

OTHER STORIES

ESI SCAM ACCUSED SURRENDERS BEFORE ACB COURT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 3

The Employees' State Insurance scam accused Pramodh Reddy surrendered before the ACB court on Thursday.

He is the third accused in the ESI scam dealing with procurement of medicines, medical equipment and furniture to the ESI hospitals in the state and has been absconding for the past several days. As the ACB sleuths have taken up intense search for the remaining accused in the case, Pramodh Reddy surrendered before the ACB court which remanded him to 14 days judicial custody. He was shifted to a sub-jail in Machilipatnam.

As many as 12 accused, including former TD minister K. Atchannaaidu, were arrested in the case so far. However, the ex-minister was enlarged on bail.

HC TELLS GOVT TO SUBMIT REPORT ON TENURE OF DGPs

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 3

Even after one-and-a-half decade has lapsed after the Supreme Court in 2006 directed all states to set up Police Establishment Boards, start fixed tenure for DGPs and also recommended the constitution of State Security Commissions and Police Complaints Authorities, for redressal of public grievances of power abuse by police, the Telangana state government on Thursday submitted to the the Telangana High Court for more time to complete the process.

Advocate General B.S. Prasad also submitted that the process of framing rules and regulations has been completed and the process of appointments has started. Dealing with a suo motu contempt case on non-compliance of the Telangana High Court's orders in 2017, which was following the Supreme Court directions, the Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice B. Vijayeswari directed the government to fill up such posts in four weeks and to submit the report by January 7, 2021. As the Andhra Pradesh government was also made party to this case, the court also sought an explanation from the AP government.

SC CALLS FOR MEETING ON ROAD SAFETY STEPS

Hyderabad: The Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety directed the authorities concerned of the Telangana state government to further strengthen measures to bring down the number of road accidents and fatalities in the state.

The committee headed by Justice Abhay Manohar Sapre convened a virtual meeting on road safety today to review the road safety interventions taken up by the state government.

GIRL'S FATHER SEES 'WEDDING' SHOOT

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According to the report, after the wedding shoot, the photo and video were watched by the girl's father who immediately contacted to the principal and questioned her.

The principal then summoned the three students and sought an explanation. The students apologised to the principal and said it was a 'prank' video and they had no intention to do any harm."

However, the principal formed a disciplinary action committee on November 28. According to the report, the three students, including the student who shot the video, were sent out from the college by giving "Transfer Certificates" and their parents informed about the same.

Subsequently, it was felt that the punishment was harsh and the college authorities had ruined their career.

AP Bar Counsel member Muppalla Subba Rao said that irrespective of the marriage being 'real' or 'prank', it was not valid and the incident had not taken place in the presence of other students.

The college could have counselled the students and their parents and warned them instead of sending them out of the college.



Police check vehicles on Prakasam Barrage near Tadepalli, in Vijayawada on Thursday as the TD leaders called for Assembly seize, demanding hand over of Nandyala Abdul Salam case to CBI.

8 TD men suspended from House following bedlam

Telugu Desam members climbed on to the Speaker desk

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 3

Verbal clashes between ruling and opposition parties continued in the state legislative Assembly on the fourth day, leading to suspension of eight Telugu Desam MLAs from the House on Thursday.

Following this, other TD members, led by Leader of Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu, walked out of the House protesting against the suspension.

During a short discussion on welfare schemes for SC, ST, BC and Minorities in the Assembly, ruling party MLAs reeled out various welfare schemes and funds allocated under them.

BC welfare minister Chelluboina Venugopala Krishna, municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana, MLA Dharamana Prasada Rao and others stated that the erstwhile TD government gave pensions only to its party supporters and sympathisers. They alleged that pensions of people who had voted for YSRC were cancelled by the then TD government.

TDLP deputy leader Nimmala Rama Naidu claimed that the credit for introduction of pensions should go to former chief minister N. T. Rama Rao and Chandrababu. Rama Naidu and others alleged that bringing in Amul, a corporate company into AP, is going to destroy milk cooperative societies and ruin milk farmers in the state.

Minister and ruling party legislators severely objected to allegations by the TDLP deputy leader, claiming that it was only Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy who is giving pensions to people without showing any bias towards caste, creed or political affiliations. Tribal welfare minister Seediri Appalaraju said TD was worried of AP-Amul project being implemented in AP as Naidu family-owned Heritage would lose its business. The ruling party members alleged that the erstwhile TD government destroyed milk cooperative societies only to promote sale of milk through Heritage.

At this, angry Telugu Desam legislators rushed to the podium raising slogans and demanding that Speaker Thammineni Seetaram give them a chance to refute the allegations by ruling party members. But the Speaker denied permission. On this, TD members climbed on to the Speaker desk and entered into arguments with Seetaram. Severely objecting to such rude behaviour, transport minister Perni Venkataramaiah proposed a motion to suspend eight TD members from the House for one day and Speaker

CM slams Naidu for failing people

From page 1

The CM slammed his predecessor N. Chandrababu Naidu for failing to avail the God given opportunity to serve people with genuine commitment and honesty.

He gave an account of the amount of money the previous regime spent on various schemes during its rule and the money YSRC spent over the last 18 months. Pointing to the difference in figures, he said the commitment of the YSRC to serve the people helped them to spend much more on people. Referring to the pension scheme, he said that when the TD offered ₹1,000 per month pension to 44.32 lakh people in October 2018, the YSRC government is offering to 61.94 lakh pensioners ₹2,150 and added that while their monthly expenditure was ₹1,500 crore, it was just ₹500 crore in the previous TD regime.

With regard to welfare expenditure on people from SC, ST, BC and minority communities, the previous TD regime spent ₹79,806 crore for five years at the rate of ₹15,419 crore per annum while the YSRC spent ₹58,729 crore for 18 months at the rate of ₹39,153 crore which was more than double the amount spent by the TD.

The CM castigated Naidu for remembering people and their problems just a few months before elections and either hurriedly launching some schemes or releasing some amount.

He blamed Naidu for making his follower Pratap Reddy to file a petition in the High Court to reduce the reservations from 59.85 per cent to 50



Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy

per cent only for the elections.

The CM listed out a series of welfare schemes detailing the quantum of money spent and the number of beneficiaries for every scheme and said that 5.65 crore beneficiaries were being provided with financial support of ₹77,731 crore from which an amount of ₹63,540 crore was getting credited directly into the bank accounts of beneficiaries at the press of a button. He claimed credit for giving prominence to the people from SC, ST, BC communities, minorities, women and those from other communities by placing them in important positions in the government and also for setting up 56 BC corporations.

He said that their government, by introducing village/ward secretariats and volunteers, created 4 lakh new jobs for people. On implementation of prohibition of liquor in a phased manner, the CM said that despite huge dip in volume of liquor sale in 2018-19, as the government had taken over liquor business and even reduced the number of outlets to 2,932 from 4,380, there was no perceptible deviation in revenue as they enhanced the cost to discourage people from consuming liquor and ensuring the happiness of women in the state.

Those suspended are TD legislators Rama Naidu, K. Atchannaaidu, Dola Bala Veeranjaneeya Swamy, Jogeswara Rao, Ramakrishna Babu, Manthana Ramaraju, Anagani Satyaprasad and Bendalam Ashok. Naidu and the remaining opposition legislators walked out from the assembly protesting against the suspension.

NAIDU A 'FAKE OPPOSITION LEADER': NANI

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 3

Minister for civil supplies Kodali Srivenkateswara Rao alias Nani lambasted former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu terming him as a fake opposition leader and the Telugu Desam as a fake party.

Earlier, Naidu on Wednesday termed Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy as fake CM. Nani said that Naidu did not start his own party but he snatched the TD from his father in law NTR while Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy formed a new political party which shows YSRC credibility.

The TD legislators disturbed the hard-hitting speech of the minister for several times but Nani went on to criticise Naidu and the TD regime.

During the discussion on welfare schemes in the AP Assembly on the fourth day on Thursday of the winter session, Nani refuted the allegations of Naidu and other TD legislators against Jagan Mohan Reddy running away from discussions on various issues in the Assembly. He said that Naidu has a history of running away in his career as first he contested from the Congress in the beginning of political career but ran to the TD after facing defeat in 1983.

Nani said that Naidu fled from Chandragiri constituency to Kuppam, then from Karakatta at Undavalli from Hyderabad due to "vote for note" case and further fled to Hyderabad from Karakatta during Corona times. He said that the TD never contested alone in elections as Naidu used to contest elections under alliances and later fled away from the alliance after elections and TD's alliance with all parties reflects it.

Nani stated that Mr Naidu who cannot compete without an alliance in the election but CM Jagan contested elections single and claimed Naidu has no right to criticise our leader. He recalled the episode of Naidu backstabbing NTR and snatching the TD party.

Jagan for ban on Nimmala from speaking in Assembly

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 3

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy turned edgy and accused Telugu Desam Legislature Party deputy leader Nimmala Rama Naidu of telling lies in the Assembly with regard to YSR Cheyutha scheme.

He moved a privilege motion against Rama Naidu for spreading lies and misleading the House. He said that even in the last session, Opposition benches had told lies and it was being continued.

The Chief Minister said that this can be put an end by banning Rama Naidu from speaking in the House.

Calling the TD member as 'Drama' Naidu, Jagan Mohan Reddy showed video footage of his promises about pensions in the Assembly and claimed that the government had fulfilled the promises as mentioned in their election manifesto.

During a discussion on welfare schemes, Rama Naidu alleged that the YSRC government had



Nimmala Rama Naidu

deceived pension beneficiaries by not enhancing the pension amount to ₹3,000 from the present ₹2,000 in spite of promising to do so. He also levelled allegations against YSR Cheyutha and other schemes.

Turning edgy on seeing Rama Naidu's provocative speech, Jagan Mohan Reddy intervened and recalled that in the previous session, K. Atchannaaidu had told lies in the House and now Rama Naidu was continuing the same.

Apart from showing the video footage, he read aloud the party manifesto. The Chief Minister said that the TD had made tall

claims in their manifesto but never implemented those poll promises. He said that unlike N. Chandrababu Naidu "We did not give a big manifesto and gave only two pages treating the manifesto as the Quran, Bible and Bhagavad Gita. We are implementing everything mentioned in it".

The Leader of the House said that chances to speak would not be given to those who want to deliberately tell lies and mislead people. He further said that they should be banned from speaking in the House.

Jagan Mohan Reddy said that Chandrababu Naidu lies without blinking and his MLAs are also doing the same now. He said that Assembly sessions must have meaningful debates. He said that he was giving a privilege motion seeking that Rama Naidu be barred from speaking in the Assembly. On being urged to initiate action, Speaker Tamineni Sitaram assured to consider the privilege motion.

Naidu now calls Jagan a "zero CM"

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 3

Leader of Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday slammed the YSRC government for "misleading" poor beneficiaries by spreading fake news claiming that pensions, ration cards and other benefits were being extended to them.

Addressing a press conference here, Naidu claimed that in reality pensions in the state are being gradually reduced after YSRC came to power. He said records showed that only 52.90 lakh pensions had been given in January, which was clearly far less than 54.19 lakh pensions given by TD regime in April 2019.

Naidu, who on Wednesday termed Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy as "fake CM", referred to the CM Jagan as "zero CM" as the latter, according to former CM, had zero knowledge of governance.

Referring to Jagan Mohan Reddy's statement that TD MLA Nimmala Rama Naidu should not be allowed to enter the assembly, the Leader of Opposition retorted that the assembly was not the "Jagir of CM's grandfather).

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Jagan's thatha" (property of CM's grandfather). Naidu asked when ruling YSRC members attacked Rama Naidu saying he was Drama Naidu, what is wrong in TD members calling Jagan as a Jail Reddy? He protested that opposition parties were not being given mike in the assembly even to express their dissent before staging a walkout.

The TD chief observed that serious loss was being caused to SC, ST, BC and Muslims under the direct benefit transfer scheme. He said the CM has even failed in sending a strong message within the society that strong action will be taken against those who perpetrate atrocities against

NAIDU FOR STRICT CORONA MEASURES IN ASSEMBLY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 3

Leader of Opposition Telugu Desam in Assembly, N. Chandrababu Naidu accused Speaker Thammineni Seetaram of not enforcing Covid-19 preventive measures in State Legislative Assembly, thus posing a serious risk to all MLAs and MLCs attending the current session of the two Houses.

He pointed that in parliament, partitions had been erected between members but nothing of that sort exists in the AP assembly.

In this regard, the Leader of Opposition pointed out that YSRC MLA

Karumuri Nageswara Rao, who is reported to have contracted Coronavirus, had asked all those who interacted with the MLA to go into self-quarantine. Naidu pointed out that even home minister Mekathoti Sucharita had attended a meeting with the infected MLA. Still, she was attending the assembly without even bothering to wear a face mask. He claimed that almost all YSRC MLAs and MLCs are also not wearing masks or observing social distance on the assembly or council premises, thereby putting others' health in jeopardy.

Chandrababu Naidu said YSRC has not learnt any lessons even after Tirupati MP Balli Durga Prasada Rao died due of the infection. He alleged even temperatures of MLAs are not being checked while they entering into the assembly. He wanted the Speaker and CM to take all possible steps for safeguarding legislators in the assembly from Covid-19.

Naidu said YSRC has not learnt any lessons even after Tirupati MP Balli Durga Prasada Rao died due of the infection.

ROAD | SHOW

False cases foisted on minority leaders, BCs threatened and persecuted, alleges TD

TD stages stir against atrocities on weaker sections

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 3

The Telugu Desam leaders resorted to a novel protest rally alleging that atrocities on SCs, STs, BCs and minorities have increased under the YSRC government.

TD legislators, led by Opposition leader N. Chandrababu Naidu, wore black ribbons and shackles while holding placards and airing slogans against attacks on SCs, STs, BCs and minorities.

They lamented the 'deteriorating' law and order situation in Andhra Pradesh.

MLC Nara Lokesh wore

shackles on his hands to symbolically show how a diabolical regime was ruling the state.

TDLP Deputy Leader K. Atchannaaidu, Nimmakayala Chinaraajappa and others decried atrocities in different parts of the state.

They said that never before in the 67-year history of AP, such attacks and humiliations were perpetrated on weaker sections and backward classes.

Stating that the state had become Ravana Kashtam and Arachaka Pradesh, they said that just because he questioned the steep rise in liquor prices, a Punganur Dalit youth was

forced to end his life.

Stating that the BC leaders came under constant attacks, they said that false cases were being foisted and BCs were being threatened and persecuted.

Muslims were not spared, which drove a family into a suicide pact. Gang-rapes, violence against tribals, sexual harassment and attacks on temples were the order of the day, they said.

Stating that the government had unleashed a faction-oriented Raja Reddy administration, they said that burning of temple chariots marked a new-low for the government.



Former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu leads his party leaders in a protest rally against the farmers arrest outside the Assembly at Velagapudi on Thursday.

NAIDU FACES BITTER EXPERIENCE FROM THREE CAPITALS SUPPORTERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 3

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu faced a bitter experience from three capitals supporters while going to the Assembly at Mandadam.

Till now it was Jagan Mohan Reddy who was booed by supporters of Amaravati capital city while on Thursday Chandrababu Naidu was at the receiving end from those in support of three

capitals on the Amaravati Seed Access Road.

Protesters in the camp at Mandadam supporting three-capitals aired slogans against Naidu when his convoy approached the protest camp at Mandadam village.

Women protesters wore black badges and shouted slogans that Naidu was a Dalit cheater.

They further raised slogans 'Oka Rajadhandu Vaddu' - Moodu Rajadhanulu Muddu'.

OTHER STORIES CYCLONE BUREVI CLOSE TO TAMIL NADU COAST

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 3

The cyclonic storm 'Burevi' over north Sri Lanka moved west-northwest wards with a speed of 13 kmph during past few hours on Thursday and lay centred about 40 km west-northwest of Mannar, 40km east-southeast of Pamban (India) and 260 km east-north-east of Kanniyakumari.

The associated wind speed is about 70-80 gusting to 90 kmph. The cyclonic storm would move nearly westwards across Pamban area than move west-south westwards and cross south Tamil Nadu coast between Pamban and Kanniyakumari on Friday.

ENTRY, EXIT AT VIZAG RAILWAY STATION RELAXED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 3

Keeping in view the public demand and for the convenience of the passengers, Waltair division has decided to allow the entry and exit of the passengers on either side, east and west side, of the Visakhapatnam railway station with effect from Friday. Hitherto the entry and exit was restricted. Westside (platform No. 8) was open for entry and east side (platform no. 1) only for an exit.

Now the passengers having confirmed tickets will be allowed on both sides of Visakhapatnam railway station that is from platform No. 1 and platform No. 8 (Gnapuram). Two gates on each side will be opened for the passage of bonafide passengers earmarking one gate for entry and the other gate for exit.

Passengers have to follow all safety protocols, and they will be screened, and only asymptomatic passengers will be allowed to enter/board the train. Passengers travelling by these special services should observe health protocol by wearing face covers/masks at the entry and during travel.

The passengers shall reach the station in advance to facilitate thermal screening at the station.

BIRRD HOSPITAL LAUNCHES INDIA'S FIRST BIONIC HAND

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 3

The TTD-run BIRRD Orthopaedic hospital claimed to have launched the country's first Bionic hand here on Thursday.

Participating in the event via video conference in the conference hall at BIRRD, TTD Trust Board chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy said, he is so happy that the hospital has launched the country's first Bionic hand, on the day of the International Day of persons with disability.

Later, he interacted with Ms Gayathri from Hyderabad to whom the Bionic hand was inserted.

She expressed immense satisfaction over the functioning of the hand, which is arranged to her left arm.

The Makers Hive firm, which has created this arm inspired by former President of India, late Abdul Kalam named it after him as Kal Arm (the arm of future for the needy).

According to them, this artificial hand costs around ₹35-40 lakh in foreign nations.

However, they are manufacturing per piece at ₹2.75 lakhs only. The hand can lift nearly eight kg.

TTD JEO P. Basanth Kumar, BIRRD Director Dr Madan Mohan Reddy were present.

FIVE KIDS FALL SICK AFTER EATING BISCUITS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 3

Five children with an age group of 8-10 years became sick after eating biscuits and mushrooms.

According to Chinturu police, the children bought biscuits in a shop and went to fields in the forests.

They picked up mushrooms, growing under trees and ate it. After some time of eating, they developed vomiting and fell sick.

They were admitted in the government hospital at Bhadrachalam.

The condition of a boy Rishi Vardhan is in critical, according to sources.

Chinturu police registered a case.

Another decade for total indigenisation: ENC chief

Project 17 Alfa to thwart frequent Chinese aggression

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 3

Indian Navy in its efforts to thwart the frequent intrusion of Chinese submarines has launched Project 17 Alfa ordering construction of seven anti-submarine warfare vessels-four at Mazagon Docks, Mumbai and three at Garden Reach Shipbuilding and Engineers, Kolkata.

These vessels will have the technologies onboard Milind Kulshreshtha, Artificial Intelligence and C4I.

Vice-Admiral A.K. Jain answering question on Chinese intrusions said six months ago the Indian Navy picked up signals of Chinese submarine at Malacca straits entrance and keeping in view such unwarranted presence, four ASW vessels were launched under P28 programme and last of the four vessels *INS Kavaratti* under P31 was commissioned in March this year.

He said all the vessels under the Project 17 Alfa would be indigenous and the defense ministry has allowed Indian companies to sign MoUs for strategic partnership with Original Equipment Manufacturers of foreign origin. There will be technology transfer and Indian companies would manufacture both equipment and the components.

"Unlike China which builds naval projects at a faster rate, India needs another 10 years to achieve total indigenisation," the Vice-Admiral said.

Earlier, explaining the year-long activities, the Vice-Admiral said it was a challenging time for the Eastern Naval Command in 2020 due to Covid 19 and Chinese aggression.

"No one had envisioned Covid-19 and its intensity. We have all, over time, adapted and evolved measures and procedures to try and arrest its spread and provide relief to people to the extent feasible. Our outreach to provide assistance during these trying times has further strengthened the Indian Navy's connection with Visakhapatnam and beyond," the Vice-Admiral said.

He said Naval Dockyard has developed a Multi-feed Oxygen Manifold and 35 of these were distributed with Visakhapatnam



Commander-in-chief of Eastern Naval Command, Vice-Admiral Atul Kumar Jain addresses during a press conference on the eve of Navy Day at Command Mess inside Eastern Naval Command in Visakhapatnam on Thursday.

— DC

Vizag to host Presidential Fleet Review in March '21

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 3

The Eastern Naval Command with its headquarters in Visakhapatnam will host Presidential Fleet Review in March next year. This is for the second time Visakhapatnam is hosting President Fleet Review. President Dr Abdul Kalam reviewed the Naval fleet in 2006 in Visakhapatnam, announced Flag Officer, Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command Vice-Admiral Atul Kumar Jain.

Every President as supreme commander of armed forces reviews the Naval fleet once in his or her term as per the naval traditions. Ships from all the commands and few merchant ships belonging to Shipping Corporation of India will participate in the fleet review.

Addressing a press conference at the ENC headquarters on the eve of Navy Day on Thursday, the Vice-Admiral he had asked the defence ministry to send tentative

dates so that the command would launch preparations.

Similarly, Vizag would host MILAN, a multilateral naval exercise in March before the Presidential Fleet Review. MILAN is a biennial,

Women inducted as SSC officers in July 1992

From page 1

This is for level-playing field in the defence services to overcome history of discrimination.

Women were inducted only in the Armed Forces Medical Service till the year 1992. From July 1992, the Navy started inducting women as Short Service Commissioned Officers in select branches of the Navy.

They were inducted in Air Traffic Control, law, observer, logistics, education, Naval architecture, pilot (Maritime Reconnaissance Stream

only) and Naval Armament Inspectorate. The government has also given approval for Permanent Commission in education branch, law and naval architecture on completion of Short Service Commission tenure depending on merit and vacancy.

After the Supreme Court orders, the defence department has issued permanent commission orders for women in Army and Indian Air Force also. Women were appointed in military police and IAF aircrafts.

multilateral naval exercise which commenced in 1995, and was conducted at Andaman and Nicobar Command until 2018. It was to be held in March this year but deferred due to Covid Pandemic, he said.

patients and given to VIMS. Between April 29 and July 2, *INS Jalashua* and *INS Airlavat* evacuated close to 4,000 civilians from three island countries.

‘Follow Covid precautions till efficacy of vaccine is proved’

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, DEC. 3

Medical professionals in India and USA have been underlining the need to follow Covid-19 precautions for at least one more year even if the vaccine is made available while pointing to unlock process in progress in the country even as the rest of the world is either has brought in measures to counter second wave of Covid-19 or in the process of doing it.

"We know what we need to do but somewhere, physical, mental and emotional fatigue has set in with regard taking the needed precautions and limiting our activities," said Dr Supriya, Director for Infectious Diseases at Northeast Georgia Hospital at Gainesville in the Georgia, USA.

"This is leading to us loosening our guard against this enemy we are fighting, and it is finding its way to infect more and kill more," said Dr Supriya, who got her roots in Nellore in AP.

Speaking to this newspaper, Dr Supriya Mannepalli said "Good hand hygiene,



Dr Supriya Mannepalli

mask use, social distancing are our weapons to fight this deadly virus."

Various regions in the world, where compliance with these measures is not optimal have continued to see Covid-19 transmission.

"Small household gatherings of family and friends that do not live in the same household, travel, eating in closed spaces in a group setting (restaurants, bars pubs) all contribute to the transmission of the virus. Stressing that lockdown gave time to prepare and treat the unknown virus," Dr Supriya said that lockdown is like a lifeboat but not the permanent solution. If we take the necessary precautions, we can avoid

lockdown and safely do things we could not do during the lockdown, she said.

Referring to an article in a medical journal, she said hundreds of their health care workers in the USA got infected with Covid-19, outside work, in the community and the exposure occurred in break rooms /cafeterias where people congregate and eat together while chatting.

Subscribing to her opinion, Senior most Physician in Nellore Dr C.V. Subhramanyam has stressed the need to follow precautions till a vaccine or specific medicine to treat the pandemic are available.

Dr Biju Ravindran, Superintendent of Narayana Hospital at Nellore, the designated District Covid Hospital, said there is no scope for relaxing at least for one more year even if the vaccine is made available since it takes substantial time to prove its efficacy beyond doubt. Nellore Collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu opined that covid precautions are a must till the last person is effectively vaccinated and that the cure is effective and final.

AP records spike in Covid-19 deaths to 11

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 3

Andhra Pradesh witnessed a slight spike in the number of daily cases of death of Covid-19 infected patients to 11 unlike the average cases of five to six a day in the last few days.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin on Thursday reporting that out of 63,049 samples tested, 664 persons were found infected with Covid-19 in the last four 24 hours. Out of a total number of 1,02,29,745 samples tested so far in the state, 8,70,076 persons were found infected with Covid-19 and out of them, 8,56,320 patients were recovered while 6,742

patients are active with the virus.

Among the daily cases of Covid-19, Chittoor and Krishna reported 105 each followed by 73 in Visakhapatnam, 72 in Guntur, 70 in West Godavari, 67 in East Godavari, 40 in Prakasam, 34 in Nellore, 29 in Anantapur, 21 in Kadapa, 19 each in Kurnool and Vizianagaram and 10 in Srikakulam.

Krishna registered the highest number of active cumulative Covid-19 cases with 1,220 followed by 1,025 in Guntur, 837 in EG, 702 in Nellore, 573 in Chittoor, 572 in WG, 549 in Visakhapatnam, 365 in Prakasam, 233 in Anantapur, 183 in Kadapa, 168 in Srikakulam, 162 in Vizianagaram, 153 in Kurnool.

Vaccination: Officials told to be prepared

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 3

District Collector Dr Narayan Bharat Gupta has instructed the officials concerned to ready a road map for the transport, storage and administration of the Covid-19 vaccine, at first to

all the health workers in the Chittoor district.

Speaking at the meeting with officials of the district taskforce as part of the Covid-19 vaccination preparedness program on Thursday, the collector asked the officials to prepare a database of frontline

workers in the district and chalk out an action plan for setting up vaccine storage points and a route map for the administration of the vaccine in the district.

He said that the Covid-19 vaccine would be first administered to the health-care workers.

PK DEMANDS AID TO FLOOD-HIT FARMERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 3

Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan reiterated his demand to the state government to give an immediate token monetary relief of ₹10,000 per acre and also a compensation of ₹35,000 per acre to the distressed farmers, whose crops were damaged due to heavy rains caused by the cyclone Nivar.

As part of his three-day tour to the flood affected areas in Chittoor and Nellore districts, the actor-turned politician on Thursday reached Tirupati.

Addressing a press conference here, the Jana Sena chief flayed that the state government's attitude towards farmers is limited to lip sympathy.

"So far, four farmers had committed suicide after they lost their crops and were in no position to repay their debts. According to the preliminary reports, crops laid to an extent of nearly 17 lakh acres were damaged due to the heavy rains triggered by the cyclone and the state government should come to farmer's rescue by giving rightful compensation to those farmers in distress," Mr Kalyan added.

He said, Janasena will tour all the flood affected districts in Andhra Pradesh and will submit a detailed report to the state and Central governments.

POLICE FOIL CHALO ASSEMBLY PROGRAMME OF MINORITIES

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 3

The police prevented the Muslim community leaders in Nellore from proceeding to Amaravati to take part in Chalo Assembly programme to demand the government to hand over the suicide case of Abdul Salam and his family in Kurnool district to CBI on Thursday.

Police served notices to Telugu Desam minority cell members including presi-

dent of the cell Pathan Sabir Khan apart from former Mayor and TD Nellore Lok Sabha constituency in-charge S.K. Abdul Aziz late on Wednesday night.

The leaders took strong objection to the restrictions on their movements when police served the notice to him against traveling to Vijayawada. The leaders said police could not stop them if they decide to participate in the Chalo Assembly programme.

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SHORT TAKES

SC PUTS ON HOLD GUJARAT HC'S ORDER ON COVID

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 3

The Supreme Court on Thursday put in abeyance the Gujarat High Court order directing that those not wearing mask in public places be made to do community service in Covid-19 care centres as it expressed concern over the implementation of the Centre and the state government's guidelines at the ground level.

A bench comprising Justice Ashok Bhushan, Justice R. Subhash Reddy and Justice M.R. Shah directed the Gujarat government to ensure that the guidelines issued by the Centre under the Disaster Management Act and the one issued by the state government are implemented vigorously and those violating it are punished.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for Gujarat government said that the problem of people not wearing masks is serious but the solution prescribed by the High Court is not correct.

"Harm of not wearing masks is much less than sending such persons to Covid centre," he said.

However, Justice Shah said that there were serious gaps in the implementation of the guidelines on wearing masks and maintaining social distancing in public places, social gatherings and malls.

MALEGAON BLAST TRIAL TO START ON DEC. 19

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, DEC. 3

A special NIA court on Thursday directed all the seven accused in 2008 Malegaon bomb blast case to remain present before the court on December 19, as the trial in the case would begin on regular basis from that day. The court passed this order on Thursday, as BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur, Lt Col Prasad Purohit and two other accused failed to appear before the court despite an earlier court direction.

Meantime, the Bombay High Court on Thursday clarified that it has not stayed the trial in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, and said the trial must go on.

The lawyers of the absent accused told the special NIA judge P.R. Sitre that their clients were absent due to the Covid-19 situation. Following this the court directed all the accused to be present before it on December 19.

A division bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and M.S. Karnik was hearing a plea filed by Lt Col Prasad Purohit, seeking that charges against him be quashed because prior sanction was not taken to prosecute him.

According to him, section 197 of the CrPc lays down the procedure for prosecution of public servants and mandates that a prior sanction be sought from the government. Purohit said that in the absence of prior sanction, the trial court couldn't have taken cognisance of the charges against him.

AIRLINES TO ALLOW MORE PASSENGERS

New Delhi, Dec. 3: The cap on the number of domestic flights that Indian airlines are permitted to operate was increased from 70 per cent to 80 per cent of their pre-Covid levels on Thursday, said Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

The minister had said on November 11 that the Indian airlines can operate up to 70 per cent of their pre-Covid domestic passenger flights due to the prevailing demand amid the coronavirus situation.

Puri tweeted on Thursday, "Domestic operations recommenced with 30K passengers on 25 May & have now touched a high of 2.52 lakhs on 30 Nov 2020."

"Ministry of Civil Aviation is now allowing domestic carriers to increase their operations from existing 70% to 80% of pre-Covid approved capacity," he stated.

The ministry had resumed scheduled domestic passenger services from May 25, after a gap of two months due to the coronavirus lockdown.

However, the airlines were allowed to operate not more than 33 per cent of their pre-Covid domestic flights.

On June 26, this was increased to 45 per cent and on September 2, it was further increased to 60 per cent.



Farmers block a part of the Delhi-Meerut National Highway during their protest march against the new farm laws, in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

Farm laws: Mamata warns of a nationwide agitation

Mamata to hold party meet today, says Centre must withdraw farm laws

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 3

As the farmers' protest against three laws continues, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday demanded that the Centre withdraw the laws immediately. Otherwise, she threatened to launch her agitation nationwide.

The Trinamul Congress supremo's threat came within few days of her support to the farmers' agitation and offer to join them, if invited, as the Left has already hit the streets over the issue in the state ahead of the Assembly election.

In a Facebook post, Banerjee said, "I am very much concerned about the farmers, their lives and livelihood. GOI must withdraw the anti-farmer bills. If they do not do so immediately we will agitate throughout the state and the country. From the very start, we have been strongly opposing these anti-farmer bills."

Clarifying her party's stand, she added, "We have called a meeting of the the All India Trinamul Congress on Friday, December 4. We will discuss how the Essential Commodities Act is

ODISHA FARMERS EXTEND SUPPORT TO STIR IN DELHI

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, DEC. 3

Farmers in Odisha on Thursday extended support to the 'Delhi Chalo' protest by staging demonstrations here in state capital Bhubaneswar.

They echoed, among others, the demands for scrapping the recent farm laws enacted by the Parliament, legal assurance with regard to continuance of Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for agriculture produces and withdrawal of cases slapped on the agitating leaders. Several farmer organisations under the banner of All India Kisan Sangharsha Coordination Committee gathered at the Lower PMG Square here and tried to march towards the state Assembly.

impacting common people and resulting in sky rocketing prices. The central government must withdraw this anti-people

Cong demands special Parl. session to repeal farm laws

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC 3

Congress on Thursday demanded a special session of Parliament to discuss the "repeal" of the three recently passed farm laws and the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

In a letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Congress Leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury demanded that the former convene a short winter session of the House to discuss several issues, including the farmers' agitation and preparation for Covid-19 vaccine.

The letter asked Birla to convene the winter session of the House with all the Covid-19 protocols in place to help the people understand the important

issues the country is facing at present.

"There are a number of very important issues that the nation is facing in present times. The most notable among them are the ongoing farmers agitation and the status/preparation of the Covid-19 vaccine," he said.

Chowdhury listed issues like "economic slowdown, unemployment scenario, continuous stand-off along the India-China border and unabated ceasefire violation along the India-Pakistan border".

"There is a need for a thorough and transparent discussion on all the above mentioned important issues," he said.

Meanwhile, former Congress President Rahul Gandhi demanded a repeal of the new farm laws. He said accepting

anything less than a complete repeal of the new farm laws would be betrayal with the country and its farmers.

Incidentally, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh met Union home minister Amit Shah on Thursday morning to work out a solution to the farmers protest against the Centre's agri-marketing laws.

Farmers have been staging protests at four busy border points of the national capital — Singhu, Noida, Ghazipur and Tikri — to press their demands for repealing the agri-marketing laws.

Gandhi also attacked the Centre over its statement that it had never spoken about inoculating everyone with a vaccine against Covid-19.

law." Banerjee also slammed the Centre, alleging "The GOI is selling everything. You cannot sell Railways,

Air India, Coal, BSNL, BHEL, banks, defence, etc. Withdraw ill-conceived disinvestment & privatisation policy. We must not

allow treasures of our nation to be transformed into Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) personal assets."

TMC MLA hails PM as 'head of family'

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, DEC. 3

Joining the league of rebel Trinamul Congress MLAs ahead of Assembly election in West Bengal, Bally legislator and late ICC president Jagmohan Dalmiya's daughter

Baishali Dalmiya has stamped her party, wondering how its leaders could call Prime Minister Narendra Modi an "outsider" when he is the "head of our family."

In a video message which went viral, she was heard saying, "These people are calling our honourable PM an outsider. Whenever someone comes here from another state, he is labelled as an outsider. They do not even know that India is a country. The PM is the head of our family. He is seen in

city of which he is the Chancellor. Meanwhile, the TMC termed rebel Nandigram MLA Shubhendu Adhikari a 'closed chapter' after his rebuttal to its claims of reaching a truce with him.

The former state minister, expected to make an announcement on December 6, is all set to quit his posts in the TMC though it remains a secret whether he would resign as an MLA before his defection to the BJP.

Senior MP Saugata Roy said, "I will not comment on Shubhendu anymore. It's a closed chapter now. I do not know where Shubhendu is heading to. When a ship shakes a bit, rats feel it will sink and try to save themselves by jumping to the sea. But the ship later becomes steady again. Similarly many are planning to leave suspecting TMC weak now. They will meet the same fate like the rats."

Taking potshots at senior TMC leaders of Kolkata, Adhikari said at Garbeta in East Midnapore, "It was claimed in the media I do politics in a comfort zone. Before 2011 its only me who used to come here the most. Now someone, who stays in a flat, faces problems as the village boy (me) has been out on the road."

Police close key routes connecting Ghaziabad-Delhi

New Delhi, Dec. 3: Police on Thursday closed routes on two national highways connecting Ghaziabad to Delhi as farmers remained adamant on their demand for scrapping of the Centre's agriculture reform laws and stayed put at the national capital's borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

The protesting farmers had on Wednesday threatened to block other roads of Delhi if their demands were not met.

"The local police have closed the routes on NH-9 and NH-24 from Ghaziabad to Delhi. On NH-1, both sides of the route have been closed near Shani Mandir," the Delhi Traffic Police tweeted.

The crowd of farmers continued to swell at Ghazipur, prompting the police to close the Delhi-UP border on NH-24.

"The Ghazipur border on NH-24 is closed for traffic from Ghaziabad towards Delhi due to farmers' protests. People are advised to avoid NH-24 for coming to Delhi and use Apsara/Bhopra/DND instead," the traffic police said.

It said NH-44 is closed on both sides and asked people to take alternate routes via NH-8, Bhopra, Apsara border, and Peripheral expressway. At the Chilla border, one carriageway from Delhi to Noida has been opened for traffic. However, the other carriageway from Noida to Delhi is still closed.

People commuting from Noida to Delhi are advised to avoid Noida link road, the traffic police said.

The Delhi-Haryana border at Jharoda and Jhatikra remained closed for traffic movement. The Badusarai border is open only for two-wheeler traffic.

However, people can travel to Haryana through Dhansa, Daurala, Kapashera, Rajokri, NH-8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam Vihar and Dundahera border points, the traffic police have said.

The police also kept the Haryana-Delhi border at Singhu and Tikri closed for traffic for the eighth day on the trot.

"Singhu border is still closed from both sides. Lampur, Auchandi & other small borders also closed. Please take alter-

FARMERS WHO END LIFE ARE COWARDS, SAYS K'TAKA MANTRI

Bengaluru, Dec. 3: Karnataka Agriculture Minister B.C. Patil on Thursday said the farmers who commit suicide are cowards.

"The farmers who commit suicide are cowards. Only a coward who can't take care of his wife and children commits suicide. When we have fallen (in the water), we have to swim and win," Patil said addressing farmers at Ponnampet in Kodagu district of Karnataka.

The Minister was explaining to bamboo growers of Ponnampet how profitable the agriculture business is, but some cowards do not realise that and commit suicide. To buttress his point, Patil cited an example of a woman who was wearing gold bangles.

"When I enquired with her how her hands were full of gold bangles, You know what she said? She said, This mother earth has given me for my 35 years of toil. Doesn't this please you all after listening to this?" Patil told the gathering. He said when a woman who had depended herself entirely on agriculture and achieved big why other farmers cannot do it.

Reacting to this, Congress Karnataka unit spokesperson V.S. Ugrappa condemned the Minister's statement, saying he has shown disrespect to the farming community.

"It's a disrespect to the farmers. He should apologise for it," Ugrappa said. — PTI

nate routes. Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba Chowk & GTK Road," the traffic police tweeted.

"Traffic is very heavy. Please avoid Outer Ring Road from Signature Bridge to Rohini & vice versa, GTK road, NH 44 & Singhu, Auchandi & Lampur borders," it said.

As traffic spilled over to alternate routes, it led to long jams there as well. The farmers' unions also called for a nationwide protest on Saturday to oppose what they claimed was "corporatisation" of farming. — PTI

MEA STILL MUM ON BORIS AS R-DAY GUEST

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 3

At its weekly media briefing on Thursday, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) evaded a question from reporters on whether British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had been invited by India to be the chief guest at the Republic Day parade next month, saying that in such matters on the chief guest attending the Republic Day event, "the announcement is made closer to the event".

There had been reports on Wednesday that had said that the British Prime Minister had been invited by India to be the chief guest at the Republic Day parade.

It may be recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had spoken on phone to Johnson just last week on November 27 in which the two "leaders agreed that officials from both sides would continue their work to quickly finalise an ambitious long-term roadmap for the India-UK partnership".

The MEA had said last week, "The two leaders exchanged thoughts about the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and reviewed the promising cooperation between India and United Kingdom in the area of vaccine development and manufacturing."

NEW BEGINNING

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, DEC. 3

A Rajini fan here aptly referred to the song 'Singam onnu purapatadhey' in Rajini-starrer 'Arunachalam', where the actor plays the role of a political party leader campaigning for his candidate, making a comparison of matinee idol Rajinikanth's entry into politics.

Amid the pouring rain on Thursday, Rajini fans and supporters here cele-

brated the actor's announcement on Thursday about his plans to start a political party, and celebrated the moment bursting crackers and distributing sweets to the public. These are the ones, who in a first among Rajini fans association in the state, had gathered in mid-December 2017 for a walkathon from the Nilgiris border to Chennai, to urge their hero enter politics.

Secretary, Rajini Makkal

Mandram, the Nilgiris, S. Kumar, said that Thursday was an auspicious day for Rajini fans. "No doubt our Thalaivar has decided to script a new history in state politics dominated by Dravidian parties. His entry into politics will certainly deal a blow to the five-decade-old political culture of Dravidian parties, where family and dynasty politics had been ruling the roost. Thalaivar's way is always unique with a touch of

spirituality, honesty and simplicity, and he will definitely deliver clean and transparent governance if voted to power. During many film shoots in the Nilgiris, 'Thalaivar' proved himself to be people friendly and accessible. We are hopeful that people will be with him to usher in a new era of politics in the state," Kumar added.

Despite pouring rain, film star Rajinikanth's fans celebrated his announcement of floating

a political party, by bursting crackers and distributing sweets to the public across the central districts of Tiruchy, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Pudukkottai, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam on Thursday.

In Tiruchy district, many places including Srirangam, railway junction and central bus stand areas, his fans celebrated the moment by stopping buses and distributing sweets to the passengers.



Actor-turned-politician Rajinikanth gestures during a press conference in Chennai on Thursday. — PTI

Finally, Rajini takes the political plunge; fans celebrate by bursting crackers

Dawn of new era in TN politics, say Rajini fans

SHORT TAKES

FLORIDA COP, 1 OTHER WOUNDED IN SHOOTING

St. Petersburg (Florida), Dec. 3: A Florida police officer and at least one other person were wounded in a shooting Wednesday, authorities said.

The shooting occurred Wednesday afternoon, according to a St. Petersburg police Facebook post. The wounded officer was taken to a nearby hospital for medical treatment, the *Tampa Bay Times* reported. Officials didn't release details about the other person or how they were wounded. Police haven't released information about what led to the shooting.

A video posted to Facebook appears to capture the shooting. More than a dozen gunshots can be heard, as several plainclothes officers fire at a vehicle that appears to be blocked in by other vehicles, including marked police vehicles.

MAN GETS THREE MONTHS FOR SHOOTING FLARES

Fort Myers (Florida), Dec. 3: A Florida man has been sentenced to three months in federal prison for shooting distress flares from a boat when there was no real emergency and triggering a US Coast Guard rescue operation.

Justin Patrick Obert, 32, was sentenced Wednesday in Fort Myers federal court, according to court records. He must also pay \$13,414.78 to cover costs associated with the rescue. He pleaded guilty in August to communicating a false distress message. "Mariners on the water rely and count on Coast Guard assets and personnel to be ready and able to respond when they are in distress," Coast Guard Capt. Matt Thompson said in a statement. "Hoax calls can redirect critical rescue capabilities and put lives at risk in the dangerous maritime domain." Obert was on a vessel in the Gulf of Mexico near Fort Myers Beach in September 2019 when he drunkenly discharged two red flares, according to court documents.

The Coast Guard, Fort Myers Beach Fire Rescue and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission all responded. Officials determined that Obert had discharged the flares despite not needing emergency assistance.

KEYS-BYRNE, STAR OF MAD MAX FILMS, DIES

Los Angeles, Dec. 3: Veteran actor Hugh Keays-Byrne, who played villain Immortan Joe in George Miller's cult hit "Mad Max: Fury Road", has died. He was 73.

A representative for the actor told *Deadline* that the actor died peacefully on Tuesday morning. Filmmaker Brian Trenchard-Smith, who worked with Keays-Byrne for 1975 film "The Man from Hong Kong", was the first to break the news of the actor's demise in a Facebook post on Wednesday. "Hugh had a generous heart, offering a helping hand to people in need, or a place to stay to a homeless teenager. He cared about social justice and preserving the environment long before these issues became fashionable."

"His life was governed by his sense of the oneness of humanity. We will miss his example and his friendship. Vale, Hugh," Trenchard-Smith wrote. Born in 1947 in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir to British parents, the actor was very young when his family moved to Britain. Keays-Byrne later moved to Australia where he featured in many Royal Shakespeare Company productions, including "As You Like It", "The Balcony", "Hamlet", "King Lear", "The Man of Mode" and "Much Ado About Nothing". He started his acting career when he was cast in TV series "Bellbird", created by Barbara Vernon.

The actor appeared in a number of series and films, including as Morrie Grosse in Trenchard-Smith's 1975 action flick "The Dragon Flies". Keays-Byrne's big moment came when he was roped in to play Toecutter in Miller's 1979 movie "Mad Max", which featured Mel Gibson in the lead. More than thirty years later, Miller requested Keays-Byrne return for his another plunge in to the world of "Mad Max" with 2015's "Fury Road", starring Tom Hardy and Charlize Theron. In the movie, Keays-Byrne played the villainous Immortan Joe, the head of a cult reigning the Wasteland. Throughout the film, Joe and his biker gang terrorised Theron's Furiosa and Hardy's Max Rockatansky as they seek to liberate the world.

China Moon probe to return with rocks

Beijing, Dec. 3: China's latest lunar probe has finished taking samples of the moon's surface and sealed them within the spacecraft for return to Earth, the government announced on Thursday.

Change 5, the third Chinese probe to land on the moon, is the latest in a series of increasingly ambitious missions for Beijing's space programme, which also has a probe en route to Mars carrying a robot rover. The Change 5 touched

down on Tuesday on a mission to return lunar rocks to Earth for the first time since 1976.

The probe "has completed sampling on the moon, and the samples have been sealed within the spacecraft," the China National Space Administration said in a statement.

Plans call for the upper stage of the probe to be launched back into lunar orbit to transfer the samples to a capsule for return to Earth. — AP

China tiff: Morrison seeks conciliation

Wellington, Dec. 3: A diplomatic war of words between Australia and China over a graphic tweet seemed to finally cool on Thursday as Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison struck a much more conciliatory tone.

Morrison's change in approach came even after he was thwarted in getting his views out directly to Chinese people over the messaging app WeChat, after the Chinese company deleted his post on the grounds it could distort historical events and confuse the public.

Earlier this week, Morrison expressed indignation and anger at the tweet posted by a Chinese official that showed a fake image of a grinning Australian soldier holding a bloody knife to a child's throat. The post took aim at alleged unlawful killings and abuses by Australian soldiers during the conflict in Afghanistan.

Earlier this week, Morrison called the tweet "truly repugnant" and "deeply offensive" and demanded an apology from China. But China had not

backed down, saying that Australia should be the one examining its actions. On Thursday, Morrison took a much different approach, telling reporters in Canberra that his aim was for the two countries to have a "happy coexistence."

"My position and my government's position is to seek constructive engagement," he said. "The relationship with China is a mutually beneficial one. It supports both our countries, it is good for both of our countries." China is Australia's largest trading partner. Morrison said Australia had made its views very clear on both the tweet and the WeChat message. WeChat is ubiquitous in China and is used for everything from getting news to making electronic payments.

The company is held responsible for ensuring content doesn't attract negative attention, and censorship is relatively common. Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said he was disappointed about the tweet and the deleted post. — AP

JuD spokesperson gets 15 years' jail

Lahore, Dec. 3: Mumbai terror attack mastermind and Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed's spokesperson Yahya Mujahid has been sentenced to another 15 years in jail by a Pakistani anti-terrorism court in a terror financing case.

Mujahid was last month handed down 32 years jail term by the anti-terrorism court (ATC) in two terror financing cases. Besides Mujahid, the ATC Lahore on Wednesday also handed down 15 years' imprisonment to JuD's senior leader Zafar Iqbal and six months jail term to Saeed's brother-in-law Hafiz Abdul Rehman Makki.

Earlier, the ATC Lahore had sentenced Iqbal for 26 years imprisonment in three such cases. Judge Ijaz Ahmad Butt announced the verdict under different provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997. The three convicts were present in the court when the judge announced the verdict. The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab police had registered as many as 41 FIRs against JuD leaders, including Saeed in different cities.

The trial courts have so far decided 25 cases. The ATC has sentenced Saeed for a collective imprisonment of 21 years on terror financing charges under sections 11-N of Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 in four

COP GUARDING POLIO TEAM GUNNED DOWN

Peshawar, Dec. 3: A police officer assigned to guard a polio immunisation team was killed when unidentified gunmen opened fire at him.

The incident happened on Wednesday in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province's Bannu district. Sub Inspector Akhbar Zaman was on his way back home after performing his duty when two men on a motorcycle opened fire at him, resulting in his death on the spot.

The accused fled the scene. No group has claimed responsibility. Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria suffer from endemic polio, a virus that can cause paralysis or death. — PTI

cases so far.

Saeed-led JuD is the front organisation for the Lashkar-e-Taiba which is responsible for carrying out the 2008 Mumbai attack that killed 166 people, including six Americans. Saeed, a UN designated terrorist whom the US has placed a \$10 million bounty on, was arrested on July 17 last year in the terror financing cases. — PTI

100 world leaders to speak at UN session on Coronavirus

Will chalk out recovery path from pandemic which has claimed 1.5 mn lives

United Nations, Dec. 3: Nearly 100 world leaders and several dozen ministers are slated to speak at the UN General Assembly's special session starting Thursday on the response to Covid-19 and the best path to recovery from the pandemic which has claimed 1.5 million lives, shattered economies, and left tens of millions of people unemployed in countries rich and poor.

Assembly President Volkan Bozkir said when he took the reins of the 193-member world body in September that it would have been better to hold the high-level meeting in June. Nonetheless, he said Wednesday it "provides a historic moment for us to come together to beat Covid-19." "With news of multiple vaccines on the cusp of approval, and with trillions of dollars flowing into global recovery efforts, the international community has a unique opportunity to do this right," he said.

"The world is looking to the UN for leadership. This is a test for multilateralism." When financial markets collapsed and the world faced its last great crisis in 2008, major powers worked together to restore the global economy, but the Covid-19 pandemic has been striking for the opposite response: no leader, no united action to stop the pandemic that has circled the globe.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres sent a letter to leaders of the Group of 20, the world's richest nations responsible for 80 percent of the global economy ahead of their summit in late March as Covid-19 was starting its killing spree urging that they adopt a "wartime" plan and cooperate on an international response to suppress the coronavirus. But there was no response. The two-day special session will not be raising money to finance vaccine immunisations or taking any political action, and there will be no final declaration, just a summary document from Bozkir.

"The real point of this special is to galvanize concrete action to approach our response to Covid-19 in a multilateral and collective way," General Assembly spokesman Brendan Varma said Wednesday.

TURKEY PLANS TO USE CHINESE VACCINE

Istanbul, Dec. 3: Turkey's health minister has announced a vaccination plan starting with an experimental "inactivated vaccine" later this month to combat the Covid-19 pandemic amid a surge in infections and deaths. Fahrettin Koca had previously announced an agreement with Chinese biopharmaceutical company Sinovac Biotech for 50 million doses of CoronaVac, which is currently in Phase 3 trials.

Koca said in a statement late Wednesday that the first shipment of the inactivated vaccine will arrive in Turkey after December 11. Inactivated vaccines are made by growing the whole virus in a lab and then killing it. — AP



Local restaurant employees and staff members hold placards during a protest against the restrictions imposed by the authorities after indoor dining was banned following a rise in Covid-19 cases in Karachi on Thursday. — AFP

Not game over in the fight against virus, warns UK PM

London, Dec. 3: Prime Minister Boris Johnson sought to strike a note of caution amid the excitement of the UK becoming the first country to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19, warning that it is not "game over" for the deadly virus just yet.

Johnson hailed the "searchlights of science" fighting back against the world's "invisible enemy" but urged people to not get carried away with over optimism over the course of the "long and cold months" ahead while the two-dose vaccine starts to be injected into the arms of those at the highest risk of death from the disease.

He urged people to follow the Covid Winter Plan of tiered lockdown which is now in force across England, with a majority of areas still under high alert measures of social distancing.

"It is a fantastic moment, but the worst thing now would be to think that this is the moment when we can relax our guard and think it's game over in the fight against Covid. It's not. This is not the end," Johnson said, during a briefing at 10 Downing Street on Wednesday evening. "We have been waiting and hoping for the day when the searchlights of science would pick out our invisible enemy and give

us the power to stop that enemy from making us ill — and now the scientists have done it," he said.

"It is all the more vital that as we celebrate this scientific achievement we are not carried away with over optimism, or fall into the naive belief that the struggle is over. It's not, we've got to stick to our Winter Plan," he noted.

He said that in line with the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, the first phase of the vaccine deployment will include care home residents, health and care staff, elderly and those who are clinically extremely vulnerable. — PTI

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, and European Union chief Charles Michel.

The US will be represented by Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar. Friday's session will focus on three panels, the first on the UN's response

to Covid-19 and the second on vaccines that will include representatives from producers BioNTech and Oxford University-AstraZeneca, and the World Health Organisation's ACT-Accelerator which is working to get vaccines to the world's poorest people. The final panel is on recovery from Covid-19. — AP

Biden urges Americans to avoid Christmas travel

Washington, Dec. 3: US President-elect Joe Biden has urged Americans not to travel during the Christmas and New Year holidays so as to prevent the spread of the deadly Coronavirus pandemic. The novel Coronavirus has so far infected 13,921,374 people and claimed 273,799 lives in the US — both the numbers highest in the world.

"You cannot be travelling during these holidays. As much as you want to," Biden told a group of workers and small business owners in Wilmington, Delaware. "Christmas is going to be a lot harder," he said during the virtual roundtable. "I don't want to scare anybody here, but

understand the facts. We're likely to lose another 250,000 people dead between now and January..because people aren't paying attention," the Democratic leader said.

The Centre for Disease Control (CDC) has warned that this winter may be the most difficult time in the US public health history. CDC Director Robert Redfield on Wednesday said the US could see another 200,000 Coronavirus deaths in the next three months if people do not take heed of mitigation measures like mask-wearing and social distancing.

According to the Covid tracking project, the number of Coronavirus patients in US hospitals have surpassed 100,000 for the

first time.

Biden said Americans need to take precautions till the vaccination is done. "There's two things that are happening for real. One, help is on the way in terms of vaccines. But the vaccine is not the most important thing. It's the vaccination. It's one thing to pay and the government having people show up and get the vaccine that's delivered to the state capital or to hospitals, wherever it's gonna be delivered," he said.

Biden said vaccination is a really expensive proposition. "We're talking about having to make sure over 340 million Americans and others have access to that vaccination." — PTI

CRONYISM AT CHINESE AGENCY SPREAD COVID

Wuhan, Dec. 3: Secrecy and cronyism at China's top disease control agency led to widespread test shortages and flaws that hampered the early response to the Coronavirus outbreak, an *Associated Press* investigation has found. China's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention gave test kit designs and distribution rights exclusively to three then-obscure Shanghai companies — GeneoDx Biotech, Huirui Biotechnology, and BioGerm Medical Technology — with which officials had personal ties.

It was based on interviews with more than 40 doctors, CDC employees, health experts, and industry insiders, as well as hundreds of internal documents, contracts, messages and emails. — AP

PAK TO START VACCINATION FROM APRIL '21

Islamabad, Dec. 3: The Pakistan government will provide the Coronavirus vaccine free of cost to its people and plans are afoot to start the immunisation drive by April next year, officials said on Thursday. Parliamentary Secretary on Health Nausheen Hamid said the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government has approved funds to purchase the vaccine doses.

"The PTI government will provide the Coronavirus vaccines free of cost to the people. The government will start the vaccination from the second quarter of 2021," Hamid tweeted. Hamid said the phase III of clinical trials of Chinese vaccines was proceeding well and the shots would be available to the people soon.

Pakistan's Coronavirus caseload rose to 4406,810 on Thursday after 3,499 new cases were reported in the last 24 hours. The Ministry of National Health Services, in an update, said 39 people had died due to Covid-19 in the last 24 hours. — PTI

COVID CURBS

Virtual visits are on, where kids chat with Santa online for prices ranging from \$20 to \$100

Ho, ho — Whoa! Virus keeping most Santas at a distance

Miami, Dec. 3: Brad Six becomes Santa Claus, pulling his black boots over his red pants in the office of a Miami outdoor supply company.

It's hot, so he forgoes the traditional heavy jacket for a lightweight vest and grabs his Santa hat. But before sliding it on, the gray-bearded 61-year-old dons a plastic face shield and then takes his chair positioned behind a plexiglass sheet. "Getting paid is nice, but to get your battery recharged and to really get something lasting

out of it requires interacting with the kids — you don't get a lot of that this year," said Six, who first portrayed Santa 35 years ago. This is Santa Claus in the Coronavirus Age, where visits are conducted with layers of protection or online.

Putting hundreds of kids daily onto Santa's lap to talk into his face — that's not happening for most. The physical attributes that make the perfect Santa align perfectly with those that make Covid-19 especially deadly.

"Most of us tick all the boxes: We are old, we are overweight, we have diabetes and if we don't have diabetes, we have heart disease," said Stephen Arnold, the president of IBRBS, an association formerly known as the International Brotherhood of Real Bearded Santas. That has spurred creativity in Santa's workshops. Santas conducting in-person visits are using some combination of masks, the outdoors, barriers and distance for safety. Others are doing virtual visits, where

● **THE AVERAGE** Santa makes \$5,000 to \$10,000 during a normal season, Allen said. That's a welcome bonus for men often retired on a fixed income, but many Santas say revenue is down as corporate parties and other lucrative gigs evaporated.

children chat with Santa online for prices typically ranging from \$20 to \$100, depending on the length

and extras, such as whether customers want a recording. Some Santas are taking the season off. "Santa safety is our No. 1 concern" and negotiated into every contract, said Mitch Allen, president of HireSanta, one of the nation's largest agencies. He said the pandemic initially dried up his business, but it bounced back, especially online.

The average Santa makes \$5,000 to \$10,000 during a normal season, Allen said. That's a welcome bonus for men often retired on a

fixed income, but many Santas say revenue is down as corporate parties and other lucrative gigs evaporated.

Jac Grimes, a Santa in Greensboro, North Carolina, gave up home visits, about a third of his business. He did it not just for his own health, but to prevent becoming a super-spreader, fearing he'd pass the virus from one family to the next.

At a farmers market he annually works, Grimes and his wife dress up as Santa and Mrs Claus and

sit in a parking lot where they try to talk to people who remain inside their cars.

Some homeowners associations are moving their annual Santa-visitation parties outdoors; Grimes will arrive in his red convertible to greet the crowds from afar.

One of the hardest adjustments Santas have made is wearing masks that hide their painstakingly grown beards. "Santa performers are fairly vain people — if they are good," Grimes said. — AP

DECCAN Chronicle

4 DECEMBER 2020

Amid challenges, there is hope Covid's end is near

The British government clearing the vaccine against coronavirus, developed and manufactured jointly by German startup BioNTech and US pharma major Pfizer, so that vaccination in that country could start as early as next week, is perhaps the biggest news of 2020. The pandemic, Covid-19, which the virus causes, has made six crore ill and killed more than 14 lakh people, rendering itself into the biggest threat to public health in recent times. A vaccine to keep it at bay now offers humanity a reason to look at their lives and livelihoods with a little more hope than that they have done with in the past 10 months.

It was a truly global endeavour that resulted in the development of the vaccine at a record speed — the lead was taken by a Turkish couple who set up their startup in Germany and was supported by a US pharma major. And the final product, which the whole world was waiting for, was cleared for by the British regulator. The mRNA vaccine, or memory RNA vaccine, uses a fragment of genetic code from the coronavirus to teach the body how to prompt an immune response and fight the disease. It is for the first time that such a process has resulted in a vaccine that's authorised for public use. Reports say the vaccine is 95 per cent efficient, particularly among the elderly adults. The British regulator has insisted that the vaccine candidate has been subjected to thorough quality checking, allaying fears of expediency leading the push.

The challenges are not over. The vaccine needs to be stored at around minus 70 degrees Celsius, a logistical challenge only a few countries can take up. Mass production, safe distribution and proper administration based on a transparent protocol could still pose difficulties before the vaccine reaches all the needy people. One can take comfort from the fact that there are at least five more candidates that are easier to store and distribute and are in the final stages of clinical trials. Their arrival in the next few weeks will ease the situation substantially.

Now that science has done its job of coming up with an answer to a potential danger to human race, it's time for politics to take over and design a formula, which can address the needs of the last man on the street. Reports offer no hope in this, though: the entire bulk of early production has been pre-ordered by the rich western nations. India's hopes rest on its vast vaccine manufacturing capabilities built over decades; still the government has sounded cagy vis-a-vis assurances of inoculating everyone. Then there are nations with neither the money nor the production capacities but still house millions of vulnerable people. Their cries of desperation could easily be lost in the cacophony of global marketplace, which recognises only a few ideas, such as capital and profit. It is incumbent on countries, such as India, which in the past have used their leverage to amplify the voice of the less privileged on the global scene. There is a lot to gain by saying, "I am my brother's keeper", especially if he is a potential target of a deadly disease.

Cricket: Individuals shine

On the current tour of Australia, Virat Kohli passed the milestone of 12,000 ODI runs in fewer innings than Sachin Tendulkar, who with 18,426 ODI and 15,921 Test runs, remains cricket's greatest gatherer of runs. More significantly, India stopped a run of seven ODI defeats on the trot since 2019 with a consolation win over Australia after having been comprehensively outplayed in the first two ODIs in Sydney when the series was alive. The celebration of Kohli's feat amid what is for him a leaner time at the crease in comparison to his purple patches in his more prolific years in international cricket since his debut in 2008 is, however, a pointer to how Indian cricket is extremely rich in individual feats of record breakers while rating considerably lower as a team.

The pattern of ineffectual cricket stemming from a lack of mental preparedness to be combat-ready even for what is considered a great rivalry with Australia was in stark evidence in the two defeats at the Sydney Cricket Ground, which presented belters for batsmen. The bowling attack was clueless about adjusting to the challenge and was taken to the cleaners twice by Australian batsmen, most of all Steve Smith who held out impressive lessons in how to make adjustments after a particularly poor IPL outing. Those Indian cricketers who seemed heroic match winners at times in the same IPL were found wanting when it came to chipping in for the national team cause.

A run of seven years without a trophy from any rated global event like the World Cups in the 50 overs and T20 formats or the Champions Trophy is a telling comment on Team India's record. The skipper Kohli's inability to inspire his team in the manner of Mahendra Singh Dhoni is clear even if he remains his team's pre-eminent performer, averaging an unprecedented 50+ in all three formats. Impressive as the comeback win in Canberra was, Team India's performances have been generally dissatisfactory. Fans must begin to appreciate that occasions arise for true celebrations when India performs as a combination in a team sport.

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Subhani



Keeping Big Biz out of banks not a good idea



Sanjeev Ahluwalia

It's curious how resistance to any big change, invariably, comes from the "progressives" within a political system.

Farmers in Punjab and Haryana — the "gold standard" of agricultural productivity in India — are up in arms over the government's hurried attempts to liberalise the marketing of agricultural produce, allowing farmers to sell to anyone they wish. So why are the farmers outraged?

They say that they never asked for this "gift", so why was it being imposed on them? They suspect that it is a move to allow the "backdoor" entry of "corporates" enabling them to get control over the agricultural sector. Never mind that nothing is envisaged to stop farmers who are happy to sell to "Ardhtia" cartels in Central government-regulated mandis (markets) to continue to do so. Conspiracy theories, once born, acquire a life of their own.

In a similar vein, otherwise forward-looking Indian economists of the "left liberal" American tradition condemn the recommendation by a working group of the Reserve Bank last month that industrialists should be allowed to own banks, albeit with suitable checks, to create a "Chinese wall" (bad name this one!) around the banking operations of such business groups, to avoid "connected or mutual" lending.

Never mind that the only "unconnected" lending in Indian banking is when a middle-class woman goes to a bank for a loan to buy a house or a scooter! For all other personal or business lending, the bank must know and trust the borrower. How else do you explain the constant socialising that rotund banking types engage in? Networking has always been

the traditional "oil" in the banking sector, and "connections" matter.

So why are economists of repute up in arms despite these ground realities. They say that "big business" cannot be "trusted" to play with a straight bat and would bend the rules to favour lending and, more important, soft-soap defaults, by borrowers connected to them.

Pause here for a fact check. The ₹10 trillion-plus non-performing loans, even before the Covid-19 pandemic, are not the result of happenstance. Much of this is "directed" lending to unworthy "favoured" business borrowers.

These came to light when growth stalled, pulling out the plug from various ponzi schemes in real estate and the stock markets. Stiffer asset classification rules from the RBI also helped to unearth the scams. Publicly-owned banks are the most affected, though poor governance and low managerial propriety standards were visible in some private banks as well.

Formalising the reality of this "jugalbandi" by letting big business own banks transparently, rather than remain the unseen puppeteer, can only help reduce the existing systemic risk rather than increase it. Private banks should grow their asset share to equal that of public banks (which is now 70 per cent) while boosting credit levels to equal the GDP, up from 60 per cent today.

Timely and forceful intervention by the RBI against delinquent management — private or public — as in the recent case of the Lakshmi Vilas Bank, is the way to go, to contain the rot, not to pull up the drawbridge against industry ownership in banks.

Consider the oldest, iconic Indian "brand" — the Tatas. Do we envisage a Tata, a Godrej, a Bajaj

or a Mahindra managed bank being less sound than the "diversified ownership" private banks in operation today? Look at the "newbie" business brands — Jio for instance. Does Mukesh Ambani need to own a bank to get access to credit or to nudge its flow? What if N.R. Narayana Murthy or Azim Premji were to float banks. What could possibly compel them to damage their international stature and credit rating by committing irregularities in their banking operations?

We have moved well beyond the stymied sources for wealth creation which existed in 1949, when the Banking Regulation Act was framed. Regulatory systems and public expectations have evolved. Even the 2013 guidelines, liberalising the entry of private banks, did not specifically bar big business from owning banks. Forty per cent of the capital of the best private banks is held by international investors. The gains from retaining a healthy and "sustainable" asset profile and international governance standards far outweigh the domestic "benefits" from bending licensing norms for dodgy loans.

Left-leaning consumer activists raise the spectre of "concentration of wealth" and "higher inequality" if business is let in through the banking door. These fears are overblown. Increasing the number of well-capitalised private banks will induce competition and dilute the concentration of economic power. The way to reduce inequality is not by preventing billionaires from becoming richer, but by improving

public services, creating decent jobs and enhancing the incomes of the poor.

Globalisation, corporatisation and industrialisation do tend to concentrate surpluses at the top. But they also expand the economic pie. Walking away from these pervasive global trends is not an option if growth is to be preserved. Pushing it to the high single digits, requires extensive liberalisation — cutting through the post-1991 residual red tape and "re-liberalisation" — hacking through the new accumulation since then with a motorised saw.

The key to manage big corporates is to have strong community-based governments with heightened accountability to the people, so that "cozy deals" and "crony capitalism" — a much larger generic problem beyond banking — are exposed and the guilty brought to book.

Are we there yet? Possibly not. Can we get there. Yes, we can. But not by stepping into Emperor Xi's boots and undermining the public profile of big business — just to keep them in respectful submission. The Chinese regulators, last month, torpedoed the giant \$35 billion IPO of the Ant Group in Shanghai and Hong Kong to rein in the "outsoken" Jack Ma (shades pf Rahul Bajaj?), who criticised the government publicly.

Efficient banking is a key "commanding height" of the Indian economy. Accountability of banks to their creditors and minority shareholders needs to be strengthened. The RBI recognises that. But to shun the financial heft and managerial excellence of big business in scaling up bank services is like marching into the future with one hand permanently tied behind our back — ideologically pure, possibly. But irresponsibly courageous and blindly devotional to the blunt governance strategies of an earlier era.

The writer is adviser, Observer Research Foundation

LETTERS

PAWAN IMPACT

Let the BJP become wiser. The fact is Pawan Kalyan is not an accepted leader in the state. He himself could not win despite contesting from two places. He may be accepted as an actor but not as a leader. It is better for Rajanikant also not to get into the mire and lose the image gotten with great effort.

D.S.P. Rao
Kakinada

TRUDEAU COMMENTS

Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's comments with regard to farmer's agitation are unwelcome and uncalled for (*DC, Dec. 3*). It seems like he wanted to appease and placate the sizeable Punjabi community in India. Without mincing words, India has given a befitting reply and it is appreciated. Be that as it may, the government needs to make an all out effort to sort out the issue on an immediate basis.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

Canada PM's unsolicited remarks against the farmers' agitation was in very bad taste. He must have done this at the behest of Indian diaspora majority being from Punjab and Haryana. He could have conveyed their apprehensions to the Indian embassy there.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

POLAVARAM STATUE

Instead of statutes, I suggest AP government publish a small pocket book highlighting the progress of AP during the tenures of three different chief ministers. It will be especially useful to the youngsters.

K. Lakshman Rao
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Scuffle in UN panel meet

UNITED NATIONS, DEC. 3 Pandemonious scenes and near physical scuffles between delegates marked the United Nations General Assembly's Social and Humanitarian Committee yesterday during its futile attempt to begin discussions on appointing a High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The disorderly scenes at the morning meeting led to its abrupt suspension and thereafter there was physical scuffling involving French ambassador Baroody, French counsellor Paulini and an unidentified Uruguayan.

The key to manage big corporates is to have strong community-based governments with heightened accountability to the people, so that 'cozy deals' and 'crony capitalism' are exposed and the guilty brought to book



James Ball

Why 'immunity passports' can be problematic

A few months ago it wasn't certain we would find a Covid-19 vaccine. Now, we have three, with potentially more on the way — and the rollout of the Pfizer jab due to begin in Britain next week. It's an extraordinary achievement for the research community, our best hope of restoring normal life and a huge relief after a year of disappointments. But the UK government should beware of geeks bearing gifts. To get herd immunity, it has to persuade 60 to 90 per cent of people to get vaccinated.

You can see Boris Johnson's problem. If he makes vaccination voluntary, we may never hit the target we need for herd immunity. It's not just antivaxers. Some people who are usually amenable to vaccines will worry about a "rushed" new one — and fear the speed of its development means corners were cut. Others may not wish to take the vaccine offered by the government if they believe one of the others on the market, or on the way, will be more effective. The Oxford/AstraZeneca, with its 70 per cent effectiveness rate, is so last season, darling. Everyone's going 95 per cent gene-based Moderna this year. (Or they would if it was on

offer!) People holding out for a vaccine of choice could cause delays. So what to do?

Enter Nadhim Zahawi, a Tory MP who was set to rebel over this week's tier vote until he was given the new job of minister for vaccine delivery. He's a Cameron-era MP who came of political age when the "nudge unit" was at large, thinking of ways to change behaviour without passing laws. He has started floating the idea of cinemas, pubs and other venues creating a system by which people can socialise in ways the tier system would not normally allow — if they can prove they've had the vaccine.

This opens the door to a system where the government uses vaccination to decide in what ways citizens are allowed to be involved in which parts of society. The Prime Minister has tried to give his reassurance that making vaccines compulsory is "not the way we do things in this country". But if airlines, pubs and cinemas make them compulsory at the government's suggestion, that's presumably okay.

The first problem with this should be glaringly obvious: someone would have to provide verifiable information

of who had been vaccinated. That would need to be the government, likely via the NHS. Dido Harding has floated the prospect that her white-elephant £12 billion NHS Test and Trace app could be used for this purpose, which would mean transforming an app every Brit was assured would protect their privacy and anonymity into a health passport they might have to show before ordering a beer.

The Prime Minister, in typical amiable-buffoon mode, seems quite keen on framing immunity certificates as "freedom passes", as innocuous as pensioners' bus passes. If a piece of paper will let you go to a bar, visit the theatre or go to a football match, how could it be anything but a good thing — says the logic that ignores that before the coronavirus, people could do all of these without having to show their government-issued papers.

When David Blunkett proposed identity cards back in 2004, Boris Johnson said he'd rather eat one than show it when requested. He quoted 1964 US Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater to the effect that "extremism in defence of liberty is no vice". Now he seems to have ambled

into becoming a vocal advocate of an even more intrusive form of ID card, one that shares not only our identity but also our health information. It would be the cornerstone of a new biosecurity state.

Modern technology makes casual state intrusion into our daily lives easier than ever. But it doesn't change the rights and wrongs of any of it. Even if you care not one iota about civil liberties, you can still see the dangers in what's being proposed here. For one, there is an uncomfortable precedent in requiring people to prove their health or vaccination status before they can access public life. At what point should that stop? No access to schools for unvaccinated pupils? Routine tests for flu before getting the Tube? Why not an app showing a verified set of your latest STD results before you can have a government-sanctioned fling?

The final, grim truth of "immunity passports" is they're not even all that likely to work — not least because they are the absolute confirmation of what the most fervent anti-vaccination protesters have always warned about. If the government suddenly tries to make vaccines a condition of public

life, that plays into every conspiracy theory about mass vaccination now spreading like wildfire online. It is generally not a good idea for anyone to prove such people "right", especially not on such a vital issue. The more extreme fringes of the anti-vax movements warn vaccines would contain the mark of the devil, or some surveillance chip.

Tying vaccination into a government-run tracking app, and making it a requirement of engaging in public, risks turning a movement of dangerous cranks into this generation's civil liberties freedom fighters. Worse still, it risks radicalising people currently unsure about a vaccine into being absolutely sure they don't want one.

We must sympathise with the government, which faces a huge challenge, and one prone to frustrations. It could be that developing the vaccine is the easy part compared with persuading enough people to actually take it. But that's the job ministers have signed up for, and they owe the public better than making up poorly thought-through policy live on air.

By arrangement with the Spectator

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	44,632.65	0.03
Nifty 50	13,133.90	0.15
S&P 500*	3,678.77	0.27
Dollar (₹)	73.91	-0.13
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.05	-0.54
Euro (₹)	89.46	-0.57
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,887.481	0.98
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	48.36	0.11
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.932	0.011
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.938	-0.008

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Chhattisgarh accepts Centre's GST option

Chhattisgarh has accepted the Centre's borrowing proposal and will get Rs 3,109 crore through the special window to meet GST revenue shortfall. With this, 27 states and three union territories have accepted the Centre's borrowing plan, leaving only Jharkhand which is yet to decide. Govt. of Chhattisgarh has communicated its acceptance of option-1 to meet the revenue shortfall arising out of GST implementation, MoF said.

Ultratech to spend over ₹5,400 cr on capacity addition



UltraTech Cement, India's largest cement maker, announced a Rs 5,477-crore investment to add 12.8 million tonnes capacity, taking its overall output to over 136 mt per annum. The company said its board in a meeting approved capacity expansion plan with a mix of brown-field and green-field expansion. "The additional capacity will be created in the fast-growing markets of the eastern, central and northern regions," the firm said.

Standard Life Aberdeen sells HDFC Life stake

UK-based Standard Life Aberdeen said it has sold 1.37 per cent stake in HDFC Life Insurance Company for Rs 1,703.2 crore. Standard Life (Mauritius Holdings), a subsidiary of Standard Life Aberdeen, sold 27,772,684 shares of HDFC Life at an average price of Rs 619.14, receiving about Rs 17,032 million (172 million pounds), net of taxes and expenses, the company said in a filing to the London Stock Exchange.

Tata Power arm CGPL repays ₹1,550 cr loans

Tata Power said its subsidiary CGPL, which runs the Mundra ultra mega project, has repaid Rs 1,550 crore of bank loans. Coastal Gujarat Power Ltd (CGPL) repaid the amount on December 2. Tata Power said in a BSE filing. "With this repayment and the earlier repayment of Rs 2,600 crore of bank loans made in October 2020, the entire bank loans of CGPL aggregating Rs 4,150 crore have been fully repaid.



RBI halts card, digital expansion HDFC Bank told to freeze new plans

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, DEC. 3

After several incidents of outages in digital services of HDFC Bank in the last two years, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has temporarily barred the lender from new digital banking launches and issuing new credit cards besides asking the bank's board to examine the lapses and fix accountability. The restrictions do not affect the bank's existing customers.

The private lender's managing director and chief executive officer Sashi Jagdishan on Thursday assured clients that "there is no reason to worry" and that they "can continue to transact with the bank without any concern."

The apex bank's order came on Wednesday, days after the last instance of service outage across its digital banking channels, including internet banking, mobile banking and other payments. The outage, which happened on November 21, had severely inconvenienced customers and was the third major outage faced by the country's largest private lender in a span of two years.

"The RBI has advised the bank to temporarily stop all launches of the digital business generating activities planned under its programme—Digital 2.0 (to be launched) and other proposed business generating IT applications, and sourcing of new credit card customers," the bank



informed the stock exchanges in a filing. HDFC Bank is the largest issuer of credit cards and has 1.49 crore customers as of September this year while it has 3.38 crore debit card-holders.

Started in 2018-19, Digital 2.0 is part of the bank's elaborate strategy to transform itself into a bank of the future. It comprises improving customer experience, using analytics to power customer interactions and developing new applications; empowering virtual banking offerings and bringing in innovation to shape up customer preferences. Under Digital 2.0 partnerships are planned with technology companies and fintech players to improve services.

"We had two outages, one in Nov. 2018 and second one in Dec. 2019. We have taken help of external expertise, understood what needs to be done further and have substantially implemented the inputs to strengthen our IT infrastructure and systems. Unexpectedly another incident happened on Nov. 21, 2020 and the pri-

mary reason for the same is the power outage in our Primary Data Centre. We are working on war footing to strengthen this area also now," said Jagdishan in his message to the bank's customers.

"Some of our strategic digital initiatives to improve the front end digital experience, improve digital origination, straight through processing, next generation of mobile and internet banking, APIs based banking on the edge etc would now be readied and launched post the approval and clearance from the regulator," he added.

HDFC Bank shares plunged to a low of Rs 1,374.25 on the BSE before closing at Rs 1,377.05, down 2.13 per cent. The bank's promoter HDFC Ltd's shares also fell 0.95 per cent to close at Rs 2253.90. Shares of its main rival, State Bank of India and its subsidiary SBI Cards and Payment Services, gained 3.87 per cent and 5.31 per cent, respectively.

(With inputs from Ravi Ranjan Prasad)

NCLT nod for R-Infratel plan; lenders may get ₹4,400 cr

Mumbai, Dec. 3: The National Company Law Tribunal on Thursday approved a resolution plan of Reliance Infratel following which the lenders may get around Rs 4,400 crore and Reliance Jio may pick up the assets of the debt-ridden telecom infrastructure company, according to sources.

Reliance Jio through its subsidiary placed bids to acquire the assets of Reliance Communications' fully owned subsidiary Reliance Infratel and the same have been approved by the tribunal as part of the resolution plan, a source aware of the development said.

"The lenders will get around Rs 4,400 crore from Reliance Digital Platform, a group company of Reliance Jio and the successful resolution applicant," the source said.

Under the approved resolution plan, RCom and its subsidiary Reliance Telecom Infrastructure Ltd will go to UV Asset Reconstruction Company, while the tower unit Reliance Infratel will go to Jio for a total consideration of Rs 20,000-23,000 crore to be paid over a period of seven years.

Reliance Infratel has around 43,000 towers and 1,72,000 route kilometres of fibre. The Resolution Plan was approved by 100 per cent votes of the committee of creditors. —PTI

Self-made women make up a third of India's wealthiest

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

As many as 31 self-made women have made it to the list of 100 Indian wealthy women. Of the 31 self-made women in the Kotak Wealth Hurun-Leading Wealthy Women List 2020, six are professionals and 25 are entrepreneurs.

With a wealth of Rs 36,600 crore, 67-year-old Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw of Biocon is the richest self-made woman and occupies the second place in the list of the wealthiest women. Out of the 13 women from the pharmaceuticals industry, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw is also the only self-made woman from the sector. Radha Vembu of Zoho with a wealth of Rs 11,590 crore is the second richest self-made woman and fifth among India's richest women.

Arista Network's Jay-



Roshni Nadar: Wealthiest of All

shree Ullal, with a wealth of Rs 10,220 crore, is the richest professional manager. Indra Nooyi of Pepsico too has figured in the list.

There are six startup founders and of them Falguni Nayar of Nykaa and Divya Gokulnath of Byju's have registered a wealth of Rs 5,410 crore and Rs 3,490 crore respectively and have built their companies into unicorns.

The 100 richest women have a cumulative wealth of Rs 2,72,540 crore. With a wealth of Rs 54,850

crore, Roshni Nadar Malhotra, chairperson of HCL Technologies, is the wealthiest woman on the list. Among the 100, 38 have wealth of Rs 1,000 crore and more.

With four entrants, Apollo Hospitals Enterprise produced the most number of women leaders on the list, followed by Godrej Group which contributed three entrants to the list.

"The women on the Kotak Wealth Hurun-Leading Wealthy Women 2020 List are the most successful women business leaders in India. Their stories deserve to be shared and studied. What is it that makes them successful? How did they do it? I hope this list can inspire more women to become entrepreneurs, run businesses or lead companies," said Anas Rahman Junaid, manager director and chief researcher, Hurun India.

SC asks Franklin to consult investors

New Delhi, Dec. 3: The Supreme Court on Thursday asked Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund to initiate steps within one week for calling a meeting of unit-holders to seek their consent for closure of the six mutual fund schemes and said there will be no redemption of units by investors till further orders.

The top court also agreed to hear an appeal filed by Franklin Templeton against the Karnataka High Court order, which stopped the fund house

from winding up its debt fund schemes without prior investor consent.

A bench of Justices S. Abdul Nazeer and Sanjiv Khanna observed that the issue is big and people wanted a refund.

It said that without prejudice to the rights of any party, trustees are allowed to call a meeting of unit-holders to seek their consent for approval and in this regard steps be taken within one week.

Advocate Pratap Venu-gopal, appearing for the Sebi, submitted that the

regulator has no role in the winding up process but had written to RBI in this regard.

The bench posted the matter for further hearing next week and directed that all cross appeals be placed on record.

On October 24, the Karnataka High Court had said that the decision of the Franklin Templeton Trustee Services Private Limited to wind up six schemes cannot be implemented unless the consent of the unit holders is obtained. —PTI

Rabi sowing moving at a buoyant pace

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

Rabi crop sowing at the end of November is higher than the levels of last year and the average acreage of the past five years. Estimates show total acreage under rabi crop in the current season would be higher than last year's.

Sowing of the winter crop has already covered 348 lakh hectares as of November 27. This is 4 per cent more than the sowing in the previous season till the end of November and 2 per cent above the average of the past five years, finds Crisil Research. In 2019-20, a total of 662 lakh hectares were under rabi cultivation.

Timely kharif harvest has also ensured that rabi sowing started as per schedule. Last year, kharif harvest was delayed and hence Rabi sowing got delayed. The higher acreage till November is supported by the low base of last year. But last year, sow-



ing picked up from December. Hence, rabi sowing for the current season will be up against the high base from last December.

Rabi sowing has been spurred by abundant rains this year. An overall 9 per cent above-normal monsoon has led to high soil moisture and 19 per cent higher reservoir levels compared with the average of the past five years.

"Oil seeds, including mustard, pulses and jeera are expected to see higher acreage this rabi season. Coriander sowing too had started on a

strong note," said Ajay Kedia, MD, Kedia Commodities.

As per the farm ministry data released last week, rabi oilseeds acreage was at 6.16 million hectares, up from 5.87 million hectares, due to higher sowing of groundnut. Further, farmers have sowed mustard over 5.7 million hectares in 2020-21 rabi season, up 6.6 per cent from the previous year. Rabi chana have been sown across 6.94 million hectares, compared to 6.08 million hectares a year ago.

Jeera sowing, too, is expected to be higher in terms of acreage this rabi season.

Overall, a bountiful monsoon has brought cheer to the farmers, with a record output expected in the kharif season. With reservoirs filled to the brim, output is expected to be bountiful in the rabi season as well. This will increase the purchasing power in the hands of the farmers and increase rural demand.

Flipkart to hive off PhonePe

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

Flipkart will partially hive off its digital payment platform PhonePe, valued at \$5.5 billion. After the partial spin-off, Flipkart will have an 87 per cent stake in the digital payments services company, while Walmart will keep 10 per cent direct stake and Tiger Global and other Flipkart investors will have a 3 per cent stake.

On its part, PhonePe will raise \$700 million of capital in two months.

However, the spin-off provides PhonePe an opportunity to constitute a new board of directors focused on supporting its development. The new board will have veterans from the

BFSI sector, apart from representatives of Walmart and PhonePe.

PhonePe will also create a tailor-made equity incentive or ESOP programme for its employees. The employees who earlier were owning Flipkart's ESOPs will have PhonePe's ESOPs.

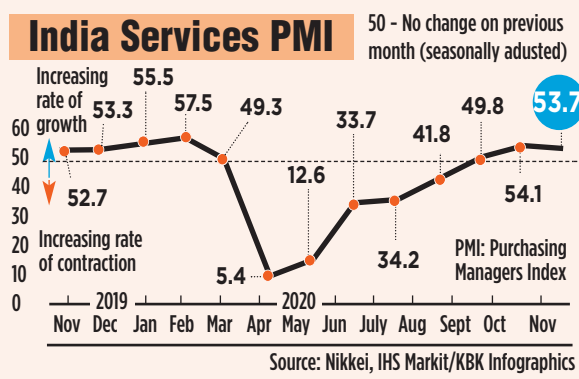
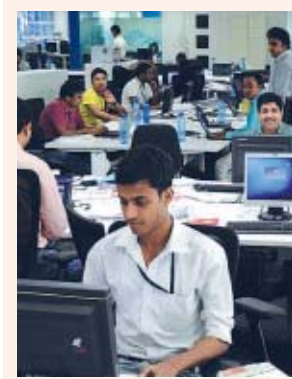
PhonePe will also have the freedom to independently raise funds. It has raised less than \$1 billion from its parent company and its investors till now.

Recognizing the momentum that has been achieved, as well as PhonePe's significant growth potential, Flipkart's board determined that this was the right time to partially spin-off PhonePe so it can access

dedicated capital to fund its long-term ambitions over the next three to four years, the company said in a release.

In a couple of months' time PhonePe will be raising \$700 million in primary capital in two tranches from existing Flipkart investors led by Walmart. The company will be valued \$5.5 billion.

In four years, PhonePe has crossed the 250 million registered user milestone with over 100 million monthly active users generating nearly one billion digital payment transactions in October 2020. Walmart sees value in spinning off PhonePe from Flipkart as the two companies have become large in their respective areas.



MDH | DADAJI

Man who started out with ₹1,500 leaves behind a ₹1,500-cr empire

Spice King started his journey in a tonga

New Delhi, Dec. 3: School-dropout Mahashay Dharampal Gulati, famously known as 'MDH Dadaji' for repeated appearance in his spice brand's television ads—who passed away on Thursday morning at the age of 97—started his spices business journey at a nondescript shack in Delhi's Karol Bagh after selling his tonga, and went on, at the age of 94, to becoming the highest-paid CEO in the country's FMCG sector.

Gulati, also known as the Spice King, was born in Sialkot—now in Pakistan—on March 27, 1923, and moved to India after Partition and set up his business in Delhi. His father had a spice

shop in Sialkot, called 'Mahashian Di Hatti' (MDH), but the outlet was popularly known as 'Deggi Mirch Wale'.

His family left behind everything during Partition to come and settle in Delhi. Gulati, who dropped out of school in 1933 after class 5, dabbled in many odd jobs, including wood-work and working in soap, fabric and rice factories.

He arrived in Delhi in September 1947 with Rs 1,500 in hand, mentions a bio-sketch of him on MDH's portal.

He used the money to buy a tonga (horse cart) for Rs 650 and drove it from New Delhi Railway Station to Qutab Road and Karol Bagh to Bara Hindu Rao



Dharampal Gulati

for a few days.

He sold his carriage in October 1948 to restart his ancestral business, opening a small shop at Ajmal Khan Road, Karol Bagh.

He never looked back. As the business grew, he himself appeared on television commercials endorsing Deggi Mirch, Chat

Masala, and Chana Masala, among the most famous products from the MDH stable, which has over 50 products.

Over the years, the MDH Dadaji, or Mahashay as he was popularly known, became a household name. His father Mahashay Chhuni Lal Gulati founded MDH Spices in 1919, and Dharampal would later turn it into a Rs 1,500-crore empire.

The company was officially established in 1959 when Gulati bought land in Delhi's Kirti Nagar and set up a production unit.

Starting with manually ground spices, MDH soon switched over to automatic machines to meet the fast-growing demand for spices.

Today, huge volumes of spices are manufactured and packed by modern machines and sold throughout India and abroad by the company through a network of over 1,000 stockists and over four lakh retail dealers.

Gulati, who took home Rs 21 crore salary in 2017, was said to donate nearly 90 per cent of it to charity through his Mahashay Chhuni Lal Charitable Trust. The Trust operates a 250-bed hospital in Delhi, along with a mobile hospital for slum-dwellers as well as four schools.

Gulati established more than 20 schools. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2019. —PTI

FRESHTOHOME EXPANDS FTH DAILY SERVICES

Mumbai, Dec. 3: FreshToHome, which sells fresh fish and meat online, said it has expanded its daily delivery service, FTH Daily, which delivers milk, groceries, fruit, vegetables, and daily essentials, in Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune. There is no minimum order and the delivery is free, the firm said.

ITC HOTELS LAUNCHES '100% BACK' OFFER

Chennai, Dec. 3: ITC Hotels has launched '100 per cent Back' offer, which will provide guests hotel credits that can be used against various services. The offer allows guests to book at any of the ITC Hotels and Welcomhotel, and redeem the hotel credits for food and beverage, spa treatments, etc.

SHORT TAKES

Messi fined for tribute to Diego

Barcelona: Lionel Messi was fined 600 euros (\$720) for taking his jersey off to pay tribute to Diego Maradona, the Spanish football federation said.

The federation's competitions committee fined the Argentine player for his actions after scoring in Barcelona's 4-0 win over Osasuna in the Spanish league on Sunday. After a strike from outside the box, Messi took off Barcelona's blue-and-burgundy to reveal the red-and-black of Maradona's jersey from his stint at Newell's Old Boys. Messi then blew a kiss with both hands to the sky as he looked upward. After the game, Messi posted a photo of his tribute alongside an older image of Maradona in the same shirt, adding the message Farewell, Diego in Spanish. Maradona died last week at the age of 60. The federation also refused to void the yellow card that was shown to Messi for taking off his jersey, and fined Barcelona 180 euros (\$216). — AP

48 NBA players test Covid positive

Los Angeles: The NBA announced Wednesday that 48 players have tested positive for the Covid-19, a dramatic increase over the zero positive tests reported during last season's quarantine bubble in Florida. The league said the positive tests are the result of 546 tests carried out between November 24-30 as the NBA gets set to begin preseason games in nine days. The zero positive tests were from the beginning of last season's quarantine bubble to the end of the season in mid-October.

One team, the Golden State Warriors, has already delayed the beginning of their individual workouts by a day this week because of players testing positive. This was the initial round of tests for players as they returned to their teams ahead of the start of individual workouts on Tuesday. — AFP

Grosjean's fiery crash to be probed

Paris: An investigation has been opened into Formula One driver Romain Grosjean's horrifying crash at the Bahrain Grand Prix, governing body FIA said Thursday. The FIA said it could take up to eight weeks before the conclusions are made public.

Grosjean was discharged from a military hospital in Bahrain on Wednesday.

"The investigation into the Grosjean incident will look at all areas including competitor safety devices such as the helmet, HANS (a head restraint device), safety harness, protective clothing, survival cell, headrest, in-car extinguisher system and the Halo," the FIA said in a statement. "Analysis will also include chassis integrity and the safety barrier performance," it added. — AP

Sneha retains one-shot lead

Noida: Amateur Sneha Singh retained a one-shot lead over the field with an even par 72 in the seventh leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour here on Thursday.

Sneha had a roller-coaster front nine with three birdies on first, fourth and eighth and dropped shots on second and sixth, as she turned in one-under 35. On the back nine, she missed a couple of birdie chances, dropped a shot on Par-4 12th and closed with six pars for a round of 72.

One shot behind Sneha is Siddhi Kapoor, whose sole win on the Hero WPGT was in her rookie year in 2016, when she won the 14th leg at the Delhi Golf Club. Siddhi rode on her fine start which saw her get to three-under in the first six holes. — PTI

Live on TV

CRICKET

Australia vs India: First T20 from 1.40 pm on Sony Six, Ten 1, HD

South Africa vs England: First ODI from 4.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

WWE

SmackDown: Bouts from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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Back to slam-bang!

India look to pose tougher challenge to Aussies in T20s

Canberra, Dec. 3: Short of resources in ODIs, India will have enough options to choose from to pose a stiffer challenge to Australia when the two sides clash in a three-match T20 series beginning here on Friday.

The 1-2 ODI series loss reaffirmed that India have a lot of work to do in the 50-over format but they possess a much more balanced squad in the shortest format.

The presence of Washington Sundar, Deepak Chahar and T Natarajan, who did well on his ODI debut on Wednesday, lends much-needed balance to the bowling department.

With Hardik Pandya not bowling regularly, India had only one specialist all-rounder in Ravindra Jadeja in the one-dayers.



Natarajan could also make his T20 debut on Friday having shown enough promise in his maiden international appearance.

Unlike the SCG, the Manuka Oval surface had enough for both the spinners and pacers. It will be interesting to see who opens up the bowling alongside Jasprit Bumrah with the toss-up being between Mohammad Shami and Deepak Chahar.

In batting, K L Rahul is expected to go back to his preferred opening slot alongside Shikhar Dhawan.

Australia, after naming the same squad for ODIs as well as T20s, would be backing themselves to beat India after a clinical display over the last one week. David Warner is unavailable due to a groin injury and it remains to be seen if Marnus Labuschagne comes alongside Finch on Friday. — PTI

MORGAN FOR USE OF SIGNALS FROM BALCONY

Cape Town, Dec. 3: England one-day captain Eoin Morgan said on Thursday that he would continue to make use of signals from the team balcony.

Television coverage during the third Twenty20 international against South Africa at Newlands in Cape Town on Tuesday captured images of numbers and letters being displayed by video analyst Nathan Leamon.

"There's been no real signals," said Morgan.

"There has always been constant communication, verbal or physical, from the change room to us the field to help improve my decisions as captain and Jos Buttler's decisions as vice-captain," the English skipper and the World Cup winner added. — AFP



Virat Kohli (left) shares a light moment with his teammates in this file photo.

NUMBERS GAME

INDIA-AUSTRALIA IN T20 INTERNATIONALS

Team	M	W	L	T	N/R	
Success%						
India	134	83	44	3	4	64.55
Australia	128	68	55	2	3	55.07

HIGHEST INNINGS TOTALS:

India: 202-4 in 19.4 overs at Rajkot in 2013

Australia: 201-7 in 20 overs at Rajkot in 2013

LOWEST INNINGS TOTALS:

India: 74 in 17.3 overs at Melbourne in 2008

Australia: 86 in 16.2 overs at Dhaka in 2014

HIGHEST INDIVIDUAL SCORES:

India: 90* Virat Kohli at Adelaide in 2016

Australia: 124* Shane Watson at Sydney in 2016

BEST BOWLING IN AN INNINGS:

India: 4-11 Ravichandran Ashwin at Dhaka in 2014

Australia: 4-21 Behrendorff at Guwahati in 2017

FOR THE RECORD:

● In Twenty20 International matches between the two countries it is 11-8 in favour of India although Australia won the previous series 2-0 in India.

● Virat Kohli who has scored 24 fifties in 76 innings needs one more fifty to equal Rohit Sharma's record of the most fifties scored in Twenty20 Internationals. Rohit Sharma has scored four hundreds and 21 fifties in 100 innings.

● Aaron Finch who has smashed 96 sixes in 64 innings needs four more to become the first Australian and sixth batsman overall to complete a century of sixes in Twenty20 internationals.

— S.PERVEZ QAISER

WILLIAMSON GIVES KIWIS A FLYING START

Hamilton, Dec. 3: The West Indies delight at winning the toss on a lush green wicket turned to frustration as New Zealand were rarely troubled in posting 243 for two on day one of the first Test in Hamilton on Thursday.

Kane Williamson, despite being troubled with cramp late in the day, produced a masterful innings to be unbeaten on 97 at stumps with Ross Taylor on 31.

Williamson featured in a 154-run stand with Tom Latham for the second wicket before Latham was bowled for 86.

After the start of play was delayed two hours by rain, the Windies were delighted to win the toss with an emerald wicket that potentially offered untold demons for their pace attack.

But after Gabriel bowled Will Young early for five, the tourists found they did not getting the assistance they expected from the wicket.

Chase also saw flaws in the visitors' attack which they failed to rectify.

It appeared to be a case of not doing thorough homework as Latham said the pitch was not unusual for New Zealand.

Williamson, who will resume on Friday requiring just three runs to register his 22nd Test century.

BRIEF SCORES

Day 1: New Zealand 243/2 in 78 overs (T. Latham 86, Kane Williamson 97; Kemar Roach 1/53) vs West Indies.

BCCI set to add two teams in IPL

New Delhi, Dec. 3: The BCCI will hold its Annual General Meeting on December 24 to discuss the induction of two new IPL franchises besides the appointment of India's ICC representative and three new national selectors.

Also on the agenda is the election of a new vice-president. As per norm, the BCCI has sent a 23-point agenda to all affiliated units 21 days prior to the holding of the AGM.

The most significant point is seeking approval for two new teams to make it a 10-team IPL.

It is understood that the Adani Group and Sanjeev Goenka's RPG (owners of the Rising Pune Supergiants) are interested in owning new teams with one franchise surely from Ahmedabad.

Another important point will be BCCI's representative to the ICC and the Asian Cricket Council. It is expected that secretary Jay Shah will be the BCCI representative in the global committees.

Appointment of three new selectors, along with a chairman of selectors, is also on cards given that Cricket Committees and Standing Committees are part of the agenda.

"Selection committee is a part of cricket committee plus the technical committee also needs to be formed. They are all statutory sub committees," a senior BCCI source said.

The all-important Umpires' sub-committee will also be formed and matters related to the National Cricket Academy will also come up for deliberation.

The agenda also includes discussion on India's

AGM AGENDA

- Election of Vice President
- Election of 2 representatives of General Body in IPL Governing Council
- Adoption of Annual Budget FY 20-21
- Adoption of Ombudsman and Ethics Officer
- Adoption of Cricket Committees and Standing Committees as mentioned in Rules 26 and 25 (Constitution) respectively
- Appointment of Umpires Committee in Rule 27.
- Appointment of representative/representatives in ICC and/or similar committees.
- Approval of two new teams to the IPL.
- Discussion on BCCI's stand on inclusion of cricket in Los Angeles Olympic Games in 2028.
- To update ICC Matters
- To update on NCA matters.
- To update on ICC T20 World Cup 2021 to be held in India.
- To update on India's FTP Program.

Future Tours Program for 2021, preparation with regards to organisation of next year's T20 World Cup (includes the ICC tax issue) and inclusion of cricket in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

On the administrative front, one of the primary points on the agenda is election of new vice president, a position which has been left vacant after Mahim Verma's resignation.

It is expected that the choice would be unanimous.

Also, two representatives from the governing body will get a seat in the IPL governing council.

— PTI

Krishna dazzles as ATK edge Odisha

Fatorda, Dec. 3: An injury-time winner from Roy Krishna helped ATK Mohun Bagan secure a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Odisha FC in an Indian Super League fixture here on Thursday.

Krishna (90+5'), netted his third goal in as many games to ensure the Mariners climbed to the top of the ISL table.

The first half proved to be a cagey affair but both sides failed to grab their chances and take the lead.

ATKMB dominated the early exchanges and constantly raided the opposition box. However, Odisha did well to close down the spaces and keep things tight at the back.

Despite the dominance displayed by Habas' side early on, it was Odisha who missed a great opportunity to go ahead after the break.

A well-worked set-piece routine during the 38th minute saw Cole Alexander whip in a dangerous cross into the box. Jacob Tratt, unmarked, got to the end of it but failed to get his header on target.

Despite the miss, Odisha FC kept knocking on the door only for ATKMB's defense to thwart the danger.

The result ensured Odisha FC's winless run continued.

— PTI

BENGALURU, CHENNAIYN TO RENEW RIVALRY

Bambolim, Dec. 3: Bengaluru FC will look for their first win of the season when they take on southern rivals Chennaiyin FC in an Indian Super League match at the GMC Athletic Stadium here on Friday.

Both the teams have played twice so far, with BFC winless following consecutive stalemates, while CFC registering a victory and draw.

The fixture between Chennaiyin and Bengaluru has become a huge rivalry since BFC entered the ISL fold in 2017. The final that season was a closely contested affair that CFC won 3-2 on Bengaluru's turf to lift a second ISL title.

In the head-to-head battle, both the clubs have won three apiece with one draw being played out last season.

It promises to be yet another intense contest, as the likes of Anirudh Thapa, Rafael Crivellaro and Lallianzuala Chhangte aiming to make it two wins out of three.

— PTI

Aussie Cameron in awe of India's 'quality' spin attack

Canberra, Dec. 3: Young Australian all-rounder Cameron Green is in awe of the Indian team's "quality" spin attack and feels no amount of research work can prepare one for the on-field experience.

The prodigiously talented Green made his international debut in the third ODI against India. Although Australia lost the fixture by 13 runs, the rookie gained crucial match experience in the middle.

"Their spinners, I haven't faced quality like that," Green was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au.

Chasing 303 for victory, the 21-year-old came in at number five and hit a boundary and a six before a superb catch by

Their (Indian) spinners, I haven't faced quality like that. Jadeja is a beautiful bowler who knows exactly what he's trying to do: Spin some away from you and dart one back in.

— CAMERON GREEN
Australian player



Ravindra Jadeja ended his debut innings on 21.

"Jadeja is a beautiful bowler who knows exactly what he's trying to do: Spin some away from you and dart one back in," Green added.

"You can do as much research and watch as much footage as you want to get an understanding how they bowl. But it's a different beast out in the

middle. I will take a lot out of it," Green said, referring to Kuldeep Yadav and Co.

"Bowling to Virat you can just see there is a step up in how good of a cricketer they are," Green said.

"I tried to bowl a bumper to Virat Kohli and he was onto it so quick," the Australian allrounder added further.

— PTI



Cristiano Ronaldo (right) of Juventus outruns Dynamo Kiev's Tomasz Kedziora (left) and Denys Popov during their UEFA Champions League Group 'G' match at the Juventus stadium in Turin on Wednesday. — AFP

Ronaldo rocks; PSG, Barca win

Paris, Dec. 3: Neymar's brace helped Paris Saint-Germain to a vital 3-1 win over Manchester United on Wednesday that took the French club to within touching distance of the Champions League Last 16, while Borussia Dortmund secured their qualification for the next round and Olivier Giroud scored all four goals in Chelsea's 4-0 thumping of Sevilla.

PSG could have been on the brink of elimination from Group 'H' with a defeat at Old Trafford but Neymar put last season's runners-up ahead in the sixth minute and the world's most expensive player sealed their victory in stoppage time.

In between, Marcus Rashford's shot went in off Danilo Pereira to bring United level in the first half

THE RESULTS			
Juventus (Chiesa 21, Ronaldo 57, Morata 66)	3	PSG (Neymar 6, 90+1, Marquinhos 69)	3
Dynamo Kiev	0	Manchester United (Rashford 32)	1
Barcelona (Antoine Griezmann 14, Martin Braithwaite 20, Ousmane Dembele 28-pen)	3	Borussia Dortmund (Guereiro 44)	1
Ferencváros	0	Lazio (Immobile 67-pen)	1
Chelsea (Giroud 8, 54, 74, 83-pen)	4	RB Leipzig (Poulsen 26, Mukiele 43, Olmo 66, Sorloth 90+2)	4
Sevilla	0	Basaksehir Istanbul (Kahveci 45+3, 72, 85)	3

but Marquinhos prodded the French champions back in the 69th minute post which Neymar netted one more goal to send United packing.

There is a three-way tie on nine points at the top of the group with RB Leipzig right in contention after Alexander Sorloth scored in injury time to give them

a 4-3 victory at Istanbul Basaksehir.

Meanwhile, history was made in Turin as France's Stephanie Frappart became the first woman to referee a men's Champions League game when Juventus beat Dynamo Kiev 3-0.

The game was also notable for Cristiano Ronaldo scoring his 750th career goal, his record-extending 132nd in the Champions League.

Federico Chiesa and Alvaro Morata also scored for Juve, who had already qualified from Group 'G' before the game, along with Barcelona.

The Catalans kept up their perfect record and stayed on course to win the group by beating Ferencváros 3-0 in Budapest without the rested Lionel Messi. — AFP