably Apple. But at the same time, it's not a cell-phone," said a person who worked on Project Titan.

It remains unclear who would assemble an Apple-branded car, but sources have said they expect the company to rely on a manufacturing partner to build vehicles.



And there is still a chance Apple will decide to reduce the scope of its efforts to an autonomous driving system that would be integrated with a car made by a traditional automaker, rather than the iPhone maker selling an Apple-branded car, one of the people added.

Apple has decided to tap outside partners for elements of the system, including lidar sensors, which help self-driving

cars get a three-dimensional view of the road, two people familiar with the company's plans told Reuters.

As for the car's battery, Apple plans to use a unique "monocell" design that bulks up the individual cells in the battery and frees up space inside the battery pack by eliminating pouches and modules that hold battery materials, one of the people said.

Apple's design means that more active material can be packed inside the battery, giving the car a potentially longer range. Apple is also examining a chemistry for the battery called LFP, or lithium iron phosphate, the person said, which is inherently less likely to overheat and is thus safer than other types of lithium-ion batteries.

"It's next level," the person said of Apple's battery technology. "Like the first time you saw the iPhone," he said. — Reuters

Sebi to rope in agency to conduct risk assessment

New Delhi, Dec. 22: Capital markets regulator Sebi is looking to rope in an agency for performing in-depth risk assessment of its information technology (IT) infrastructure.

The risk assessment needs to include identification of foreseeable threats, assessment of the likelihood and potential damage of these threats, and the sufficiency of controls to mitigate risks.

In a notice last week, the regulator has invited expression of interest (EOI) from solution providers to conduct risk assessment of IT infrastructure, prepare policy documents, standard operating procedures (SOPs), documentation of procedures and processes and other IT documents.

In addition, design specification document need to be prepared for all the selected processes for automation, the regulator added.

"Bidder is supposed to conduct risk assessment of IT infrastructure deployment at Sebi annually, calculate risk score accordingly, review controls and its impact on policies and SOPs and changes required in the reviewed policies and SOPs," the regulator said.

Sebi noted that IT risk assessment helps to determine the vulnerabilities in information systems and the broader IT environment, assess the likelihood that a risky event will occur, and rank risks based on the risk estimate combined with the level of impact that it would cause if it occurs.

It will also help in identifying controls and measures required to be included in IT policies and SOP, it added. — PTI

Industry bodies to ask Centre to relook at new wage definition

New Delhi, Dec. 22: Representatives of industry bodies, including from CII and Ficci, will hold a meeting with the labour ministry top brass on Thursday to make a case for holding back implementation of new definition of wages, which would increase social security deductions and reduce take-home pay of workers.

"The representatives of CII and Ficci among other industry bodies would meet union labour ministry top brass on December 24, 2020 to discuss the new definition of

● Lobbyists want the government to hold back the new definition and fear that this would result in major cut in take-home salaries and also put additional burden on employers.

● The new definition will lead to a cut in workers' take-home pay while an increase in the employer's provident fund contribution liability.

wages which is likely to be implemented by April 1, 2021," an industry source said.

The source also said that lobbyists want the government to hold back the new definition and fear that this would result in major cut in take-home salaries

and also put additional burden on employers.

The new definition of wages is part of the Code on Wages, 2019 passed by Parliament last year. The rules to enforce the law was also firmed up last year. Now, its implementation is planned from April

Firms step up hiring after Covid impact

New Delhi, Dec. 22: Adapting to the new hybrid normal of remote and office work, cautiously optimistic corporates are looking to hire more people and provide better appraisals in the new year as they step out of the pandemic-ravaged 2020.

The coronavirus pandemic emerged as the biggest inflection point for the Indian job landscape. For the corporates, work-from-home and remote workers became the new normal and for the professionals, online learning and digital skills took the centre-stage.

In 2020, most companies "deprioritised" their hiring plans amid uncertain economic outlook while industries like travel, hospitality, retail, aviation, real estate, construction and automobile were severely hit.

Nevertheless, there is a cautious optimism among

corporates and it is getting reflected in their recruitment plans for the new year. "Yes, the market is showing positive signs of recovery with almost all industries showing growth in hiring but with caution. Overall, the intent to hire recovered smartly from 11 per cent during the lockdown period to 18 per cent for HY (half year) and this number is growing," Deval Singh, business head, Mobilization (hiring) at TeamLease Services.

While there is caution in hiring, the market is displaying optimism. He said there is a 50 per cent increase in employment opportunities from the lockdown days.

Pay cuts have been reversed since Diwali in most organisations and bonuses were issued in few. Some IT companies even declared early appraisals, he noted. — PTI

Daimler AG picks Infosys to manage automotive IT infra

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 22

German auto major Daimler AG and Infosys on Tuesday entered into a long-term strategic partnership to drive hybrid cloud-powered innovation and IT infrastructure transformation in the automotive sector. Daimler is the company that manufactures Mercedes-Benz cars.

"After the receipt of all regulatory approvals, Daimler AG will transform its IT operating model and infrastructure landscape across workplace services, service desk, data centre, networks and SAP Basis together with Infosys," said a joint statement issued by the two companies.

"The partnership will enable the company to deepen its focus on software engineering and to



establish a fully-scalable on-demand digital IT infrastructure and anytime-anywhere workplace. The collaboration will empower Daimler to strengthen its IT capabilities, and Infosys, its automotive expertise."

"Daimler will work towards a model that ensures a robust IT infrastructure across its plants and regions, and supports consolidation of its data centers, scaling its IT operations, and bringing innovations to the fore," the joint statement said.

"As a part of this partnership, automotive IT

Centre begins process to sell stake in SCI

New Delhi, Dec. 22: The government on Tuesday invited expressions of interest for strategic disinvestment of its 63.75 per cent stake in Shipping Corp of India along with the transfer of management control.

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) has issued Preliminary Information Memorandum (PIM) inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI) from potential buyers by February 13, 2021.

Shares of Shipping Corp were trading at ₹86.30, up 4.54 per cent over its previous close on the BSE. At the current market price, the government's stake sale in Shipping Corp is valued at about ₹2,500 crore.

The government has appointed RBSA Capital Advisors LLP as its transaction advisor to manage the disinvestment process.

Shipping Corporation of India is largest Indian shipping company with a fleet strength of 59 vessels. It operates a fleet of 59 ships, including crude oil tankers, very large crude carriers, petroleum product carriers, liquefied petroleum gas carriers, bulk carriers, container ships and off-shore support vessels.

The state-owned shipping company owns and operates around one-third of the Indian tonnage, and has interests in practically all areas of the shipping business; servicing both national and international trades.

Prominent among the companies that have shown interest in acquiring a stake in Shipping Corporation of India are Vedanta Resources Ltd and Dubai's DP World.



● Shipping Corporation of India is largest Indian shipping company with a fleet strength of 59 vessels. It operates a fleet of 59 ships, including crude oil tankers, very large crude carriers, petroleum product carriers, liquefied petroleum gas carriers, bulk carriers, container ships and offshore support vessels.

Recently, Vedanta Resources has teamed up with Centricus Management Ltd to create a warchest of \$10 billion to acquire the state-run companies.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs in November last year gave in-principle approval for the strategic divestment of Shipping Corp.

However, the plans were delayed due to the pandemic. The 2020-21 Budget has set a record divestment target of ₹2.1 lakh crore.

The government has so far raised ₹12,380 crore through minority stake sale in Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and share buybacks this fiscal year. Strategic sale process of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Air India is ongoing and both the companies have received "multiple" EOI from potential buyers. — Agencies

ICICI Bank to focus on MNCs

Mumbai, Dec. 22: With the increase in foreign direct investment into the country, ICICI Bank on Tuesday said it is upping its focus on serving the multinational companies.

The lender is looking at services beyond credit needs of such overseas corporates with an eye on the fee income possibilities, its executive director Vishakha Mulye told reporters.

It already serves about 1,500 MNCs out of an overall market of up to 5,000 companies, she said.

Mulye said factors like aversion to China, favourable demographics and an improvement in the ease of doing business is leading many MNCs to look at investing in India. — PTI

BIG | BUCKS

Tech firms Glance and VerSe Innovation crossed \$1-billion valuation

Google backs two social media unicorns



can internet peers are steadily amping up their investment in India, latching onto the only other country with a billion-plus population after getting shut out of China.

From Amazon.com Inc. to Facebook Inc., they're hoping to get in on the ground floor of what they envision as a smartphone

and online commerce boom that could eventually create a market to rival the world's No. 2 economy.

The online search leader has struck an alliance with Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd. to invest \$4.5 billion and cooperate on technology initiatives including the development of afford-

able mobile phones. But they're also teaming with smaller outfits to target more local audiences.

"In the last two years alone, 100 million new internet users have come online from rural India," Google vice-president Caesar Sengupta wrote in a blog post on Tuesday, announcing its investment in VerSe. "But many of these internet users continue to have trouble finding content to read or services they can use confidently, in their own language."

Of the two, Bengaluru-headquartered Glance Digital Experience Pvt is the more nascent outfit. It's the second unicorn to emerge from the group that created InMobi, a

cloud marketing platform that became India's earliest tech startup to reach the milestone. That group was founded by 43-year-old Naveen Tewari, alumnus of the prestigious IIT and the holder of an MBA from Harvard Business School. On Tuesday, his 18-month-old firm announced it had scored \$145 of investment from Google and billionaire Peter Thiel's Mithril Capital.

Glance currently has 115 million daily active users who average 25 minutes on the app each day. The app operates only in the Android ecosystem and has partnered with leading device makers including Samsung Electronics, Xiaomi Corp., Oppo and Vivo. — Bloomberg

3.75 CR ITRs FILED FOR 2019-20 FISCAL

New Delhi, Dec. 22: As many as 3.75 crore taxpayers have already filed their Income-Tax returns for Assessment Year 2020-21 (fiscal year 2019-20) till December 21, the Income Tax department said on Tuesday.

"Do you know that 3.75 crore taxpayers have already filed their Income Tax Returns for AY 2020-21 till 21st December, 2020? Have you filed yours yet? If not, File NOW!," the Income Tax department tweeted.

This includes 2.17 crore taxpayers filing ITR-1, 79.82 lakh filing ITR-4, 43.18 lakh ITR-3 and 26.56 lakh filing ITR-2. The deadline to file I-T Returns by individual taxpayers for 2019-20 fiscal (Assessment Year 2020-21) ends on December 31, 2020, while

the same for taxpayers whose accounts require to be audited is January 31, 2021.

The due date has been extended from July 31 and October 31, 2020, respectively in view of the Covid pandemic.

At the close of deadline for filing ITR without payment of late fees for fiscal 2018-19 (assessment year 2019-20), over 5.65 crore returns were filed by taxpayers.

The deadline last year too was extended till August 31.

Giving a comparative analysis of the ITRs filed, the Income Tax department said 3.63 crore income-tax returns were filed till August 21, 2019, compared to 3.75 crore filed till December 21, 2020. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Cole's goal settles point for Odisha

**Goa:** It could have been another defeat but Odisha FC clawed back a point despite taking the lead early against NorthEast United, drawing 2-2 in a Indian Super League game at the GMC Stadium, here on Tuesday. Odisha took the lead through Diego Mauricio (26') before Benjamin Lambot (45+1') drew parity. Kwest Appiah (65') then converted a penalty to put the Highlanders ahead but soon saw his goal cancelled out by Cole Alexander (67'). Odisha named an unchanged eleven from the side that lost to Bengaluru FC while NorthEast coach Gerard Nus rang in four changes with Federico Gallego handed a start. The first half saw a cagey contest with both sides heading into the break level after creating plenty of chances. The first big chance of the game arrived during the 10th minute but Odisha keeper Arshdeep Singh produced a fine save to deny an opener for the Highlanders.

## Don's Test cap sells for \$340k

**Sydney:** An Australian businessman has purchased Donald Bradman's first baggy green Test cap for 450,000 Australian dollars (\$340,000) at auction, the second-highest price paid for a piece of cricket memorabilia. Peter Freedman, the founder of Rode Microphones who earlier this year paid 9 million Australian dollars (\$6.8 million) at an auction for a guitar used by Nirvana front man Kurt Cobain, plans to tour Bradman's Test debut cap around Australia. "The price for Bradman's 1928 Australia cap sits behind the 1,007,500 (\$760,000) paid at auction for Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne's Test cap earlier this year the world-record price for an item of cricket memorabilia," auction officials said. — AP

## Sindhu hopeful of travelling from UK

**New Delhi:** Unfazed by the worsening Covid-19 situation in England where she is training right now, world champion shuttler P.V. Sindhu on Tuesday said that she remains hopeful of travelling to Thailand for tournaments in January despite countries increasingly banning flights from the UK. Sindhu, who has qualified for the Tokyo Olympics, has been training in London for the last two months and is scheduled to play her first tournament since the break in Thailand. She will have to be in Bangkok by January 3 to compete in the two Super 1000 events (January 12 to 17 and January 19 to 24). "I plan to travel in the first week of January. There is no travel ban from UK in Thailand, so I can travel from Doha. The idea is to use the Gulf route to reach Thailand," said Sindhu. — PTI

## Pakistan win third T20 in NZ

**Napier, New Zealand:** New Test captain Mohammad Rizwan showed his leadership quality in a bold innings of 89 which steered Pakistan to a four-wicket win over New Zealand in the third Twenty20 on Tuesday. Rizwan will lead Pakistan in the two-match Test series against New Zealand starting on Sunday in place of Babar Azam, who is injured. With Rizwan's leadership, Pakistan surpassed New Zealand's moderate total of 173-7 with two balls to spare. Rizwan batted his team within sight of victory when he was out in the final over at 171-6. — AP

**Brief scores: New Zealand 173/7 (Conway 63, Ashraf 3-20) lost to Pakistan 177/6 (Rizwan 89, Southee 2-25).**

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**Big Bash League:** Brisbane Heat vs Adelaide Strikers from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

## FOOTBALL

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

**Italian League:** Verona vs Inter Milan from 11 pm; AC Milan vs Lazio from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2; Napoli vs Torino from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1; Roma vs Cagliari from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Six, HD

## WWE

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

## KOHLI SIGNS OFF

## After pep talk, Virat leaves Australian shores for India

**Adelaide, Dec. 22:** Indian captain Virat Kohli left Australian shores on Tuesday after a pep talk with his beleaguered teammates, handing over the mantle of leading the side to Ajinkya Rahane in the remaining three Tests.

Kohli is coming back to India for the birth of his first child in January.

Before boarding his flight back home, the star batsman met his teammates and encouraged them to give their all in the remainder of the series, which the visitors trail 0-1 after the heavy defeat in the opening Test.

Long before setting foot on Australia, Rahane had been entrusted with the responsibility of leading in the team in Kohli's absence after the star had approached the BCCI for paternity leave.

The idea behind organising the pep talk was to boost the confidence of the players and keep them in a positive frame of mind heading into the crucial Boxing Day Test in Melbourne.

India lost the lung-opener here inside three days after crumbling to their lowest Test score of 36 which drew a lot of eyeballs across the cricket galaxy.

The second Test is scheduled to be held at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) from December 26-30.

Kohli, who has been leading the Test team since 2014, urged his players to show intent and express themselves on the field without any inhibition.

While Kohli has departed for India, his white-ball deputy Rohit Sharma is quarantining in Sydney.

Kohli was India's best performer with the bat in the series opener, top-scoring with a sedate 74 in their first innings before being run out following a misunderstanding with Ajinkya Rahane. — PTI

● **Before boarding his flight back home, Virat Kohli met his teammates and encouraged them to give their all in the remainder of the series**

## Waugh sees 'no hope' of India bouncing back

**Melbourne, Dec. 22:** The Indian cricket team has "no hope" of making a comeback after the humiliation in Adelaide and will suffer a 4-0 whitewash in the four-match Test series against Australia, feels former batsman Mark Waugh.

India were bundled out for their lowest-ever Test score of 36 in their second innings as Australia claimed an eight-wicket win in the pink-ball Test to take a 1-0 lead in the series.

Asked if India could bounce back after losing the first Test, Waugh said: "No hope, no hope."

"I thought Adelaide was the Test that they could win on paper and with Virat Kohli here for just the one Test. I thought the conditions would suit them."

"I just can't see how they



Australia's Steve Smith (left) and Virat Kohli during the first Test in Adelaide.

— AFP

## Virat deserves respect: Smith

**Adelaide, Dec. 22:** Australian batsman Steve Smith on Tuesday said Virat Kohli deserves credit for prioritising the birth of his child over cricket as "there would have been a lot of pressure" on the India skipper to stay for the entire duration of the ongoing Test series.

India are 0-1 down in the four-match rubber after losing the opening Test by eight wickets during which they also collapsed to their lowest Test score. Kohli will head home on

Tuesday. "Obviously, it's a big loss for India, not having him for the rest of the series. We just have to look at the way he played in the first innings. That was a pretty class display against some good bowling on a wicket that was doing a bit," Smith said during a virtual press conference.

"I just fist-pumped him at the end (of first Test) and said 'Mate safe travels, hope everything goes well with the baby, and pass on my best to your wife.' That was about it,"

Smith said.

"I'm sure there would have been a lot of pressure for him to stay but to stand up and want to go home for the birth of his first child, it's a credit for him. It's a milestone that he certainly wouldn't want to miss."

Kohli's 74 was the highest score by any batsman on either side in the first innings of the pink-ball day/night Test while Smith was out for 1.

Smith was also asked about legendary Australian spinner Shane

Warne's view that red ball is "pathetic" and pink ball should replace it in all Tests. He disagreed with the idea.

"Personally I'd like to keep red-ball cricket alive. I think one series or something like that is a good amount. We've seen in Adelaide for instance it's worked exceptionally well, it's a great spectacle. We played some really good day/night games."

"But I think overall, I'd like to personally play red ball cricket a lot," Smith said. — PTI

## ENG TOUR ON DESPITE COVID WAVE

**Colombo, Dec. 22:** The new strain of Covid-19 that has hit the United Kingdom will not jeopardise England's upcoming tour of Sri Lanka even though the development is a cause of concern, the country's cricket board (SLC) said on Tuesday.

Sri Lanka Cricket's (SLC) medical team feels that the tour starting January 14 is on schedule but additional Covid-19 protocols might be enforced for the visitors either before leaving their country or after arriving here.

According to ESPNcricinfo, SLC's medical team is expected to hold discussions with their English counterparts on Tuesday on the matter. — PTI

## Tammy hammers West Ham

**London, Dec. 22:** Tammy Abraham hit a quickfire late double on Monday as Chelsea beat West Ham 3-0 to reignite their Premier League challenge after a consecutive defeats.

The Hammers proved tricky opponents at an empty Stamford Bridge but lacked the firepower to hurt Frank Lampard's men, who led early through Thiago Silva's

bullet header.

Chelsea enjoyed a strong start to the season before losses to Everton and Wolves checked their progress but the victory at the London Stadium lifts them into fifth spot.

Champions Liverpool have opened up a five-point gap at the top of the table but behind them, just seven points separate second-placed Leicester from 11th-placed Wolves.

West Ham had the ball in the net in the seventh minute after a cleverly worked free kick but Declan Rice was denied by the off-side flag after an impressive finish from a tight angle.

Three minutes later Chelsea were in front when Silva powered home a header from Mason Mount's corner.

The Brazilian found the net from close range after

a well-timed run, leaving West Ham goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski rooted to the spot.

Chelsea enjoyed the lion's share of possession after their goal without creating much of note but West Ham worked their way into the game as the half wore on.

The win lifts Chelsea to 25 points — one behind fourth-placed Everton. — AFP

## Raina sorry for code violation

**Mumbai, Dec. 22:** Former India cricketer Suresh Raina, who was among 34 people arrested and released on bail by Mumbai Police for violating COVID-19 social distancing norms at a club here, has regretted the "unintentional and unfortunate" incident.

A statement issued by the former batsman's management team said the 34-year old was not aware of the local timings and protocols at the time of the incident.

"Suresh was in Mumbai for a shoot which extended to late hours and was invited by a friend for a quick dinner post the same prior to him taking his flight back to Delhi. He was not aware of the local timings and protocols," said the statement.

"Once pointed out, he (Raina) immediately complied with the procedures laid out by the authorities and regrets the unfortunate and unintentional incident."

"He (Raina) always holds rules and laws laid down by governing bodies with the highest regard and will continue to do so in the future as well," it added.

Thirty-four people including Raina and Bollywood celebrity



Suresh Raina

Sussanne Khan were arrested after a raid at a posh club near the Mumbai airport on Tuesday for violating social distancing norms.

According to the police, those arrested in the raid at the Dragonfly Experience included seven staffers of the club.

The 13 women, who were arrested, were allowed to leave after being served notices. The men were shown as arrested and granted bail later.

Police said the raid was conducted after the club remained open beyond the permissible time limit and violated Covid-19 norms.

Raina, who has played 18 Tests, 226 ODIs and 78 T20s, announced retirement from international cricket in August earlier this year. — PTI

**Andhra Pradesh State Co-operative Marketing Federation Ltd.,**  
55-17-2 to 4, 5th Floor, Stalin Corporate Building, Road No -2, Autonagar, Vijayawada-520 007. Ph: 9866237328 & 9031421312

Applications are invited for HR-Payroll services for Consumer Division of AP MarkFed, Govt of AP. Applications will be open till 05/01/2021 3.30 PM. RFP containing detailed description of the Tender is available on AP MarkFed's Website. [www.apmarkfed.in](http://www.apmarkfed.in) under "Tenders" section. Firms are advised to go through the detailed RFP, and ensure their eligibility and other details before submitting the tender. Sd/-  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

**PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited**  
Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001  
OFFICE OF CHIEF ENGINEER / METERING  
C-3, SHAKTI VIHAR, PSPCL, PATIALA, PUNJAB 147001  
Tel. No. 0175-2218871, Fax No. 0175-2200284, e-mail: [semeteringpatiala@gmail.com](mailto:semeteringpatiala@gmail.com)  
Corporate Identification Number (CIN): U40109PB2010SGC033813  
Registration Number: 33813, website: [www.pspcl.in](http://www.pspcl.in)  
e-tendering page: <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

Tender Enquiry / Specification No.	MQP-170 /2020-21/PR
Short Description	Procurement of 1-in-1 Metal Meter Boxes for incorporating Single Phase Energy Meters
Start date of downloading of tender documents/ Bid submission start date	22.12.2020 at 11.00 Hrs
Last date of downloading / Bid submission	25.01.2021 till 11.00 Hrs
Bid opening date (Part-I & II)	01.02.2021 at 11.30 Hrs
Intending officer and Contact No.	SE/HMC, PSPCL, Patiala 96461-18774

Detailed NIT and set of specification/ tender documents can only be downloaded from website <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>. Tender ID is 2020\_POWER\_57662\_1  
**Note:** Corrigendum, if any, after the publication of this tender enquiry shall only be uploaded on site and will not be published in any newspaper.

C-379/2020 RO No PR-Advt. No :- 76155/12/3/2021/56 SE/HMC PSPCL, Patiala

BAPINEEDU.B PRESENTS  
SVCC SRI VENKATESWARA CINE CHITRA LLP  
ZEE5STUDIOS  
DEC 25<sup>TH</sup> IN THEATRES  
BVS N PRASAD SUBBU  
THAMAN S VENKAT C DILIP  
NAVIN NOOLI SATISH BKR AVINASH KOLLA  
SONY MUSIC

Regd. No. H/SD/509/2018-20

Printed and Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press situated at Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433. RNI Registration No. 3081/1957. Editor: Kaushik Mitter