

WEATHER

Max: 29.0°C

Min: 16°C

RH: 89%

Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 29/16 9C

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

Variyam: 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

HIJRI CALENDAR

Rabbi-ul Akhir 24, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.08 am

Zohar: 12.05 pm

Asar: 4.11 pm

Maghrib: 5.47 pm

Isha: 7.02 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.17 AM

SUNSET TODAY 5.49 PM

MOONSET 12.05 AM

MOONRISE 11.42 PM

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 Saswatha 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 | 4

Popular Tamil television actress Chitra found dead

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

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 Covisheild.

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

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: 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".

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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

WORLD | 5

UK body issues allergy warning for Pfizer jab

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

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 bipolar 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 7: Russia unhappy with close Indo-US ties

■ Page 7: Russia unhappy with close Indo-US ties

The Centre on Wednesday proposed to

Self-employment plan gets Cabinet approval

DC CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved an employment generation scheme Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana at an expenditure of ₹1,584 crores for the current financial year and ₹22,810 crores for the entire scheme period i.e. 2020-2023.

The Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana scheme, which aims to create more formal jobs, to benefit around 58.5 lakh employees, said Union minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar while briefing media after Cabinet meeting. The registration for the scheme will be effective from October 1,

2020, to June 30, 2021, the labour minister said, adding that the ministry will soon notify rules for the scheme.

Though the government claims that there are around 10 crore labourers formally registered with it, even as there are more than 40 crore labourers in the country, his department has no data on the number of people who have lost jobs since Corona virus-induced lockdown was imposed on March 24 this year. Under the programme, the Centre will reimburse 24 per cent, 12 per cent each for employees and employers, for two years for all new formal jobs created in enterprises having up to 1000 employ-

ees between October 1 and till June 30 next year, Gangwar said at the cabinet briefing.

In an organisation where employee strength is more than 1,000 workers, the reimbursement will be restricted to 12 per cent of the employees' contribution, he said.

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had on November 12 announced ₹2.65 lakh crore worth economic stimulus package, termed as Atmanirbhar Bharat 3.0, comprising 12 big measures to revive the economy marred by Covid. These measures included the Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana to generate employment.

CJI'S MOTHER DUPED OF ₹2.5CR, ACCUSED HELD

Nagpur, Dec. 9: Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sharad Arvind Bobde's mother was allegedly duped to the tune of ₹2.5 crore by the caretaker of a family property here, the police said on Wednesday.

The accused, Tapas Ghosh (49), was arrested on Tuesday. A Special Investigation Team is looking into the matter under the supervision of DCP Vinita Sahu, said Nagpur commissioner of police (CP) Amitesh Kumar.

Mukta Bobde, CJI Bobde's mother, is the owner of Seadon Lawn near Akashwani Square which is rented out for marriages and other functions, he said. The Bobde family had appointed Ghosh as caretaker of the property in 2007.

He was paid salary and also a commission on bookings. Taking advantage of Mukta Bobde's age and frail health, Ghosh and his wife allegedly kept her in the dark about transactions, and did not deposit the entire rent amount which they collected, the CP said. They also allegedly forged receipts. The fraud came to light when several bookings were cancelled in lockdown,

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) arrested a known bigtime drug peddler from Mumbai and seized a contraband to the tune of ₹2.5 crore from him in connection with the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide probe.

The NCB officials said that the accused was the supplier to one of the arrested peddlers, who later passed on the drugs to Rajput's girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty's brother Showik for consumption. The seized contraband is premium quality cannabis with market name 'Malana Cream'.

The arrested accused was identified as Jineendra Jain alias Rigel Mahakal alias Jeet who was arrested from Andheri's Lokhandwala area from where the NCB officials also seized the contraband. The officials said that Jain was named in the statement by arrest-

ed peddler Anuj Keshwani, who was arrested for supplying Charas / Hashish.

The charas seized in this case is 'Malana Cream' which is the most desirable charas in the world.

The said charas is grown only in Malana Region of Himachal Pradesh. The market price of Malana Cream ranges from ₹50 lakh per kg. "Preliminary probe revealed that Jain was involved in trafficking of Hashish in Mumbai area. Another accused Mohammad Azam Jumman Shaikh was also apprehended and 5 kg Charas was recovered from him along with small quantities of opium and ecstasy from his house in Millat Nagar, Oshiwara," said an officer. The officials said that the seizure is a part of follow up of Rhea Chakraborty Case and this is the biggest haul of drugs seized in this case. Shaikh is the main supplier of Charas linked to this case.

Farmers reject Centre's offer

Threaten to intensify agitation, block Delhi

SANJAY KAW | DC

NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

Within hours of receiving the Centre's draft proposals to amend the new agriculture laws, the farmers' unions categorically rejected it on Wednesday and threatened to intensify their agitation by blocking all entry points to Delhi if their demands were not immediately met. They also threatened to capture all toll plazas and hold "sit-in" protests across the country.

Terming the proposal as "vague" and an insult to farmers, Krantikari Kisan Union president Darshan Pal said: "We will block the Delhi-Jaipur highway and Delhi-Agra expressway and sit on dharna at all toll plazas on December 12... No tax to be paid on that day at any toll plaza... We will also gherao all district headquarters during our protest on December 14. We have asked the people to protest against every MP and MLA of the BJP."

The farmers' organisations have also threatened they will boycott all Jio products and Reliance malls across the country.

The Centre on Wednesday proposed to

give a "written assurance" that the existing Minimum Support Price (MSP) regime for procurement will continue. In a draft proposal, the Centre also assured the registration of all private mandis to strengthen Agricultural Produce Market Committees.

With the farmers camped out at Delhi's busy border points, three of the Delhi-Haryana border points — Tikri, Jharoda and Dhansa — have been closed for traffic. Besides the border areas of the capital, demonstrations are also being

held at a ground allocated for the farmers' protests in Delhi's outskirts. At least five deaths were reported since the protests began.

After deliberating over the Centre's proposal, the farmers' leaders made it clear they will continue their agitation until all the three new farm laws are rolled back. The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) said the Narendra Modi government was "insincere and arrogant" about resolving their demands.

Opposition leaders Sharad Pawar, Rahul Gandhi, Sitaram Yechury, D. Raja and T.K.S. Elangovan present a memorandum to President Ram Nath Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Wednesday on the new Farm Bills.

— D. KAMRAJ

PUBLIC WI-FI NETWORKS GET CABINET NOD

DC CORRESPONDENT

with agency inputs

NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

The Union cabinet on Wednesday approved a proposal to launch a Wi-Fi access network in the country, wherein public data centres would be opened to facilitate the process. No licence fee would be levied, while registration would be needed for the purpose, which will be done within seven days.

Announcing the decision, Union IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad told mediapersons that the proposal is aimed at the growth of public Wi-Fi networks in the country, especially in the interiors of the country so that even people at the grassroots level can have internet access. The programme will be called PM-WANI and, under it, public data offices will establish and maintain Wi-Fi access points and deliver broadband service to subscribers.

Further, official sources said that the proliferation of public Wi-Fi will not only create employment but also enhance disposable incomes in the hands of small and medium entrepreneurs and boost the GDP of the country.

The proliferation of Broadband Services through public Wi-Fi is a step towards digital India, Prasad said, adding that this will have consequential benefits thereon. No Licence Fee for providing broadband Internet services using public Wi-Fi hotspots will massively encourage its proliferation and penetration across the length and breadth of the country, he further added.

"No licence, no registration, and no fee will be applicable for the PDOs, which could be small shops or even Common Service Centres," he said. App provider will be responsible for developing application to register users and discover WANI compliant Wi-Fi hotspots in the nearby area.

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 Dargahs into a spiritual pilgrimage centre.

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

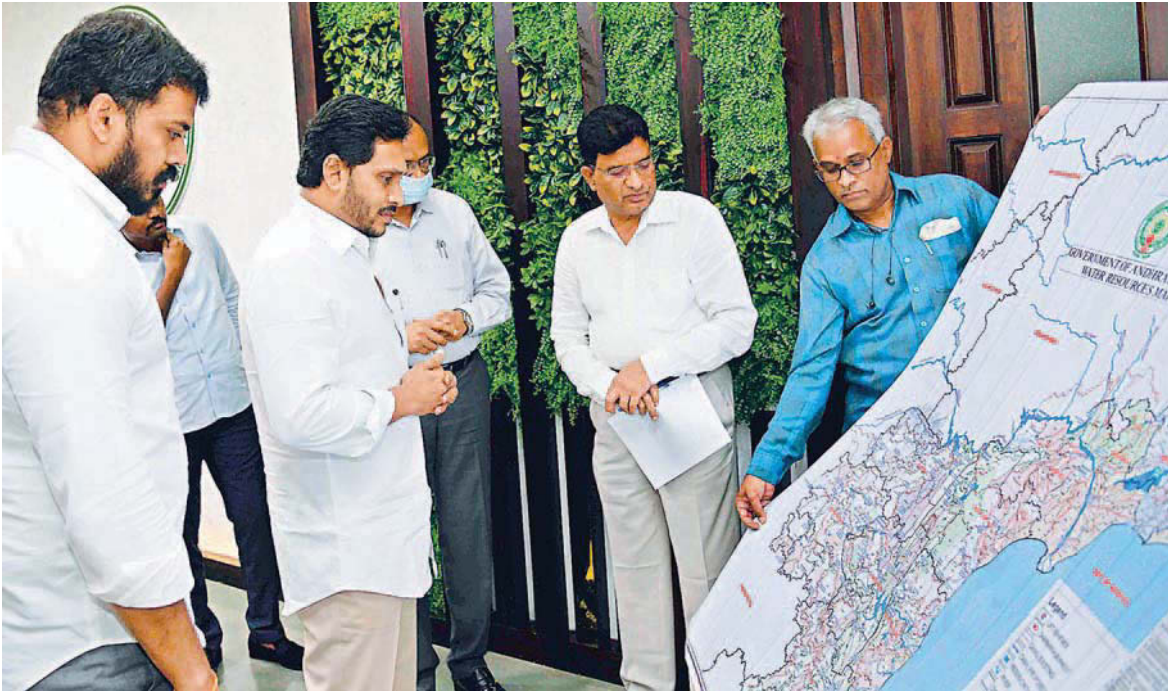
Milk Producers associations and secretaries of Milk Procurement Centres have been told to increase the milk supply to Amul Project and provide tips to the farmers to improve the butter percentage and solid non-fat in the milk to secure enhanced price for their milk.

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.

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 Rayala-seema 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 Somaravandlapalli 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, Ramotla 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 being 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 letter 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.

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.

LEGAL | OPINION

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.

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-

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.

clinging 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 Chandrashekar Reddy and expert teams of AIIMS, NIN, IIC, WHO, CCMB and other officials were present.

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.

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, Andal 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 Vaishnavaita 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) in a human year. Dhanurmasam falls at the end of Dakshinayana. In fact, this month is considered to be auspicious for worship during early hours. To invoke the blessing of the Lord, Thiruppavai pasurams, with each one on each day.

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.

YSRC DOUBLE STANDARDS IN FARM LAWS: TD

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, DEC. 9

Telugu Desam politburo member Reddeppagari Srinivasa Reddy said that anarchy was continuing in the state. He said the storm had caused crop damage in thousands of acres with heavy rains.

He found fault in estimation of crop damage of just ₹40 crore against the loss of hundreds of crores of rupees. He spoke to media persons in Kadapa on Wednesday.

He accused the YSR Congress government of saying one word in Delhi and another in the state. The party MPs supported the agriculture bills in the last Lok Sabha. Now that he has power in the state, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy has cooperated with the bandh in support of the farmers' agitation. He said that Telugu Desam MPs had said in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha at the time that there were flaws in the agriculture bills. Telugu Desam party leader Chandrababu Naidu has always been thinking about farmers, he said. He demanded that the YSR Congress government pass a resolution in the Assembly against the agriculture bills.

130 TONNES OF PDS RICE, 6 TRUCKS SEIZED

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 9

Chittoor police have seized 130 tonnes of rice, meant for the public distribution system, at Tada mandal of SPSR Nellore district late on Tuesday night.

They have also seized six trucks transporting the rice bags illegally. A team of police led by Satyavedu Sub Inspector Nagarajuna Reddy jumped into action and found the rice at an unauthorised stock point at Tada following a tip-off.

Police officials said their men are keeping a tab on the movements of paddy brokers of the region after they came to know that some of them have been purchasing PDS rice in Chittoor district and shifting to Chennai and other parts of Tamil Nadu.

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 parametre 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.

WOMAN FARMER OBSTRUCTS SURVEY

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 9

A woman farmer attempted to end her life by consuming pesticide-laced water in front of the revenue officials who came to conduct a survey for the construction of Rythu bharosa kendra and wellness centre at Baiparedlapalle village of Ramakuppam mandal in Chittoor district on Wednesday.

According to Ramakuppam tahsildar Srinivasulu, the villagers from Baiparedlapalle had staged series of protests in front of the tahsildar office, demanding construction of Rythu bharosa kendra and wellness centre at a Banda Poramboke (government) land in the village.

Following this, the revenue officials visited the village on Wednesday morning and started a survey at the said government land – with Survey No. 144/11 (Extent - 1.95 acres). The survey was later obstructed by the woman farmer Harathi, who claimed that she owns the land. She later tried to end her life by consuming pesticide-laced water.

"As per records it is a 'Banda Poramboke' land, which belongs to the government. The woman has temporarily covered the rocks in the said land with some soil and has been raising groundnut crop which has also dried up. We have requested the woman not to obstruct our duties. But she didn't paid heed to our words and tried to commit suicide by drinking pesticide-laced water," said tahsildar of Ramakuppam.



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 collective 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 environ-

ments. In line with the statutory directives, RINL constructed guard ponds at a cost of ₹10 crore. This guard pond has 4 ponds with each having a capacity of 9,600 cubic meters for storing two days of treated effluent from Coke Ovens. Once the water is stored, it shall be permitted to be discharged into the marine environment after its quality is cross-checked by APPCB. This ensures that 100 per cent of the effluent being discharged into the marine environment is done only after it meets the prescribed norms. 'This is one more environment friendly measure taken by RINL.

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Passengers traveling in Vijayawada to Lingampally inter-city express after it was restored after nine months due to Covid pandemic from Vijayawada Railway station on Wednesday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

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 more. 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 Wednesday 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, unaided, 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

● The first phase of web based counselling for MBBS seats available under CAQ including special categories like physically challenged.

on the website on December 7, are 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 and when the final prioritised list from the authorities concerned is received.

Muslim minority can-

didates 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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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 Kilpauk 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, Gurvasan 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 panchayats 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 panchayats 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 Onnyay* (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 supremo 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 supremo 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.

your opponents. This is very much relevant to Bengal even today. If we look at Mamataji, intolerance thy name is Mamata. Intolerance is growing so fast here!”

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.

ETHIOPIA DENIES
PROBES INTO
TIGRAY CONFLICT

Nairobi, Dec. 9: Ethiopia's government is rejecting calls for independent investigations into the deadly conflict in its Tigray region, saying it “doesn't need a baby-sitter.”

The declaration comes amid international calls for more transparency into the month-long fighting between Ethiopian forces and those of the fugitive Tigray regional government that is thought to have killed thousands, including civilians.

At least one large-scale massacre has been documented, and others are feared. Senior government official Redwan Hussein told reporters on Tuesday evening that Ethiopia will invite others for assistance only if it feels that “it failed to investigate.”

To assume the government can't carry out such probes “is belittling the government,” he said.

Frustration is growing as the northern Tigray region remains largely cut off from the outside world, with food and medicines desperately needed by the population of 6 million — some 1 million of them now thought to be displaced.

INDIA'S WEAPONS
PURCHASE FROM
US AT \$3.4 BILLION

Washington, Dec. 9: India's weapons procurement from the United States jumped from a meagre \$6.2 million to a whopping \$3.4 billion in the final year of the Donald Trump's administration, according to official data.

As per the data released by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), the jump in the sale of American weapons to India comes at a time when sale of weapons from the US to other countries has dipped to \$50.8 billion in 2020 from \$55.7 billion in 2019. In 2019, the sale of US weapons to foreign countries was \$55.7 billion. In 2017, it was \$41.9 billion, it said. Major buyers of American weapons in 2020 were India (\$3.4 billion up from \$6.2 million in fiscal year 2019), Morocco (\$4.5 billion up from \$12.4 million), Poland (\$4.7 billion up from \$67.3 million), Singapore (\$1.3 billion up from \$137 million), Taiwan (\$11.8 billion up from \$876 million), and the United Arab Emirates (\$3.6 billion up from \$1.1 billion), the data showed.

Several countries reported a drop in purchase of weapons from the US.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attends a ceremony to mark the arrival of a plane of the international courier company DHL, carrying over 1,00,000 of doses of the first batch of Pfizer vaccines which landed at Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv, on Wednesday. — AFP

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.

“We have been advised by MHRA [Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency] of two yellow card reports that may be associated with allergic reaction due to administration of the Covid-19 BNT162b2 vaccine,” Pfizer UK said in a statement. “As a precautionary measure, the MHRA has issued temporary guidance to the NHS while it conducts an investigation in order to fully understand each case and its causes,” it said.

Dr June Raine, the head of the MHRA, told a joint select committee hearing on Tuesday that “real-time vigilance” will continue throughout the vaccine rollout process. — 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

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 government 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’, his administration's effort to produce and distribute safe and effective vaccines for Covid-19. Trump told reporters

● **THE DEFENCE** Production Act allows a president to force private manufacturers to ramp up production and give the federal government priority on any orders it places. American companies, he said, were the first to produce a verifiably safe and effective vaccine.

that his administration provided a total of \$14 billion to accelerate Coronavirus vaccine development and to manufacture all of the top candidates long in advance. As a result of this “unprecedented investment”, both Pfizer and Moderna have announced that their vaccines are approximately 95 per cent effective, he said.

Pfizer has developed its vaccine outside of ‘Operation Warp Speed’, but is collaborating with the US government on manufacturing and distribution. The UK on Tuesday began its vaccinations with the first set of people injected with their first of two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech jab. — 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.

President Donald Trump's administration has imposed crippling sanctions on Iran's banking sector and its vital oil and gas industry since unilaterally withdrawing the US from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018. While the United States insists that medicines and humanitarian goods are exempt from sanctions, restrictions on trade have made many banks and companies across the world hesitant to do business with Iran, fearing punitive measures from Washington.

The country is also cut off from the international banking system, making it difficult to transfer payments. — AP

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 services — including serving as the chief

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 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

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 decision.

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.

She enjoys the strong backing of South Carolina Rep. Jim Clyburn, the No. 3 House Democrat who gave Biden a key nod of support in the primaries. — PTI

Pak lawmakers to resign to
paralyse govt: PDM chiefPAKISTAN TO BUY RAJ KAPOOR'S
ANCESTRAL HOUSES IN PESHAWAR

Peshawar, Dec. 9: Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has determined the price of the ancestral houses of legendary Bollywood actors Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor in the heart of this city at ₹80,56,000 and ₹1,50,00,000 respectively.

The provincial government in September decided to purchase their ancestral houses to conserve the historic buildings which are in dilapidated condition and facing demolition threat.

The two buildings, located in the heart of this northern Pakistani city, have been declared as national heritage. Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar Muhammad Ali

Asghar, following a report of the Communication and Works Department, fixed the price of Dilip Kumar's four Marla house for ₹80,56,000 while that of Raj Kapoor's six Marla house for ₹1,50,00,000. Marla, a traditional unit of area used in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, is considered as equal to 272.25 square feet or 25,292.9 square metres.

The archaeology department has sent a formal request to the provincial government for releasing over ₹2 crore for purchasing both the historic buildings, where the two greats of the Indian cinema were born and raised in their early days before the Partition. — PTI

believed that en masse resignation is the only way to bring the government on its knees and force it to call early elections.

The PPP government in the Sindh province was considered as a hurdle as it was not sure if that it would sacrifice its government to help the Opposition alliance.

The leaders also agreed to go ahead with a rally in Lahore on December 13 as a show of power to the government. It will be the sixth rally after similar

gatherings held in Gujranwala, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar and Multan.

The Opposition parties succeeded in attracting a huge number of people despite hurdles created by the government. Prime Minister Imran Khan rejected the demand to step down or call early elections and consistently advocated that Opposition was protesting to put pressure to stop probes in corruption cases against their leaders. — PTI

MISSION | MARS

Automatic engine abort occurred with just 1.3 secs remaining in countdown, no word on next flight

SpaceX aborts test Starship flight in last second

Cape Canaveral (US), Dec. 9: The first high-altitude test flight of SpaceX's futuristic Starship was aborted at the last second in Texas on Tuesday.

SpaceX came close to launching a prototype of the rocketship that company chief Elon Musk is designing to carry people to Mars.

The goal was to shoot Starship to an altitude of

eight miles (12.5 kilometres) — the highest yet — and then bring it back to a vertical landing. But an automatic engine abort occurred with just 1.3 seconds remaining in the countdown.

SpaceX announced on its web broadcast it was done for the day, and there was no word on when it might try again. SpaceX already has conducted five Starship test

● **THE GOAL** was to shoot Starship to an altitude of eight miles (12.5 kilometres) — the highest yet — and then bring it back to a vertical landing. But an automatic engine abort

flights, but these earlier, simpler models have gone no higher than 490 feet (150 metres.) The stain-

less steel version on the launch pad on Tuesday was the first to feature a nose cone, body flaps and

● **THE STAINLESS** steel version on the launch pad on Tuesday was the first to feature a nose cone.

three Raptor engines.

SpaceX has taken over Boca Chica in the far southeastern corner of Texas, near the Mexican border, to build and test its Starships. The company intends to use Starships — the upper stage atop Super Heavy boosters — to deliver massive satellites into orbit around Earth, and send people and cargo to the moon and Mars. — AP



This image shows SpaceX full-size Starship SN8 rocket prototype before its launch. — AFP

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.

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.

— PTI

Former runner
Earnest is dead

Hyderabad: Former middle distance runner and secretary of Ranga District Athletics Association B. Earnest Das passed away on Monday night.

He was 81.

Das participated in the Indo-German Athletics Test held in Hyderabad in 1965. An international athletics official, he officiated in the 1982 Asian Games in New Delhi, 2002 Asian Grand Prix in Hyderabad and the 2003 Afro-Asian Games in Hyderabad. He also served as manager of the South Central Railway Athletics team for 30 years.

His son B. E. Stanley Jones is Athletics Federation of India's Technical Committee chairman. Telangana Athletics Association general secretary K. Sarangapani and Hyderabad District Athletics Association president Prof. Rajesh Kumar mourned the demise of Das and offered condolences to the family members.

Chess tourney
at the weekend

Hyderabad: The Brilliant Chess Academy is conducting the 175th Brilliant Trophy Open chess tournament online on Saturday and Sunday. A total of ₹10,000 will be given to Top 20 places in the Open category. Special prizes will also be given to top two places in the Under 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 age groups for boys and girls separately. For further details contact J. Subrahmanyam on 9247399717.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Big Bash League: Hobart Hurricanes vs Sydney Sixers from 1.45 pm on Sony Six

Lanka Premier League: Jaffna vs Colombo from 3 pm; Galle vs Kandy from 7.30 pm on Sony Six

FOOTBALL

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

Europa League: CSKA Sofia vs Roma from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 3; Dundalk vs Arsenal from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Napoli vs Real Sociedad from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 1; Sparta Prague vs AC Milan from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 1; Tottenham Hotspur vs Antwerp from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2; Wolfsburg vs Feyenoord from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Six; Leicester City vs AEK Athens from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 3

Printed and published from Anantapur by **K.Sudhakar** on behalf of **Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited** at Deccan Chronicle Press, Bye-Pass Road, Tapovanam, Anantapur - 515004
RNI Registration No. APENG/1999/401
Editorial : 276068
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Ronaldo bests Messi

Cristiano nets brace as Juve crush Barcelona 3-0

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, but Juve's three-goal victory handed them a superior head-to-head record.

Ronald Koeman, reeling from Barcelona's 2-1 defeat by promoted minnows Cadiz on Saturday in La Liga, reacted by making four changes but the hosts started badly.

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, Weston 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, Kluijvert 69)
Manchester United 2
(Fernandes 80-pen, Pogba 82)

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

Borussia Dortmund 1
(Piszczek 68, Witsel 78)
Zenit Saint Petersburg 1
(Driussi 16)



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.

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's penalty and a deflected Paul Pogba header gave United a lifeline but Leipzig, who reached the semifinals 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.



Kylian Mbappe (third from right) of PSG looks on after the game was suspended amid allegations of racism by one of the match officials during the UEFA Champions League Group 'H' football match against Istanbul Basaksehir at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris on Tuesday. — AFP

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 Webbo, 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 Webbo

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". — AFP

KASHMIR INTO SEMIFINALS

Kolkata, Dec. 9: Real Kashmir and United SC secured their second successive wins to seal semi final berths from their respective groups in the 123rd IFA Shield here on Wednesday.

Fresh from a 2-1 win over Peerless SC, the Snow Leopards were caught unawares by the aggressive brand of football by Aryan SC before they finally broke the deadlock with a Mason Robertson strike in the 72nd minute. — PTI

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



David Warner

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 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. — AFP

RAHUL CRUISES INTO
TOP 3 IN T20 RANKINGS

Dubai, Dec. 9: India captain Virat Kohli moved up a place to eighth while K. L. Rahul broke into the top three in the latest ICC rankings for T20 batsmen, after their impressive performances in the three-match series against Australia.

Taking the third spot in the chart, Rahul has bagged 816 rating points and is 55 points behind second-placed Babar Azam in the current standings.

England batsman Dawid Malan (915 points) retained the top spot, while Australian limited-overs skipper Aaron Finch slipped to the fourth spot. — PTI

Kohli rues DRS
miss in last tie

Sydney, Dec. 9: Captain Virat Kohli wasn't happy that his team lost out on a perfect DRS call just because replay of the delivery bowled to Matthew Wade was shown on giant screen before the permissible limit of 15 seconds.

India lost the third T20 International by 12 runs and one of the reasons could be attributed to the fact that Wade, who could have been adjudged leg before off T Natarajan at a score of 50, got a lucky reprieve and added 30 more runs.

"That lbw was a strange one because we were still discussing whether the ball was going down and within the 15-second time, they showed the replay on the screen. We decided to go for the review but the umpire said they have already shown the replay on the screen," Kohli said.

In fact had the review been taken, TV replays showed that the umpire would have been forced to reverse his decision.

That lbw was a strange one because we were still discussing whether the ball was going down and within the 15-second time, they showed the replay on the screen.

— VIRAT KOHLI
Indian cricket captain

"I had a chat with Rod (Tucker, the umpire) and said: 'what do we do in this situation' and he said 'nothing can be done. It's a mistake from TV,'" Kohli narrated the incident.

He said the Indian team management had made its displeasure clear with the authorities, saying a mistake of this magnitude in an international game is unacceptable. "I thought from the management perspective, a message has to be passed that this can't be done at the highest level because in a very important game, it can be very costly," he said. — PTI

Gopi delves into
athletes' minds

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

Badminton guru Pullেলা Gopichand has stepped up his training by a notch, and has decided to delve into the minds of his trainees. On Wednesday, the champion coach launched Dhyana for Sports, an app that measures mental aspects via meditation and helps achieve emotional fitness.

Vouching for its mechanism, Gopi termed the application a 'game changer' and stressed on the importance of mental training. As many as 10 meditation sessions designed, voiced by himself and inspired from his on-ground training sessions will now be available on the app that tracks mindfulness.

The 10 sessions in the 'Dhyana for Sports' section in the app 'Uniting Your InnerSelf, Forgive, Winner Instincts, Gratitude, Stillness, Visualisation, Strengthen Discipline, Pre-Workout, Post-Workout and End of the Day' — cater

to athletes and assist them in monitoring and analysing their state of meditation in order to help inculcate a champion's mindset.

"I am certain that these guided sessions will prove to be fruitful to anyone wanting to become the best version of themselves. In sport, you need to be a warrior and possess killer instinct. This is what we talk about in the app — the winning attitude," the chief national coach said, adding, "I am so proud to be associated with it."

Athletics coach N. Ramesh echoed Gopi's opinion. "This is a huge plus for track and field athletes, who have very little time to recover between the heats and the finals, that's when mental strength comes into play," he said.

"Physical abilities can make you a national champion but if you want to excel on the international stage and stay there, mental ability is a must," the Dronacharya awardee added.

Mumbai hammer Chennaiyin 2-1

Bambolim, Dec. 9: Mumbai City FC rallied to eke out a 2-1 win over Chennaiyin FC and record their fourth victory on the trot in the Indian Super League here on Wednesday.

Adam Le Fondre smashed in a 75th-minute winner after Hernan Santana (45th) had cancelled Jakub Sylvestr's first goal.

The Sergio Lobera's team maintained the top spot in the ISL table.

Chennaiyin FC had a perfect start and would

have been ahead in the second minute if it was not for Sylvestr missing a sitter. Rafael Crivellaro delivered a perfect corner which was flicked in by Enes Sipovic and found Sylvestr, who missed the target.

Mumbai were not at their best and took time to settle. But they did have their moments. The home side's best chance came in the 25th minute when Adam Le Fondre had a clear sight on goal, but his powerful drive from inside the box, was

straight at keeper Vishal Kaith. The rebound fell to Bipin Singh, but he couldn't utilise the opportunity.

Chennaiyin were clearly the better side in the opening quarter creating numerous chances through Lallianzuala Chhangte, Sipovic and Crivellaro. The Chennai-based side took the lead in the 40th minute. Sylvestr scored probably the easiest goal of the season.

Chhangte deserved credit for his initial

spadework on the right before he played a low cross from the byline to find Sylvestr, who slotted it in.

Just when it looked like Chennaiyin would walk into the breather with a goal advantage, Mumbai's Santana had different plans. The Spaniard, who was unmarked at the far post, nodded in a Hugo Boumous' corner to restore parity post which they doubled the lead in the 75th minute through another set-piece. — PTI

Parthiv announces his retirement

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 months' 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 jour-

ney, I feel heavier with gratitude for many," the 35-year-old Parthiv said in a statement on his official twitter and instagram account.

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

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.



Parthiv Patel

and even before he made his Ranji Trophy debut.

"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 fact, he played his first Ranji Trophy after he was dropped from the India squad in 2004 due to below-par glove-work on tours of Australia and Pakistan.

He was thankful to all his captains and "especially Dada", referring to BCCI president Sourav Ganguly.

Parthiv Patel called his first Test captain Sourav Ganguly a "leader in true sense" along with the legendary Anil Kumble and said their influence in his life went beyond the crick-eting arena.

"I would always hold Sourav Ganguly as a leader in true sense with his man management skills. Sourav and Anil Kumble were great leaders and they made me the kind of person I am," Parthiv said.

"I still have the Test cap with my name wrongly printed 'Partiv' that Dada gave me. The victories at Headingley (2002) and Adelaide (2003-04) and the half-century opening the innings at Rawalpindi will be my favourite memories."

He said that retirement was on his mind for the last one year and that the timing couldn't have been better. — PTI



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