

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

ANANTAPUR | SUNDAY | 6 DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER

Max: 30.0°C
Min: 17°C
RH: 62%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 30/17 °C

IN BRIEF

Petrol prices at 2-year high

New Delhi: Petrol price on Saturday breached the ₹83 per litre-mark in Delhi for the first time in more than two years after a rally in international oil prices forced a 13th increase in rates in the last fortnight. Petrol price on Saturday was raised by 27 paise per litre and diesel by 25 paise, according to a price notification of OMCs. In 16 days, the petrol price has risen by ₹2.07 per litre and diesel by ₹2.86.

46 youth, kids faint in Eluru

Eluru: More than 46 youth and children mysteriously fainted all of a sudden. They were vomiting and had reeling eyes and headache on Saturday. The reason for their fainting could not be ascertained immediately and the victims were admitted to the Government Hospital at Eluru for treatment.

■ Report on Page 2

INSIDE

STATE... PAGE 2 Rise in material prices burdens homebuyers

NATION... PAGE 5 Gujarat HC judge dies during Covid treatment



NATION | 4

PM to lay foundation for new Parl on Dec. 10

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WORLD | 7

Biden for scaled-down Presidency inaugural



CORONA COUNT
CASES (+29,931) 96,36,741
DEATHS (+372) 1,40,072
covid19india.org

STATE GOVT BULLETINS
TELANGANA (+596) 2,72,719
(+3) 1,470
ANDHRA PRADESH (+630) 8,71,305
(+4) 7,024

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES
6,65,98,672
DEATHS
15,30,642
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
218

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Haryana minister Vij +ve 2 weeks after Covaxin shot

Will know efficacy 14 days after 2nd dose: Biotech

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs
NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD, DEC. 5

Haryana health minister Anil Vij, who had received one shot of the two-dose trial of Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin, an indigenous potential vaccine being developed by Bharat Biotech against Covid-19. He was administered the dose on November 20 at the Civil Hospital in Ambala Cantonment,

about 50 km from Chandigarh.

"I have been tested Covid positive. I am admitted in Civil Hospital Ambala Cantt. All those who have come in close contact to me are advised to get themselves tested for corona (sic)," Mr Vij, who is also the state's home minister, tweeted on Saturday.

Bharat Biotech took to Twitter on Saturday to allay any concerns over the efficacy of the vaccine, saying clinical trials are based on a two-dose schedule, given 28 days apart. The vaccine efficacy will be determined 14 days after the second dose, it said.

Bharat Biotech also said it is a double blinded trial in phase 3 where 50 per cent will receive the vaccine and 50 per cent will receive a placebo.

Though it is not yet known whether Mr Vij received the vaccine or placebo, the company has the data and any issue will be reported to the ethics committee of CDSCO-DCGI data safety monitoring board. The Hyderabad-based vaccine maker said that in the phase 3 trials, 26,000 subjects in 25 sites are involved to determine the efficacy of Covaxin vaccine.

■ Page 5: 45 days needed to develop anti bodies

SEC opposes AP's poll move

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 5

State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar wrote a letter to Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan on Saturday against the AP government's move to insist that the SEC takes the government's permission to hold gram panchayat elections.

■ Page 2: SEC: It is against Constitution

CAG faults AP transport dept

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 5

Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, in its 2017-18 report placed in the State Legislative Assembly, revealed that 71,011 transport vehicles registered outside Andhra Pradesh had been plying in state. Of these, 57,047 vehicles operated within the state.

■ Page 2: Manual register denting revenue

Say 'yes' or 'no', farmers tell Centre on farm laws

Talks end in deadlock, next meeting scheduled on Dec. 9

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 5

The government on Saturday proposed to hold another meeting on December 9 with representatives of protesting farmers as their fifth round of talks ended in a deadlock with the farmers' group going on a "maun vrat" (vow of silence) during the meeting, seeking a clear "yes or no" answer to their demand of repealing the three new farm laws. And, for the second time, farmers' leaders declined the Centre's offer of lunch and sat down on the floor to eat their packed food.

At the beginning of the meeting at Vigyan Bhawan, Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar told the group of farmer unions that the government is committed to cordial talks and welcomed all positive feedback on the new farm laws, sources said.

Later, minister of state for commerce Som Parkash, an MP from Punjab, addressed the leaders in Punjabi and said the government understands the sentiments of Punjab.

But after over four into



Representatives of various farmer unions show their water bottles, which they had carried along to the venue, during their meeting with the government over the Centre's new farm laws, at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on Saturday.

— PTI

the meeting, in which farmers stuck to their demand of doing away with the farm laws altogether and sought assurance that minimum support price (MSP) for their produce will not be done away with, and the government not agreeing, irate farmers' representatives underlined their rising discontent over lack of progress by opting for a brief silent protest and refusing to engage with

the Centre. They held up placards that said "Yes Or No?" The implicit question was, "Will the Centre scrap the farm laws?" During Saturday's meeting, the farmers also threatened to walk out over "meaningless" talks, but were persuaded to return to their seats.

Sources said the government then sought some time from the unions to present a concrete proposal after further consulta-

tions within the government and proposed another meeting on December 9 next week. That will be the sixth round of talks between the government and representatives of farmers, thousands of whom are protesting at various borders of Delhi against what they claim are the laws meant to end the mandi system and minimum support price procurement system to benefit corporates.

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OTHER STORIES

POLAVARAM
PROJECT TO GET
₹2.234 CR SOONDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 5

Polavaram irrigation project to get ₹2,234.28 crore soon as the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development released the amount to National Water Development Agency working under Union ministry of Jal Shakti.

The state government had spent ₹12,529.42 crore from April 1, 2014, for execution of the project and out of it, an amount of ₹8,614.16 crore was released by the Nabard to NWDA and to Polavaram Project Authority earlier and that amount was released to the AP government. However, for the remaining amount of ₹4,022.16 crore, the state government had written a letter to the Centre seeking its reimbursement recently. Accordingly, the Centre directed the Nabard to release ₹2,234.28 cr to the AP government.

AMBATI TESTS
COVID-19 POSITIVE
FOR SECOND TIMEDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 5

YSR Congress MLA representing Sattenapalli Assembly segment Ambati Rambabu was infected with Covid-19 for the second time.

The legislator tweeted on Saturday stating that he was infected with the Coronavirus for the first time in July and recovered and added that when he underwent the Covid-19 test again arranged in the Assembly premises, he tested Covid-19 positive.

The MLA expressed wonder for getting infected for the second time and said that based on the need, he would visit the hospital for treatment and wished to come out as a Covid-19 warrior with the blessings of the people, he said on his twitter handle.

RESCHEDULE OF
GROUP-1 MAINS
EXAM SOUGHTDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 5

The APPSC group-1 aspirants sought reschedule of Group-1 Mains exams, scheduled to be held from December 14 to 20. The exam aspirants, who came from various places of AP, lamented that the absence of required time for preparation is worrying the aspirants and appealed to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to reschedule the exams giving required time for preparations. The team submitted a memorandum of their demands to the officials at the CM's Camp office on Saturday to take the issue to the notice of Jagan Mohan Reddy.

DEMAND FOR
REOPENING
OF SKIADDC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, DEC. 5

Students and intellectuals from Anantapur district, along with Sri Krishnadevaraya University students, demanded to reopen the Sri Krishadevaraya University Institute of Academic Development (SKIAD).

The institutes keep their costs low and thus can offer training at free of cost. Classrooms at SKIAD have good infrastructure to conduct a real-time programming lab for the students.

The SKIAD was established in 1997 to promote employability skills among rural youth of Anantapur district. The purpose of SKIAD is to stimulate the creativity of students and enhance their employability skills.

CM PRAISED FOR
NAMING MUSIC
SCHOOL AFTER S.P.BDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 5

In a laudable move the state government has issued a GO deciding to name the Government Music and Dance School in Nellore after ace playback singer S.P. Balasubrahmanyam following a representation made by Industries and IT minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy.

District Collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu revealed this in a tweet while thanking the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, ministers Mekapati Goutham Reddy and Balineni Srinivasa Redd on behalf of the people of Nellore.

Rise in material prices
burdens homebuyers

Builders face tough challenge to take up new constructions

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 5

Rise in prices of construction material like sand, steel, cement and even labour charges has caused hardships to homebuyers in AP.

The cost of sand has been raised to ₹525 from ₹375 a tonne and it costs up to ₹750 or more if the sand to be procured from stockyards and transport charges to be added. So is the case with steel as its cost has been raised to ₹55,000 to ₹60,000 per tonne from the previous price of ₹45,000. In case of cement, its cost too has been raised to ₹300 to ₹350 per a 50 kg bag from the previous price of ₹240. The cost of plumbing material like pipes, electric wires and fittings and others has gone up by 5 per cent to 10 per cent.

The cost of labour too has gone up as the masons are demanding ₹200 for square feet at present

● The cost of sand has been raised to ₹525 from ₹375 a tonne and it costs up to ₹750 or more if the sand to be procured from stockyards and transport charges to be added.

● So is the case with steel as its cost has been raised to ₹55,000 to ₹60,000 per tonne from the previous price of ₹45,000.

unlike the earlier practice of nearly ₹150 or so. In the wake of prevalence of Covid-19, no camps are being run for labourers at construction project sites to avoid any spread of the virus and migrant labourers are not available as they are staying at home and attending to local works instead of migrating to workplaces traveling hundreds of kilometres. This resulted in daily payment of wages to local labourers ranging from ₹800 to ₹1,000 per head.

The builders are facing a tough challenge to take up new construction projects due to cost escalation fearing trouble to sell them

off, especially in Tier-II cities and towns in the state. They maintain that on an average, they have to incur an additional expenditure of ₹250 per square feet due to cost escalation in construction materials and rise in labour charges.

The salaried class and those from middle-income are the worst hit as they are unable to afford the rise in cost of the flats. According to an estimate, a double bedroom flat coming up in suburban areas in a town, in 1,150 square feet area to cost ₹44 lakh unlike earlier cost of nearly ₹40 lakh showing rise by ₹4 lakh.

A homebuyer, identified as K. Venkateswara Rao, from Vijayawada said, "I retired from government service recently and I'm yet to receive all my dues from the government. When I enquired to buy a two bedroom flat not in a very prime locality in the city with my little savings, I have realised that I have to pay more due to cost escalation. I have shelved the idea of buying a flat for the time being."

CREDAI AP Chapter president Chigurupati Sudhakar said, "It is true as the cost of construction material has been raised, it is having its impact on cost of construction of housing projects. We appeal to the state government to intervene and reduce at least stamp duty on registration of flats from 7 per cent to 2 per cent similar on the lines of Maharashtra and Karnataka so that it reduces some burden on homebuyers in AP."

Police restrictions



Policemen house arrests Vijayawada city Congress president N. Narasimha Rao when he tries to venture out to lay seize to Chief Minister's house at Tadepalli in Vijayawada on Saturday. The PCC leaders bid to meet Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and seek continuation of Amaravati as only Capital of AP on Saturday was foiled by the police through arrests and restrictions. APCC president Sake Sailajanath and Narasimha Rao were detained at the party office in Vijayawada on Saturday.

— DC

TD came to Assembly to
create ruckus, says BotsaDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 5

Minister for municipal administration Botsa Satyanarayana alleged that Opposition Telugu Desam came to the Assembly to create ruckus, shunning norms.

Addressing a press meet here on Saturday, the minister alleged that Leader of Opposition and TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu totally failed as the Leader of Opposition due to his heedless behaviour of squatting on the floor at Podium and further sending his legislators to Speaker's chair for protests. He said the YSRC government despite financial crises implementing welfare schemes which brought good name among masses and unable to digest the same, while the Opposition tried to mislead people through their objectionable protests.

Satyanarayana said, "We have clearly laid the facts about our one-and-half-year governance in the Assembly, but the Opposition TD has failed miserably to play a con-

● Botsa Satyanarayana said that the Opposition leaders have been vindictive and intentionally tried to create chaos in the House, despite the discussions being taken as per the choice of the Opposition.

structive role and resorted to cheap tricks to disrupt the House."

Satyanarayana said that the Opposition leaders have been vindictive and intentionally tried to create chaos in the House, despite the discussions being taken as per the choice of the Opposition.

He criticised Chandrababu Naidu that despite having 40 years experience and working as chief minister three times, Naidu still doesn't know how to take up Opposition role in the Assembly. He recalled that against the rules, Naidu had squatted at the Speaker podium, where no Opposition lead-

er would have done and this Opposition leader created a bad remark.

He added, "Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and other leaders have clearly laid the facts on Polavaram project, along with other welfare schemes, where over ₹67,000 crore was directly credited into the beneficiaries' accounts. While the Chief Minister affirmed that the height of Polavaram will not be reduced, the Opposition leaders with their friendly media constantly distorted the facts and tried to mislead people."

Heavily coming down on Opposition TD, Satyanarayana said that Naidu and his team failed in addressing public issues as an Opposition party. All they tried is to gain sympathy from the public by getting suspended.

He defended that the Opposition was given the opportunity to speak in the House but all they did was chaos, and even pointed fingers threatening the Speaker which is a severe violation of norms and objectionable.

Stir for roads



BJP leaders Vishnuvardhan Reddy other activists stage a protest demanding repair of the damaged Roads in Vijayawada on Saturday.

— DC

Naidu demands
nationwide debate
on farm lawsDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 5

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday called for a comprehensive nationwide debate between representatives of political parties and farmer associations for resolving apprehensions within farmers over the three contentious agricultural acts passed by the Centre.

He said opinions and suggestions of all stakeholders should be taken into consideration, so that a better deal could be provided to farmers through new policies.

Naidu expressed concern that despite having 22 MPs in Lok Sabha, the ruling YSRC has not broken its silence on the farm laws, which amounts to betrayal of farmers. He claimed that while the then TD government gave bonus in addition to MSP to farmers, farmers are not even getting the MSP under the current YSRC dispensation, because of which they are coming on to roads for registering their protests.

The TD chief feared that if the limit on holding stocks of food grains is not reduced, it will lead to black-marketing in future and only benefit middlemen.

He demanded that Rythu Bazaars be modernised and new agricultural policies formulated that are beneficial to both farmers and consumers.

GOVT FAILED TO DO ENUMERATION
OF CROP LOSSES, ALLEGES LOKESHDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 5

Telugu Desam national general-secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh on Saturday accused the YSRC government of turning a blind eye to the suffering of farmers on account of severe losses due to crop damages in the heavy rains, floods and cyclone.

He expressed concern over lack of government support though paddy, chilli, tobacco and other crops were badly damaged. He made a whirlwind visit to the damaged crops in Ponnur, Bapatla and Chilakaluripeta segments in the Guntur district.

The farmers poured out their woes in front of the

● Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu said opinions and suggestions of all stakeholders should be taken into consideration, so that a better deal could be provided to farmers through new policies.

Meanwhile, Telugu Desam national general secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh has accused YSR Congress government of turning a blind eye to sufferings of farmers who have suffered severe losses due to heavy rains, floods and cyclone. Taking up a whirlwind visit of Ponnur, Bapatla and Chilakaluripeta segments in Guntur district, where crops had been damaged, he protested that the government has not yet paid any compensation to affected farmers.

Speaking at Ponnur, the party general secretary accused Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy of not visiting farmers when they are in distress. He maintained that when TD tried to raise farmers' woes in the assembly and council, ruling YSRC Congress members prevented his party legislators from doing so.

He accused the YSRC regime of not giving input subsidy despite the unprecedented losses suffered by farmers.

TD OBJECTS TO
ASSEMBLY PASSING
RESOLUTION ON
LOCAL BODY POLLSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 5

Telugu Desam termed the resolution passed by the ruling YSRC in the AP Assembly on the local body elections in the state as 'unilateral' and 'objectionable'.

Telugu Desam AP president Kinjarapu Atchannaidu asked how the government could defy the decision taken by a Constitutional institution like the State Election Commission which had to hold the elections every five years as per the constitutional obligations. He claimed that the YSRC was running a vengeful and destructive regime demolishing all the established institutions.

Atchannaidu accused Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy of behaving as crazy as US President Donald Trump who had to pay a heavy price for his failures.

MANUAL REGISTER
DENTING REVENUE

from page 1

Vehicles plying in AP without valid inter-state permit due to establishment of a check post 120 km away from border, are causing a loss of at least ₹1.60 crore, the CAG said.

The CAG report further said 1,39,315 of 1,79,278 offences related to repeat offences. Levying of just ₹1,000 penalty instead of ₹2,000 led to loss of ₹10.45 crore. Transactions at Chinturu check post were done manually and registers not maintained properly. This showed a discrepancy of ₹3.09 crore in revenue collected at Chinturu.

At three check posts, revenue collected could not be reconciled between April 2016 and March 2018. Audit with treasuries found that ₹1.49 crore was untraceable. Quarterly road tax of ₹69.10 lakh and ₹34.55 lakh penalty were not collected from 500 transport vehicles. Non-renewal of 48,472 transport vehicle fitness certificates caused a loss of ₹91.78 lakh. Lack of coordination between departments of Registration and Stamps, and Transport led to loss of ₹86.82 crore in stamp duty.

SEC: It is against
our Constitution

from page 1

He said it was against the spirit of the Constitution. The AP government had passed a resolution in the Assembly on Friday stating that it was not possible to conduct gram panchayat polls in February, 2021 in the wake of prevalence of Covid-19 and the threat of a second wave.

On November 17, the SEC had started proceedings to conduct gram panchayat polls in February, 2021 after consulting the state government.

In the backdrop of the recent Assembly resolution, the commissioner mentioned that the SEC is

an independent agency with the authority to hold elections every five years as per article 243K of Indian Constitution. He further said that the SEC had the power similar to the Election Commission of India to conduct elections.

The SEC appealed to the Governor to reject any ordinance the state government could come up with making it mandatory for the SEC to take government's permission to conduct gram panchayat polls. He even suggested to the Governor to consult legal experts from the Supreme Court on the issue.

SUDDEN ILLNESS

The affected experienced vomiting, had reeling eyes and headache
46 youth and children faint in EluruDC CORRESPONDENT
ELURU, DEC. 5

More than 46 youth and children mysteriously fainted all of a sudden. They were vomiting and had reeling eyes and headache on Saturday. The reason for their fainting could not be ascertained immediately and the victims were admitted to the Government Hospital at Eluru for treatment.

Some of the affected people also got fits and a five-year-old girl was shifted to Siddardha Hospital in Vijayawada for better medical care.

District collector Revu Muthyala Raju alerted the medical and health offi-

cials and directed them to render immediate medical treatment to the victims. However, the officials failed to diagnose the disease.

The incidents were reported mostly at South Street, East Street, Ashoknagar, Arundathipet and in the vicinity areas in Eluru of West Godavari district.

Muthyala Raju formed special medical teams to treat the victims and also find out the reason for the situation. Over 100 beds have been set up in Eluru Government Hospital and another 50 beds at ASRAM Hospital for treating the patients.

Muthyala Raju told this

● The reason for their fainting could not be ascertained immediately and the victims were admitted to the Government Hospital at Eluru for treatment.

● Some of the affected people also got fits and a five-year-old girl was shifted to Siddardha Hospital in Vijayawada for better medical care.

newspaper that doctors diagnosed it as "viral encephalitis" and collected samples from spinal

cord for Cerebro spinal fluid analysis test. He said that house-to-house survey has begun to identify patients as some of them went home after getting treatment and some were sleeping in their homes without consulting doctors. He said that scanning and other tests are being conducted and samples being sent to concerned labs to ascertain the disease. He also said that water sample was taken by RWS and other water bodies to test the water quality. He added that most of the victims were in the age group 10 to 30 and only a few children are below 10 years.

On receiving the infor-

mation, Deputy Chief Minister and health minister Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas (Nani) visited the areas and enquired with the people about their health. He said that the people need not fear or panic about the situation. He said that better medical treatment would be given to them. He instructed the District Medical and Health Officer Dr Sunanda to take care of the patients. He instructed the officials to set up medical camp in the areas. He said that an emergency ward has been set up in Vijayawada also. The Joint Collector (development) Mr Himanshu Shukla and others were present.

OTHER STORIES

ACB traps corrupt VRO in Nellore

Nellore: Anti-Corruption Bureau sleuths trapped a Village Revenue Officer in Chittoor district for collecting ₹1 lakh bribe from a farmer for processing and forwarding his application to the higher authorities about the entry of his land details online. According to ACB Inspectors, one C. Rama Krishna, Basinikonda in Madanapalle mandal, Chittoor district lodged a complaint with DSP, ACB, Tirupati Range stating that P. Gangadri, VRO, Basinikonda village, has demanded ₹5 lakh to enter the details of his land online and sought ₹1 lakh initially to process the application.

DELHI-TYPE AGITATION TO PROTECT RARS LANDS IN NANDYAL

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL DEC. 5

Rayalaseema Saguneeti Sadhana Samithi(RSSS) to take up a Delhi-type road block agitation to protect the lands of Rayalaseema Agriculture Research Station (RARS) at Nandyal.

Bojja Dasarath Reddy, president of RSSS said despite representations made to government to spare fertile lands of RARS for agriculture

experiments by scientists, there was no positive response.

The government plans to construct buildings for sanctioned Medical College on these lands, he said.

Mr Reddy further said farmer associations in the district are launching a people's contribution to raise funds to buy lands for the proposed Medical College elsewhere other than RARS lands.

BJP DEMANDS HELP FOR FLOOD-AFFECTED FARMERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, DEC. 5

BJP leaders demanded the government to improve the condition of bad roads in the state.

They all held a dharna in front of the Kadapa Collectorate on Saturday seeking relief for the farmers affected by the cyclone. The dharna was attended by former minister Adinarayana Reddy, district leader Shashi Bhushan Reddy and other activists.

Former minister Adinarayana Reddy said that all the roads in the state were severely damaged.

The government is not paying interest to repair the roads, the public suf-

fering due to the bad condition of roads, he said.

Cyclone Nivar hit many areas in the state, a huge amount of crops were damaged. He said the crop, which was expected to be harvested in a few days, was completely damaged by the onslaught of floods.

He said the government has a moral responsibility to provide immediate assistance to farmers who have been badly affected by the floods.

He demanded the government to finance and support the farmers. He demanded that strict action be taken against all the officials responsible for wasting water at the Annamayya project near Rajampet.

people. The sand, which was not available to the commoners, was questioned as to how it was moving to other states.

The TD leaders also alleged that the ruling party leaders were committing land grabs with the baton of revenue officials across the district.

They questioned whether this was what fair governance meant. They said there was no benefit to the farmers under Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy rule.

TD state vice-president Putta Narasimhareddy, executive secretaries Balishetti Hariprasad, Govarthan Reddy, Reddyam Venkata Subbareddy, Kadapa constituency in-charge V.S. Ameer Babu and others were present on the occasion.

Minor arrested, 20 vehicles seized

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, DEC. 5

In a breakthrough, the Fourth Town police arrested a minor boy and seized 20 motorcycles worth ₹7.59 lakh on Saturday. The 15-year-old boy hailed from Tadipatri area in the district, who was a school dropout at sixth standard due to lack of care in the family and took to robbery. He, along with two more persons, started lifting motorcycles from various parts of the district.

Fourth town circle inspector Kathi Sreenivasulu said the 15-year-old minor boy was ignored by parents who were divorced. The boy along with two others, one from Tapovanam in Anantapur and other from Kalyanadurgam

area started lifting motorcycles and selling in the market.

The three-member gang robbed motorcycles from parking areas of busy centres in different parts of Anantapur headquarters and also BK Samudram mandal headquarters.

The police records say at least 125 motorcycles were stolen from various parts of Anantapur town alone since January this year.

SP Satya Esubabu alerted the town police stations over a series of vehicle missing cases. In a tip-off, Fourth Town police arrested the minor boy and recovered 20 motorcycles from his procession.

The police launched a hunt for two others. The boy was shifted to a juvenile home.

New property tax 'irrational'

With new rules citizens fell the pinch as civic body services are not satisfactory

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL DEC. 5

The Levy and Assessment of Property rules implemented by the AP government shocked the property owners in Kurnool as it aims to tax on the capital value of the property.

With this, the liability of property tax astronomically shoots up, it is feared. There is no rationality in the property tax as even open spaces also being taxed by Kurnool Municipal Corporation.

Agitated property owners say with the new rules, citizens feel the pinch as the Civic body service is not satisfactory.

Apart from KMC, 10 other municipalities in the district also would revise tax liability upwards, said Mallikarjunayya, a resident of Sankalbagh in Kurnool.

The AP government has issued the Levy and Assessment of Property Tax Rules, 2020 applicable to all the Urban Local Bodies (Nagar Pan-

chayats, Municipalities and Municipal Corporations) of AP. The Rules provides that the Property Tax shall be levied at such percentages of the Capital Value of lands or buildings or both as may be fixed by the Municipal Council / Corporation.

A.G. Swathi Reddy, a housewife said, the property tax must correspond to the civic services and conveniences provided by the KMC. It lets out into

Tungabhadra river, lacks in water supply, cleanliness, controlling stray dogs, pigs, medical facilities, education, street lights, hygiene, food inspection etc. Why should we pay revised taxes for hopeless civic services, she questioned.

Veera Reddy, an advocate, said that property-owning residents have to pay the percentage of the property tax so fixed, which shall not be less than 0.1 per cent and not more than 0.5 per cent of

the Capital Value for residential buildings and shall not be less than 0.2 per cent and not more than 2 per cent of the Capital Value for non-residential buildings, which shall be effected from the Financial Year 2021-2022. It is atrocious and breaking back of citizens.

While Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was giving so many sops to a cross-section of people in the state, why he is burdening us, Mr Veera Reddy questioned.

AP records 630 Covid-19 cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 5

AP registered 630 new Covid-19 cases and four deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin on Saturday reporting that out of 57,132 samples tested, 630 persons were found infected with the Coronavirus. Out of 1,03,50,283 samples tested so far in the state, 8,71,305 persons were found infected with Covid-19 and out of them,

8,58,115 were recovered while 6,166 persons are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of Covid-19, Krishna topped with 97 followed by 90 in WG, 89 in Chittoor, 85 in Guntur, 64 in EG, 40 in Visakhapatnam, 35 in Prakasam, 32 in Nellore, 29 in Anantapur, 28 in Kadapa, 24 in Vizianagaram, 12 in Srikakulam and five in Kurnool. With regard to the total active cases, Krishna registered the highest number of 1,138 cases.

GUDURU SIVARAMAKRISHNA PRESENTS

SPI CREATIONS

RELEASING ONLINE ON

18TH DEC

Exclusive on FRIDAY MOVIES APP

DIRTY HARI

Written & Directed by M S RAJU

PRODUCED BY

GUDURU SATEESH BABU GUDURU SAI PUNEETH KEDAR SELAGAMSETTY VAMSI KARUMANCHI

MARK K. ROBIN M.N. BAAL REDDY JUNAID SIDDIQUI BHASKAR MUDAVATH PULAGAM CHINNARAYANA KRISHNA KANTH SHRESHTHA B. SRI HARSHA VMS ADJITI SRIJAI ELURI

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AP makes senior bow to junior

Babus in the Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy dispensation are an unhappy lot over the two recent appointments, Vijay Kumar as secretary of forest and environment and retired cop B. Malla Reddy as director of Anti Corruption Bureau.

For decades the post of secretary environment and forest is filled with senior bureaucrats of the rank of special chief secretary. This is primarily done because the principal chief conservator of forest, who heads the forest force, is equivalent to the rank of principal secretary or above and reports to senior officials in the government. In babudom a senior officer reporting to junior is almost like a sin and would never happen. But Vijaykumar is much junior to many of the senior officers in the forest department. This is not the first time that the Jagan government took such a decision. Earlier, Karikal Vallevan was appointed as managing director of a small time organisation in Infrastructure and Investment which at that time was headed by his junior Rajat Bhargav. Both Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney or GAD principal secretary Praveen Prakash are not bothered to bring such anomalies to CM's notice and take corrective measures leaving other babus in red.

A strage victory for the Congress

The Congress settled for two seats in the recently concluded elections to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation. Both seats were located in the Malkajgiri Lok Sabha constituency. In all the other 148 wards, where stalwarts in the Congress campaigned, party candidates were swept away by those of either the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samiti or the Bharatiya Janata Party, the new superpower. Post the elections, Congress leaders began seeing the victory of the TRS and the BJP as unethical and based on divisive politics. Congress leaders are claiming that though they had been routed, the party had won an ideological victory. The party will emerge as a strong force against the divisive politics of the BJP and the dynastic rule of TRS in the future, they proclaimed. The state Congress' chief has resigned and the party incharge hasn't so much as cast a glance. That must be a strange kind of victory.

'TD', 'YSRC', bnoth supported TRS

In highly caste driven Andhra Pradesh politics the bitterness between the Kamma and Reddy communities is well known and their political affiliations by and large sail with Telugu Desam and YSR Congress respectively.

But they have a common liking for Telangana Rashtra Samithi in the neighbouring Telangana as is evident from

the results of the recently held Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation polls. Both are in considerable numbers in Kukatpally and surrounding areas where the TRS candidates won comfortably enjoying their support. The TD sympathisers are thoroughly upset with BJP not only for soft pedalling against Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy but

also for choosing not to protect the capital status to Amaravati. The YSR sympathisers on the other hand supported TRS because they are afraid of BJP making AP as its next destination if its allowed to grow in Telangana. But people of the capital city thought otherwise and braced BJP to a sizeable extent.

STATE

SHORT TAKES

AIRPORT GEARS UP FOR VACCINE TRANSPORTATION

Hyderabad, Dec. 5: GMR Hyderabad Air Cargo (GHAC), located at the centre of one of the vaccine production regions in the country, is also a key stakeholder in the global vaccine logistics with facilities such as modern temperature-sensitive pharma and vaccine storage and processing zones.

"GMR Hyderabad Air Cargo boasts India's first Pharma Zone with a temperature-controlled GDP-certified facility for temperature-sensitive cargo handling. The terminal is fitted with different temperature zones from -20 degrees Celsius to 25 degrees Celsius and state-of-the-art equipment and cool containers to meet the unique specifications of the product," said the spokesman for the Hyderabad airport.

The spokesperson confirmed that the freighter parking stands are only 50 m from the terminal, thereby reducing the timing of ramp visibility and ensuring the aircraft's rapid turn around.

The airport also introduced the new cool dollies recently to remove any temperature excursions and to keep the cool chain unbroken.

The GHAC also boasts one of India's largest cool container storage facilities such as enviro-tainer, c-safe, unicoliner, and vacutainer within its premises to ensure 24/7 customers have access to the facility.

The GHAC has also taken many paperless steps to eliminate the human interface, such as e-reception e-OOC, e-LEO e-AWB, among others.

— INV

● **GMR HYDERABAD** Air Cargo boasts India's first Pharma Zone with a temperature-controlled GDP-certified facility for temperature-sensitive cargo handling. The terminal is fitted with different temperature zones from -20°C to 25°C.



AIMIM party candidates who won in the GHMC elections meet party president Asaduddin Owaisi at the party headquarters Darussalam in Hyderabad on Saturday.

— P. SURENDRA

Owaisi: BJP win at a great cost

Says people will stop lotus blooming in TS

ATHER MOIN | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 5

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi termed the BJP's win a 'pyrrhic victory' and claimed that it will not garner the same response from the entire state as the political landscape will be far different from what it is in Greater Hyderabad, which is cosmopolitan in nature while in the mainland Telangana, regional emotions determine the outcome.

Interacting with media persons here on Saturday, Owaisi said that the political vacuum created by TDP, Lok Satta, Left parties and a weakened Congress party, was seized by BJP, although it will just be a momentary joy for them. It indulged in a communal and negative campaign. However, the political scenario will

change within the next eight to 10 months.

Owaisi said Telangana has particular regional sentiments, which correlate with K. Chandrashekar Rao. BJP will not be able to get a mandate from the people of Telangana, he asserted and added that BJP's latest showing would not vitiate the prospects of AIMIM.

"Even in GHMC polls, BJP could not harm us even though their national leaders campaigned here. We are satisfied with our present performance. The strike rate of our party is 86%, the highest among all political parties. The voters of the Hyderabad Parliamentary constituency gave a befitting reply to BJP's derogatory campaign".

Replying to a question about the claim of BJP leaders that they will

conquer MIM bastion, Owaisi said Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and others had made similar lofty claims but they could not dent our vote bank.

The MIM boss clarified that the party will consult with leaders of the party in West Bengal over contesting the Assembly elections in that state.

However, the party will not contest in Assam and Kerala where Moulana Badruddin Ajmal's party All India United Democratic Front of and Indian Union Muslim League exist.

"We will confront whoever obviates us. What is the logic that BJP will gain if MIM participates in elections? If so, how could BJP manage to win 18 Lok Sabha seats from West Bengal, when our party was not there," he asked.

Yalamanchili Janardhana Rao passes away

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 5

Yalamanchili Janardhana Rao, father of Member of Parliament Y.S. Chowdary, passed away in the early hours of Saturday.

The cremation was held at

11.45 am on Saturday at Vaidik Mahaprasthanam, in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad.

Janardhana Rao was born on January 9, 1932 at Dosapadu village of Krishna district. He studied in Madras Loyola College and later completed BE

(mechanical) from PSG college of Coimbatore in 1955.

Having joined the irrigation department of Andhra Pradesh as a junior engineer in 1955, Janardhana Rao served in the construction of several irrigation projects in united Andhra

Pradesh till his retirement in 1990. He was also the recipient of various awards for meritorious service. He was also given special responsibility while installing the monolith statue of Buddha at Tank Bund in Hyderabad.

KCR to decide Rythu Bandhu tomorrow

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 5

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao will decide on releasing Rythu Bandhu financial assistance of ₹5,000 per acre for the Rabi season to the bank accounts of farmers on Monday.

A high-level meeting will

be held at Pragathi Bhavan with the finance and agriculture department officials on this issue.

The state government had to transfer farm assistance to farmers in October, but it got delayed due to the Dubbak by-election and also the Covid-19 crisis.

However, farmers under

the Dubbak Assembly segment received the farm assistance before the scheduled by-election was released.

The agriculture department said the government is providing financial support to 58.33 lakh farmers across the state for the Kharif and Rabi season

crops. During the Kharif season this year, the state government transferred farm assistance to 58.33 lakh farmers within 48 hours in June.

The Telangana state government has allocated ₹12,000 crore for the Rythu Bandhu scheme in the 2020-21 Budget.

SEC, Hyd police failed to hold fair polls: Bandi

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 5

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Saturday charged the State Election Commission and the Hyderabad police with bias towards the ruling TRS during the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections.

Addressing a press conference at the state party office, he said that if the

SEC and the Hyderabad

police would have conducted free and fair polls, the BJP would have won another 25 seats.

He alleged that the SEC and the police worked under the directions of the TRS.

Stating that the vote share of the party had considerably increased in the GHMC, he pointed out that though the MIM and the TRS had contested together under a secret pact, both of them got just 0.2 per cent more votes

than the BJP.

Bandi also pointed out that the TRS won against the BJP in 55 seats one against Congress, but it did not win a single seat against the MIM.

He said that BJP will extend its support for all-round development and will fight and expose corruption of the ruling party in the GHMC.

He said that the Congress star campaigner and actor-turned-politician Vijayashanthi will soon join the BJP.

KTR TO MEET NEW CORPORATORS TODAY AT 2PM

Hyderabad: TRS working president K.T. Rama Rao will be holding a meeting at 2 pm with the newly-elected corporators of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation on Sunday at Telangana Bhavan. The TRS won 55 out of 150 wards in the GHMC elections. Sources said, the working president will interact with the new corporators on the election of mayor and deputy mayor of the GHMC. He is likely to ascertain views from the new corporators and second-time elected corporators to strengthen the party in the GHMC in future in view of drubbing the party received.

New beneficiaries await pensions under Aasara

DURGAM SRINIVAS | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 5

About 10-15 lakh people, who have applied for pensions under Aasara scheme, have been waiting for the past two years with the hope that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao will provide solace to them by okaying their applications and granting them pensions.

During 2018 elections, the TRS boss had promised to reduce the age limit for old age pensions from 60 years to 57 years. Following this, officers subsequently received applications from eligible beneficiaries between the age of 57 years to 60 years.

Already two years have elapsed, but there has been no indication from the state government whether or not these applications will be approved and when. Welfare officials disclosed that they have only been awaiting orders from the state government in this regard, as they have already processed the applications of eligible beneficiaries. Officials said as

CATEGORY, NO. OF BENEFICIARIES UNDER THE AASARA SCHEME	
Old age pension	12,86,363
Disabled persons	4,98,565
Widows	14,52,545
Handloom workers	37,569
Strike workers	63,162
Single women	1,35,162
Beedi workers	4,08,755
HIV-infected	33,229
Filariasis cases	14,403
Total	39,29,753

● **ALREADY TWO** years have elapsed, but there has been no indication from the state government whether or not these applications will be approved and when.

● **WELFARE OFFICIALS** said they have been awaiting orders from the state government in this regard, as applications of eligible beneficiaries processed.

there have been no orders for payment of pension to people above 57 years, they are distributing pension of ₹2,016 only to each of the people exceeding 60 years of age.

Officers said the state government will have to bear an additional burden of around ₹3,600 to ₹4,000

crore for payment of pensions to beneficiaries between the age of 57 years to 60 years.

They point out that the state government has already been spending ₹1,756 crore per month for payment of pensions to 39,29,753 existing beneficiaries in the state.

IN BRIEF

ONE HELD FOR FLOATING FAKE AIRPORT PORTAL

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, DEC. 5

A three-member team of IGI Airport police station, New Delhi, on Saturday arrested a youth from his in-laws house at Naraharipur village in Odisha's Bhadrak district for allegedly committing a cyber fraud amounting to ₹1 crore.

The accused, identified as Rajendra Malick of Bairi village in Japur district, was held while hiding at his in-laws house to avoid police action.

According to the police reports, Malick runs a travel agency through which he used to "make" online train and flight tickets using fake identity documents. He also used to dupe people of thousands of rupees on the pretext of getting them a job at IGI Delhi Airport.

Malick who lives in Bhubaneswar floated a website faking the official website of IGI Airport. In the website, he advertised for various posts and asked job aspirants to deposit ₹1,00,000 registration fee. Thousands of youths fell victim to Malick's design and deposited the money.

"The accused has looted people of over ₹1 crore by promising them jobs at IGI Airport. Besides, he has cheated people in many other way. We are probing all cases," IGI Airport police station inspector Vijaya Kumar who led the three-member team said.

A complaint was lodged against Rajendra on December 2 by a resident of Delhi. Based on the complaint, the Delhi police booked a case under Section 420, 468 and 471 of the Indian Penal Code team reached Bhadrak and arrested him on Saturday morning.

"Based on the complaint, we launched the investigation and successfully reached the accused. We are interrogating the accused to know further details about the cheating and fraud perpetrated by him," the police said.

Soon after his arrest, the accused was produced in the local Dhamnagar Court which remanded him in the transit remand of Delhi police.

SPICEJET PLANE UNDERSHOOTS RUNWAY

New Delhi, Dec 5: A SpiceJet plane undershot the runway while landing at the Guwahati airport on Friday, but no one was hurt in the incident, senior DGCA officials said.

Aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation has grounded the two SpiceJet pilots who were operating the SG960 Bengaluru-Guwahati flight, they said on Saturday.

"They (pilots) have been off-rostered. It (matter) is under investigation," one of the officials said.

Officials said that while the plane landed before the designated point on the runway, none of the passengers were affected. "However, some of the runway lights were damaged while landing the SG960 Bengaluru-Guwahati flight," an official said.

SpiceJet did not respond to PTI's queries on this matter. It was not clear how many passengers were on board the plane when the incident occurred. The SpiceJet plane, which has registration number VT-SLL, is fit for flying and has conducted multiple flights post the runway incident, the officials said.

HUBBY SEEKS MAINTENANCE FROM WIFE

Thane, Dec 5: A man from Bhiwandi in Thane district of Maharashtra has been booked for allegedly harassing his wife for delivering a baby girl and demanding ₹30,000 as "maintenance" from her parents for the child, police said on Saturday.

Besides the man, his parents were also booked under section 498A (Husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), an official said.

The woman (21) was harassed by the accused, identified as Dilshad Gaba Momin, Sonu Gaba Momin and Naushad Momin, for delivering a baby girl and was asked to bring ₹30,000 from her parents towards "maintenance" of the child, the official said quoting the complaint.

Police are yet to make any arrest in the case.



A model of the proposed new Parliament building in New Delhi on Saturday.

PM to lay foundation stone for Parl building on Dec 10

LS speaker says as many as 1,224 MPs can sit together in the building

New Delhi, Dec 5: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone on December 10 for a new Parliament building and the construction is expected to be completed by 2022 at an estimated cost of ₹971 crore, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Saturday.

"The existing temple of democracy is completing 100 years... It is a matter of pride for our countrymen that the new one will be built by our own people as a prime example of Aatmanirbhar Bharat," Birla said here announcing details of the new proposed building.

"The new building will showcase the cultural diversity of the country. Hopefully, in the 75th year of independence (2022), Parliament session will be held in the new building," he said.

Birla said the new building will be earthquake resistant and 2,000 people will be directly involved in the construction of the new building and 9,000 indirectly.

He said as many as 1,224

MPs can sit together in the building, while a new office complex for all MPs of both the houses would be built at the site of the existing Shram Shakti Bhawan.

The existing Parliament building will be conserved as it is an archaeological asset of the country, Birla said.

The existing building is a British era building, designed by Edwin Lutyns and Herbert Baker who were responsible for planning and construction of New Delhi.

The new building will have an area of 64,500 square metres and is being built at an estimated cost of ₹971 crore

"There will be a basement, ground, first and second floors in the new building and its height will be same as the old building so that both are in symmetry," he said.

The Lok Sabha Speaker said the invitation will be extended to all political parties. While some would attend physically and others would attend virtually, Birla said, while adding

that the ground laying ceremony at 1 pm on December 10 would follow all Covid-related guidelines.

As per rules, the speaker of the lower house of parliament is also the custodian of the parliament building.

Sufficient steps have been taken to control air and noise pollution during the construction work for the new parliament building, which will have separate offices for all MPs and those will be equipped with the latest digital interfaces as a step towards creating 'paperless offices'.

The new building will also have a grand Constitution Hall to showcase India's democratic heritage, a lounge for members of Parliament, a library, multiple committee rooms, dining areas and ample parking space.

In the new building, the Lok Sabha chamber will have a seating capacity for 888 members, while Rajya Sabha will have 384 seats for the upper house members.

This has been done keeping in mind the future increase in the number of members for the two houses.

At present, Lok Sabha has a sanctioned strength of 543 members and Rajya Sabha of 245.

In September this year, Tata Projects Limited won the bid to construct the new parliament building at a cost of ₹861.90 crore. The new building will be constructed close to the existing one under the Central Vista redevelopment project.

The existing Parliament House building will be suitably retro-fitted to provide more functional spaces for parliamentary events, to ensure its usage along with the new building.

The existing building is a massive circular edifice of 560 feet in diameter. The Parliament House Estate is enclosed by an ornamental red sandstone wall or iron grills with iron gates that can be closed when occasions demand. The building has twelve gates.

Hindus will be beaten up if they visit church: VHP

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, DEC. 5

In what is said to be in retaliation of alleged closure of a Hindu temple in Meghalaya, the right wing group Vishwa Hindu Parishad has warned Hindus against visiting churches during Christmas in Assam's Barrak Valley.

In a viral video Mithu Nath, the general secretary of Cachar district unit of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, declared himself "outraged" by the alleged shut down of the Vivekananda Centre (part of the Ramakrishna Mission) in Christian-majority Meghalaya state capital Shillong, and said that Hindus would "not be allowed" to attend Christmas Day programmes and festivities.

"If Hindus go and visit Churches on Christmas Day, they will get brutally beaten," warned Mr Nath in his speech amidst the slogan of "Jai Shri Ram" by his supporters. He added, "They are locking temples in Shillong and we are going and celebrating Christmas with them. This cannot happen, we will not allow this to happen."

"If we do so (assault by Hindus) I know the headlines in newspapers the next day - 'Gunda Dal' has vandalised Oriental school.. but that is not our priority. We will not allow Hindus in programmes during Christmas when they are locking gates of temples in Shillong," he said.

Addressing a crowd of around 70 people dressed in saffron and shouting 'Jai Shri Ram' repeatedly Mr Nath also said, "We accept this", referring to claims the media twists the right-wing outfit's name.

However, Mr Nath's claim - that the Khasi Student Union had shut down a temple - has been denied by authorities of the Meghalaya government, who said it was the Cultural Centre (where students are taught advanced computer courses) whose gates had been closed - not locked - because of a district holiday. No temple of the Ramakrishna Mission has been shut, the official added.

Although the Christian population in the north-eastern state's Cachar district is relatively small, the Christmas is traditionally celebrated by the Oriental School at Ambikapaty near Silchar. People from various religions gather every year.

GUJARAT HC JUDGE DIES OF CARDIAC ARREST DURING COVID TREATMENT

Ahmedabad, Dec 5: A sitting judge of the Gujarat High Court died following a cardiac arrest on Saturday while undergoing treatment for coronavirus at a private hospital here, a doctor said.

Justice G R Udhwani (59), who had tested Covid-19 positive on November 19, died at SAL Hospital due to complications arising out of the infection, the doctor said.

He died in the morning, days after he was admitted to the hospital on November 22 in a critical condition, Dr Divyang Dalwadi, a critical care expert of the hospital, said. "He was admitted to the hospital with severe lung infection. He was also suffering from hypothyroidism," the doctor said.

In his career spanning over three decades, Justice Udhwani had also served as an additional judge of special POTA court in 2003.

People have a right to protest peacefully: UN

United Nations, Dec 5: People have a right to demonstrate peacefully and authorities should let them do so, spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said on the farmers' protests in India.

India has called the remarks by foreign leaders on protests by farmers as "ill-informed" and "unwarranted" as the matter pertained to the internal affairs of a democratic country.

As to the question of India, what I would say to you is what I've said to others when raising these issues is that people have a right to demonstrate peacefully, and authorities need to let them do so, Stephane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General, said on Friday.

Reacting to the comments by the foreign leaders, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "We have seen some ill-informed comments relating to farmers in India. Such comments are unwarranted, especially when pertaining to the internal affairs of a democratic country."

In a terse message, the ministry further added that "it is also best that diplomatic conversations are not misrepresented for political purposes."

On Friday, India summoned Canadian High Commissioner and told him that the comments made by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and others in his Cabinet on the farmers' protest constituted an "unacceptable interference" in the country's internal affairs and these actions, if continued, will have a "seriously damaging" impact on the bilateral ties.

Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana and several other states have been protesting for the last nine days at the borders of Delhi against three farm laws.

FARMERS BRING THEIR OWN FOOD, TEA AT GOVT MEETING

New Delhi, Dec 5: Meeting the government for the fifth time on Saturday with their demands for scrapping the three new farm laws, union leaders decided to have their own tea and food, ferried from their langar (community kitchen) at Singhu border, where thousands of farmers are protesting for over a week.

The fifth round of talks began at 2.30 pm and was attended by 40 representatives of various farmer organisations.

Union leaders said they had their own food and tea during a break, rather than having what was arranged by the government at Vigyan Bhawan, the meeting venue.

During their last meeting on Thursday also, the farmer leaders had their own lunch, tea and even water.

Farmers' leaders had earlier on Thursday told the government to focus on resolving the issues instead of trying to be a good host by offering lunch.

Thousands of farmers have been camping at various borders of the national capital as part of their protest against the laws.

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Railways, Commerce and Food Minister Piyush Goyal and Minister of State for Commerce Som Parkash, who is an MP from Punjab, are holding talks with the representatives of the farmer groups at the Vigyan Bhawan. The laws have been presented by the government as major reforms in the agriculture sector by removing middlemen and allowing farmers to sell anywhere in the country.

Support for agitation by farmers grows, MP farmers leave for Delhi

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, DEC 5

Farmers from various districts in Madhya Pradesh on Saturday started for Delhi to join the ongoing stir in the national capital demanding scrapping of the three farm laws passed in the parliament recently.

Small groups of farmers took out rallies in Shivpuri, Dewas, Gwalior, Mandasaur and Raisen in protest against the farm bills and then left for the national capital in trucks to join the ongoing agitation.

In Dewas, around 40 farmers marched to the local district collector's office and submitted a memorandum to deputy collector demanding scrapping of the farm laws.

In Mandasaur, the local 'Kissan Sabha' staged a demonstration in protest against the farm laws and threatened to intensify the agitation if the Centre did heed to their demand.

Ruling BJP here, however, claimed that the call by some farmers' bodies to oppose the farm laws have no impact in Madhya Pradesh.

"No recognized farmers' bodies in MP have so far joined the stir. Only some local leaders have been trying to provoke the farmers to join the agitation. But, they have failed", BJP spokesman here Rajneesh Agrawal said.

Mr Agrawal said no farmer has joined the stir and only middlemen in the agriculture sector are opposed to the farm laws because they are well aware that the laws will eliminate their role in the market and ensure fair price to the farmers of their produce. Farmers in MP are happy with the Shivraj government for its pro-farmer policies, he



Fumigation drive being carried out at Ghazipur border amid the coronavirus pandemic, during farmers' 'Delhi Chalo' protest march against the new farm law in New Delhi on Saturday.

RSS-AFFILIATE BKS SUGGESTS 4 AMENDMENTS TO NEW FARM LAWS

Jodhpur, Dec 5: RSS-affiliate Bharatiya Kisan Sangh proposed on Friday four amendments to the three contentious central farm laws to make it "farmer-friendly" and address the apprehensions that have led to protests.

"Instead of scrapping the new laws as some organisations have been demanding, we propose four amendments in these legislations," BKS general secretary Badri Narayan Chaudhary said, adding that it would be enough to address the apprehensions.

The amendments are that there should be no purchasing below the MSP in the wholesale markets or outside, registration of all traders on a government portal that can be accessed by all, payment to the farmers in a stipulated time through bank guarantee and setting up of the agriculture tribunals for resolution of farmers' disputes in their hometown itself.

The BKS welcomed the new laws that it said was a "long-pending demand". Chaudhary said the outfit had been pushing for 'one nation-one market' since long.

The BKS leader said the wholesale markets were introduced with the welfare of farmers in mind and it helped them a lot. "But gradually, it became a means of exploitation of farmers," he said, adding that many organisations had been demanding rectification in the system for a long time.

DECCAN Chronicle

6 DECEMBER 2020



Shashi Warriar

Off the beaten track

The evolution of the indigenous BPO

A friend of mine, a professor of business communication at a business school nearby, dropped in recently after renewing his driving licence. “What’s up?” I asked. “I just thought of something more for us Indians to be proud of,” he said.

“What?” I asked. “Well, Indians thought up aircraft and plastic surgery long before the people in the West thought of them,” he replied, “but there’s also something in management science that we invented long ago.”

“What?” I asked. “Business Process Outsourcing,” he replied. “BPO. The backbone of some of our business... The West invented the term and took credit for the concept, as usual. But we thought of it first. You see it all over the place.”

Pictures came to mind of ranks of young people wearing headphones, speaking in fake American accents answering tedious telephonic questions from overseas customers, or ranks of computers recording inter-bank transactions, and so on. I couldn’t make the connection. “How so?” I asked.

“Back in the 1980s,” he replied, “when I was in Bangalore, if you wanted to register a company, you went to the Registrar of Companies. You did your paperwork, and, when it was done, you handed over an envelope containing his private fee for your work. He’d say, ‘Heh, heh, *saar*, this is not necessary,’ and place the cover in his drawer. A few years later, it had changed. You handed him the cash when the job was done, and he counted it before putting it away. And a few more years down the line, you never even got to see the registrar. You handed your papers and the fee to an agent outside his office and you got your registration a day or two later.”

“I don’t understand,” I said. “Forgive me for being so slow.”

“I see you haven’t thought about it,” he said, straightening up and using the professorial tone that he might use on a backbencher who’s just slept through a lecture. “The purpose of governance in India is to create and manage queues. Where there are queues, there are people willing to pay to jump them. Governance is about helping people to jump queues for a consideration. The longer the queue, the bigger the consideration, and the happier the officials. Okay?”

“Okay,” I replied.

“That’s why no one bothers about overpopulation,” he continued. “The greater the population, the longer the queue. The idea was, the more the people suffer, the longer the queue, and the more people are willing to pay to jump.”

“Right,” I agreed.

“But that’s old hat,” he went on. “Thirty years back, someone saw the virtue of a freer economy. Simple: the more money people have, the more they’ll pay to jump the queue. So they loosened up bits of the economy, and watched the money roll in. And that was when they thought of BPO. People were beginning to complain about corruption, you see.”

“But what’s BPO got to do with corruption?” I asked.

“Everything!” he said, happily. “Officials began to outsource their business to agents. The agent collects the money and delivers papers. He settles with the officials afterwards, outside the office. One side-effect: it keeps the officials safe. A surprise check at the office will produce no evidence that anyone’s taken any money under the table!”

“And it doesn’t end there. The government can hire more people for the vigilance department whose people conduct raids. Since there are queues for those jobs as well, they can make more money there, and depend on the vigilance fellows — who have paid to get those jobs — to do what they can to sustain the system, but the people can be lulled into thinking that someone is doing something about corruption. Brilliant!”

“Yes,” I said, not knowing what else to say, “but what does all this have to do with your driving licence?”

“Ahi!” he said. “I should have told you. I got my licence from a new transport office at Melkar, some 30 kilometres from Mangalore. It’s a new office, and my wife I only had to wait two minutes to get our work done. So, you see, the agent tells the officials when it’s time to expand the office to get more work done. So there are more jobs, more buildings, more of everything, and they make money out of all that, and at least some people are happy because they get their work done really fast.”

“The system has evolved. It used to create queues and take what the traffic would bear. Now, it manages queues so that the people running the system get the best possible income with the least possible risk. It works in good times and in bad. In good times, people earn more, and are willing to pay more. In bad times, the population increases, so there are more people willing to pay...”

“Terrific!” I said. “You should write a paper about this!”

“No way!” he said, horrified. “Officials hate whistleblowers, and they protect themselves. Remember the officer who gave the Wadhawan family a certificate allowing them to travel to their farmhouse during the lockdown? The Wadhawan family is in trouble, but the official who signed the certificate is the police commissioner of Pune. If I write a paper about this, it’ll cost me my job!”

“Right,” I said. “It works very well for officials. But the people are suffering, aren’t they?”

He looked a little shame-faced, but only for a moment. “For an answer to that,” he said, “we have to look to the West.”

“How so?” I asked.

“Before the French Revolution,” he said, resuming his professorial persona, “someone told the French Queen, Marie Antoinette, that the people of France were suffering. ‘The masses are starving,’ he said, ‘they have no bread to fill their bellies.’”

“And how did Marie Antoinette respond?” I asked.

“Let ‘em eat cake!”

Shashi Warriar has written fairy tales, thrillers, a semi-fictional biography, satires, and a love story. Besides writing, he teaches strategic communication at a business school.

Subhani



Battle of ‘Bhagyanagar’ concludes in stalemate



Sriram Karri

It begins with the name. Always. You can hold on to it or change it, but the decision is never easy. Ask parents as they go through greater anxiety in deciding the name of their child to be over any other birthing issue. Should we continue to be Hyderabad, or become Bhagyanagar? When a city of over one crore was thrown the challenge, over which its nearly 77 lakh registered voters brooded hard during a fortnight of the most shrill vituperative campaign that forced the attention of the nation, in which less than half turned out to vote in the midst of a pandemic, some turning nostalgic for a chance to vote on paper ballots again, the Hyderabad or Bhagyanagar duel, with all its underlying implications of this symbolism and euphemism, ended in an uneasy stalemate.

SAFFRON-PINK BATTLES AHEAD

The TRS has failed to defend its 99 incumbent seats won in the last elections, losing 44 out of them to the BJP. Where it has won too, it is the BJP, which was a close second in most. More importantly, the BJP has stolen the narrative and set the agenda — it has successfully portrayed the TRS as a dynastic, nepotistic, corrupt, decadent party and government, which has failed to deliver its promises, all of which are explained by their policy of appeasing Muslims under pressure from the MIM.

The TRS, in turn, tried hard to set its stated narrative of continuity and development as an alternative paradigm but was unconvincing. The TRS called the BJP communal, fanatic, insane, divisive and a big failure, even promising to be the nucleus of a new formation that would challenge Narendra Modi on a national level.

As a voter said, “while according to the TRS, it was a vote between development and communalism, the BJP dubbed it a battle between a dynasty’s corrupt politics versus nationalistic

Hindutva without appeasement. People see the picture in their own way, without the funnel vision of parties — as a battle between corrupt, nepotistic development versus communal nationalism”.

In this round, the advantage is still with TRS-MIM but the momentum has been taken by the BJP. The impasse will be broken by battles, nay, war, that lies ahead.

A MULTI-CUT STRATEGY

The BJP has demonstrated successfully, with three different electoral coups — in Nizamabad Lok Sabha elections in 2019 defeating K. Kavitha, incumbent MP and daughter of chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao; in a byelection in Dubbaka last month, in which they humbled the TRS strategist in-charge, T. Harish Rao, minister and CM’s nephew; and finally, the GHMC, in which they had denied the hitherto invincible image of K.T. Rama Rao, CM’s son and heir apparent.

As a BJP leader said, “daughter, nephew and son have been given a drubbing each. Each individually and three together add up to what people feel — a strong anti-KCR family and TRS emotion. The next defeat is reserved for KCR in the Assembly elections”.

Meanwhile, the next byelection is in sight, in

The BJP has demonstrated its strategic edge successfully with three different electoral coups — defeating K. Kavitha in the 2019 LS elections, humbling T. Harish Rao in a byelection in Dubbaka last month, and finally, the GHMC, in which they have denied the image of K.T. Rama Rao

Nagarjunasagar constituency, whose sitting TRS MLA passed away on December 1.

BJP’S SECOND SOUTHERN BASTION

Despite the fascinating changes in Tamil Nadu and Kerala politics, it is unlikely the BJP is realistically close to winning power on its own in any southern state as Telangana.

In 2013, MIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi told me in an interview, explaining why his party was opposed to the formation of a separate Telangana. “The YSRC and TDP will die out in this region because they will be dubbed as Andhra parties. A new regional party may win and come to power based on sentiment, but as we have seen in Jharkhand and other such states, such parties lose credibility soon because of corruption and family domination. Telangana will become very vulnerable to a BJP onslaught.”

Owaisi’s words, spoken when Narendra Modi was chief minister of Gujarat, have come very true. The BJP is not coming for some 60 MLA seats or 17 Lok Sabha seats; it is coming to make more fundamental changes to how south India perceives itself.

For too long, most people argued and believed that the five southern states are not rife as a social soil for a political Hindutva to bloom. Pakistan is too far away, far less people understand Hindi, education and prosperity levels are relatively higher and delivery of development and welfare much more effective for decades here. The case of Karnataka was dismissed as an exception.

Not any longer. Not the way Telangana is rapidly shifting from pink to saffron. Not unless the development alternative introspects and reinterprets itself as a stronger moral alternative, not a merely more convenient substitute.

LETTERS

RENAMING COLONIES

The innovative idea of Anantapur Collector to rechristen the names of colonies and places regardless of caste, creed and community is appreciable (*No caste-based locality names, DC, Dec. 5*). The localities which are being bifurcated based on caste, apparently won’t give any complacent results. However, the need of the hour for every section of people is to get united and establish peace and harmony to stand tall. There are many challenges ahead, viz, to rebuild our economy, to ensure hassle free education, to develop sources of employment and overall development. A collective and constructive endeavour by everyone to remove caste-based barricades will only lead to attain the status of a developed country.

Neralla Venkata Rao
Vizianagaram

JAGAN’S STATEMENT

Jagan’s statement should be taken seriously and a case filed against Naidu for illegal or unlawful trade practices (Naidu milked coop dairies to enrich Heritage: Jagan, DC, Dec. 5). Otherwise, what is the use of making the statement? It is a pity that a ruling party is making hollow statements against the Opposition leader and his followers day in and day out without taking concrete action against anybody. The Prime Minister, during a poll campaign in 2019, made a shocking statement against Naidu that Polavaram project is an ATM for Naidu. It was a fact, why was there no action against Naidu till date? While in Opposition, even Jagan brought out a fat booklet with several allegations of misappropriation of peoples’ money but nothing happened till date.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

BJP’S VICTORY

After winning Dubbaka assembly by-election recently, the BJP saw the GHMC elections as a good opportunity to make a mark in south and reached out to voters. That scores of Union ministers flew down to take campaign for a Mayor election shows that BJP won’t take any election easy.

Dr D.V.G.Sankararao
Vizianagaram

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

British diplomat released

MONTREAL, Dec. 5

Seven persons were flown to asylum in Cuba last night in exchange for kidnapped British diplomat James R. Cross, who was released into Cuban custody in Montreal earlier in the day, the Quebec Justice Minister announced.

Aboard the aircraft were: Jacques Lancot, his wife and child, Marc Carboneau Jacques Cosette Trudel and his wife and a seventh person whose identity will be disclosed shortly.

Justice Minister Jerome Choquette said he had met Mr. Cross after he had been escorted from his abductor’s hideaway in Montreal north and taken to what was the Canadian pavilion at Expo-70.

massive bloodshed at worst. ... [T]he myth of the strong leader is a central thread which unifies the discussion of democratic, revolutionary, authoritarian and totalitarian leaders. Those in the first of these categories can do far less damage, precisely because there are constraints upon their power from outside government.

“It is, nevertheless, an illusion — and one as dangerous as it is widespread that in contemporary democracies the more a leader dominates his or her political party and cabinet, the greater the leader. A more collegial style of leadership is too often characterised as a weakness, the advantages of a more collective political leadership, too commonly overlooked.”

Stalin and Mao created famines, as did Churchill in Bengal. Thatcher had to be booted out of power by her party, while Attlee is highly regarded by history. This is true of both domestic and foreign policies. Modi is in decline. Witness the mammoth protests by Punjab’s farmers. But his end is not very near.

A.G. Noorani



Indians are not alone in falling for the ‘strong man’ myth

It is not fashionable to cite old classics. But if one turns to Roman, Greek and, more so, the English classics, one is struck by their relevance to modern times. Take this, from John Stuart Mill’s essay on representative government: “There are nations who will not voluntarily submit to any government but that of certain families, which have from time immemorial had the privilege of supplying them with chiefs.” This applies to South Asia.

He added, “But there are also cases in which, though not averse to a form of government — possibly even desiring it — a people may be unwilling or unable to fulfil its conditions. ... Thus a people may prefer a free government, but if, from indolence, or carelessness, or cowardice, or want of public spirit, they are unequal to the exertions necessary for preserving it; if they will not fight for it when it is directly attacked; if they can be deluded by the artifices used to cheat them out of it; if by momentary discouragement, or temporary panic, or a fit of

enthusiasm for an individual, they can be induced to lay their liberties at the feet even of a great man, or trust him with powers which enable him to subvert their institutions; in all these cases they are less unfit for liberty: and though it may be for their good to have had it even for a short time, they are unlikely long to enjoy it.”

India is passing through this dangerous phase. It ought to have known better. Indira Gandhi all but tore up the constitution during her regime and installed herself as a dictator. A wave of anger swept across the country and she lost the 1977 election. But the small men who formed a government fell apart over the loaves and fishes of office. In 1980, the people returned her to power, unmindful of her past record.

Now, Narendra Modi is following in her footsteps. He undermined the cabinet, suborned the civil service, but his greatest challenge was political. As soon as he came to power in 2014, he called for a ‘Congress-free India’. He began

campaigning from day one.

Hyderabad just held municipal elections. Modi was about to descend to the city to campaign against two parties: the Telangana Rashtra Samithi and the All India Majlis-i-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen, which was founded by the legendary Bahadur Yar Jung and now led by the indomitable Asaduddin Owaisi. Modi sent his deputy Amit Shah to campaign for the BJP. Owaisi asked, “Why not Donald Trump?”

There is no doubt that Modi enjoys popularity across the country, though it is on the decline. He was elected to power in 2014 and 2019. Why? By common consent, the government led by the extraordinarily upright Manmohan Singh was scarred by his ministers’ corruption. He was perceived as ‘weak’. Nor did he receive the support of his party and its president Sonia Gandhi, which it was her duty to extend. She was focused on grooming her mediocre son. The Congress is in a deep crisis.

Modi is out to wipe out not only the

SHORT TAKES

MINE MISHAP:
NICARAGUANS
SEARCH MINERS

Managua, Dec. 5: An unregulated gold mine collapsed Friday in southern Nicaragua near the border with Costa Rica, leaving about 10 wildcat miners missing.

Vice President Rosario Murillo said firefighters and rescue personnel were being sent to the scene in the hamlet of La Esperanza.

Murillo did not specify how many people were trapped, but local media put the number at 10 to 15. They reported that one injured miner was able to escape and report the collapse. President Daniel Ortega said that “we hope we don’t have major tragedies” at the mine.

HIGH CARBON
MONOXIDE LEVEL
KILLS 18 MINERS

Beijing, Dec. 5: Eighteen of the 23 workers were killed in a coal mine in China due to an excessive level of carbon monoxide, local officials said on Saturday.

The accident happened at around 5 pm on Friday at the Diaoshuidong coal mine in the district of Yongchuan in Chongqing Municipality, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Eighteen miners were confirmed dead due to excessive level of carbon monoxide, it said. Rescuers, including police officers and firefighters, are trying to reach the trapped miners.

The cause of the accident is under further investigation, the report said. The Diaoshuidong coal mine, which was established in 1975 and became privately-owned in 1998, has an annual production capacity of 120,000 tonnes of coal, according to the local emergency management department.

Hydrogen sulfide poisoning in the mine left three dead and two injured in March 2013, Xinhua report said.

CRIME VICTIM
CHASES, SHOTS
MAN IN FLORIDA

Miami, Dec. 5: A man who says he was the victim of a burglary attempt chased a man down a South Florida street and shot and wounded him with an assault-style rifle as he begged for his life, authorities said.

Corthoris Jenkins, 28, was charged with attempted first-degree murder with a firearm, court documents showed Friday. Jenkins told investigators he was playing video games when a man burst into his Miami-area apartment on Tuesday, the Miami Herald reported.

Instead of calling 911, Jenkins grabbed the rifle and ran after the man, who fell to his knees in the street, a police detective said in court. “He begins to what appears to be to beg for his life,” Miami-Dade Detective Iry Watson told a judge on Wednesday afternoon. “But the defendant takes the assault rifle and shoots him multiple times.”

Authorities said the man who was shot remained hospitalised on Friday, and detectives have not yet been able to talk to him.

2 TRUMP ALLIES
APPOINTED BY
PENTAGON

Washington, Dec. 5: The Pentagon has appointed two close allies of President Donald Trump to a defence advisory board, continuing a post-election purge in the final weeks of the administration.

The acting secretary of defence, Christopher Miller, who was installed by Trump on Nov. 9 after he fired then-Defence Secretary Mark Esper, said in a written statement Friday that nine members of the Defence Business Board had been replaced with the appointment of 11 new members.

The new members include Corey Lewandowski and David Bossie, who are among Trump’s most vocal supporters. The nine others are Henry Driefus, Robert McMahon, Cory Mills, Bill Bruner, Christopher Shank, Joseph Schmidt, Keary Miller, Alan Weh and Earl Matthews.

“These individuals have a proven record of achievement within their respective fields and have demonstrated leadership that will serve our department and our nation well,” Miller said. He also said the nine individuals removed from the board had been serving in “expired positions,” although this was not explained.

Biden proposes scaled-down Prez inaugural to avoid Covid

US President-elect suggests lot of virtual activity with emphasis on safety

Washington, Dec. 5: US President-elect Joe Biden has said the presidential inauguration on January 20 will not be a “gigantic” event, but something closer to what the Democratic convention was like, with a lot of virtual activity across America and an emphasis on safety due to the raging Coronavirus pandemic. Biden said he expected to be sworn in on January 20 on the platform already being constructed on the steps of the US Capitol, but plans to avoid the crowds that typically gather on the National Mall and along Pennsylvania Avenue to view the ceremony and parade that attracts millions of people.

“My guess is there probably will not be a gigantic inaugural parade on Pennsylvania Avenue, but my guess is you’ll see a lot of virtual activity in states all across America engaging even more people than before. That’s in train now and I’m not in a position to give you an example of exactly what it will look like,” he said when asked about the inauguration planning at a news conference on Friday in his hometown of Wilmington, Delaware. “But, I promise you, it’ll be available either virtually or in-person for many and my guess is, there will still be a platform ceremony, but I don’t know exactly how it’s all going to work out. The key is keeping people safe,” he



An aerial picture taken on Saturday shows a general view of Taksim square and Istiklal avenue in Istanbul during a weekend curfew aimed at curbing the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. — AFP

said. Biden, 78, suggested that the festivities could end up looking like the virtual convention Democrats held in August, with on-line activity in the states. “We are in discussion with the House leadership and the Senate leadership as to what they plan for the inauguration, particularly those 200,000 spots they control. But I think you’re going to see something

that’s closer to what the convention was like than typical inauguration,” he said. He said that his first and foremost objective was to keep people safe but also allow them to celebrate. “We’re in consultation. My team is in consultation with folks who help us put on the convention, as well as with our colleagues in charge of the inauguration,” he said. — PTI

MOSCOW OPENS
CENTRES FOR
VACCINATION

Moscow, Dec. 5: Thousands of doctors, teachers and others in high-risk groups have signed up for Covid-19 vaccinations in Moscow starting Saturday, a precursor to a sweeping Russia-wide immunisation effort.

The vaccinations come three days after President Vladimir Putin ordered the launch of a “large-scale” Covid-19 immunisation campaign even though a Russian-designed vaccine has yet to complete the advanced studies needed to ensure its effectiveness and safety in line with established scientific protocols. The Russian leader said Wednesday that more than 2 million doses of the Sputnik V jab will be available in the next few days, allowing authorities to offer jabs to medical workers and teachers across the country starting late next week.

Moscow, which currently accounts for about a quarter of the country’s new daily infections, moved ahead of the curve, opening 70 vaccination facilities on Saturday. Doctors, teachers and municipal workers were invited to book a time to receive a jab, and Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said that about 5,000 signed up in a few hours after the system began operating on Friday.

Russia boasted that Sputnik V was the world’s “first registered Covid-19 vaccine” after the government gave it regulatory approval in early August. — AP

Vaccine will not be mandatory: Biden

Washington, Dec. 5: US President-elect Joe Biden said on Friday that Americans will not be forced to take the Coronavirus vaccine and he is willing to get vaccinated publicly to assuage any concerns about its efficacy and safety. “I don’t think they should be mandatory. I wouldn’t demand it to be mandatory, but I would do everything in my power just like I don’t think masks have to be made mandatory nationwide,” Biden told reporters at a news conference in Wilmington, Delaware. Biden was responding to a question if Covid-19 vaccine be made mandatory. Biden, who is due to take office on January 20, said he will make sure that the vaccine is both free and available and that any follow up on the vaccine is free and available that relates to any health complications from it. “I will do everything in my power as the president of the United States to encourage people to do the right thing,

and when they do it, demonstrate that it matters. That’s why I said in my inaugural speech I’m going to ask people to commit for 100 days to wear a mask, not because I’m asking it for any reason to punish this is not a political issue,” he said. “It has become one. But if people do it for 100 days in the middle of what will be still a raging crisis and the vaccine is able to be distributed, they are going to see deaths drop off the edge,” he said. “They are going to see hundreds of thousands of people not getting sick; and my hope is they will be then inclined to say okay, it’s worth the patriotic duty to go ahead and protect other people,” Biden said. On Friday the US recorded 2,861 new deaths. It has seen more than 14 million confirmed cases in total and more than 275,000 deaths. Biden said he is willing to get inoculated in public to assuage any concerns about its efficacy and safety. — PTI

Congress urged to pass \$900 bn stimulus

Washington, Dec. 5: US President-elect Joe Biden on Friday urged Congress to pass the \$900 billion stimulus package required to provide relief to people and small businesses who have been badly hit by the deadly Coronavirus pandemic.

“Americans need help, and they need it now, and they need more to come early next year,” Biden said at a speech in

Wilmington in Delaware, noting that he is encouraged by the bipartisan efforts in the Senate for the economic relief bill of about \$900 billion.

“It’s a bipartisan effort. If Congress as they work out the details of this relief package they’re going to have to focus on resources for direct public-health responses to Covid-19. We need meaningful funding for vaccines now,

so don’t lose time and leave people waiting for additional months. We need serious funding for testing now,” he said.

“We need to ramp up testing to allow our schools and businesses to operate safely. The sooner we pass the funding, the sooner we can turn the corner on Covid-19,” said Biden, who will take oath as the 46th president of the United States on January 20.

“As we inherit the public health and economic crisis, we are working on a plan that we will put forward for the next Congress to move fast to control the pandemic, to revive the economy, and to build back better than before. We hope to see the same kind of spirit of bipartisan cooperation as we are seeing today,” the President-elect said. — PTI

sealed them within the spacecraft for return to Earth, as space developing nations compete in their missions.

Many Hayabusa2 fans gathered to observe the moment of the capsule separation at public viewing events across the country, including one at the Tokyo Dome stadium. In the early hours of Sunday, the capsule, protected by a heat shield, will briefly turn into a fireball as it reenters the atmosphere 120 kilometers (75 miles) above

Earth. At about 10 kilometers (6 miles) above ground, a parachute will open to slow its fall and beacon signals will be transmitted to indicate its location. JAXA staff have set up satellite dishes at several locations in the target area to receive the signals, while also preparing a marine radar, drones and helicopters to assist in the search and retrieval of the pan-shaped capsule, 40 centimeters (15 inches) in diameter. — AP

Bureaucrats face axe if caught for graft, says Imran

Islamabad, Dec. 5: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has said the government will introduce a new system of “reward and punishment” for the civil servants under which corrupt bureaucrats will be sacked instead of just transferring. Speaking at a ceremony to celebrate the completion of two years of Pakistan Citizen Portal at the Prime Minister House on Friday, Khan said he was dissatisfied over the performance of the current local governments, the *Dawn* reported. “The government was introducing a new system of ‘reward and punishment’ for the civil servants. Under the new system officials would not be transferred but sacked if found involved in corruption and irregularities,” he said.

He also said under a separate new system introduced at the village level funds would be transferred directly to the councils. “A new local government system is being introduced which will usher in a revolution. It will be implemented at the village level where people will be able to elect their representatives who will directly receive funds every



Imran Khan

BLAST KILLS ONE IN RAWALPINDI

Islamabad, Dec. 5: At least one person was killed and seven others wounded in a rare bomb attack in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi on Friday, police said.

Rawalpindi, the country’s fourth-largest city, is known for its military garrison and adjoins the capital Islamabad.

“One person was killed and seven others wounded. It was a timed device and was planted near a bus terminal,” Rawalpindi police spokesman Sajjad ul Hassan said.

No group immediately claimed responsibility. The police spokesman said investigators were probing all angles, including the possibility of terrorism. — AFP

Lanka to hurry Easter Sunday probe: Minister

Colombo, Dec. 5: Sri Lankan government will expedite the ongoing probe of Easter Sunday suicide bombings that killed 258 people, including 11 Indians, last year, a senior Cabinet minister said on Saturday.

Nine suicide bombers, belonging to local Islamist extremist group National Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ) linked to ISIS, carried out a series of blasts that tore through three churches and as many luxury hotels in Sri Lanka, killing 258 people, including 11 Indians, and injuring over 500 on the Easter Sunday on April 21, 2019.

“Sri Lankan government will expedite the ongoing probe of Easter Sunday suicide bombing. I will meet the Attorney General on Monday to see how we could proceed,” Sarath Weerasekera, the minister of public security, told the parliament. He was reacting to an

opposition lawmaker charging that the current government appeared not interested now to carry on with the probe.

Niroshan Perera, the opposition member told parliament, that the head of the local Catholic Church Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith had just a few days ago had expressed doubt if the investigations were leading nowhere. Ranjith said if the current government showed no genuine interest in the investigations to see its conclusion the catholic minority would lose confidence in the government.

Assuring there was no attempt to sweep the investigation under the carpet, Weerasekera said the legal process would be expedited from next week. Weerasekera said 257 people have been arrested and 86 of them are currently under detention orders while 172 are in remand custody. — PTI

NMC hosp founder ‘stopped’ by India

Mumbai/Dubai, Dec. 5: The founder of troubled hospital operator NMC Health has filed a legal challenge against a move by Indian immigration authorities to prevent him from departing to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) last month, according to his court petition.

B.R. Shetty’s NMC, listed in London and UAE’s biggest hospital group, went into administration in April following months of turmoil over its finances and the compa-

ny’s disclosure that it had \$6.6 billion in debt, well above its earlier estimates. Shetty had said November he planned to return to the UAE and denied reports he had fled the country after the hospital group’s implosion.

His petition, filed in the Karnataka high court on November 30, said immigration officials at Bengaluru airport stopped him boarding a flight to the UAE on Nov. 14, “without assigning any reasons whatsoever”. — Reuters

SPACE | ODYSSEY

Hayabusa2 left the asteroid Ryugu, about 300 million kilometres away, a year ago

Japan awaits spacecraft with asteroid soil samples

Tokyo, Dec. 5: Japan’s space agency said the Hayabusa2 spacecraft successfully separated a capsule and sent it toward Earth to deliver samples from a distant asteroid that could provide clues to the origin of the solar system and life on our planet.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency said the capsule successfully detached Saturday afternoon from 2,20,000 kilometres (1,36,700 miles) away in a challenging operation that required

precision control.

The capsule is now descending to land in a remote, sparsely populated area of Woomera, Australia, on Sunday. Hayabusa2 left the asteroid Ryugu, about 300 million kilometers (180 million miles) away, a year ago.

After the capsule release, it is now moving away from Earth to capture images of the capsule descending to the planet. Yuichi Tsuda, project manager at the space agency JAXA, stood

up and raised his fists as everyone applauded the moment command center officials confirmed the successful separation of the capsule.

Hayabusa2’s return with the world’s first asteroid subsurface samples comes weeks after NASA’s OSIRIS-Rex spacecraft made a successful touch-and-go grab of surface samples from asteroid Benu.

China, meanwhile, announced this week its lunar lander collected underground samples and



Journalists wait for the start of a live telecast at JAXAS Sagami-hara Campus in Sagami-hara, near Tokyo on Saturday. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

Covid-hit Hamilton may miss next GP

Manama: Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton, who was diagnosed with coronavirus this week, is struggling with the illness and is in doubt for next week's season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff said on Friday. The seven-time champion won the Bahrain Grand Prix last weekend and was ruled out of Sunday's Sakhir Grand Prix after waking up on Monday with mild symptoms. The 35-year-old is now in the process of isolating for 10 days according to the established protocols.

"He is not great. Covid-19 is something you mustn't take lightly and he is in safe hands," said Wolff.

— AFP

Anderson retires from int'l cricket

Christchurch: Plagued by injuries, New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson, who once held the record for fastest ODI hundred, called time on his international career and signed a three-year deal with USA's Major League Cricket. The 29-year-old, who has played 13 Tests, 49 ODIs and 31 T20Is for New Zealand, didn't feature in any of Black Caps' assignment for the past two years. In the 93 international games across formats, he scored 2,277 runs with two hundreds and 10 half-centuries. He also picked up 90 wickets. "It's been a huge honour and (I am) extremely proud to represent New Zealand," Anderson, who holds the record for the fastest ODI century for his 36-ball innings against West Indies in 2013, was quoted as saying by 'Cricbuzz'. — PTI

PCB to probe team Covid cases in NZ

Karachi: The Pakistan Cricket Board has started a probe into how as many as 10 players tested positive for Covid-19 after landing in New Zealand. The investigation has been launched after it emerged that some players from one or two teams in the ongoing domestic Quaid-e-Azam Trophy had complained of coughing, fever and sneezing — symptoms of a possible Covid-19 infection — just few days before they left for the tour of New Zealand. "These players were deemed to have viral infections due to changing weather and later also tested negative in the Covid-19 tests carried out in Lahore by the board. But they tested positive after reaching Christchurch where the entire squad is now quarantined at a managed facility after the 10 positive tests," a PCB source said. — PTI

NZ's push for 1st Test win stalled

Hamilton: New Zealand's push for an innings victory over the West Indies in the first cricket Test was stalled on the third day Saturday by a bold, counter-attacking partnership for the tourists' seventh wicket between Jermaine Blackwood and Alzarri Joseph. New Zealand seemed to be coasting to a win within three days when captain Kane Williamson enforced the follow-on with a 381-run lead after dismissing the West Indies for 138 in reply to their first innings of 519-7 declared. — AP

Brief scores: West Indies 138 (Campbell 26, Southee 4-35) & **196/6** (Blackwood 80*, Joseph 59*, Wagner 2-62) vs **New Zealand 519/7 decl.**

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

South Africa vs England: Second ODI from 1.30 pm on Star Sports 1

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Tottenham Hotspur vs Arsenal from 10 pm; Liverpool vs Wolverhampton Wanderers from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Italian League: Crotone vs Napoli from 10.30 pm; Sampdoria vs AC Milan from 1.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

FORMULA ONE

Sakhir Grand Prix: Main race from 10.35 pm on Star Sports Select 2

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Sub-plot thickens

Cricket fraternity divided over concussion rule

Sydney, Dec. 5: Indian batting great Sunil Gavaskar finds nothing wrong in Yuzvendra Chahal coming on as a "concussion substitute" for Ravindra Jadeja but doesn't like the concept of teams being provided cushion for a batsman's inability to face bouncers.

Chahal replaced Jadeja, who got hit on the head, in the first T20 International and did a star turn with figures of 3 for 25 in the team's 11-run victory in Canberra.

"First and foremost let me say that match referee is a former Australian cricketer David Boon. He was okay with Chahal substituting for Jadeja. They normally say like-for-like and Chahal is not an all-rounder but if he goes out with the bat whether it's one run or 100 run, he is an all-rounder," Gavaskar said. "An Australian match referee had no objection to that. So I don't see why there is so much of noise about it."



Gavaskar however doesn't endorse the concept as he feels it is a leverage given to batters for a technical deficiency.

"On the business of concussion substitute itself, I don't agree with it. May be I am old fashioned and I have always believed that if you are not good enough to play the bouncer and get hit on the helmet, then you don't deserve a substitute. I am sorry," Gavaskar said.

'RULES SHOULD BE USED FAIRLY'

Former Australia captain Mark Taylor has cautioned against abusing the concussion substitute rule, saying it is for the protection of players and needs to be used fairly and responsibly.

"The concussion rules are there to protect players. It's up to the players to make sure they use the concussion sub fairly and responsibly," Taylor said. — PTI

Now, it's Handball Premier League

Jaipur, Dec. 5: The inaugural edition of the Premier Handball League (PHL) will be held from December 24 to January 10 at the Sawal Mansingh Indoor Stadium here, the national federation said on Saturday.

The PHL, being held under the aegis of Handball Federation of India, will have 33 matches in 18 days this season.

"This is going to be a significant moment in Indian handball history as the PHL will infuse fresh air to the sport which has immense potential at grassroot level. The league will bring exciting competition among the players as well as help build handball

as a brand," HFI president Arshnapally Jagan Mohan Rao said at the launch on Saturday.

The first season will have six men's teams — Telangana Tigers, UP Icons, Maharashtra Handball Hustlers, KingHawks Rajasthan, Bengal Blues and Punjab Pitbulls — battling for the title.

The PHL will see more than 80 players taking part in the inaugural edition as each team will consist of 14 players.

The PHL India Sports Private Limited is the official license holder of the league. The matches will be broadcast live on Sony Pictures Sports Network. — PTI



Ravindra Jadeja (third from left) has a trainer tend to his leg during the first T20 international between India and Australia at the Manuka Oval in Canberra on Friday.

— AP

INDIANS READY TO HIT TEST MODE

Sydney, Dec. 5: India will look to figure out their playing XI as the Test squad gets into the groove by taking on Australia 'A' in a three-day warm-up game at Drummoyne Oval on Sunday.

With India and Australia playing the second T20I on the same day, the visiting Test squad has been named India 'A' for the first of the two practice games scheduled ahead of the much-anticipated four-Test series.

The tour games will be a chance to sort out India's combinations both in the batting and bowling departments ahead of opening Day-Night Test scheduled at Adelaide from December 17.

In batting, Mayank Agarwal is set to open the innings but there is a question mark over his partner with the choice being between Prithvi Shaw and Shubman Gill.

While Shaw was preferred in the New Zealand series, he struggled for consistency in the IPL. Gill, on the other hand, have scored 440 runs for Kolkata Knight Riders and also looked in good touch in the third ODI.

The other option is KL Rahul, who has been in rampaging form and also formed a formidable pair with Mayank for the KXIP, but the last time he had played a Test was in September 2019.

In the wicketkeeper's slot, it will

be Wriddhiman Saha versus Rishabh Pant.

For Saha, who had injured both his hamstrings during the IPL, it will be a test to show his fitness after getting back at the nets recently.

Pant has been India's number one choice in overseas Tests but he was dropped from the limited over series and will have to deliver the goods to seal the keeper's slot.

With skipper Virat Kohli going on paternity leave after the opening Test and the injured Rohit Sharma too uncertain, the onus will be on Ajinkya Rahane, Cheteshwar Pujara and Hanuma Vihari to show the way. — PTI

Pujara subjected to racism in UK

Leeds, Dec. 5: English county side Yorkshire finds itself in the centre of a raging issue with their former players and employees backing cricketer Azeem Rafiq's claims of "institutional racism" at the club, including reference to India's Cheteshwar Pujara with a generic name.

Former West Indies international Tino Best and Pakistan's Rana Naved-ul-Hasan provided evidence in support of Rafiq as part of an ongoing investigations into his allegations.

According to ESPNcricinfo, two former Yorkshire employees — Taj Butt and Tony Bowry — have also given evidence against the club which has institutionalised racism. "There were continuous references to taxi drivers and restaurant workers when referring to (the) Asian community," Butt, who was employed within the Yorkshire Cricket Foundation as a community development officer, was quoted as saying by the cricket portal.

"They called every person of colour 'Steve'. Even (India batsman) Cheteshwar Pujara, who joined as an overseas professional, was called Steve because they could not pronounce his name."

Butt tendered his resig-



Cheteshwar Pujara

nation within six weeks of joining.

Having worked as a coach until 1996, Bowry was the cultural diversity officer at the Yorkshire Cricket Board from 1996 until 2011, before he was appointed as a cricket development manager to develop the game for black communities.

"Many youngsters struggled to make progress, and the few that did found the environment of the dressing rooms very difficult and unwelcoming, as a direct result of racism they faced," Bowry said.

"It affected performance... they were labelled trouble-makers." — PTI

KDCA elections are put on hold

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, DEC. 5

Justice G. Krishnamohan Reddy, Ombudsman of the Andhra Cricket Association, has stayed elections to the Krishna District Cricket Association scheduled on Sunday.

KDCA, an affiliate of the ACA, has been asked to adopt a new constitution in tune with the Supreme Court appointed Lodha Committee reforms.

"It is contended by the complainant in his written arguments that the President of KDCA without compliance of the order of the Ombudsman and without any fundamental constitution and just basing on the Rule No. 6 of the bylaws of ACA, cannot proceed with the election of its office bearers and shall wait for a sub-committee report on codifying the Lodha committee reforms for implementation to KDCA otherwise conducting the election on 06-12-2020 is invalid," Justice Reddy said in his order dated December 5.

"It is held that the election process initiated by KDCA through the said

election officer and also consequent unanimous election of the office bearers of its Apex council are declared as null and void and hence, cannot be enforced.

Further, ACA is hereby directed to form a committee to draft appropriate byelaws and, rules and regulations for KDCA in terms of its own byelaws and, rules and regulations subject to making necessary changes as early as possible because further delay in the matter causes more and more inconvenience to KDCA to elect its office bearers. In view of the inconvenience faced by KDCA because of non-conducting of its election after the expiry of the term of the previous office bearers, it is also observed that ACA has to take necessary measures to decide within one week as to who would form the full members of KDCA taking all aspects into consideration to enable KDCA to adopt temporarily the byelaws and, rules and regulations of ACA and then on that basis to conduct the election to its office bearers," the order read.

NORTHEAST UTD TWO GOOD FOR EAST BENGAL

Goa, Dec 5: NorthEast United FC piled further misery on SC East Bengal with a 2-0 win in their Hero Indian Super League Season 7 encounter here.

A Surchandra Singh (33') own goal and an injury-time strike from Rochharzela (90') helped the Highlanders remain unbeaten and climb to second spot in the league table. East Bengal are yet to score in the league. SCEB will be disappointed that a good display did not lead to points, with a couple of key refereeing decisions going against them. NEUFC coach Gerard Nus did five changes to the side that drew against FC Goa. Gurmeet, Ashutosh, Shereef, Kwesi Appiah and Ninthoingnba Meetei were back in the playing eleven. — Agencies



Handball Federation of India president Arshnapally Jagan Mohan Rao (third from right) poses after the launch of Premier Handball League in Jaipur on Saturday.

Chahal for concussed Jadeja was a legitimate switch



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

India's recovery after losing the ODI series in the first two matches itself has been smart and impressive. Winning the third ODI against the trend of play showed resolve, resilience and wherewithal, which was being seriously questioned. It also created the confidence to win the first T20 international.

There was some quirky luck for India when Yuzvendra Chahal, who came in as 'concussion

substitute' for Ravindra Jadeja did the star turn, picking up three wickets. Without Jadeja's batting and Chahal's bowling, India would never have won, so maybe the Man of the Match award should have been shared between the two!

That the Aussies did not like how the substitution was carried out was evident from coach Justin Langer haranguing match referee David Boon during the innings changeover.

Australia's objections, as one understands from reports, was on two fronts.

One, since Jadeja continued batting after being hit on the helmet, was this strictly a case for concussion substitution? Second, was Chahal for Jadeja a "like-for-like" replacement which this rule demands? Debate on the matter will doubtless continue for some time. What's clear though is that the decision of the referee is final and binding, so Chahal for Jadeja in the first T20 was a legitimate switch.

The momentum is now with India, and if the T20 series can be won, it will be a shot in the arm for the team which looked so beleaguered in the first two ODIs. There is no scope for

excuses at the highest level and India — to put it bluntly — were outplayed and outclassed by the Aussies in the first two matches of the ODI series.

But it must also be acknowledged that unlike the Aussies, who've played a bilateral series in England and also some domestic Sheffield Shield cricket — plus the IPL for those who were in the league — India's players have had no such opportunities apart from the IPL.

Even being in a bio-secure bubble at home is an advantage, which is why I think this turnaround by the Indian team has been quite remarkable. Issue now is sustenance — of form and fitness — and resource management by

the support staff as there is still a lot of cricket remaining on this tour.

Jadeja, for instance, will not play in the remaining two T20s. That is a major blow considering he is a genuine all-rounder and has been in excellent form with bat though his bowling has been found wanting. In the T20s for instance, will he be replaced by Chahal? And if so does that weaken the Indian batting?

This is Kohli/Shastri's immediate vexing problem. In a slightly longer time frame is the bigger concern: will Jadeja be fully fit for the first Test? The Test series which starts on December 17 is the main assignment and India will want all their

players ready, physically and mentally, more so with Virat Kohli returning home after the first match.

Hopefully, Rohit Sharma will be on the flight to Australia after the NCA medical staff assess him on December 11, but there are still other areas to cover adequately. Some of these may be linked to injury and rehab (like Jadeja), some to form and having back up players in place.

This is where I believe Hardik Pandya and T. Natarajan can be of great value. Though neither was in the original Test squad, their presence in Australia can be exploited. Both Pandya don't have to go through the mandatory quarantine process which

any other player would have to. And their skills are no less pertinent.

While Pandya was left out from the Test squad because he isn't bowling much, his batting in white ball cricket on this tour has been magnificent. He could be an asset as a batsman alone. Debutant Natarajan has impressed hugely in the two white ball matches he's played.

As a left arm seamer he brings variety in the attack. He wasn't originally in the ODI squad too. Drafted in late, he made an impact. Even if he's not played, just the experience of being with the team in such an important series would be an invaluable learning curve for Natarajan.