

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
VISAKHAPATNAM | THURSDAY | 10 DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 31.4°C
Min: 16.8°C
RH: 76%
Rainfall: NIL
Forecast: Mist.
Max/Min temp.
31/16 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+26,348)	(+338)
97,62,250	1,41,735
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+721)	(+3)
TS: 2,75,261	1,480
(+618)	(+3)
AP: 8,73,457	7,045

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

6,89,23,274
DEATHS
15,69,873
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
218
worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Bahula Dasami till 12.48 pm
Star: Hasta till 10.48 am
Varjyam: 6.07 pm to 7.35 pm
Durmuhurtam: 10.19 am to 11.03 am; 2.42 pm to 3.26 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
HILARI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Akhri 24, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.50 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 4.45 pm
Maghrib: 6.15 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm
SUNSET TODAY 5.22 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.17 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 1.52 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 1.33 AM

COUNTER POINT



Too much of rajneeti!

IN BRIEF

China, Pakistan start joint exercise

Islamabad: The air forces of Pakistan and China on Wednesday commenced a joint exercise designed to deepen practical cooperation and improve the actual-combat training level of the two sides. The joint air force exercise "Shaheen (Eagle)-IX" started on Wednesday at an operational air base of the Pakistan Air Force in Sindh.

Prize winning teacher positive

Mumbai: Ranjitsinh Disale, a school teacher from Maharashtra who won a global award having \$1 million prize money, on Wednesday tested positive for COVID-19, said a family member.

LAND SURVEY

MoU signed for survey, first of its kind in 100 years

AP, Survey of India join forces

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

The State government on Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Survey of India for the implementation of 'YSR Jagannanna Saswathi Bhoomi Hakku-Bhoomi Rakshana', scheduled for launch on December 21.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said that they would be conducting a comprehensive survey which will be written in golden letters as a survey of such a magnitude is being conducted after almost 100 years. He said that the two partners are putting together 70 base stations to take up this survey, which will

be added to their network in future. The Chief Minister said that all the measurements will be accurate with a minimum error rate of 2 cm. State-of-the-art facilities are being used with the latest CARS technology, drones and rovers. He instructed officials to take up awareness campaigns about the initiative and directed district collec-

tors to be responsible for the survey project. He said "As many as 14,000 surveyors have been appointed by the State government and 9,400 surveyors are being given training by Survey of India. Training for the remaining lot will be completed by January 26."

■ Page 2: 5,000 villages to be covered in first phase

NATION | 5

Popular Tamil television actress Chitra found dead



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WORLD | 6

UK body issues allergy warning for Pfizer jab



SPORTS | 6

Ronaldo beats Messi in battle of big two



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DCGI denies EUA to Biotech, Serum vaccine

KANIZA GARARI
with agency inputs
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

In a setback to two major pharma companies in the race for the vaccine for Coronavirus, the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) has not granted the Emergency Use Authorisation permission (EUA) to city-based Bharat Biotech and the Serum Institute of India (SII) for their respective vaccines, Covaxin and Covishield.

The data submitted by both companies was found to be "insufficient" by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) of the DCGI in terms of data on the trials of Indian patients, according to sources. The panel sought additional data on the safety and efficacy of their proposed shots. Due to lack of data on Indian patients, the CDSCO subject expert committee, which met on Wednesday, found that

the "data submitted of phase 1 and phase 2 trials was not sufficient".

The DCGI said that Covid-19 vaccine candidates should have "at least 50 per cent efficacy in phase III clinical trials" for it to be widely deployed.

The DCGI rules of 2019 state that there must be at least 3,000 patients on whom the vaccine has to be tested before approval.

■ Page 3: Phase III trial data needed for approval

Toxins in food may have led to mystery Eluru illness Find actual reason for illness: Jagan

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

Even as the number of fresh cases of "mystery illness" has come down to 12 on Wednesday and only 44 affected persons are still undergoing treatment, a deadly combination of neurotoxins and organochlorine are prime suspects for the confounding disease that has caught national and even international attention.

State health authorities maintain that these substances found in hydrocarbon pesticides such as DDT can turn poisonous, affecting nervous tissues in human body. This could be why affected people are developing convulsions for a brief period, being getting back to normalcy after some time.

Several reputed central agencies like All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT) and World Health Organisation (WHO) are working on finding the source of such poisonous substances entering the human body and affecting nervous system.

The AIIMS report has already confirmed presence of lead in the blood of affected people in its preliminary report after

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy conducted a review meeting on the illness in Eluru with officials and medical teams on Wednesday. He directed them to conduct a through research and find out the causes of the illness and affirmed that the state government is offering good treatment to people.

During a video conference with the authorities, doctors and experts from the WHO, AIIMS, NIN, CCMB and the IICT, the Chief Minister said that corrective measures will be taken based on the final outcome of investigations and urged the experts to find the actual reason for the illness.

■ Page 2: WHO officials take details

POLLUTION EFFECTS

● Vegetables raised with polluted water from Kolleru Lake may contain residues of pesticides and toxic substances. Their consumption may cause health problems like convulsions.

● Untreated effluents from tanks of shrimp culture contaminate soil. Those who consume crops raised on such soil may also suffer from symptoms being exhibited by people with the "mystery illness".

testing 10 patients. It is, however, yet to come up with its report of analysing milk samples.

NCDC has started its investigations to find out reasons for the illness. It is also collecting samples from blood and urine of cattle, as they are expo-

sed to pesticide either through their feed or consumption of contaminated water.

In such a case, their milk may contain residues of pesticide.

■ Page 2: Boiled milk of infected cattle not safe

Kurnool shocked by quality of KMC water

D. SIVA
RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL DEC. 9

Citizens in Kurnool are shocked at the quality of water being supplied to them by Kurnool Municipal Corporation (KMC) in the wake of Eluru contamination that saw hundreds of people taking ill.

KMC has no sewerage treatment plant and every day

it discharges 60 million litres (mld) into Tungabhadra river without any concerns for peoples health. River pollution in Handri and Tungabhadra, the two rivers that flow across Kurnool city, have been causing health issues to people residing on the river bank. Plastic waste and other non-degradable material, lead and cadmium that are in the river

need to be cleared. Regional Pollution control Board officials say that Tungabhadra waters showed marginally higher toxins after Pushkarams. The Board conducted a test on the quality of water in Tungabhadra in the first week of this month soon after Pushkarams.

■ Page 2: Coliform bacteria exceed standards

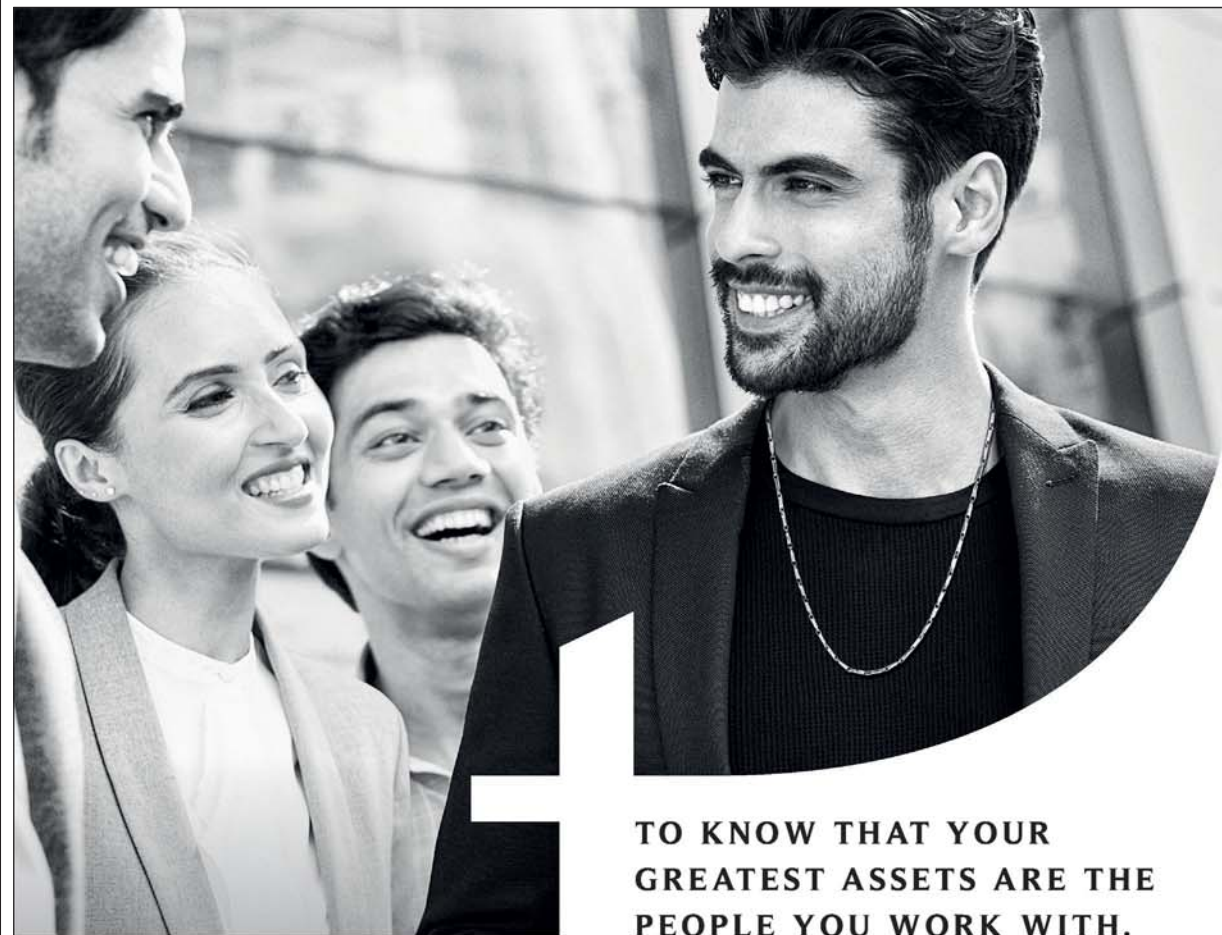
RUSSIA: INDIA IN ANTI-CHINA GAME PLAYED BY WEST

SRIDHAR
KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

The West, led by the United States, is trying to engage India in "anti-China games" through its Indo-Pacific strategies and is also trying to undermine Russia's close and privileged ties with India, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov has said, in unprecedented remarks that have highlighted both Moscow's proximity with Beijing and a growing unease over the India-US strategic partnership.

Addressing the Russian International Affairs Council, Mr Lavrov said: "It (the West) is trying to restore the unipolar model of world order. 'Poles' like Russia and China are unlikely to be subordinate to it. However, India is currently an object of the Western countries' persistent, aggressive and devious policy as they are trying to engage it in anti-China games by promoting Indo-Pacific strategies, the so-called 'Quad'."

■ Page 6: Russia unhappy with close Indo-US ties



TO KNOW THAT YOUR GREATEST ASSETS ARE THE PEOPLE YOU WORK WITH.

WHEN THE WORLD STOPS, ONLY FEW REALISE WHAT KEPT IT TURNING.

AND WHILE SOME CHOOSE PROFIT OVER PEOPLE, THE COURAGEOUS ONES REFUSE TO MAKE THAT CHOICE.

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OTHER STORIES

Naga Bhushan is additional A-G

Vijayawada: State government appointed the advocate Jasti Naga Bhushan as the additional advocate general for the state of Andhra Pradesh. The state government issued GO RT No. 329 here on Wednesday appointing him as the AAG. He is the son of Supreme Court former judge Jasti Chelameswar.

MINISTERS ASSURES DEVELOPMENT OF TWO DARGAHS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

Minister for endowment Velampalli Srinivas Rao assured development of Syed Shah Quadri and Ali Hussein Shah Quadri Dargahs into a spiritual pilgrimage centre.

The minister announced that *Chadar* would be offered in the Durgah on behalf of the state government during Urs.

Dargah Muzawar Syed Khaja Mohideen and others presented to the minister an invitation of Urs of Ali Hussein Shah Quadri scheduled to be held on December 11 in the Dargah situated near Prakasam Barrage at Vijayawada.

They said that the Dargah committee made flawless arrangements for Urs following the Covid-19 guidelines. The minister praising the arrangement appealed to the devotees to attend the Urs programme. He said that their government adhered to develop the Dargah hence started development works which were under progress.

He assured that YSR Congress government will turn the Dargahs into a spiritual pilgrimage centre in the coming days.

ORGANISERS TOLD TO KEEP POLLUTION TESTING VEHICLES FIT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

The Transport Department directed mobile pollution testing vehicles to complete checks of their equipment by December 31 and warned of stern action if they issue pollution certificates without proper testing to the vehicles.

Deputy Transport Commissioner (DTC) M. Purendra said that a programme to create awareness among the mobile testing organisers about vehicle pollution tests was conducted.

He said that as per the instructions of the State Transport Commissioner inspection was held on the pollution control testing vehicles across the district.

He said that vehicle pollution inspection records made last month are required to be shown at the RTA offices by the 5th of every month. He warned surveillance will be intensified across the district from the first week of January.

Mr Purendra said that there are 60 pollution checking vehicles in the Krishna district out of which 50 are mobile and rest of 10 are stationary.

ACQUIRE SKILLS TO SUPPLY QUALITY MILK, FARMERS TOLD

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 9

Milk Producers associations and secretaries of Milk Procurement Centres have been told to increase the milk supply to Amul Project and provide tips to the farmers to improve the butter percentage and solid non-fat in the milk to secure enhanced price for their milk.

During a review with secretaries and assistant secretaries of Milk Procurement Centres at Ongole on Wednesday, Prakasam district collector Pola Bhaskar said that milk producers should be told not to compromise on milk quality while pointing to the standards of Amul.

"Create awareness among milk producers on the management of cattle and offer tips to provide high quality balanced feed along with nutrients to increase the milk output," the collector told them. He said village taskforce and secretaries should provide technical skills necessary to handle the cattle and improve the milk production.

Mr Bhaskar called for collective efforts from everyone concerned to overcome the initial hurdles in the supply of quality milk to Amul since the toil is certain to boost the village economy unlike never before.

JC T.S. Chetan and Deputy Director of Animal Husbandry, D.L.D.A. Hanumantha Rao were present among others.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy watches a Map of Anantapur before laying the foundation stone for three reservoirs from the camp office on Wednesday. Minister P. Anil Kumar Yadav and others are also seen. —DC

CM sets foundation stone for three new reservoirs

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy virtually laid a foundation stone to Dr YSR Upper Penna project, where three reservoirs Muttala, Thopudurthi, and Devarakonda in Anantapur district are to be constructed at a cost of ₹803 crore under Handri Neva Sujala Sravanthi (HNSS) scheme on Wednesday in the CM camp office at Tadepalli.

Mr Reddy said that their government added two extra reservoirs to HNSS scheme with extra storage capacity of 3.3 tmc of water and this would be carried without increase in cost of ₹803 crore.

Speaking on this occasion, the Chief Minister said that the project was taken up with utmost sincerity and added two more reservoirs to store an additional 3.3. tmc. He stated, "The project is

● **THE PROJECT** will also fill up 7.216 tmc of water in five reservoirs in 90 days and irrigate about 75,000 acres in Beluguppa, Kuderu, Atmakuru, Kambadur, Kanaganapalli, Chennekothapalli, Raptadu and Ramagiri mandals.

being constructed at the same price quoted by the previous Telugu Desam government with an addition of two more reservoirs thereby increasing the capacity. This shows how much corruption the previous TD government was steeped in. During the previous government, a GO was issued on January 24, 2018, to carry out works at a cost of ₹803.96 crore, but the works was not done. However, our government is establishing two additional reservoirs with the same cost and increasing the storage capacity which clearly explains the contrast."

He said that through this project, the government

aims to irrigate about 6.025 lakh acres in Rayalaseema and provide drinking water to about 33 lakh people. He explained that as part of Handri Neva, lifting water from Jeedipalli reservoir, through main canals of Muttala, Thopudurthi, Devarakonda and Somaravandapalli reservoirs of the upper Penna reservoir which have a capacity of 5.40 tmc will be irrigating 75,000 acres.

He further explained that in addition to this, the project will fill up 7.216 tmc of water in five reservoirs in 90 days and irrigate about 75,000 acres in Beluguppa, Kuderu, Atmakuru, Kambadur, Kanaganapalli, Chennekotha-

palli, Raptadu and Ramagiri mandals.

The Chief Minister said that four more lift irrigation projects are going to be constructed in Kottapalli, Atmakuru, Bala Venkatapuram, Maddalacheruvu. He said that the lives of people and their economic conditions will be changed forever bringing a better facelift to the rural area.

He said by the grace of God all reservoirs across the state are filled with water and the government has been implementing all the welfare schemes as promised and mentioned in the manifesto.

Meanwhile, ministers Botsa Satyanarayana, M. Sankara Narayana and S. Appalaraju, MP Madhav, MLAs T. Prakash Reddy, MLC Iqbal and other officials were present at the event held at Venkatapalli of Kothapalli mandal in Anantapur district near the pylon.

Pushkar ghats: Coliform bacteria exceed standards

From page 1

In the test it was found that "It may be noted from the data, the pH and dissolved oxygen are meeting the standards, whereas the other two parameters, viz., Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) and Total coliform bacteria are exceeding the standards."

A PCB official said that Environment ministry constituted a committee in 1999 which recommended desirable limit of fecal coliform at 1,000 MPN/100ml and a maximum permissible limit at 10,000 MPN/100ml for discharge of treated sewage into a water body or reuse for agriculture, aquaculture or forestry application. And when it comes to drinking water, it should not be more than 500/MPN/ 100 ml, he said.

Pushkar Ghats near Mantralayam at Vinayaka Ghat, Santa Market, Kurnool Pump House, Rambotla and Sankalbagh

ghats showed abnormal fecal contamination as reflected in coliform samples, said a PCB Engineer.

Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) is a measure of the quantity of oxygen used by microorganisms (aerobic bacteria) in the oxidation process. In a study conducted sometime back by independent researchers, the BOD values of water samples during the monitoring periods at the industrial effluent disposal point was found to be between 78ppm to 119 ppm, which indicates that the effluent run-off carries chemical wastes during poly-fibre synthesis. This is due to the discharge of untreated or partially treated industrial effluent directly in to the river.

There is makeable variation in the BOD content along the downstream from the discharge point during the study period which varied from 20.1 ppm to 36 ppm. The

upstream water showed low BOD values 3.1 ppm to 6.4 ppm.

The decrease in BOD and increase in DO from effluent discharge point was due to natural self-purification.

The rivers in Kurnool are polluted by chemical effluents, medical waste in addition to sewage by KMC, said K.N. Reddy, an environmental activist.

KMC Commissioner D.K. Balaji said it requires ₹300 crore to construct sewerage treatment plant but the civic body does not have that much of money. A proposal has been sent to the Union government to sanction the amount under Swach Bharat scheme, he said.

Balaji further said AP Urban Infrastructure Asset Management Ltd also assessed the sewerage treatment desirability and contemplated to take up construction of the treatment plant for sewerage in a phased manner.

Declare SVVU as national varsity: TTD

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 9

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam Trust Board chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy on Wednesday appealed to the Union education minister Ramesh

Pokhriyal to recognise the TTD-run Sri Venkateswara Vedic University (SVVU) as a national university and requested to hike the TTD quota in the Delhi based S.V. College.

The TTD chairman has given a representation let-

ter to the Union minister at her office in New Delhi on Wednesday.

In the representation, the chairman said that the SVVU, which was set up in 2006, was recognised by UGC as a State University under 2F category.

LEGAL | OPINION

BJYM SEEKS IMPLEMENTATION OF EWS QUOTA

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 9

Bharatiya Janata Party Yuva Morcha threatened to launch a statewide agitation to bring pressure on the government to implement EWS Bill (Reservation for Economically Weaker Sections) while accusing the CM for ignoring the Bill even after extending support in the Assembly and Parliament.

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

Senior Supreme Court advocate Dushyant Dave has appealed to the High Court not to issue any interim order to stop the state government's move to set up three capitals in the state during the hearing held here on Wednesday.

He informed the court that the state government had decided to set up three capitals, including legisla-

tive, executive and judiciary, keeping in mind the interests of the people. He said that the High Court's interference on the capitals issue was unwarranted.

Dave said that though the state government had taken the decision to set up three capitals based on the reports submitted by experts' committees, the previous government's decision to develop Amaravati as capital city, was based on the opinion of political leaders and

AKN university to study mystery illness at Eluru

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

Adikavi Nannaya University will take up a study to find out the reason for the mystery illness at Eluru in West Godavari.

The university vice-chancellor held a meeting with the heads of several departments in Rajamahendravaram on Wednesday and discussed with them about the mystery illness affecting several people. He said that based on the suggestion from the state government, the university would take up a study to find out the possible reason affecting the health of several people at Eluru.

The VC said that a committee under the leadership of professor Dr A. Matta Reddy from university science and technology college, would take up the study and submit its report.

He called upon the managements of university affiliated colleges and NSS volunteers to move to Eluru and extend all necessary help to the affected people and their families and also to the general public to instil confidence among them as they were panic stricken following the mystery illness affecting several people in the town.

He also said that it was their social responsibility to do so.

BOILED MILK OF INFECTED CATTLE NOT SAFE

From page 1

Humans, who consume such milk even after boiling, have a chance of getting infected with pesticide residues.

NCDC is also collecting samples of crops like paddy and others to test them for any presence of pesticide remnants in them. This is because those who consume food cooked with such crops may get infected. It is also searching for warehouses, where huge quantities of pesticides are stored to check any chance of their leakage or spillage that may find their way into drains, canals and other water bodies, especially owing to recent spell of heavy rains and floods. Soil may have got contaminated with residues of pesticides in the process.

Health authorities say that all these grounds will be subject to a scientific scrutiny. Truth can be established once test reports from several central agencies are out.

Health director Dr. T. Geeta Prasadini said, "We will be able to know the exact reason for the cause of mystery illness very shortly. Several central agencies have collected samples of blood, urine, water, milk and crops, among others. These are being testing at present and their reports are awaited."

CM should disclose results of tests: Naidu

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday demanded

that the Jagan Mohan Reddy government disclose the results of tests held so far in order to find out the actual reasons for the Eluru mass sickness in West Godavari district.

He wrote a letter to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, saying that

Sarma: Lead coated PVC pipes could be poisoning water

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 9

Former civil servant and social activist EAS Sarma told the chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy that use of lead coated PVC pipes for supplying domestic water could be the reason for the massive sickness of the people in Eluru.

In a letter to the Chief Minister on Wednesday, Mr Sarma said an analysis carried out by the officially recognised Quality Council of India, 33 per cent of the water samples taken in 26 cities in India have indicated high levels of lead. Lead coated PVC pipes used extensively in urban drinking water systems seem to be the major contributor to lead poisoning of water.

The water samples thus analysed indicated lead levels to be in excess of the Indian norm of 50 parts per billion, which is in itself a questionable one compared to the WHO norm of 10 parts per billion.

lion. Excess lead in the human body can cause neurological problems of the kind observed in Eluru. The impact of lead poisoning of water is far more deleterious on children. Lead in excess of 10 micrograms per decilitre causes serious learning problems in children. More than 70 different body ailments are attributable to excess lead present in the human body, Sarma told the chief minister in his letter.

It is also possible that discarded vehicle batteries entering the drinking water supply systems might have also caused lead poisoning.

The former civil servant suggested urgent measures on the part of the municipal bodies to maintain cleanliness at all fresh water sources that cater to water supplies, minimise the use of PVC pipes and carry out frequent, statistically well designed sample analysis of the municipal tap water points at the consumer end.

WHO officials take details

from Page 1

He told authorities to focus on whether the illness was due to water contamination or due to some other cause and asked to conduct a detailed investigation.

Officials informed that the presence of lead and nickel in the patient bodies might have caused the illness, which could have happened due to excessive use of pesticides. Officials said that the number of cases have been declining and the patients are recovering within 3-4 hours.

Meanwhile, experts from the WHO said they are surveying the areas where people fell sick and are taking health details including the food they consumed. On the other hand, experts suspect that bleaching and chlorine used in sanitation programmes as part of Covid-19 prevention measures may also be the cause.

Doctors and experts from AIIMS, Delhi said that comprehensive tests are yet to be done, but the primary investigations revealed that lead and nickel appear to be high in the blood of those who were ill. As Indians do have nickel in their bodies, the presence of lead might have caused the illness. Also, it was found that there is a significant drop in the level of lead in the patients after 24 hours of becoming sick.

"The process of recy-

cling batteries or due to the dumping of broken batteries, or when fired may also have led to the current situation. We will test drinking water and milk samples and come to a definite conclusion on the reasons as soon as possible," they said.

Experts from AIIMS, Mangalagiri said that pesticides might have contaminated the organic chlorides, which is just a primary finding, where accurate conclusions on this are yet to come.

Expert team from NIN, Hyderabad said that they have examined the food, water, milk, urine and blood samples from the families of the sick and also taken samples of vegetables and essentials from the market. "We are conducting comprehensive tests, so far, there are no signs of danger. We shall submit a report on water, food, milk, urine and blood samples."

Similarly, experts from IIC and CCMB are also investigating the cause of illness and are conducting various tests for accurate diagnosis.

Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney, Principal Secretary of Health Department Anil Kumar Singhal, Andhra Pradesh Medical and Infrastructure Development Corporation chairman Dr K Chandrasekar Reddy and expert teams of AIIMS, NIN, IIC, WHO, CCMB and other officials were present.

there were rising fears over the presence of heavy metals like lead and nickel in the drinking water.

He demanded that the government immediately address these concerns and ensure proper drinking water supply through mobile mineral water plants and such measures.

Stating that the general public were under grip of constant fears, Naidu said that the presence of heavy metals would have a seri-

ous impact on the health of pregnant women, children and the aged people hence every resident in the town should be given electronic health cards.

Every patient should be monitored on a long-term basis. He demanded that the best medical care should be provided with medical experts and a scientific study of the Eluru illness should be made in order to find out the root cause.

State govt taken decision keeping in mind interests of people: Dave

HC urged not to issue interim order on 3 capitals

has submitted its report.

He informed the court that it was the prerogative of the state government to decide its capital city and said that the Centre never intervened in setting up the capital city in any state.

He said that a few political leaders and businessmen had decided to set up a capital city at Amaravati and develop it at a cost of ₹1 lakh crore without consulting appropriate authorities.

Advocate general S. Sriram arguing in the case said that Amaravati town and the capital city Amaravati were not having any relation at all and said that the previous government had resolved to develop the capital city between Vijayawada and Guntur.

He said that the court needed to know how the previous government had taken the decision to develop Amaravati as the capital city.

SHORT TAKES

THIRUPPAVAI TO REPLACE SUPRABATHAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 9

As the auspicious month of Dhanurmasam is commencing from December 16 at 6.04 am onwards, Andai Sri Godai Thiruppavai will be recited in the place of Suprabatham – the awakening seva of Lord inside Tirumala temple till January 14, 2021.

All the Sri Vaishnavaites temples follow the recitation of Thiruppavai hymns during the entire month and it is also an important month for all spiritual seekers as it is believed as the most sacred period to worship Lord Vishnu.

According to Hindu scriptures, a day of God is equal to six months (Uttarayana) and a night equal to the remaining months (Dakshinayana).

APSSDC-IBM TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

The AP State Skill Development Corporation and IBM offering training in front end web development innovation camp and inviting applications from unemployed youth.

APSSDC Krishna district skill development officer E. Tammaji Rao here on Wednesday said that the training would be held for 22 weeks and computer science and electronics graduates and PGs are eligible to get the training.

He said that training would be offered in coding, front end web development and design making. He said that besides this, front end skills, HTML, GIT, JavaScript, CSS-pre processors and CSS programming would be offered through online free of cost.

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Name of the Work : MISCELLANEOUS CONTRACT FOR ELECTRICAL GENERAL WORKS AT VISAKHAPATNAM JURISDICTION UNDER SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER/ELG/SOUTH, NORTH, DIESEL LOCO SHED, ELECTRIC LOCO SHED, MPM, IN WAITAIR DIVISION FOR ONE YEAR (EXCLUDING VDDO, EPRH & TC PALEM).

Tender Value : ₹ 40,44,580.70, EMD: ₹ 80,900/-, Cost of tender document: 3,540/-, Completion Period: 1 year.

Tender closing date and time at : 1330 hrs. of 30.12.2020. Tender opening date & time at : 1600 hrs. of 30.12.2020.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Complete details & tender documents will be available at website www.irps.gov.in

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G), PR-398/L/20-21 Waitair

CLASSIFIEDS

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Vaccination to spur infra

AP has 1,142 PHCs, 7,548 sub-centres which would be used for vaccination

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 9

The massive exercise of Covid-19 vaccination could lead to strengthening of the rural health infrastructure, according to experts.

Over the years, Andhra Pradesh has 1,142 PHCs and 7,548 sub-centres through which the vaccine would be administered to the vulnerable sections of the society.

Incidentally, the State has begun improving the infrastructure at the PHC and sub-centre level under Effective Vaccine Management (EVM) programme in February itself and a third party

agency suggested a 9-point parameter to make the rural health points flawless in administering the vaccine.

"We have covered 85 per cent of the PHCs and sub-centres under the EVM and complete all the points before the first shot was administered which is likely to happen after polio vaccination being taken up in mid-week of January," said director of health Dr T. Geetha Prasadini.

Talking to *DC* she said the PHCs have been refurbished under Nadu-Nedu programme and the sub-centres were being converted into health and wellness centres under

● The PHCs have been refurbished under Nadu-Nedu programme and the sub-centres were being converted into health and wellness centres

Ayushman Bharat programme. Installation of generators and uninterrupted power supply are in place to maintain the cold-chain, she added.

She said AP was ahead in building infrastructure in the rural sector got ready to launch the vaccine all over the State. "Our PHCs have been administering vaccine

since years but Covid-19 will definitely improve the basic infrastructure facilities. In this regard we are conducting gap analysis to find out the needs of the PHCs," said OSD for Covid-19 for north Andhra and principal of Andhra Medical College Dr P.V. Sudhakar.

In rural area, PHCs are grassroot-level government-run health centres that are responsible for providing last-mile health services. Once a vaccine is manufactured, it is transported from the manufacturer/supplier to the state or regional vaccine store. From there, the vaccine is distributed to districts,

which in turn send them to community health centres, primary health centres and the last point sub-centres.

The state government has directed the district administrations to form mandal level task force committees and similar committees at PHC and sub-centre level for smooth functioning of the programme and ensuring involvement of all the line departments.

As per the available guidelines, frontline health workers, frontline staff of other departments, 50 plus age group people and people below 50 with co-morbidities will be vaccinated.



Project Director, Ship Building Centre Visakhapatnam, Vice Admiral K. Srinivas lays a wreath at the Submarine Cenotaph as part of Submarine Day celebrations at INS Virbahu inside Eastern Naval Command in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

Guard pond in RINL, Vizag steel, inaugurated

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 9

Chairman and managing director of RINL, the holding company of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, P.K. Rath inaugurated Guard pond in the plant premises on Wednesday.

Mr Rath congratulated the projects and works collec-

tive for completing the project within the stipulated time and said RINL was always at the forefront in implementing environment friendly measures.

Guard ponds are 'Safe Guard' mechanisms for preventing discharge of 'untreated/abnormal' effluents into marine environments.

82 TONNES OF GANJA DESTROYED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 9

After a long wait, the officials of Vizag Rural Police got a legal nod to destroy tonnes of seized dry ganja in Vizag region. The police destroyed over 82,400 kgs (82 tonnes) of dry ganja seized by the police in the presence

of Drug Disposal committee at Balighattam dumping yard in Narsipatnam of Vizag district on Wednesday.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (Visakha Range) L.K.V. Ranga Rao said that the ganja was seized in over 657 cases under 41 police stations limits.



Huge flocks of egrets fly past the trees at Timmapuram in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday. — P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

Phase III trial data needed for approval

FROM PAGE 1

Dr Kiran M, senior anaesthesiologist, Government Hospital, Nizamabad, said, "Phase III trials are still not complete. They are currently ongoing. Without data of these trials, the EUA cannot be given.

There is no concept of EUA in India. This is for the first time vaccines are being taken up under this given the emergency of the pandemic. For this reason, scientists and drug controllers are very cautious."

According to sources aware of the proceedings, "the data submitted by a company to CDSCO in order to get a EUA pertained to data of overseas patients by a company for phase III human clinical trials."

In case of another company, recruitment of all 26,000 volunteers is still not complete, sources said. Given these lapses

it will take time for the EUA to be given to these companies.

Experts argue that vaccine development takes time and evaluation of data requires time.

Dr Sanjay Reddy, senior pharmacist, said, "The data generation will be based on the dosage regime, time after doses and adverse effects, if any. These phases have to be completed. Till it is completed, it will not be known where this vaccine can be administered to people safely."

Experts believe that the waiting period for EUA will take at least another month, if not ore. There are three committees which have to evaluate the request from these two companies, including the vaccine subject expert committee, the technical panel and the apex committee. The first committee, SEC, has asked for more data from the companies,

which means that the wait for the vaccine from these two firms reaching people has gotten much longer.

The application by the Indian arm of US pharmaceutical firm Pfizer was not taken up for deliberation on Wednesdays as the company sought more time for making a presentation before the committee, they said.

The recommendations by the SEC have been approved by the DCGI," an official source was quoted by PTI to have said.

Bharat Biotech applied to DCGI for EUA on December 7 for Covaxin, developed indigenously by the firm in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research, while Pune-based Serum Institute sought a nod for its Oxford vaccine, Covishield, on December 6.

NTR health varsity web counselling starts today

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

Dr NTR university of health sciences issued notification for exercising web options for the first phase web based counselling for admission into MBBS course under Competent Authority Quota seats for the academic year 2020-21 from 8 am on December 10 to 8 am on December 13.

The Dr NTR university of health sciences in its notification issued here on Wednesday stated that it had notified the first phase of web based counselling for MBBS seats available under CAQ including special categories like physically challenged, police martyrs children and Anglo Indian in government, private, un-aided, non-minority and minority medical colleges and MBBS seats in Sri Padmavathi Medical College for Women, Tirupati for the academic year 2020-21 in AP. All the eligible candidates who are present in the provisional final merit position list displayed on the website on December 7, are

● The first phase of web based counselling for MBBS seats available under CAQ including special categories like physically challenged, police martyrs children and Anglo Indian in government, private, un-aided.

asked to exercise their options at <https://apmedam.apntruhs.in> as per the seat matrix displayed in the website <http://ntruhs.ap.nic.in>.

The eligible candidates present in the provisional final merit position list of applied candidates, should give only one time option to be exercised for all medical colleges as per their order of priority. The same options will be considered for all phases of counselling including mop-up counselling and also for filling special category seats also as when the final prioritised list from the authorities concerned is received.

Muslim minority candidates only will be considered for competent authority quota seats in un-aided private minority medical colleges. If minority candidates are not available, then the seats will be converted to non-minority in the last phase of counselling and will be filled with eligible candidates.

The seats reserved under special categories like NCC, CAP and sports and games will be filled as and when the prioritised merit list is received. Therefore, candidates claiming under special category reservation are also informed to exercise their option for all colleges as per their order of priority. The unallotted seats under special categories quota will be converted and added to respective categories.

The selected candidates have to pay university fee of ₹10,500 through payment gateway. The Tuition fee is fixed at ₹10,000 in government medical colleges and ₹15,000 in private, un-aided, non-minority and minority medical colleges.

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DECCAN Chronicle

10 DECEMBER 2020

Democracy and reforms: How much is too much?

Is there a connection between democracy and Niti Aayog? Or, not to put too fine a point on it, between India's democracy and the government's think tank on economic affairs that was created as the National Institute for Transforming India (Niti) by dismantling the Planning Commission, which had planned to achieve balanced development of the various regions to remove poverty. Probably not, if putative observations of the Niti Ayog CEO, Amitabh Kant, made recently, are to be taken at face value.

The transformation of India in the conception of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is the chairman of the think tank he created in January 2015 through a mere cabinet decision and not the constitutional route, is to be achieved, fundamentally through de-regulation in all fields of economic activity. This means taking away any role for the government through "hard reforms" that Mr Kant spoke of while addressing an event virtually on Tuesday.

The country's major news platforms quoted the Niti Aayog operational chief as saying that "tough reforms" were very difficult in the Indian context because there was "too much democracy" in the country. He also noted that the Modi government had shown the "political will" to drive hard reforms. He reeled off examples such as mining, agriculture and labour.

The agri-laws were rammed through Parliament virtually without discussion — in an example of the 'political will' shown by the regime

The political meaning of this is obvious — that the rules, regulations and the culture of debate, dissent and protest in a democracy will not yield "tough reforms" needed to deliver economic prosperity. This is a discredited notion and Mr Kant evidently ran for cover when the implication of his remarks was revealed to him. He flatly denied saying the words attributed to him though it is highly unlikely that all reputed media outlets would misquote him. The videos of his only underscore that his clarification and denials are to be regarded with a stiff dose of skepticism.

Mr Kant went to the extent of saying that India can compete with China only through "hard reforms" and not through holding seminars. Seminars imply discussion and debate. This China reference would also suggest that in the Niti Aayog CEO's scheme, debates are not the way to push "tough reforms", implying a failure of the well-known basis of democracy. Presumably, then, hard reforms can only be achieved through bulldozing, the way it is done in China, a totalitarian state where a single leader is all knowing and all-powerful.

Examples of so-called "hard reform" (even when they undervalue public welfare by privileging the market principle on an exclusive basis), pushed through the methods of democracy, have evidently eluded Mr Modi's most powerful economic bureaucrat. He could have recalled, for instance, that former Britain PM Margaret Thatcher battled and debated in Parliament and the media to get her way in scuttling welfare measures of an earlier era to set her country on a new path.

In fact, to make economic reforms non-sliding, acceptance by the widest sections of the people is a necessity, not a luxury, and the political principle of democracy provides for the most thorough means to install a new idea or practice. The present regime has failed to do just that, the most recent egregious example being the contentious agri-laws against which a storm is brewing. These were rammed through Parliament virtually without discussion — in an example of the "political will" shown by the regime.

The rise of Everest

Measured in 2005 by a Beijing survey to be 8,844 m, Mt Chomolungma (meaning mother goddess) was a harder climb from the Chinese side, but also shorter by a good four metres. It prompted mountaineers to rush over to Nepal to summit Sagarmatha (literally, top of the world) whose height was generally acknowledged to be 8,848 metres. It cost the Communist country no small amount of Everest tourism.

Following the 2015 earthquake in Nepal which left 9,000 dead, including some climbers, the country's survey department experts, fearing that the mountain had become shorter, called for a fresh taking of measurement. So far, Nepal had been following the findings of the 1954 Survey of India, which had put out the second figure. An American survey in 1999, however, had calculated Everest to be higher, at 8,850 metres. It added grist to speculations as to whether the young-fold mountain was still growing.

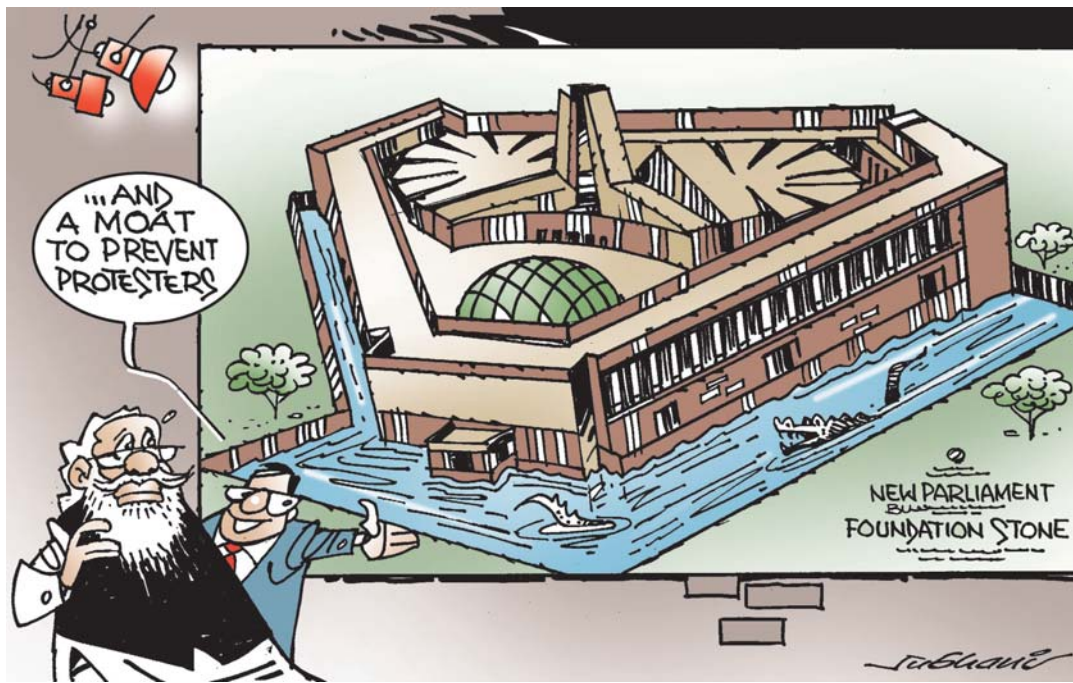
The speculators were correct. The two newest satellite aided surveys — Nepal's in 2019 and the one completed by China earlier this year — finally agree — the height of Everest is 8,848.86 metres — the mountain having grown by three feet or 86 centimetres. It is 164 years after Radhanath Sikdar used trigonometry and machines called theodolites to first calculate it on behalf of Sir George Everest to be 8,839 metres, making it the highest peak of the world.

It wasn't easy measuring the earth's tallest mountain this time either. Surveyors had to climb the mountain with a GPS receiver. A Nepali surveyor who stayed at the summit for two hours lost a toe to frostbite.

Now comes the key question — can this increase be attributed to rock, or is it merely icecap, as China once claimed? Yes and no, says Sridevi Jade, plate tectonics expert. The Himalayas stand on the boundary between the Indian and Eurasian plates. Jade calculates that the Indian plate is slipping under the Eurasian plate by about five centimetres a year. After accounting for erosion on the top, Everest is gaining about one centimetre every 10 years. So while the quake may have taken off centimetres, replicating Hillary and Norgay's feat just got harder.

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Subhani



Boris' fumbling holds lessons for the world



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray
Reflections

An important lesson for the pandemic-stricken world to remember as challenge casts its shadow on Prime Minister Boris Johnson's beleaguered government in London is that no opinion — not even that of a suspected adversary — should be dismissed or derided at a time of grave international danger.

More of that later. Immediate attention focuses on another aspect of the coronavirus crisis which inspired Britain's Agra-born business minister, Alok Sharma, to exult grandiloquently: "In years to come, we will remember this moment as the day the United Kingdom led humanity's charge against this disease." He meant — as every British spokesman repeats ad nauseam — that the UK is the first country to agree to use the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19.

Not everyone is equally boastful. While the German ambassador reminded listeners that the vaccine represents collective European enterprise, the tiny oil-rich island kingdom of Bahrain quickly muscled into the limelight to share Britain's glory with its own agreement with Pfizer/BioNTech. Another critic with little stomach for bombast that might resound to applause in Mr Sharma's ancestral Uttar Pradesh sharply reminded him that this moment might also be remembered for "the UK having one of the worst death rates and the worst economic impact due to poor governance".

Going beyond the United Kingdom's 1.71 million Covid-19 cases and 61,014 deaths, he might have been speaking of the frantic last-minute parleys in Britain's pro-

tracted divorce negotiations with the European Union which suggest that the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, did not think things through when he played up to domestic separatists with his aggressive Brexit agenda. With time running out for the December 31 deadline, this week's last throw of the dice (as it's called) in the negotiations may be heading for a breakdown rather than a breakthrough. If so, it would be catastrophic for both parties who cannot escape their interdependence.

While British waters are much richer in fish than the seas surrounding Europe, British trawlers make their money selling to the European nations. As Mr Johnson continues to pander to the insular lobby by accusing the EU of riding roughshod over British sovereignty, Rachel Reeves, a senior member of the Labour Party's shadow cabinet, has warned that he "needs to deliver the deal he promised the British people". He can't ignore her for Brexit has exposed his reliance on Labour votes in the House of Commons. Neither can he ignore the new Cold War against China and Russia that US President Donald Trump had launched with vehement diatribes against the so-called "Wuhan virus" to woo American voters ahead of the presidential election.

With talk of Washington invoking the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act to blacklist the popular Chinese video app TikTok as "an unusual and extraordinary threat", Mr Johnson has taken up the cudgels for the United States like another British leader, Tony Blair, who kowtowed to George W. Bush and joined the American invasions of Iraq and

Afghanistan. That probably explains the sudden £16 billion increase in Britain's defence budget over the next four years, despite the pandemic's calamitous damage to the economy. Such gestures appease the Americans, as do accusations of the Kremlin trying to penetrate Britain's secret scientific research programmes and promises to reveal Russia's alleged covert interference in British politics.

Initially, Mr Johnson rejected pressure, American as well as from the rightists among his own Conservatives, to ban the Chinese technology company, Huawei, from any role in building the UK's 5G infrastructure. He has since done a volte face and now cites "sound technical reasons" for giving Huawei marching orders. But although Huawei is said to threaten British security and is excluded from the 5G network, Mr Johnson cannot be seriously concerned since the eviction will become effective only over seven years.

Neither this anomaly nor the ban itself seems to have attracted much public attention in Britain. The reason may be that people are genuinely horrified by China's oppression of the Uighurs, its tightening grip on Hong Kong, the military assertiveness in the South China Sea and muscle-flexing in Ladakh. But the Brexit controversy makes Britain vulnerable, and succumbing to American pressure at this juncture may compound London's depen-

dency on Washington. Instead of taking back control of his country's destiny — the publicly reiterated reason for leaving the EU in the first place — Mr Johnson might end up by moving closer to the old joke of Britain as the 51st state of the United States of America.

Obviously, the pandemic aggravates the impact of all other crises. Covid-19 might also have caused less suffering and spread less terror if a sane approach had been followed from the beginning. Dr Hans Kluge, who heads the World Health Organisation's European operations, says that lockdowns are unnecessary if 95 per cent of the population wears masks. This should have been far more widely and forcefully propagated when the pandemic was exploding across the world. Sadly, many European and American leaders dismissed masks then as politically unacceptable.

As Britain and the EU nations were going into lockdown, Dr George Fu Gao, director-general of the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, China's main public health body, corroborated Dr Kluge's view. Asked about the mistakes being made by other countries trying to control coronavirus, he replied that "the big mistake in the US and Europe, in my opinion, is that people aren't wearing masks".

That opinion should have been taken seriously even though China had already been cast as the adversary. According to independent observers, China's return to normality was largely the result of old-fashioned public health measures, with a heavy emphasis on test-and-trace and travel bans, vigorously enforced by mobilising the country's vast resources and, of course, invoking the state's coercive authority.

There's a lesson there for the rest of the suffering world.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

Dr Hans Kluge, who heads the WHO's European operations, says that lockdowns are unnecessary if 95 per cent of the population wears masks. Sadly, many European and American leaders dismissed masks then as politically unacceptable.

LETTERS

CAPITAL LOCATION

The AP government is 100 per cent correct in asserting its right to decide on the location of new capital city. Its right should not be questioned even by a court of law. At the most the HC could ask for state's plans on how it will use the land acquired by the previous government at huge cost. Evidently all those who parted with their lands either voluntarily or under duress, had anticipated huge profit from cost escalation of land.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

COVID CASES

It is heartening that people are getting back on horse again after the Covid-19 cases are showing a consistent downfall. At the same time, Covid-19 protocols need to be adhered to strictly till not a single case is reported. The onus is on the people not to throw caution to the winds and pay a heavy price.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

LOPSIDE PRIORITIES

Even after 70 years of Independence, the suburbs are without potable water and motorable roads. Throughout the country it is the same scenario. We see multiple activities like washing of clothes, cattle and the picking up drinking water from another point along a stream passing through a village or a suburb. No wonder people often get afflicted with waterborne diseases and are prone to other ailments. This is due to negligence and lopsided priorities of rulers.

D.S.P. Rao
Sasikantnagar

High Court upholds Mulki rules

From our legal staff reporter

HYDERABAD, Dec. 9.

The full bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court today held that the Mulki rules relating to appointment of public servants in so far as they are applicable to

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle Telangana region revive and survive to continue after the judgement of

the Supreme Court striking down in 1969 Section 3 of the Public Employment Act 1957.

The full bench consisted of Chief Justice Kumarayya, Mr. Justice Gopal Rao Ekbote and Mr. Justice Sambasiva Rao.

Leher Sethi



Is pollution a greater pandemic than Covid?

As a parent, I dread Delhi winters, not just because of the cold, but because of the terrible pollution in the air. We live in the city with the worst air quality in the world. Air quality index is generally Moderate (101-200) between January and September, and then it drastically deteriorates to Very Poor (301-400), Severe (401-500) or Hazardous (500+) between October and December.

It amazes me how year after year, as the winter approaches, there is a huge outcry over pollution in the city and then it dies down its own natural death as the summer returns. There is no urgency to tackle this pandemic!

Although some of us are still getting used to wearing masks, to many of us with little children, this is nothing new because our kids have been wearing masks for the past couple of winters. In my son's Montessori pre-school, it was made compulsory for the little babies to wear masks to school. Back then, it felt like I was entering a science fiction film set every time I would go to school. Little did I know that it would become the new normal soon!

As per the current data, as on

November 28, 2020, there have been 1,35,906 deaths due to the coronavirus in India. Globally, there have been 1.45 million deaths. Now, compare this to the deaths caused due to pollution. In 2019, exposures to outdoor high average levels of PM 2.5 caused 9,80,000 deaths in India — nearly 60 per cent of all air pollution — attributable deaths. Globally, there were 4.14 million such deaths in 2019. Even if we were to double the coronavirus-related deaths, they would still amount to just about 27 per cent of the deaths caused due to air pollution in India. Then, why is this pandemic being ignored?

What will it take for the authorities and the government to wake up to its reality? Is it that the awareness of this epidemic is only with the educated and urbane few, that it will only become important once the vote bank of the poor make it an issue?

As per the State of Global Air 2020 report (SoGA 2020) released on October 21, a report published by the US-based think-tank, Health Effects Institute, there were at least 1,16,000 infant deaths due to air pollution recorded in India last year.

For the youngest infants, most deaths were related to complications

from low birth weight and premature birth — direct outcomes of mothers' exposure to air pollution during pregnancy. More than half of the infant deaths were due to PM2.5 in outdoor air and the rest were linked to household air pollution due to use of solid fuels such as charcoal, wood and animal dung for cooking, as per the study that claims to be the first-ever comprehensive analysis of air pollution's global impact on newborns. There is a growing body of evidence about the link between infant death and air pollution and several Indian and international studies have tried to explain it.

In 2019, India's population-weighted annual average concentration of PM 2.5 was recorded at 83.2 micrograms per cubic metre — seven times higher than the WHO's safe standards of 10 µg/m3 - and remained highest in the world. (The "population-weighted annual average concentration" is the average level of air pollution to which a country's population is exposed.)

As per the American Lung Association, children face special risks from air pollution because their lungs are growing and because they are so active and breathe in a great deal of air. Children's exposure to air

pollution is a special concern because their immune system is not fully developed when exposure begins.

Just like the arms and legs, the largest portion of a child's lungs will grow long after he or she is born. Eighty percent of alveoli develop after birth. Children have more respiratory infections than adults, which also seems to increase their susceptibility to air pollution.

Furthermore, children don't behave like adults, and their behaviour also affects their vulnerability. They are outside for longer periods and are usually more active when outdoors. Consequently, they inhale more polluted outdoor air. They are also closer to the earth, where the pollutants are higher.

As per a study titled "State of Global Air 2019", the average life of a South Asian child growing up in the current high levels of air pollution will be shortened by two-and-a-half years. This means that a child born today will die 2.5 years sooner, on average. That is a really scary prospect, and one that makes me want to leave this city, and country, along with my child. Doing a little bit of research on my own, here's what I found:

■ Children are more at risk from the effects of pollution since they have faster breathing rates, and their lungs are still developing.

■ Children exposed to high pollution are more likely to have reduced lung function as adults.

■ Long term exposure to air pollution may cause asthma and other health risks, including cancer, in children.

■ Air pollution is one of the leading threats to child health, accounting for almost one in 10 deaths in children under five years of age.

■ Pregnant women exposed to air pollution can hinder the development of the brain and lead to cognitive problems later in the children.

As per the World Health Organisation, in Delhi, poor air quality irreversibly damages the lungs of 2.2 million or 50 per cent of all children. My child and your child could be part of that number! There is no way of sugarcosting this; as a parent, I am afraid for my child.

If this is not a national emergency, then what is? Our children are the future, and the future is at stake here!

Leher Sethi is an entrepreneur and social activist

SHORT TAKES

TAMIL TELEVISION ACTRESS CHITRA COMMITS SUICIDE

Chennai, Dec. 9: Popular Tamil television actress Chitra was found dead at a hotel room here early on Wednesday and she is suspected to have died by suicide, police said.

The 29-year old actress, well known among television audience in Tamil Nadu was seen hanging from a fan at the hotel room — using her saree like a rope — in suburban Nazarethpet when they reached the spot, police said.

When examined, she was already dead, an official said adding her fiancé, who was with her before her death was being questioned.

After a shoot at a nearby location, K. Chitra arrived at the hotel on the Bengaluru bypass and had told the man that she would be back after a bath and requested him to wait outside, police said quoting him. “He says he knocked on the door since she did not come out for long. He says, he then informed the hotel personnel and police was informed at 3.30 am. He is being questioned. A probe is on,” the official said.

The 32-year old man was recently engaged to her and he was staying with her in the hotel room. Chitra became more popular among lovers of soap opera after she donned the role of ‘Mullai,’ in the ongoing television serial ‘Pandian Stores.’

The body has been sent to Kilpauck Government Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

THREE AL-BADR MILITANTS KILLED IN ENCOUNTER

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, DEC. 9

A gunfight that broke out in a remote village of Jammu and Kashmir’s southern Pulwama district overnight ended around noon on Wednesday after the security forces gunned down all the three militants who had been holed up in a private house. The house owner was injured in the clash, the officials said.

The Army and J&K police said that the slain men — all locals — belonged to Al-Badr, a pro-Pakistan militant outfit.

Inspector General of Police (Kashmir range), Vijay Kumar, said that the civilian who was caught in crossfire was immediately shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment and is said to be stable. Kumar said that the operation to flush out militants from Pulwama’s Tiken village had been launched jointly by J&K police’s counterinsurgency Special Operations Group, the Army’s 55 Rashtriya Rifles and Central Reserve Police Force’s 182 and 183 battalions.

The police claimed that the militants holed up in the area were given opportunity to surrender. “However, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which was retaliated leading to an encounter. Zamir Sadiq Lone in whose house the terrorists were hiding also received gunshot injuries.”

DRDO LABS ‘TALK’ IN SUCCESSFUL QUANTUM DEMO

New Delhi, Dec. 9: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Wednesday successfully demonstrated communication between its two labs using Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) technology, which is a “robust” way to share encryption keys, said an official statement.

In the QKD technology, encryption keys are sent as qubits in a fibre optic cable. Quantum computing uses qubits as basic resources, similar to how bits are used as basic resources in classical computing. The QKD is designed in a way that if an illegitimate entity tries to read the transmission, it will disturb the qubits — which are encoded on photons — and this will generate transmission errors, leading to legitimate end users being immediately informed.

“Secure communications are vital for defence and strategic agencies world over and distribution of encryption keys from time to time is an important requirement in this context... Quantum based communication offers a robust solution to sharing the keys securely,” said an official statement. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the DRDO for successful demonstration of QKD-based communication between its two labs in Hyderabad, said the statement.



Police keep vigil as Karnataka farmers participate in a protest rally in Bengaluru on Wednesday to press for repeal of the Centres agri-laws. — PTI

Save India’s annadatas, Opposition urges Prez

Anti-democratic farm laws threaten food security, says Oppn

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

Opposition parties, led by the Congress and NCP, met President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday and sought repeal of the three farm laws against which thousands of farmers have been protesting on various borders of the national capital.

The five-member delegation included former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPI’s D. Raja and DMK leader T.K.S. Elangovan.

The Opposition’s memorandum to the President said, “We urge upon you, as the custodian of the Indian Constitution, to persuade your government not to be obdurate and accept the demands raised by India’s annadatas.”

“The new agri-laws, passed in Parliament in an anti-democratic manner preventing a structured discussion and voting, threaten India’s food security, destroy Indian agriculture and our farmers, lay the basis for the abolishment of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and mortgage Indian agriculture and our markets to the caprices of multinational agri-business corporates and domestic corporates,” it said.

“We met the President and informed him of our view regarding the three farm laws. We have asked for their repeal. We informed the President that it is critical that they are taken back,” Gandhi told the media after the meeting.

He said the way the farm laws were passed in Parliament, “we feel it was an insult to farmers and that is why they are protesting in the cold weather against them”. He claimed that using the new laws, the government wants to hand over the farming sector to the “friends of the Prime Minister,” but the farmers are fearless and will not back off, and will continue with their peaceful agitation.

Kejriwal still under house arrest: AAP

New Delhi, Dec. 9: The AAP on Wednesday alleged that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal’s movement is still “restricted” and the main gate of his residence remains closed by the Delhi Police, which denied the charge.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which had on Tuesday alleged that the Delhi Police put Kejriwal under house arrest after he met farmers protesting against the Centre’s agriculture reform laws at the city’s Singhu border, again claimed that it was being done at the behest of Union minister Amit Shah.

The Delhi Police had rejected AAP’s charge against it as “totally baseless”. Addressing a press conference on Wednesday, AAP spokesperson Raghav Chadha said there is an atmosphere of “undeclared emergency” around the Chief Minister’s residence. “I am telling you with full responsibility that the movement of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is still restricted at the behest of the (Union) home minister. The main gate of the Chief Minister’s residence is still closed,” Chadha alleged.

— PTI

Elders determined to keep up the fight

New Delhi, Dec. 9: “Come home only after we win this fight”. His son’s words to him as he left his village in Punjab for Delhi ring in Gurdev Singh’s ears and give the 71-year-old the strength to carry on with the protest against the new farm laws — so what if he is still recovering from a knee replacement surgery.

The doughty sardar from Narpur village in Punjab’s Jalandhar district is just one of the several elderly people camping at the Singur border for the last 13 days, determined to keep up the fight for a repeal of the Centre’s three new farm laws.

It is getting colder by the day and they are hundreds of miles from home but the band of old men, among the many thousands of protesting farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, are not giving up any time soon.

“As far as I can remember, all generations in my family have depended on agriculture for their livelihood. My sons, too, are farmers. I came to fight for the honour of our forefathers and the rights of my children,” Gurdev Singh said, pumping his fists in the air.

He had both his knees replaced just four months ago and can’t walk without support but isn’t complaining. “This trouble is nothing compared to the issue we are protesting about.

My elder son told me, ‘Come home only after we win this fight’, and that is what I plan to do,” the farmer said as two men help him climb down from a trolley.

Gurdev Singh’s two friends from Narpur, Sajjan Singh and Pritam Singh, both in their late 60s, echo his bravura spirit.

— PTI

BUSY FIGHTING FOR OUR RIGHTS, SAY FARMERS

New Delhi, Dec. 9: Caught between the Covid-19 pandemic and the agitation for their rights, farmers protesting against the Centre’s new farm laws said the fear of contracting the disease is “not enough” to detract them from their fight.

Thousands of farmers camping at the Tikri borders are largely seen without the basic preventive measure against Covid-19 — protective masks.

“The government has already tied a noose around our necks with these laws... we cannot afford to be afraid of Coronavirus,” Gagandeep Singh, a farmer from Bhatinda in Punjab, said.

He has been protesting at the Delhi-Haryana border for the last 10 days. Demonstrating for 12 straight days, the farmers have been demanding that the three laws be revoked. Sporting a long white beard, Gursavan Singh said he was not afraid of the disease that has already killed over 1.4 lakh people in the country.

“We are losing our rights. We do not have time to worry about Coronavirus,” he said. According to Sachin Kumar from Delhi’s Uttam Nagar, the government’s refusal to hear the farmers’ demands proved that it was creating the fear of the virus to shut down the protest.

Kumar, whose family has land in Uttar Pradesh, mocked, “It seems that the virus will infect us exclusively. What is shown on camera and the reality on ground is different.”

Meanwhile, traffic was disrupted at border points with farmers agitating on the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders of Delhi.

— PTI

Rajasthan PR poll results mandate on farm bills: BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

Hailing the Rajasthan local body polls results as “phenomenal,” the BJP on Thursday claimed that the results are farmers’ mandate for Modi government’s farm reforms and also people’s support for the party across the country.

In Congress ruled Rajasthan, the BJP won 353 of 636 zila parishads, 21 zila panchayatas and 1,990 of 4,371 panchayat samitis, primarily in rural areas.

The party also cited its performance in the recently held local bodies polls in Hyderabad, Arunachal Pradesh and the Bihar Assembly polls to assert that the party and the Narendra Modi led central government has support in every region of the country.

BJP president J.P. Nadda

● THE BJP won 353 of 636 zila parishads, 21 zila panchayatas and 1,990 of 4,371 panchayat samitis, primarily in rural areas.

said the saffron party’s win in Rajasthan symbolises the trust the poor, farmers and labourers have in Modi’s leadership, while senior party leader and Union minister Prakash Javadekar stressed that people, especially farmers, have given it a “decisive” victory.

He said all these polls were held after Parliament enacted three farm sector reform laws, which have drawn protest from a section of farmers, especially from Punjab.

Noting that the polls in Rajasthan were held primarily in rural areas, Javadekar said by opting for the BJP, voters reversed the trend of the state’s ruling party win-

ning most seats in the local polls in Rajasthan.

“This is a huge victory... This is farmers’ mandate for farm reforms,” said the Union minister.

When asked about Congress leader Rahul Gandhi’s dig at the Union government alleging that “reform equals theft” for it, Javadekar took a jibe saying he does not want to respond to a “non-performing politician.”

He said the Central government is holding talks with the protesting farmer union leaders with an open mind and expressed confidence that a resolution will be reached.

The minister pointed out that these wins have come for the BJP amid the Covid-19 pandemic, economic troubles caused by it and “misinformation” campaign by the opposition against the BJP over the farm reforms.

Nadda attacks TMC as he begins poll campaign

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 9

BJP president J.P. Nadda on Wednesday attacked the ruling Trinamul Congress in West Bengal as a family-run party after embarking on a two-day visit to the state to set “dynasty politics” on the agenda in next year’s Assembly elections.

He also led a rally of Aar Noy Onnaya (no more injustice) campaign, a door-to-door outreach initiative of the BJP, on Girish Mukherjee Road in Bhowanipore, the home turf and Assembly constituency of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, to make the saffron party’s presence felt there.

On Thursday, the BJP chief is likely to visit Diamond Harbour, the base and Lok Sabha constituency of the CM’s nephew, Abhishek Banerjee, in South 24 Parganas.

Inaugurating the state BJP election office in Hastings and nine district party offices, Nadda, in an oblique reference to Banerjee’s residence at Harish Chatterjee Street in Kalighat, which is also the heart of the TMC, said, “Karyalay is the centre of culture and tradition. Interestingly, BJP is run from the Karyalay. But for other parties, home is their Karyalay from where they are run.”

He said, “To other parties, party means one particular parivar (family) and is restricted only within the parivar, which is spread like a net from top to bottom. And the TMC is no exception to it. It has also become a party of parivar. But the BJP is a party which itself is a parivar. We are part of a big parivar. This is evident for us because Karyalay is not run from any leader’s home.”

Contrasting the Trinamul Congress supreme with Asahishnuta, Nadda argued: “On December 7, 1935, Jan Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee said in



BJP national president J.P. Nadda flashes the victory sign as the party begins campaigning for West Bengal Assembly elections. — PTI

Didi says refugees will not need CAA

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 9

Desperate to get back the votebank of the Matuas, a community of Hindu migrants in West Bengal, from the BJP, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday asserted that the refugees would not need the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) to stay as legal citizens here.

Accusing the BJP of cheating the refugees in the name of the CAA in the poll-bound state, the Trinamul Congress supreme once again ruled out of allowing the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and National Population Register (NPR) also here.

Her announcement came in wake of the BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya’s announcement that the CAA implementation for the migrants would get underway from either January or February.

Banerjee told a TMC rally at the domain of the Matuas in Bongaon of

North 24 Parganas, “There are lot of refugees who live here after coming from Bangladesh. It is your home like ours. There is no need to get a fresh certificate because all of you are citizens. You are being cheated in the name of the CAA. If it gets underway, your grandparents’ age proof will be sought. Can you arrange it now?”

She informed that all the 94 refugee colonies, under the state government, were legalised already to give its residents citizenship “in exchange of nothing.”

“There were 250 more such colonies which existed privately on central government premises. We have legalised them also to give citizenship to its residents. Remember, the state government, not the central government, holds the main power. Work of the two governments is different. The state government decides who will live in the state. So there is no point in lying in the name of CAA. We will not allow the NRC and NPR to happen,” Banerjee claimed.

BACK | HOME Tigress was translocated to Satkosia reserve in 2018

‘Sundari’ to relocate to MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, DEC. 9

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh on Wednesday gave his nod for relocation of tigress ‘Sundari’, translocated to Satkosia tiger reserve in Odisha in a re-introduction programme in 2018, in Kanha National Park in MP.

Chouhan’s decision to restore Sundari to her original home in Kanha tiger reserve has ended after almost a yearlong impasse over relocation of the wild animal with MP forest department hitherto unwilling to take back her contending that she was not fit to be released in the wild.

In a letter to his Odisha

counterpart Naveen Patnaik, Chouhan said MP would take back Sundari. He, however, indicated that it would take some time for relocation of Sundari in Kanha tiger reserve.

“It has been decided to relocate Sundari in the Ghorela re-wilding centre in Kanha tiger reserve to make her fit to be released in the wild. But, an orphan cub is currently being trained in the centre to restore its wild character. Sundari could be relocated to the centre only after the tiger cub was released in the wild”, the letter written in Hindi said.

Chouhan said an expert team from MP which visited Sundari in her enclosure in Satkosia tiger

reserve has found that the wild animal was not fit to live in the wild since she has become habituated to human presence due to her prolonged captivity in the enclosure.

“It is learnt from media reports that rehabilitation of Sundari in the enclosure in Satkosia tiger reserve was not done as per provisions of wildlife Act, leading her to lose her natural wild nature”, the letter said.

A male tiger, Mahavir, and a female big cat Sundari, were translocated within a gap of a couple of months to Satkosia tiger reserve in 2018 from Madhya Pradesh in a re-introduction programme.

This was the first experimental interstate translocation of tigers in the

country.

However, Mahavir was allegedly killed by locals a few months after his translocation.

Later, Sundari killed 2 humans in the tiger reserve, forcing the Odisha forest department to shift her to a small enclosure in the reserve forest.

Later, National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and Odisha government requested the MP government to take back Sundari.

A wildlife activist moved Madhya Pradesh high court seeking a directive to the MP government to take back Sundari. The court last month ordered the MP government to relocate Sundari in Kanha.

RUSSIA UNHAPPY WITH CLOSE INDO-US TIES

From page 1

“The West is attempting to undermine our close partnership and privileged relations with India. This is the goal of the US’ very tough pressure on New Delhi,” Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov said.

Observers point out that the remarks highlight Russia’s unease with India’s growing proximity and strong strategic ties with the United States, with whom Russia has had a sharply deteriorating relationship.

It also highlights India’s challenge in continuing to maintain excellent ties with both Russia and the US.

SHORT TAKES

CHOPPER CRASH IN FRENCH ALPS KILLS 5, 1 HURT

Paris, Dec. 9: Five members of a mountain rescue team were killed and a sixth was seriously injured when their helicopter crashed in the French Alps, authorities said. The helicopter was carrying the team on a training mission in the Savoie region on Tuesday evening. The helicopter came down at an altitude of 1,800 meters (5,905 feet), the prefecture of Savoie said in a statement. The surviving crew member was able to give the alert.

He has been transported to a hospital in the city of Grenoble, the prefecture said. Weather conditions were particularly bad, local authorities said. French President Emmanuel Macron paid tribute in a tweet overnight to rescuers who “to save lives, are taking all the risks.”

GERMAN POLLS TO BE HELD ON SEPT. 26, 2021

Berlin, Dec. 9: Germany's next parliamentary election, which will determine the country's new leader after Chancellor Angela Merkel's long rule, will be held on September 26, 2021.

President Frank-Walter Steinmeier's office said Wednesday that the head of state set the date in line with a recommendation from the government. It will be post-World War II Germany's 20th parliamentary election Germany holds elections every four years.

The lower house of parliament, or Bundestag, elects the chancellor. That may not happen until well after the election, because the process of putting together a governing coalition can be lengthy. After the 2017 election, it was nearly six months before Merkel was sworn in for her fourth term — a record.

UK body issues allergy warning for Pfizer jab

Caution was given after 2 NHS workers suffered allergic reactions

London, Dec. 9: Britain's medicines regulator on Wednesday issued a warning for people with “significant” history of allergic reactions to medicines, food or vaccines to not have the Pfizer/BioNTech jab, a day after the first set of patients were administered their first of two doses of the vaccine against Covid-19.

The warning comes after two National Health Service (NHS) workers experienced “anaphylactoid reaction” symptoms shortly after being injected, but are now said to be recovering well.

NHS England said all its trusts involved with the mass vaccination programme have been informed and from Wednesday, all patients scheduled to receive the vaccine will be asked if they have a history of allergic reactions.

“As is common with new vaccines, the MHRA have advised on a precautionary basis that people with a significant history of allergic reactions do not receive this vaccination after two people with a history of significant allergic reactions responded adversely,” said Professor Stephen Powis, medical director for the NHS in England.

An anaphylactoid reaction tends to involve a skin rash, breathlessness and sometimes a drop in blood pressure and both the NHS workers who experienced this are said to have a history of serious allergies and carry adrenaline pens around with them.

— PTI

Biden promises 100 mn vaccine shots in 100 days

Washington, Dec. 9: US President-elect Joe Biden has said that in the first 100 days of his administration, he would mandate everyone to wear a mask, ensure 100 million Covid-19 vaccinations and reopen the majority of schools as he assured Americans that his “crisis-tested” team of experts will deliver better healthcare and revive the economy.

The US is in the midst of a deadly pandemic that has infected almost 15 million Americans and killed 2,86,000. Globally, there are 68.2 million Covid-19 cases and the pandemic

has claimed more than 1.5 million lives.

Announcing his national health team, Biden asked the Trump administration to act now to purchase the doses it has negotiated with Pfizer and Moderna and to work swiftly to scale manufacturing for the US population and the world.

“This can be fixed. If it does, my team will be able to get at least 100 million vaccinations done in my first 100 days. Third, it should be a national priority to get our kids back into school and keep them in school,” he said. — PTI

MERKEL BACKS TOUGHER VIRUS RESTRICTIONS

Berlin, Dec. 9: German Chancellor Angela Merkel advocated tougher restrictions on public life and pleaded with her compatriots to cut down on socializing as the country reported its highest single-day death toll of the Coronavirus pandemic on Wednesday.

Germany is gradually moving toward a tighter lockdown, at least for a limited period after Christmas, as new virus cases remain stubbornly high — and are even beginning to creep higher — despite a partial shutdown that started on November 2.

— AP

U.S. SANCTIONS HINDERING ACCESS TO VACCINE: IRAN

Tehran, Dec. 9: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that US sanctions are making it difficult for Iran to purchase medicine and health supplies from abroad, including Covid-19 vaccines needed to contain the worst outbreak in the Middle East.

Don orders vaccine priority for America

Washington, Dec. 9: US President Donald Trump has signed an executive order that prioritises Americans' access to Covid-19 vaccines before the US potentially begins helping other nations.

If necessary, Trump said, he is ready to invoke the Defence Production Act to ensure that Covid-19 vaccines first get to the Americans.

The Defence Production Act allows a president to force private manufacturers to ramp up production and give the federal gov-

ernment priority on any orders it places. American companies, he said, were the first to produce a verifiably safe and effective vaccine.

“Together, we will defeat the virus, and we will soon end the pandemic, and we will save millions and millions of lives, both in our country and all over the world. And we've already started,” Trump said during signing the executive order on Tuesday at a White House event celebrating ‘Operation Warp Speed.’ — PTI

Biden picks retired Army general to lead Pentagon

Washington, Dec. 9: US President-elect Joe Biden has announced retired Army general Lloyd J. Austin as his nomination for Defence Secretary. If confirmed by the Senate, 67-year-old Austin would be the first African-American to lead the Pentagon.

The nominee for the 28th Secretary of Defence comes with a distinguished record of military service spanning four decades. “General Austin shares my profound belief that our nation is at its strongest when we lead not only by the example of our power, but by the power of our example.

Throughout his lifetime of dedicated service — and in the many hours we've spent together in the White House Situation Room and with our troops overseas — General Austin has demonstrated exemplary leadership, character and command,” Biden said while making the announcement on Tuesday.

“He is uniquely qualified to take on the challenges and crises we face in the current moment, and I look forward to once again working closely with him as a trusted partner to lead our military with dignity and resolve, revitalise our alliances in the face of global threats, and ensure the safety and security of the American people,” the Democratic leader said. An accomplished, respected and trailblazing figure in the US military history, Austin retired from the Army in 2016 after over 40 years of service.

The first African-American to serve as Commander of US Central Command, Austin is a trusted and crisis-tested leader who has overseen some of the most complex and impactful operations in the history of the armed

Trump: Hopeful of continuing as Prez

Washington, Dec. 9: Days before the official certification of the November 3 US presidential elections in favour of his Democratic opponent Joe Biden, President Donald Trump claimed that he would continue to hold the position as he has won the elections.

Trump has been making unsubstantiated claims about widespread voter fraud and electoral malpractice in the presidential polls. State election officials and the media

have denied any such fraud.

Election officials have declared Biden as the President-elect as he received more than the required 270 of the 538 electoral college votes. The elections are officially scheduled to be certified next week. However, Trump is continuing his legal efforts to upend Biden's victory. He has allowed the official start of Biden's transition to power but has not yet conceded defeat. — PTI

U.S. TOP COURT REJECTS GOP BID TO HALT BIDEN'S PENNSYLVANIA WIN

Washington, Dec. 9 (AP) The Supreme Court has rejected Republicans' last-gasp bid to reverse Pennsylvania's certification of President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the electoral battleground.

The court without comment on Tuesday refused to call into question the the certification process in Pennsylvania.

Governor Tom Wolf already has certified Biden's victory and the state's 20 electors are to meet on December 14 to cast their votes for Biden.

Biden won 306 electoral votes, so even if Pennsylvania's results had been in doubt, he still would have more than the 270 electoral votes needed to become president. — AP

services — including serving as the chief architect of the effort to defeat ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and working closely with Biden to bring nearly 1,50,000 American military personnel home from Iraq, the transition said.

US President-elect Joe Biden has also selected Ohio Rep. Marcia Fudge as his housing and urban development secretary, according to three people familiar with the deci-

sion. Fudge was first elected to Congress in 2008 to represent a district that includes Cleveland, and had been considered a leading candidate for agriculture secretary in the Biden administration. Her intended nomination was confirmed on Tuesday by three people familiar with the decision who spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid preempting the president-elect's announcement. — PTI

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Ex Argentina coach Sabella no more

Buenos Aires: Former coach Alejandro Sabella, who led the 2014 World Cup runner-up Argentina team, died on Tuesday at a clinic in Buenos Aires suffering from heart disease.

He was 66 years old. The former boss of Estudiantes de La Plata died at the Cardiovascular Institute of Buenos Aires, where he had been admitted on November 25 - the day soccer legend Diego Maradona died — after suffering an arrhythmia.

The medical center said in a statement that Sabella was the victim of “secondary dilated heart disease and long-standing cardiotoxicity.” — AP

Ben Stokes' father passes away at 65

Christchurch: England all-rounder Ben Stokes lost his father Ged, who died here on Tuesday after a year-long battle with brain cancer.

He was 65. Stokes is currently with the England team in South Africa for the limited over series. He had played all three T20Is and was rested for ODIs, which was cancelled on Monday after multiple cases of Covid-19 were detected in the bio-bubble.

Ged, a former rugby player and coach, had been suffering from brain cancer for some time and Stokes was there in Christchurch for more than a month taking care of his ailing father. “All our thoughts are with Ben Stokes and his family following the passing of his father, Ged,” ECB tweeted from its official handle.

Stokes' famous “bent middle finger” gesture during the 2019 South Africa series was a tribute to his father's amputated finger. Ged had to remove a part of his finger in order to continue playing. It was Stokes' way of paying tribute to his father for the sacrifices he had made to see him grow as a cricketer. — PTI

Barcelona, Dec. 9: Cristiano Ronaldo struck twice from the penalty spot to win his battle with rival Lionel Messi and guide Juventus to a 3-0 win over Barcelona on Tuesday, earning the Italians top spot in Champions League Group G.

The former Real Madrid striker and his Argentina counterpart traded Ballon d'Or wins for a decade between 2008-2017 and were figureheads for the duelling Spanish giants, but there was only one winner at the Camp Nou as they met for the first time since Ronaldo's departure for Juve in 2018.

Juventus lost 2-0 at home against Barcelona in October without Ronaldo, sidelined with Covid-19, but were greatly improved and earned the first Champions League away win against Barcelona since Bayern Munich triumphed in 2013.

Both sides, tied on 15 points were assured of qualification before kick-off.

It only took 13 minutes for Ronaldo to break the deadlock, slotting home from the penalty spot after the referee deemed Ronald Araujo's challenge on him a foul. Juve's did not relent and their pressure led to a second goal, McKennie volleying home Juan Cuadrado's sweetly clipped cross in the 20th minute. — AFP

THE RESULTS

Juventus 3
(Ronaldo 13-pen, 52-pen, McKennie 20)
Barcelona 0

RB Leipzig 3
(Angelino 2, Haidara 13, Kluivert 69)
Manchester United 2
(Fernandes 80-pen, Pogba 82)

Chelsea 1
(Jorginho 28-pen)
Krasnodar 1
(Cabella 24)



Cristiano Ronaldo (right) of Juventus lines up a shot to score his team's third goal against Barcelona during their UEFA Champions League Group 'G' football match at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Tuesday. — AFP

Racist slur halts PSG game

Paris, Dec. 9: Manchester United were knocked out of the Champions League after a 3-2 defeat by RB Leipzig on Tuesday, while Paris Saint-Germain's qualification for the last 16 was overshadowed by a racism row involving a match official that caused their game against Istanbul Basaksehir to be suspended for 24 hours.

Lazio also secured a spot in the knockout rounds with 2-2 draw at home to Club Brugge in the pouring rain in Rome.

Requiring just a point to advance, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side fell behind to an Angelino goal inside two minutes in

Germany. Amadou Haidara soon added a second and United were trailing 3-0 heading into the final quarter after a Justin Kluivert strike.

Bruno Fernandes' penalty and a deflected Paul Pogba header gave United a lifeline but Leipzig, who reached the semi-finals last term, held on to move top of Group H on 12 points.

Leipzig must wait until Wednesday to find out whether they finish first or second in the section, after the contest between last season's runners-up PSG and Turkish champions Basaksehir was interrupted with the score 0-0 in the 14th minute.

Players walked off in Paris amid allegations of racism by the fourth official, in an unprecedented incident in European football's elite club competition.

The row erupted after Basaksehir assistant coach Pierre Webo, the former Cameroon international, was shown a red card during a fierce row on the touchline with staff from the Turkish club appearing to accuse the official of using a racist term.

Television microphones picked up a furious Webo repeatedly asking why a racist term had been used to describe him. Turkish President Recep

Tayyip Erdogan said he “strongly” condemned the incident, while UEFA announced it would open a “thorough investigation”.

In a statement, UEFA confirmed the game would, “on an exceptional basis”, restart from where it was stopped on Wednesday at 1755 GMT, “with a new team of match officials”.

Meanwhile, Borussia Dortmund striker Youssoufa Moukoko, aged 16 years and 18 days, became the youngest player in Champions League history as he came off the bench in a 2-1 victory away to Zenit Saint Petersburg. — AFP

Injured Warner out of first Test

Sydney, Dec. 9: Australia's star opening batsman David Warner has been ruled out of the first Test against India, but will try to return for the blockbuster second instalment on Boxing Day, Cricket Australia said Wednesday.

Warner is recovering from a strained adductor muscle that forced him to limp out of Australia's second one-day international against India last month, after a knock of 83.

“I feel I have made great progress in a short amount of time and it's best for me to stay here in Sydney to continue working on getting back to full fitness,” Warner said.

“The injury feels a lot better, but I need to be able to satisfy in my own mind and to my team-mates that it is 100 percent ready for Test match conditions.”

“That includes running between the wickets and being agile in the field. Right now I feel I am short of being able to play at peak fitness and another 10 days will make a difference,” he added.

The day-night first Test will begin in Adelaide on December 17, kicking off a four-match series.

It is not yet clear who will take Warner's place in Adelaide, but Cameron



David Warner

Green's century this week for Australia 'A' against a strong India 'A' attack — featuring Ravichandran Ashwin, Umesh Yadav and Mohammed Siraj — has put him in the running.

In contrast, Will Pucovski and Joe Burns, in line to form Australia's top order, both flopped in the warm-up match and Pucovski also had to leave the field with concussion symptoms after a delivery struck his helmet.

Burns was offered a chance at redemption Wednesday when he was one of four members of the Test squad named to play the day/night warm-up against India 'A' in Sydney from Friday.

Coach Justin Langer expressed confidence Warner would be back for the second Test. — AFP

PARTHIV RETIRES FROM ALL FORMS OF CRICKET

New Delhi, Dec. 9: Parthiv Patel, one of the youngest to have played Test cricket for India at the age of 17, on Wednesday announced his retirement from all forms of the game, three month's short of his 36th birthday.

The baby-faced Parthiv, who made his Test debut under Sourav Ganguly, aged 17 years and 153 days, played 65 international games for the country, which included 25 Tests, 38 ODIs and two T20 Internationals.

“Today, I announce retirement from all forms of cricket and as I bring down curtains on this 18-year-old cricketing journey, I feel heavier with gratitude for many,” the 35-year-old Parthiv said in a statement.

The left-handed batsman scored nearly 1700 runs (1696) across formats with 934 runs (6 half centuries) coming in the longest format.

“The BCCI showed generous amount of confidence and faith in a 17-year-old boy to play for India. I have enormous gratitude towards them for guiding me and hand holding me in the formative years of my young career,” Parthiv further stated. In ODIs, he scored 736 runs with four half-centuries and a highest score of 95. He effected 72 dismissals in Tests, which include 62 catches and 10 stumpings. — PTI