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HYDERABAD | MONDAY | 14 DECEMBER 2020

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**WEATHER**

Max: 29.3°C  
Min: 16.6°C  
RH: 44%  
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy.  
Mist or haze likely.  
Max/Min temp. 29/16 °C**COVID-19 COUNT**

CASES	DEATHS
(+30,174)	(+392)
98,84,349	1,43,386
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+573)	(+4)
TS: 2,77,724	1,493
(+506)	(+5)
AP: 8,75,531	7,057

**CASES AROUND THE WORLD**

CASES	DEATHS
7,23,97,062	
16,16,036	

**COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES**

218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

**ASTROGUIDE**

Sarvari: Dakshinayana

Tithi: Kartika Bahula Amavasya till 9.48 pm

Star: Jyeshta till 11.27 pm

Varjyam: 6.45 am to 8.12 am

Durmuhamrat: 12.32 pm to 1.16 pm; 2.44 pm to 3.27 pm

Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am

HJRI CALENDAR

Rabbi-ul Akhir 28, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajr: 5.33 am

Zohar: 12.21 pm

Asar: 4.08 pm

Maghrab: 5.50 pm

Isha: 7.05 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.38 AM

SUNSET TODAY 5.43 PM

MOONSET TODAY 5.28 PM

MOONRISE TOMORROW 6.01 AM

**COUNTER POINT**It's a multi-purpose outfit...  
protects me from  
cold and Covid!**IN BRIEF****RTGS fund transfer is 24x7 service**

Mumbai: The Real Time Gross Settlement System (RTGS) for high-value transactions will become available round-the-clock from 00:30 hours Monday onwards, making India one of the few countries in the world to operate the system 24X7. In October, the RBI had announced RTGS will be available round-the-clock on all days of the year.

**Army Chief meets Saudi generals**

Riyadh: Indian Army chief General M.N. Naravane on Sunday met top Saudi generals and discussed issues of common interest and ways to enhance bilateral defence cooperation during his historic visit to the Gulf Kingdom. Gen Naravane, arrived in Saudi on the second leg of his two-nation visit that included the UAE.

## KCR tells CS to fill 50k vacancies

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

In a major relief to youth waiting for employment for the past several years, Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao has directed the Chief Secretary to take immediate steps to fill all vacancies in government departments.

- HE TOLD officers to collect details about vacant posts in teachers, police and other departments.

- THE CM suggested assessment of the number of employees required for each department and determine cadre strength

vacant posts in teachers, police and other departments.

According to sources, the Chief Minister suggested assessment of the number of employees required for each department and determine cadre strength of each wing and if any additional staff and officers were required in any of the department, those additional vacancies also be included in the recruitment notifications.

He told the officers to collect details about

vacant posts in teachers, police and other departments.

**JP NADDA COVID POSITIVE, IN HOME ISOLATION**

New Delhi, Dec. 13: BJP president J.P. Nadda has tested positive for Coronavirus and has gone into home isolation on the advice of doctors.

In a tweet, he said he had undergone a test after showing symptoms of Covid-19, and was found to be positive. "My condition is alright and I am following all instructions after going for home isolation on the advice of doctors. I request everyone who got in touch with me in the last few days to isolate themselves and undergo test," he said.

— PTI

**BJP SHINES IN BODOLAND LOCAL POLLS**

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, DEC. 13

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in collaboration with its new ally, the United People's Party Liberation (UPPL) and the Gana Suraksha Party (GSP), has decided to form government of the Bodoland Territorial Council bringing an end to 17-years rule of Bodoland Peoples Front.

Gachibowli police released CCTV footage of the accident, which showed that they were travelling in a white Maruti Swift (AP 39 ED 5229), near the Wipro circle when their vehicle jumped the signal

and travelled to the other side where they were hit by a tipper lorry.

Gachibowli traffic and law and order police officials rushed to the spot. However, four of them died on the spot and the fifth succumbed while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Gachibowli.

"The impact of the accident was such that we are unable to tell if they had their seat belts on during the mishap.

The car was sandwiched between the lorry and a construction site barricade," said police inspector of Gachibowli, Srinivas.

The bodies were shifted to Osmania General Hospital mortuary for post-mortem and their blood samples were collected to ascertain their BAC level.

According to police, the deceased included K Santhosh, 25, software engineer from Tech Mahindra, K. Pavan Kumar, 24, employed at an IT firm, Chinta Manohar, 23, working in an animation studio, P. Bharadwaj, 20, and N. Roshan, 23.

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## SHORT TAKES

## MAN KILLS PARAMOUR'S BOYFRIEND

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

The Alwal police arrested a jilted lover for murdering his paramour's alleged boyfriend on Sunday evening.

According to the police, Kanaka Raju was having an affair with a woman, who allegedly eloped with Srikanth Reddy, an auto driver by profession.

"Upon learning about the woman's involvement with Reddy, Raju plotted to murder him and accordingly, he lured him to Dammaiguda area and strangled him to death before burying his body in Hasmatpet area here," said the Police Inspector of Alwal, A. Gangadhar.

The case was detected following a complaint from Reddy's brother, who named Kanaka Raju as a suspect. "We followed up on that lead and nabbed Raju on Sunday evening. He was booked for murder and placed under arrest after he confessed to the crime during investigation," added the official.

## COUNSELLING FOR LAW ADMISSION FROM TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

TS Lawcet/PGLCET 2020 first phase counseling for admission into LLB 3-year course, LLB 5 years (Integrated Degree Courses), and 2-year LL.M courses offered by universities in the state for the academic year 2020-21 is scheduled on December 14.

Candidates will have to upload scanned copies of original certificates for preliminary certificate verification.

They also have to upload degree certificate of qualifying exam and memorandum of marks, intermediate memo-cum pass certificate or its equivalent, SSC or its equivalent marks memo, study certificates from Class I to intermediate/graduation whichever certificate is applicable, residence certificate for preceding seven years of the qualifying examination, residence certificate of either of parents in Telangana state for 10 years in case of non-local candidates, excluding the period of employment outside the state, obtained from tahsildar, residence certificate from mandal revenue officer either of parents in Telangana state for 10 years in case of non-local candidates.

In respect of non-local candidates in order to consider them for allotment under unreserved seats, residence certificate and employer certificates need to be submitted. A total of 21,559 candidates qualified in TS Lawcet/PGLCET this year.

**CANDIDATES WILL** have to upload scanned copies of original certificates for preliminary certificate verification. They also have to upload Degree certificate of qualifying exam and memorandum of marks, Intermediate memo-cum pass certificate or its equivalent, SSC or its equivalent marks memo.

## CHARGED UP

## Users say they got exorbitant electricity bills

## Power bills during lockdown continue to haunt consumers

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

Thousands of consumers are continuing to complain about the high power bills generated during March and April when the Coronavirus pandemic started.

Since staff hired by the Electricity Department were afraid of entering houses and recording meter readings due to fear of catching Covid-19, Telangana Electricity Regulatory Commission had then released a statement stating that billing for months of March and April will be based on consumption recorded during the previous year's bills of those two months. It maintained that if any additional payment when meters are checked in future, any excess amount will be deducted from future bills.

But many consumers complain this has not been

done. This is because they have no proof to show that the department has charged them extra. On its part, the Electricity Department has denied it is collecting extra charges from its consumers.

Munige Anitha, resident of Resalagadda, lives in a single room portion. "Before the lockdown, our electricity bills were between ₹210-240. But suddenly the bills went over ₹400. We paid those bills when the minister concerned stated that the extra amount will be adjusted during future months. But nothing of that sort has happened."

Gandhi Nagar resident Ravi Samuel, who used to get a maximum bill between ₹300-400, has now started getting bill of ₹600 plus. His current month's bill is ₹650. "Mine is a two-room rented portion with two tube lights, two ceiling fans and a television. We cannot protest or bargain. If

we delay payments, the department will mercilessly disconnect our power supply," says Ravi.

Amtul Mubeen Khan of Jamali Kunta, Toli Chowki complained, "Before lockdown, we used to get a bill of around ₹400-500. Suddenly, the bills have gone up by at least ₹200. My two months bill is now ₹1,400, which is yet to be paid. Most residents near my place are also getting bills that are higher by ₹100-200. We are grateful that the department has been generous enough in allowing us to pay our bills in instalments. But the moot question is that bills generated have been higher," Mubeen protested.

Gunfoundry resident Thakur Mohan Singh says, "Because bills generated during lockdown have been much more than what we used, we went and spoke with the accounts department. But we got no respite. Power staff came one day

and disconnected our supply. With great difficulty, I paid instantly to reactivate the connection."

When contacted, TSSPDCL chairman and managing director G. Raghu Reddy maintained, "All such allegations are baseless. We have clearly informed at a media briefing at the time of lockdown that units consumed will be charged based on the previous year's consumption."

A senior financial official of TSSPDCL said, "There have been thousands of complaints regarding excess billing. But everything was according to bills generated based on meter readings at their homes. If any wrong bills have been generated we are ready to rectify them," he assured.

Due to lockdown in the interim, many families have lost jobs. Already burdened, they find extra power bills a millstone around their neck.

## Govt schools reopening will be disastrous

Parents fear spread of Covid-19 as most schools are devoid of amenities to follow protocol

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

The Alwal police arrested a jilted lover for murdering his paramour's alleged boyfriend on Sunday evening.

According to the police, Kanaka Raju was having an affair with a woman, who allegedly eloped with Srikanth Reddy, an auto driver by profession.

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## 2 women drug peddlers held

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

The sleuths of Malkajgiri zone Special Operations Team (SOT), along with Nacharam Police, nabbed two women interstate drug peddlers and seized 18 kilos of marijuana worth ₹2 lakh from their possession.

The accused, identified as Mamidi Ratnam, 35, and Lacha Naga Venkata Krishnaveni, 30, were illegally smuggling the drugs into the city to sell the same to addicts, said the police, who also seized ₹28,700 and two phones from them on Sunday.

The women belong to Visakhapatnam district and are well-connected with the agents cultivating

## BACK TO SCHOOL - PART 1

remain non-committal, teachers have been urging them to restart physical classes. However, situation on the ground does not seem ideal in most of these schools, devoid of rudimentary amenities to prevent spread of Covid.

In a single-room community hall, filled with dust and miscellaneous things scattered around like a storeroom, only two teachers divide their day between visiting students at their homes in nearby areas, walking about five kilometres one way each day to assess their students' progress, their struggle to get online classes completed, while still learning themselves everyday – these were the key highlights of the condition at one of the government school in Sun City.

A teacher confessed that the community hall was being used to conduct classes for students of grades one (1) to five (5), with a total strength of 117 students. Due to lack of space, some classes are even conducted outside in the corridor near the hall's entrance.

"Construction of a new building has been going on for a long time now.

Meanwhile, we have been managing within this limited space. Government says the construction is nearly eighty percent complete. But it is the government saying it, so we don't know," she said.

Teachers said they have been facing trouble due to non-cooperation by local

people, who are protesting claiming the community hall is public property and cannot be used as a school. There has been no support from the local body either.

Teachers complain they have to clean dust on most days to sit and hold online classes. Deep cleaning or sanitisation is a luxury they cannot even dream about. Teachers are scared of complaining to higher authorities for fear of getting suspended.

At a government school in Kanakamamidi, sanitisation and deep cleaning

has so far taken took place only once, management claimed, when schools opened for teachers. But with over half the staff having contracted

Coronavirus, ever since teachers started visiting

houses of students for assessments, cases of

virus have increased in

the village.

In Nadergul, Rangareddy district, at least four teachers have reportedly died of Covid after resumption of online classes. Other health problems have also surfaced among teachers, mainly due to stress after online classes started.

Teachers at most government schools complain that online classes are not doing any good for students. But they worry whether social distancing norms could be put in place once physical classes start.

Chava Ravi, general secretary, Telangana State United Teachers Federation, said the problem of congested infrastructure and lack of sanitisation is limited only to 20 to 30 percent of government schools. The government should resolve it effectively soon."



## TSCHE DECISION ON STARTING REGULAR CLASSES THIS WEEK

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

Officials of the Telangana State Council of Higher Education (TSCHE) along with the department of health are likely to meet this week to review the possibility of reopening universities and degree colleges for regular classes.

TSCHE chairman Prof. Papi Reddy said that a date for scheduling the review meeting will be decided shortly. The agenda of the meeting will be to discuss pros and cons of opening up regular classes for technical institutes and other universities and colleges in the future.

"Online classes have already started for all semesters. Not further hamper any examination schedules and academic calendar, we will establish a modus operandi of starting regular classes in the meeting," he said.

Admission process in most universities and colleges in the state has concluded, and online classes of first year students began last week, with a total of 27,365 candidates getting degree seats in the final Degree Online Services, Telangana (DOST) 2020 special drive.

Sebastian was earlier involved in a murder case of Musheerabad police three years ago and that case is currently under trial.

He was not lodged in Cherlapally central jail by the Malkajgiri Police of Rachakonda.

**TCHE CHAIRMAN**  
Prof. Papi Reddy said that a date for scheduling the review meeting will be decided shortly.

## Most wonderful time of the year



Shoppers check out a crib and other decorations at a shop for Christmas in Hyderabad on Sunday.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

## RPF ASI held for abusing minor girl

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

An assistant sub-inspector working with the Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Maharashtra was arrested by the Malkajgiri police for allegedly sexually abusing a Class X minor girl at his residence for over two years.

According to the police, the accused, Lalu alias Lallu Sebastian, 47, was working as an ASI with the RPSF Maharashtra and resides at Anandbagh in Malkajgiri.

"The victim, a Class X student, was his neighbour. He took advantage of her parents leaving her at home and going to work and started sexually assaulting her since 2018 by showing pornographic

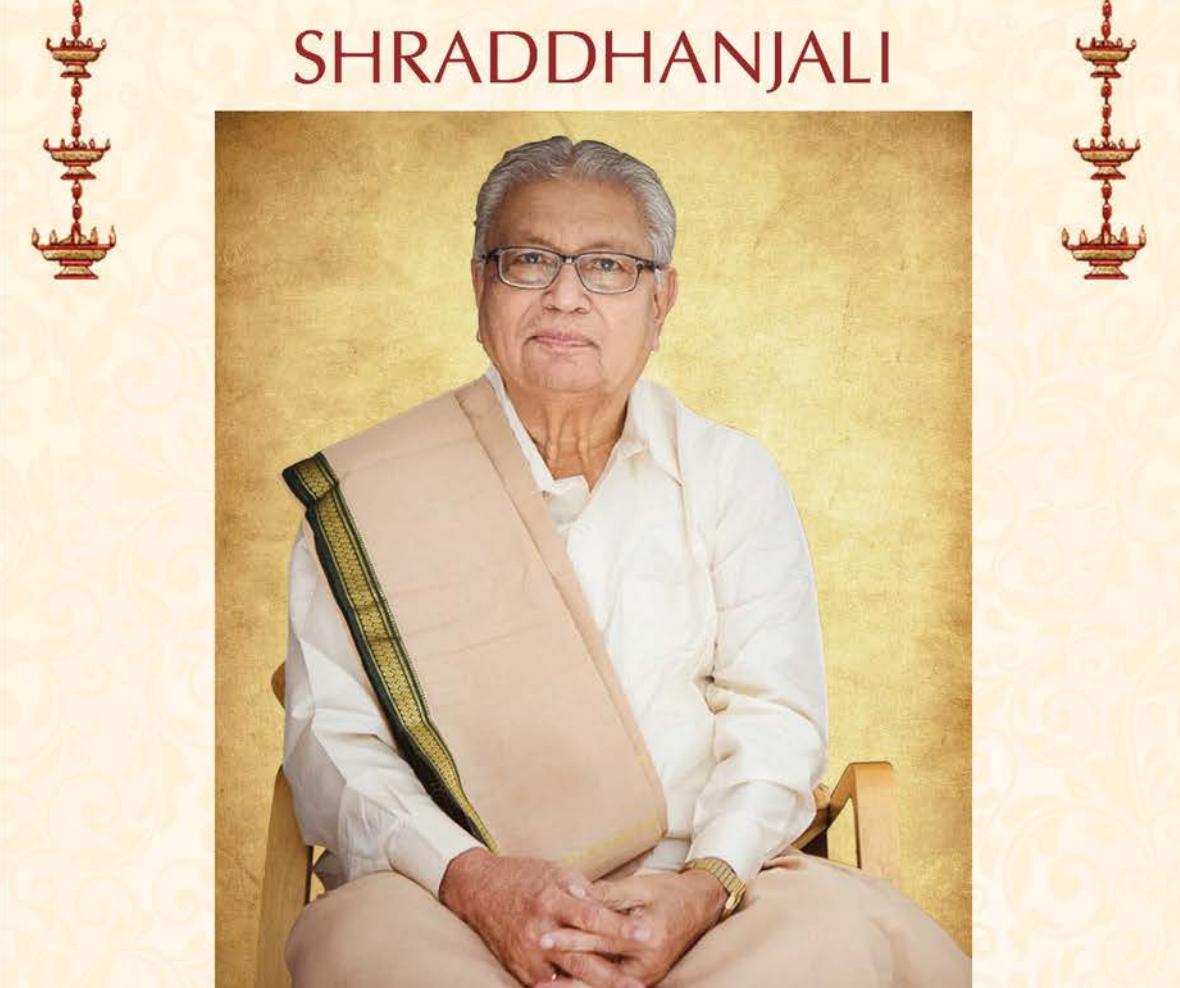
videos on his phone and also threatened her not to reveal about their activity to anyone," said the police.

Based on a complaint by the parent of the victim on December 7, the police registered a case and apprehended him from his residence.

Sebastian was earlier involved in a murder case of Musheerabad police three years ago and that case is currently under trial.

He was not lodged in Cherlapally central jail by the Malkajgiri Police of Rachakonda.

## SHRADDHANJALI



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Y Manohar Prasad & Uma Devi

Sisters & Brothers-in-law

Shantha Lakshmi & Thyagaraj Naidu

Swanthra Lakshmi

Sai Lakshmi

Dhanalakshmi & Dr. B.M. Chowdary

Sons & Daughters-in-law

Y Jitin Kumar & Uma Rani

Late Y Siva Linga Prasad & Rishi Kanya

Y Sivarama Krishna & Sarada

Y S Chowdary (Sujana) & Padmaja

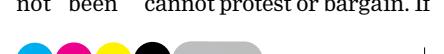
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Dhanalakshmi & ST Prasad

Grandsons, Granddaughters

Great-grandsons, Great-granddaughter

Staff & Family Members of Sujana Group of Companies



## SHORT TAKES

FUND CRISIS HITS  
SHAADI MUBARAK,  
KALYANA LAXMIDC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, DEC. 13

Around 1.37 lakh applicants of Kalyana Laxmi and Shaadi Mubarak are facing hardships due to non-release of funds under this scheme since past several months.

The state government has been providing financial assistance of ₹1,00,116 to poor families belonging to SC, ST, BC, EBC and minority communities to perform marriages of their female children.

As many as 5,32,451 beneficiaries belonging to these communities have benefited under the scheme in the last five years.

Sources in the Social Welfare department disclosed that the state government has allocated ₹1,350 crore in 2020-21 budget under Kalyana Laxmi and Shaadi Mubarak scheme.

It has already released ₹675 crore for first two quarters of the fiscal year and accorded administrative sanction for ₹337.50 crore to meet the expenditure for the third quarter.

Sources point out that ₹337.50 crore is sufficient only for making payments to a part of applicants. Payment to rest of them will have to be kept pending even after completion of the verification process.

Officials of the department, however, say they have no clue about when the funds will actually be released by the Finance Department.

## Following is the list of applications pending in respective erstwhile districts

Dist.	Pending Applications
Mahbubnagar	15,480
Khammam	7,113
Nizamabad	8,900
Adilabad	13,506
Nalgonda	10,758
Warangal	14,053
Ranga Reddy	13,450
Hyderabad	25,540
Medak	12,850
Karimnagar	15,630
Total	1,37,280

## INTER-DISTRICT VEHICLE LIFTING GANG NABBED

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, DEC. 13

In a breakthrough, the Karimnagar rural police along with the Kothapalli police on Sunday apprehended six members of an inter-district vehicle lifting gang.

The police seized 42-two wheeler, five-passenger autos, two cars, one trolley auto worth ₹23.77 lakh from their possession.

The six accused are identified as Kanugula Raju (25), Kattula Prashanth (27), Kondapalli Chinnaiah (20), Pandena Jaipal (38), Madaboina Kishan (38), and Puppala Ramulu (40), resident of the Nizamabad district. Four managed to escape and have been identified as Mettu Srinivas, Dharmai Rajeshwar, Janardhan and Naveen.

Commissioner of Police, V. B. Kamalasan Reddy informed that the gang used advanced technology to carry out their crimes.

Habituuated to a luxurious lifestyle, Kanugula Raju, resident of Amoor in Nizamabad district, formed the gang. He has been lifting vehicles for the past six months from Karimnagar, Jagtial, Rajanna Sircilla, Nirmal, Kamareddy and Nizamabad districts.

## CM told to stop works on 7 dams

Clearance only after appraisal by GRMB, CWC and Apex Council: Centre

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, DEC. 13

Union Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat has asked Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao not to proceed with the construction of seven irrigation projects that are being objected by Andhra Pradesh unless and until the mandatory appraisal is done by Godavari River Management Board (GRMB), Central Water Commission (CWC) and the Apex Council.

The Union minister was replying to Rao's October 2 letter outlining various issues of Telangana state pertaining to share and utilisation of waters in Krishna and Godavari rivers. He reminded that during the Second Apex Council meeting of the Jal Shakti Ministry, Chief Ministers of TS and AP

agreed to submit DPRS of their respective irrigation projects for approval of the concerned wings of the ministry.

Shekhawat pointed out that as per the AP Reorganisation Act 2014, both states were bound to submit DPRS of new projects to the KRMB for appraisal and technical clearance and sanction by the Apex Council.

He said, "The opinion of the ministry is that any irrigation and/or multipurpose project, whether mentioned or not in Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-I and/or APRA-2014 unless tech no-economically appraised by the CWC and accepted by the Advisory Committee of the DoWR, RD&GR, ministry of Jal Shakti, will also be considered as new projects for the purpose of appraisal in case there is change in scope."

He said that his ministry's stand is clear on this aspect that neither

## UNION MINISTER

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat was replying to Rao's October 2 letter outlining various issues of Telangana state pertaining to share and utilisation of waters in Krishna and Godavari rivers.

whether it was conceived before or after bifurcation of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh."

He said those projects which have been technoeconomically appraised by the CWC and accepted by the Advisory Committee of the DoWR, RD&GR, ministry of Jal Shakti, will also be considered as new projects for the purpose of appraisal in case there is change in scope.

He said that his ministry's stand is clear on this aspect that neither

TS nor AP can go ahead with projects, including Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme and Pothireddypadu Head Regulator expansion scheme by AP and Third TMC component of Kaleshwaram LIS. GUS Phase-III, Tupa-kulagudem project, TS drinking water supply project, barages on Lower Penganga River and Ramappa Lake to Pakhal Lake diversion.

Referring to Rao's complaint over non-installation of telemetry systems by the KRMB, the Union minister made it clear that during the first meeting of the Apex Council both state governments had agreed that both states would have to equally pay the costs of setting them up. He pointed out that even after repeated reminders and requests from the

KRMB, neither state responded and have not paid their full share of expenditure due to which the installation of telemetry was not completely done.

He said, "If the states clear their pending payments, the KRMB would immediately get them installed and can do the required monitoring."

Referring to the demand of the TS government to constitute a tribunal to decide water shares of TS and AP in Godavari waters, Shekhawat pointed out, "You (Rao) agreed in the meeting to send a request immediately to the Union government for constituting a tribunal in this regard. As decided in the meeting, our ministry will take a positive decision in this regard after receiving the request from you."

## Cabinet panel to set guidelines for non-agri land registration

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao on Sunday constituted a Cabinet Sub-Committee to study and prepare guidelines to ensure transparent, hassle and corruption-free registrations of non-agriculture lands in the state.

The sub-committee will be headed by Roads and Buildings department minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy and comprise IT Minister K. T. Rama Rao, Panchayat Raj Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao, Home Minister Mahmood Ali and Animal Husbandry Minister T. Srinivas Yadav.

Rao held a review meeting with senior officers and ministers as Monday marks the commencement of registration of non-agriculture properties. While suggesting the term of references to the Sub-Committee, he insisted the panel to ensure that there would be no discretion at any level while registering non-agriculture properties. He told the committee

members to interact with all stakeholders, including builders, and developers within the next three to four days before finalising the guidelines.

The Chief Minister pointed out that poor people were facing severe hardships while selling or buying their properties due lack of proper title of land, though they had electricity connection, property and water tax bills. He wanted the committee to find out a proper solution to resolve the problem so that poor

people can carry out their transactions smoothly.

Rao said "due to various reasons registrations were stopped for 70 to 80 days which has created difficulties to people across the state. There should not be any more delay."

He enquired about the agriculture lands registration done through the Dharani Portal and expressed satisfaction as the farmers were happy to get their lands registered through the portal after some initial hiccups.

## Danger ahead



Drainage water overflows in Ramnagar on Sunday as a road dug up three weeks ago is yet to be repaired

— S. SURENDRE REDDY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, DEC. 13

In a breakthrough, the Karimnagar rural police along with the Kothapalli police on Sunday apprehended six members of an inter-district vehicle lifting gang.

The police seized 42-two wheeler, five-passenger autos, two cars, one trolley auto worth ₹23.77 lakh from their possession.

The six accused are identified as Kanugula Raju (25), Kattula Prashanth (27), Kondapalli Chinnaiah (20), Pandena Jaipal (38), Madaboina Kishan (38), and Puppala Ramulu (40), resident of the Nizamabad district. Four managed to escape and have been identified as Mettu Srinivas, Dharmai Rajeshwar, Janardhan and Naveen.

Commissioner of Police, V. B. Kamalasan Reddy informed that the gang used advanced technology to carry out their crimes.

Habituuated to a luxurious lifestyle, Kanugula Raju, resident of Amoor in Nizamabad district, formed the gang. He has been lifting vehicles for the past six months from Karimnagar, Jagtial, Rajanna Sircilla, Nirmal, Kamareddy and Nizamabad districts.

## KCR joining hands with Modi: Jeevan

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

Congress MLC T. Jeevan Reddy accused Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao of leaving the Federal Front idea and joining hands with PM Modi front for saving his political career.

Addressing a press conference on Sunday at Congress Legislative Party office, he asked why the CM did not demand an airport at Warangal during his early Delhi tours. He

observed that this was only a political stunt to gain advantage for TRS before ensuing elections to the Warangal and Khammam municipal corporations.

The MLC observed that Telangana acquiring a debt of ₹3 lakh crore during the six years of TRS regime shows complete failure of Chandrasekhar Rao's administration.

He alleged that for KCR family and TRS leaders it is not Mission Bhagiratha but Commission

Bhagiratha. He maintained that the Chief Minister needlessly redesigned the Kaleshwaram project and has ended spending up to 2 lakh crore only on Kaleshwaram.

The senior Congressman charged that the neighbouring state Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had looted one lakh cusecs of water from Krishna basin, which actually belongs to Telangana. He accused the Chief Minister of remaining silent while

the AP CM is going ahead with the Pothireddypadu project. "Why is KCR not taking steps to counter the moves of Jagan Mohan Reddy?" he asked.

He expressed worry that Naragarjunasagar and Srisailam projects will be bereft of water if AP Chief Minister continues to go ahead with his plans. "Both Naragarjunasagar and Srisailam projects are very important to Telangana for drinking water and farming purposes," he underlined.

## TRS govt has not fulfilled its poll promises, says Cong leader

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, DEC. 13

"Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao must explain to people the secret agenda he has with Bharatiya Janata Party. What is the use of meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi without discussing the 33 issues mentioned in AP State Reorganisation Act, 2014," asked senior Congress leader, former minister and Manthani MLA Duddilla Sridhar Babu.

Speaking to media in Manthani of Peddapalli district on Sunday, he said even after ruling for seven years, TRS government has not fulfilled its poll promises and has deceived the people of Telangana. After attaining power the second time, the ruling party promised farmers that it would waive farms loans up to ₹1 lakh, but has betrayed farmers in this case too. Distribution of double bedroom houses, sanctioning of unemployed dole of ₹3,000, along

with other promises, have also remained a mirage, he pointed out, saying there was no mention of Kazipet coach factory, tribal university and 4,000 MW thermal power plant.

The senior Congress leader accused TRS of indirectly supporting farm bills when they were introduced in parliament. Now, ruling party leaders are pretending as though they are opposing the bills. "Both TRS and BJP are sailing in the same boat at the press conference.

tion of people by making allegations against each other. Chief Minister KCR has met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other Union ministers only for a compromise," he stated.

Jayashankar Bhupalpally DCC president Aitha Prakash Reddy, Kisan Congress state coordinator Sharshibushan Kache, block Congress president Thota Thirupathi Yadav and mandal Congress president Seggam Rajesh were among those present at the press conference.

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the state. He expressed confidence of winning elections from Nagarjunasagar constituency with a bumper majority in the next elections.

Jayashankar Bhupalpally DCC president Aitha Prakash Reddy, Kisan Congress state coordinator Sharshibushan Kache, block Congress president Thota Thirupathi Yadav and mandal Congress president Seggam Rajesh were among those present at the press conference.

## TS reports 573 new Covid cases

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

With 573 new Covid-19 cases being reported in the State, the overall tally touched 2,77,724, according to the medical bulletin released by the health department on Sunday.

With four fatalities in the past 24 hours, the death toll mounted to 1,493 till 8 pm on Saturday.

The case fatality and recovery rates stood at 0.53 per cent and 96.71, compared to 1.5 per cent and 94.9 per cent at the national level.

As many as 47,186 samples were tested during the period, taking the aggregate number of samples examined so far to 61,28,703.

Malkajgiri (67) and Ranga Reddy (58) districts.

Meanwhile, all 13 districts in Andhra Pradesh reported less than 100 new cases each with Chittoor topping with 95, followed by Krishna 86 and West Godavari and Guntur 72 each.

The case fatality and recovery rates stood at 0.53 per cent and 96.71, compared to 1.5 per cent and 94.9 per cent at the national level.

As many as 47,186 samples were tested during the period, taking the aggregate number of samples examined so far to 61,28,703.

## 1st DEATH ANNIVERSARY



Late: A. PRABHAVATHI

DOB: 25-08-1959 DOD: 14-12-2019

it is one year Since you have physically left this world but we feel that you are always amidst us Blessing, Guiding and Inspiring. In our hearts forever always remembering, praying and wishing "Your soul to rest in peace"

=====

Husband: A. BALAJI (Retd. Director, HLT, Bangalore)

Daughter: A. SUSHMA Son: A. SUDARSHAN

Relatives and Friends



Late G. GOPAL REDDY

D.O.B: 14.12.2019

Anand Nagar Colony, Balanagar "In every step of our life we had your guidance and blessing and let it continue for ever and ever"

Inserted by: G. Alivelamma

Sons - Daughters-in-law

Grand Children, Relatives & Friends



B.D.S. PRABHA WATKINS

## SHORT TAKES

## AP RECORDS 506 FRESH COVID CASES, 5 DEATHS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 13

The decreasing trend in Covid-19 cases continued in AP state with the 506 new Covid-19 positive cases in the past 24 hours on Sunday. Only five deaths, one each reported in Chittoor, Guntur, Krishna, Vizianagaram and West Godavari districts and the total deaths climbed to 7,057 while the death rate remains at 0.81 per cent.

Total Covid cases increased to 8,75,531 and 613 patients recovered from the infection on Sunday which increased the recovery rate to 98.63 per cent and the total number of recoveries increased to 8,63,508.

For the fifth consecutive day more than 60,000 samples were tested. The positivity rate of the 63,873 Covid tests conducted during the past 24 hours was 0.79 per cent and the overall positivity rate of the 1.08 crore samples tested was 8.08 per cent. The Chittoor reported the highest single-day tally of infections among districts with 104 new infections. It was followed by Guntur with 69 new positive cases, West Godavari registered 66, Krishna registered 59, East Godavari witnessed 41, Nellore registered 29, 28 cases in Kurnool, 25 in Srikakulam, 23 in Visakhapatnam, 20 in Prakasam, 17 in Anantapur, 13 in Vizianagaram and Kadapa registered 12 new Corona positive cases on Sunday.

## GIVE FUNDS FOR EXISTING CATTLE, TTD ADVISED

DC CORRESPONDENT  
Kakinada, DEC. 13

Priests and animal lovers suggested that the Tirumala Tirupati Devastanams feed cattle, cows and calves that are attached to temples in the state instead of gifting a cow and a calf anew.

They feel that temples which are rearing cows and calves are unable to feed to them due to lack of funds. Now, if the TTD gifts them more cattle, temples will have additional burden.

"Agriculture is being mechanised and the ploughing of fields with bullocks has been given up as tractors are doing the job. Now, these cattle have become a huge burden to farmers. Many are being sold slaughterhouses.

Animal lovers and activists are seizing cattle being illegally transported and handing them over to the police. But even the police is helpless as there are no shelters at the police stations.

"The TTD should take the initiative to save such animals by taking over such animals," said Animal Rescue Organisation secretary Gopal. R. Surabathula. He also said that the TTD should set up Goshala to save cattle.

M. Ramakrishna, priest of Lord Ramalayam temple in SC Colony in Kambalpet in Rajamahendravaram said that the TTD should provide fodder and maintenance of the temples by releasing adequate funds to save Hindu Dharma.

Ramakrishna and his family members saved a cow and a calf which was being sent to the slaughterhouse and now, the temple is accommodating more than 10 cows and calves.

## FARMER ATTACKS SUB-INSPECTOR WITH KNIFE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VEERAVASARAM (WG), DEC. 13

A farmer, A.R. Kumar, on Sunday attacked an assistant sub-inspector of Veeravasaram police station, P. Pardha Saradhi at Veeravasaram village of West Godavari district with a knife.

Veeravasaram police said that farmer Ch. Gopi had lodged a complaint with the police station against Kumar over a crop issue. The ASI along with a constable P.S. Murthy went to the field and were making enquiries when Kumar took out a knife and allegedly stabbed the ASI injuring him severely, and fled the scene.

The ASI was admitted to a hospital at Bhimavaram.

Veeravasaram police registered a case.

Meanwhile, West Godavari superintendent of police K. Narayana Naik visited the ASI at the hospital.

Director General of Police Gowtham Sawang reacting to the incident instructed the police officials to investigate the issue and take action.

## Social distancing goes for a toss at fish market



Fish vendors and customers fail to maintain social distancing at Kothapet Fish Market on Sunday in Hyderabad, even as health experts warn of second wave of Covid-19 in Telangana.  
— P. SURENDRA

## Lockdown talks hit Old City

## People start stocking up commodities hearing second wave rumours

SANJAY SAMUEL  
PAUL | DC  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

Rumours spread over social media on Sunday that a second lockdown would be imposed on the Old City leading to panic buying. People started flocking to grocery stores to stock up essentials. Some people stocked up cigarettes and chewing tobacco products too.

Mohd Abdul Rahman of Sohail of Farhat Food

Giving the reason for panic, Dr. Hyder Yamani, general secretary, Telangana Unani Medical Officer's Association, said, "Yes, there was a rumour all around. People started buying extra essential commodities for fear that again there will be a total shut down and prices may go up. People took from us rice, pulses, sugar, flour, oils, soaps, and so on. People stopped purchases on realising the truth."

Subsequently, many people, who realised the truth, started posting messages that the lockdown news is false. "That stopped people

from panicking," Dr. Hyder pointed out.

Dr. Mohd Iqbal Jaweed, medical practitioner and resident of Darulshifa, wondered that while people of old and new city are sacred and bothered about lockdown, they are oblivious of the dangers posed by Coronavirus. "Last night, I had been to a wedding, where the groom is a Canadian resident. He was not wearing a mask and went on hugging people greeting him. People are

forgetting that Covid-19 still exists," Dr. Jaweed said.

He advised educated people, religious preachers and public representatives not only to themselves practice safety measures but also educate others about taking precautionary measures. Only this will make people take precautions like wearing masks, using sanitisers and practising social distancing, the medical practitioner remarked.

## More cams for Durgam bridge

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

In order enhance to security on the iconic Durgam Cheruvu cable stayed bridge, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has asked the police department to set up another 30 cameras on the bridge in addition to the existing ones. The civic body has noticed that several miscreants have been misusing the bridge by taking selfies on it during peak hours.

The iconic cable bridge has become popular for the picturesque view of the Durgam Cheruvu. She said besides pilgrims, VIPs also came for darshan, including a minister and a Deputy Speaker. Energy minister Balineni Srinivas Reddy is visiting Srisailam on Monday, the DSP added.

The civic authorities felt there was an urgent need to increase security cover on the bridge to put a check on the users and to avoid untoward incidents.

A senior official from the

● ADDITIONAL 30 cameras to be set up to put a check on people violating traffic rules and guidelines on the cable bridge and to avoid untoward incidents.

GHMC said that the corporation has already informed Cyberabad police, who agreed to enhance security on the bridge.

These major violations include stopping on the road, riding or driving without a mirror, pillar-rider not wearing a helmet, unauthorised parking, triple-riding, driving on the wrong side and using mobile while on the move.

The civic authorities felt there was an urgent need to increase security cover on the bridge to put a check on the users and to avoid untoward incidents.

"Traffic vehicles set up on either side of the bridge and they would act

immediately after receiving information from the Command Control Centre. We tried multiple methods to educate and spread awareness to the public but after exploring numerous options the only solution found was to increase the number of cameras from 6 to 36", a senior GHMC official added.

Only four and two-wheelers are now allowed on the bridge, with a maximum speed limit of 40 kmph. The GHMC further stressed that vehicles will not be allowed on weekends/

He said only tourists are allowed to walk on it during weekends.

Vehicles are to be parked in the earmarked area. The official said that even on weekends the miscreants were trying to damage the structure and even tried to climb the bridge.

## Exhibition showcases rich range of innovation, deep observation of life's surreal moments

## Sumanth Marda's hyper-realistic art a big hit

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

An art exhibition of hyper-realistic artist Sumanth Marda at Gallery 78 in Hitec City, organised by the Castle Art City, has been a big hit and has drawn lots of art lovers to the expo.

The week-long exhibition inaugurated by Jayesh Ranjan, principal secretary, industries and commerce, and information technology departments of the state government, has so far had several well-known art connoisseurs, luminaries, artists as well as dilettantes and art enthusiasts attending it.

Marda, a contemporary fine artist, who works with charcoal and acrylic mediums, is exhibiting his works which are hyper-close to reality, with nearly photographic finish, yet fusing a rich range of innovation and deep observation of life's surreal moments.

An engineer in computer sciences from Osmania University and a BFA in animation from the Academy of Art University, San Francisco, Sumanth, after a decade-long career in animation, is now focusing on creating monochromatic works in charcoal, mainly depicting the world around with a realistic gaze.

Speaking about his work, Sumanth said, "I draw inspiration from people. For instance, in my work titled, 'Innocence', (84" x 54"), which happens to be one of my first large artworks, done purely with charcoal, I wanted to capture pure untainted emotions. In my quest to capture humans who evoke an emotional interest in me,



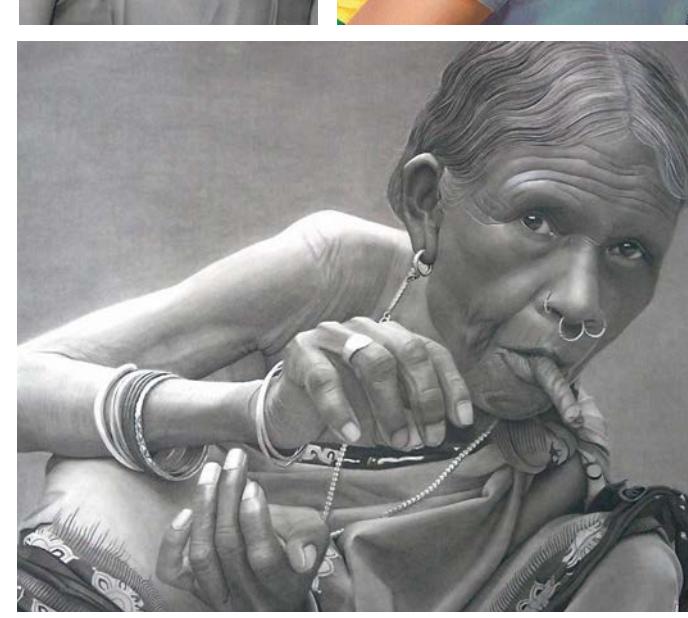
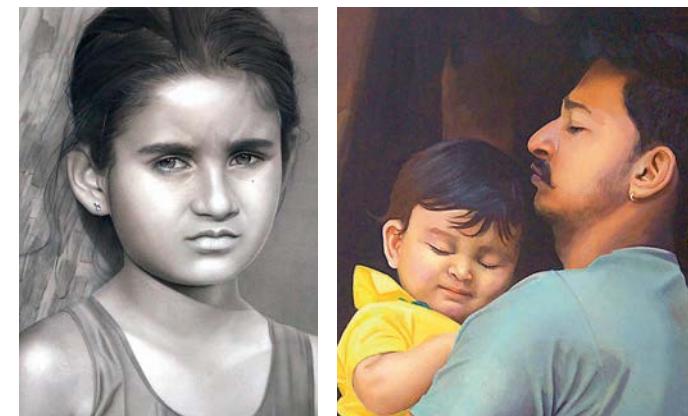
Artist Sumanth Marda, (right) his works

I travelled widely to venture into deep jungles on the Andhra-Odisha border in search of tribals living in seclusion."

Castle Art City is an idea to revolutionise the art scenario in Hyderabad and south India, founded by entrepreneurs with a common passion for art and envisaged to become an epicentre of art from all over the world.

Co-founder of Castle Art City, Ramakanth Thumrugoti, said, "As part of art promotional programmes, CAC will be discovering new talents and presenting their works to a distinguished yet wide audience. Talent focus is on original quality of work, craft and contemporary techniques. One such find is Sumanth Marda, a Hyderabadi artist with hyperrealism as his specialty."

**Location:** Gallery 78, near Novotel NAC gate, Hitec City



## Orphans lodged in same home as juvenile criminals

ANUDEEP  
CEREMILLA | DC  
WARANGAL, DEC. 13

● GOVERNMENT OBSERVATION home building meant for CCL children is in a dilapidated condition. Thus, authorities started accommodating children in conflict with law in Government Children's Home five years ago, saying it was only a temporary measure. However, since then, both the children have been sharing the building.

Lack of separate buildings for juvenile children under custody of police for crimes, and homeless orphan children in Warangal, has led to both being accommodated in the same Government Children's Home in Auto Nagar area of Warangal.

This is happening despite the Juvenile Justice Act making a clear distinction between CNCP (Child in Need of Care and Protection) and CCL (Children in Conflict with Law). The two homes are run by the Juvenile Welfare and Correctional Services Department.

The government observation home building meant for CCL children is in a dilapidated condition. Thus, authorities started accommodating children in conflict with law in Government Children's Home five years ago, saying it was only a temporary measure.

Within a span of three weeks, one CNCP child and two CCL children have escaped from the building.

Supervisor of the children's home K. Ravi Kumar fears mingling together of CCL and CNCP children may push the latter into acquiring bad habits.

"These children come from different backgrounds. Thus, they need to look after their care and protection. Since 2015, officials have not been showing any interest in shifting CCL children into another rented building. This violates the Supreme Court guidelines issued in Sampurna Behrua Vs Union of India case in 2005, as well as provisions of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015," Ravi Kumar pointed out.

Within a span of three weeks, one CNCP child and two CCL children have escaped from the building.

District Child Welfare committee chairperson Mandala Parushuramu said they have filed complaints regarding the issue with police. He hoped action would be taken at the earliest.

## AP Group-1 Mains in TS too today

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 13

● THE GROUP-1 MAINS' test will be held from 10 am to 1 pm. APPSC officials informed that candidates will be allowed into the examination centres between 8.45 am and 9.30 am. The candidates must bring their hall tickets and identity card.

About 9,679 candidates will be taking the APPSC Group-I Mains examinations that will commence from Monday and go on up to December 20.

The examinations will be held at 41 exam centres both in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states in seven sessions. The Group-1 Mains' test will be held from 10 am to 1 pm.

APPSC officials informed that candidates will be allowed into the examination centres between 8.45 am and 9.30 am. The candidates must bring their hall tickets and identity card.

A help desk has been set up at the commission office in Vijayawada for complaints or information regarding the examination. Officials said that all arrangements have been made for the candidates.

Candidates must reach the exam centres before 9.45 am including those with special exemption.

Isolation rooms have also been set up for Covid-19 patients at all exam centres.



# DECCAN Chronicle

14 DECEMBER 2020

## Russian 'concerns' drew a fitting Indian response

In a speech last week at the Russian International Affairs Council, a government think tank, the country's veteran foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, noted that "currently" India was "an object of the Western countries' persistent, aggressive and devious policy as they are trying to engage it in anti-China games". New Delhi has done well to respond with alacrity — and clarity.

The external affairs ministry noted at a briefing, responding to questions, "Our relations with Russia stand on their own merits including in the sphere of Military and Technical Cooperation (MTC)." Mr Lavrov had made a special mention of MTC, saying it was the "goal of the US (to bring to bear) very tough pressure on New Delhi" in the MTC area.

The Indian reaction seeks to reassure Moscow on continuing close bilateral relations, including in the defence domain. At the same time, by making no reference to China, New Delhi has conveyed to Moscow that it is free to make decisions as regards the world stage in light of its own perception of self-interest.

Recently India signed on to the last of the four "foundational" agreements of the US. Without these, America does not extend special partnership deals with any country. These agreements include exchanging logistics and bases, joint training of forces, and military cooperation in the limitless geo-spatial field. In addition, India has signed the Defence Technologies and Trade Initiative (DTI) with the US. These have understandably made Russia somewhat nervous.

On the other hand, India signed up two years ago to purchase the Russian S-400 Triumph air defence system that can neutralize incoming aircraft, missiles and even drones 400 km away. The system is scheduled to be delivered by end-2021. Meanwhile, in July this year, Russia confirmed supplies of anti-aircraft and anti-missile systems months after the face-off with China had begun in eastern Ladakh. This point is of special relevance since Russia has special ties with China. It is not inconceivable that Mr Lavrov's formally expressed anxiety about India being roped into an anti-China configuration is to deflect possible head-shaking from Beijing.

Meanwhile, Washington is upset with India's planned sourcing of advanced anti-missile systems from Moscow and the Trump administration even contemplated penalising India under CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), but held back. In light of India's expanding warmth with it in a multi-faceted way, Washington has had to be indulgent about India's ties with Iran and Russia.

Moscow has proved India's all-weather friend. This has been India's most abiding strategic relationship, regardless of personalities, systems and parties in power. With no country have such ties subsisted. This is on account of geo-strategic realities and geography. It would be unwise of either side to lose sight of this. Moscow has to understand that while it may have close ties with Beijing — and also a few worries in the Central Asia theatre — India has its reasons to bolster itself in the diplomatic and strategic domains all round in light of the difficulties posed by China's rise.

India has spoken, while responding to Mr Lavrov's talk centred on multipolarity and US moves to go back to a unipolar world, of its "independent" foreign policy. Even if some questions have risen about it, as a middle-level power India would do well to remind itself of the need for such independence, which permits it the latitude to negotiate with contending parties.

## Lessons from Delhi border

It's all in the 'mindset'. The farmers' barricade at the capital's borders that has entered its 16th day and is stubbornly refusing to go away, to the chagrin of the Narendra Modi government, is now beginning to expose the hypocrisies of the ruling party and its constituents. And in so doing, embarrass them. On December 10, Human Rights Day, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Joginder Singh Ugrahan's colleagues had held posters of jailed human rights activists arrested in the Bhima Koregaon case. It drew a reaction from the usual suspects — this time in the shape of union minister Piyush Goyal — who tossed out at them his party's overused salvo — that of being "hard Left" and "antinational". However, the former soldier was nonchalant.

Mr Ugrahan, whose organisation recently moved Supreme Court to have the three contentious farm laws repealed, has a question for the government. Is the government afraid to engage with him on the points that he is making regarding the laws? For whatever they are worth, Mr Ugrahan can't very well be expected to be punished for his beliefs, or the positions he has taken on these other matters, empowered as he is to have done so by dint of Articles 19, freedom of expression, and 25, freedom of conscience and religion, of our esteemed Constitution. On the flipside, Mr Goyal can't properly be said to have indulged in whataboutery either, because it is socialists who have historically upheld the humanitarian cause. Be on the Left to fight for the right.

As evidenced by the tweets sneering at fox nuts and foot massages at the protest venue, the government's propaganda machine, however, is jealous of the confident, new farmer. For them, the kisan bhai, and he needs must be a bhai, even as 60 per cent of India's subsistence farmers today are female, so farmer's rights are equally women's rights, is cast in the image of the emaciated ploughman. The government is stereotype-bound and lack ideas — for actual agro-reform — and imagination. There is hope yet. A way to avoid more embarrassment is to learn from one's mistakes.

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Subhani



## Justice hurried can be justice buried



V. Vijayasai Reddy

**B**enjamin Franklin's maxim that "it is better 100 guilty persons should escape than that one innocent person should suffer" has been staple legal thinking for centuries.

Would a time bound and hurried disposal of cases be more of a quantitative exercise than a qualitative one? Would not this unwarranted haste totally invalidate the maxim given by Franklin?

Earlier this month, senior advocate Vijay Hansaria, acting as an amicus curiae, informed the Supreme Court that as per the latest data available after collating inputs from various high courts, the number of cases against public representatives stood at 4,859.

The report submitted by him also recommended that the high courts be directed to prepare a blueprint for expeditious disposal of cases with less than five years' jail term if the accused is convicted, takes away from our focus cases against hardened criminals and repeat offenders.

The prospect of disposal of cases within one year against public representatives may make headlines but it also brings up a disturbing matter for discussion. Can a time frame be set to elicit information and verify the veracity in statements recorded by the prosecution from witnesses? Is not "justice hurried justice buried"? Normally, examination of witness in trials is filled with research and production of data beyond what was filed by the prosecution in Courts. Would not a trial court judge be pressured to deny time just

For such special treatment of expedited trial to be given to all serving and former public representatives, it must first pass the requirement of constitutionality. When the Constitution speaks of the fundamental right to equality why is it a public representative's case merits priority over a longer pending case?

The question, therefore, is whether public representatives form a separate class of citizens

**The pressure on the trial courts to dispose a case within one year and limited resources may lead to disastrous results. One wrong conviction would lead to immediate disqualification of an incumbent MP...**

within the society to enable them preferential adjudication. If the answer is yes on the basis of their role, responsibilities and powers, then shouldn't judges and heads of all statutory bodies, serving and retired, too, fall in the same category? The Supreme Court refrained from answering this question in 2013 and, has, therefore, left it open to interpretation. Disproportionate focus on cases against public representatives, most of which are either political or cases with less than five years' jail term if the accused is convicted, takes away from our focus cases against hardened criminals and repeat offenders.

The prospect of disposal of cases within one year against public representatives may make headlines but it also brings up a disturbing matter for discussion. Can a time frame be set to elicit information and verify the veracity in statements recorded by the prosecution from witnesses? Is not "justice hurried justice buried"? Normally, examination of witness in trials is filled with research and production of data beyond what was filed by the prosecution in Courts. Would not a trial court judge be pressured to deny time just

**Disproportionate focus on cases against public representatives, most of which are political or with less than five years' jail term if the accused is convicted, takes away from our focus cases against hardened criminals**

Further, the resources needed to be able to dispose of a case within one year are huge. As of 2018, India roughly has just 19 judges per million population with a shortage of over 5,700

judges in the trial courts, themselves. To

square the limited

infrastructure of the judiciary, in terms of lack of judges, limited judicial time and physical

resources in one type of mostly political cases

would be unjust to

victims of much more

heinous crimes who

would see further delay

getting justice. The

judiciary and the justice

delivery system has limited

infrastructure and it

is important to effi-

ciently use them for the

greater good of the peo-

ple. Rather than making

an un-implementable

law, the focus should be

on distributing

resources with focus on

matters, which are of

higher judicial impor-

tance, such as cases of

rape, murder and even

habeas corpus. The amici curiae's report if implemented would see the judiciary jump to the

end result without pro-

viding for a path to

enable the same?

Lastly, the pressure on

the trial courts to dis-

pose a case within one

year and limited

resources may lead to

disastrous results. One

wrong conviction

with over two years' jail

term would lead to imme-

diate disqualification of an

incumbent MP or MLA

and tarnish the reputa-

tion which he or she

built over decades.

Rather than actually

cleaning politics, it shall

clean up all the politi-

cians, good and bad.

Of late, we have been

witnessing several bills

being passed by the

legislatures, which stipu-

late a timeframe within

which the judiciary is

expected to adjudicate.

How feasible is it and

are we jumping upon the

result rather than creat-

ing an enabling envi-

ronment for it? That is a

question that only the

passage of time will

answer.

The writer is YSR

Congress Parliamentary

Party leader and

general secretary.

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## LETTERS

### KUDOS TO 3 JUDGES

I really appreciate the judges' timely intervention that helped three couples in setting aside their marital dispute and reuniting them. Honouring human values is important (*Lok Adalat disposes 32,304 cases in Telangana, DC, Dec. 13*). Judges can resolve cases in a similar fashion in lower court without filing appeal in HC, SC, bypassing court order and giving time for mutual settlement amicably.

John Samuel  
Secunderabad

### EMPTY RHETORIC

In GHMC elections, all the stars of the BJP including Yogi Adityanath could not motivate 60 per cent voters and failed to get majority in 150 seats (*Kishan sounds war bungle in Warangal, DC, Dec. 12*). However, they still do not lack in boasting. Forcing something on TS voters will be a lesson to repent.

Prasad  
Madhapur

### RELIEF, DUES, KCR

Before the GHMC election, the TRS raised the issue of flood relief fund from the Centre not materialising (*CM asks PM for relief, dues, DC, Dec. 13*). Today he was bowing and asking for relief funds. These politicians are all one class and the rest are in another class. When they change their attitude, even God does not know.

S. Laxmirajam  
Hyderabad

### 6 Air Force pilots to man IA's planes

BOMBAY, Dec. 13. Six Indian Air Force pilots arrived in Bombay today to man, in two teams, the Bombay-based AVRO HS-748 aircraft of the Indian Airlines from tomorrow as the threat of Corporation employees to go on a one-day token strike midnight tonight still loomed large. Loaders, traffic assistants and cabin crew at Bombay stopped work hours before the start of the strike in pursuance of a directive from the Air Corporation Employees' Union this morning. Traffic officers and outside loaders worked on the Boeing chartered from Air India and few Delhi-based Caravels by which the Airlines again maintained a skeleton service. Meanwhile deputy minister of civil aviation, Dr Sarojini Mahishi was meeting unions.

**S**ince Independence, India has seen many a protest, some massive. But never before has it seen such an organised, mammoth demonstration in which old as well as young participated. I am referring, of course, to the protests by the farmers of Punjab. Schoolboys left their homes and schools to be counted among the protesters. All were overshadowed by elderly women, whose presence made this unprecedented show of righteous wrath even more impressive.

## SHORT TAKES

## 17A STEALTH FRIGATE TO BE LAUNCHED TODAY

Kolkata, Dec. 13: Defence PSU GRSE-built first project 17A stealth frigate, an addition to the naval power of the venerable Indian Navy, will be launched on Monday, an official said here.

Chief of defence staff General Bipin Rawat will be the chief guest at the ceremony, the official said.

After touching water, the first of the three state-of-the-art naval ships being built by the GRSE under Project 17A, will undergo extensive trials and fittings of ultra-modern gadgets before it is delivered to the Navy.

The ship will be launched by Madhulika Rawat, wife of General Rawat, at the Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) here on the banks of River Hooghly.

17A ships are guided missile frigates, each of which is 149 metres long, with displacement of approximately 6,670 tonnes and a speed of 28 knots, another official said.

These stealth frigates are being built deploying the latest integrated construction methodology with enhanced pre-outfitting to augment quality and reduce build periods considerably, he said.

The ₹19,294-crore contract for construction of the three stealth frigates under Project 17A is the largest-ever order for the company, the official said.

The first ship is expected to be delivered in 2023 and the two others in 2024 and 2025, respectively.

## SERVE 10 YRS OR PAY ₹1 CR, UP GOVT DOCS TOLD

LUCKNOW, Dec. 13: Government doctors in Uttar Pradesh completing postgraduate courses will have to give their services in the department for 10 years or pay a compensation of ₹1 crore, according to an official.

The order, issued last Wednesday, reiterated an earlier one issued on April 3, 2017. It said there had been cases of some doctors completing the PG course and seeking a no objection certificate (NOC) for doing senior residency, which would not be allowed and they had to return to their native departments.

According to the earlier order, the PMHS (provincial medical and health services) doctors opting for postgraduation get additional marks, especially for serving in rural areas.

"On completion of the course, it's mandatory for them to serve in the government department continuously for 10 years," additional chief secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad said in a statement on Saturday.

The new order stated that government doctors should return to their native departments after returning from PG courses, failing which they would have to pay ₹1 crore to the government, Prasad said.

He added that those leaving the PG course midway would be debarred from seeking admission for three years.

## MODI CONDOLES GOVINDACHARYA'S DEMISE

New Delhi, Dec. 13: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday condoled the demise of renowned Sanskrit scholar Vidyavachaspati Bannanje Govindacharya and said he will be remembered for his great contributions to literature.

Govindacharya died at his residence at Ambalpady in Udupi on Sunday due to age-related illness, family sources said. He was 85.

"Vidyavachaspati Bannanje Govindacharya Ji will be remembered for his great contributions to literature. His passion towards Sanskrit and Kannada were admirable," Prime Minister Modi said.

"His works will continue influencing the future generations. Pained by his demise. Condolences to his family. Om Shanti," the Prime Minister tweeted.

A propagator of 'Madhwa' ideology and a great orator, Govindacharya had been conferred Padma Shri in 2009.

He was well-versed in Veda Bhashya, Upanishad Bhashya, Mahabharata, Ramayana and Puranas and has written commentaries on Veda Suktas, Upanishads, Shata Rudriya, Brahma Sutra Bhashya, and Gita Bhashya.

## No BharatNet link to most gram panchayats

Centre approves modified strategy for eight states including Telangana, Maharashtra, Guj, AP, TN, Odisha

ANIMESH SINGH | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

Despite the fact that the BJP is directly in power in 12 states and is the junior alliance partner in six other states, the NDA government's ambitious BharatNet project — envisaged to provide Wi-Fi broadband connectivity to 2.5 lakh gram panchayats by March 2019 — has till date managed to give the facility only to 15,500 gram panchayats, with the Centre now blaming the states for their non-involvement in their non-involvement in the project.

Highly placed sources said, so far only 1,26,000 gram panchayats have been made service ready, which means, they have the wherewithal to start the Wi-Fi services, but Wi-Fi hotspots have not been provided there.

On the other hand, Wi-Fi hotspots have been made functional in only 15,500 gram panchayats till date, according to information available with this newspaper. Therefore, in other words, a programme, which was originally envisioned by the erstwhile UPA regime nine years back in 2011 to connect all

● **NDA GOVERNMENT'S** ambitious BharatNet project — envisaged to provide Wi-Fi broadband connectivity to 2.5 lakh gram panchayats by March 2019 — has till date managed to give the facility only to 15,500 gram panchayats.

While NOFN was envisaged to provide infrastructure for middle mile connectivity and the service provider was to utilise the network, the NDA government — seeing that service providers were not using the network — decided to include last mile connectivity also in the scope of BharatNet.

The NDA government set new deadlines to provide broadband connectivity to

all the 2.5 lakh gram panchayats and this was to be done in two phases by March 2019. However, as can be seen by the figures provided above, the project has anything but progressed, even in the last six years.

Senior officials in the Department of Telecom (DoT) which is supposed to monitor BharatNet's progress, blame the dismal performance of the project on the lack of cooperation on part of the states.

They say that distancing of states from the ownership of the project has resulted in its slow

progress. In fact till March 2020, i.e. just before the nationwide lockdown was imposed on March 24, only four states had finalised their tenders for awarding work related to providing broadband connectivity. Of these four states, work could only be awarded in Chhattisgarh.

During the review of the slow progress of the scheme, questions were also raised whether states had been properly sensitised about the project's significance.

Meanwhile, after several internal deliberations, a modified strategy was

approved by the Union Cabinet, under which a further 61,000 gram panchayats will now be provided with connectivity in eight states through what is being called a state-led model.

These eight states will be Maharashtra, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu.

Moreover, it has now been decided to make concerted efforts to persuade the states to play a more active role in implementing the project, sources informed further.

## High fuel cost funds Central Vista: Cong

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi on Sunday hit out at the Central government over the 'unprecedented rise' in the prices of petrol and diesel.

In a tweet she said, "Prices of petrol and diesel have touched the sky. In 2020 the BJP government has earned an extra revenue in the form of excise to the tune of three lakh crore. But where does this money go? 20,000 crore for new parliament corridor, 16,000 crore for new planes for the PM and 2 crores daily for advertisement."

The tweet also illustrated that taxation is close to 60 per cent of the value of the fuel. She further demanded that why the increased revenue by the government is not being used in the welfare of people. Several Opposition parties have been targeting

● **PRIYANKA GANDHI** demands to know why the increased revenue by the government is not being used in the welfare of people.

the center over the rise in fuel prices. They have demanded that the benefit of the reduced international crude prices should be immediately passed on to the consumer.

Meanwhile, the Congress has reiterated its earlier demand of bringing the fuel prices under the ambit of the GST. Chief spokesperson of the Congress Randeep Singh Surjewala said, "The Modi government has earned 1,900,000 crores in the last 6.5 years by increasing excise duty on petrol and diesel alone. Since the lockdown the extent of extortion and profiteering by repeated increases in prices and excise duty on petrol and diesel has surpassed all forms of exploitation."

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee wants to spread violence because she knows she has lost her ground. So, she wants to come to power again in the state, riding on the power of violence. I feel that violence or any fear of it should have no place in

Need Central forces in WB: Vijayvargiya  
TMC cracks whip against dissidents

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, DEC. 13

Senior BJP leader Kailash Vijayvargiya on Sunday sought the immediate deployment of Central paramilitary forces to tackle rising violence under Trinamul Congress rule and to restore normalcy in poll-bound West Bengal.

His demand comes in the wake of two BJP workers' murder in the past 24 hours in the state and TMC workers' violent attack on BJP president J.P. Nadda's convoy on December 10 during his visit to Diamond Harbour, the Lok Sabha constituency of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee in South 24 Parganas.

"Chief minister Mamata Banerjee wants to spread violence because she knows she has lost her ground. So, she wants to come to power again in the state, riding on the power of violence. I feel that violence or any fear of it should have no place in

Vice-Chancellor of Visva-Bharati University Bidyut Chakrabarty welcomes BJP national secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya (C) at Visva-Bharati University in Birbhum district on Sunday. — PTI

Bengal's culture. We appeal to the Election Commission to deploy Central forces now to end the era of the politics of violence here and ensure that people can cast their votes without any fear," the BJP national general secretary said at Santiniketan after he met Visvabharti vice-chancellor Bidyut Chakrabarty to discuss Prime Minister Narendra Modi's virtual address at the Central uni-

versity's foundation day function on December 24.

During the day, a BJP worker's body with injury marks on his face was found from a pond at Katwa in Burdwan East. Sukdeb Pramanik, the deceased, was from the party's Mondal No. 38 in Purbasthali. Two days back he had gone to participate in a protest in the district against the attack on Nadda's convoy but went missing.

speculations of switching over to the BJP, he said.

"The state leadership cannot take these activities lightly," the leader said.

A defiant Panda said that he feels "relieved" with the party's decision as he had been under serious stress over the past few days despite "speaking the truth".

"I diligently served this party, which threw me out after all these years of working at the grassroots level. I remain on the side of Suvendu Adhikari. We will continue to serve the people," he told reporters.

In the last two weeks, Adhikari loyalists in East Midnapore, his home ground, were either removed from posts or ousted after Banerjee asked the district leadership not to tolerate anti-party activities. — PTI

## AAP LEADERS DETAINED FOR PROTESTS OVER CIVIC FUNDS

New Delhi, Dec. 13: Four AAP MLAs, including Raghab Chaddha, were detained on Sunday while on their way to stage a protest outside Union home minister Amit Shah's residence here, a day after the party alleged misappropriation of crores of rupees by the BJP-ruled municipal corporations and demanded a CBI probe into it.

Shortly after their release, the legislators termed their detention "illegal" and alleged that the BJP government at the Centre was "trying to bury the corruption matter using the Delhi Police."

The Aam Aadmi Party has alleged misappropriation of over ₹2,400 crore in the North Delhi and South Delhi municipal corporations and had announced to stage protests outside the residences of Amit Shah and Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal from Sunday till a probe is ordered.

Chaddha, Burari MLA Sanjeev Jha, Kirari MLA Rituraj Jha and Kondli MLA Kuldeep Kumar were detained on Sunday while they were on their way to stage a protest outside Shah's residence.

Atishi and eight others were briefly detained while protesting in front of the Delhi LG's residence.

Addressing a joint press conference shortly after their release, Chadha said, "There was no provision to detain us, when we asked why we are being detained they said it is because section 144 is in place which prevents assembly of more than four people but then we were four people only who were going to protest."

"It is clear that the scam we have unearthed has involvement of the top brass and that is why these attempts are being made to stop us from raising the matter," Atishi said. — PTI

## Raut takes a dig at BJP over stir

Nashik, Dec. 13: Taking a dig at the BJP over Union minister Raosaheb Danve's claim that China and Pakistan were behind the ongoing stir of farmers in Delhi, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut has asked the Centre to conduct a "surgical strike" in this regard. Danve had stirred

a controversy with his remarks that China and Pakistan were behind the protests being staged by cultivators, inviting sharp reactions from various quarters.

"The BJP is saying that Pakistan and China are behind the farmers' agitation in New Delhi. Defence

minister belongs to the BJP. The BJP should conduct a surgical strike in this regard," Raut told reporters on Saturday.

He said the agitating farmers hailing from Punjab and Haryana have stood their ground despite the use of force by the Union government.

"If the Centre takes two steps backward for the welfare of farmers, it will not lower its value. The government should retreat and hold discussions on the farm laws in the Lok Sabha again and re-introduce these laws as per the expectations of the farmers," Raut added. — PTI



Women prepare food at Singhu border in New Delhi on Sunday during farmers sit-in protest against the new farm laws. — PTI

## Security beefed up across borders

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

The Delhi Police has enhanced its security arrangements across the border points by deploying extra security personnel and placing multilayered barricading as thousands of agitating farmers threatened to block the Jaipur-Delhi and the Delhi-Agra Expressways on Sunday.

The police have made adequate arrangements and these include multi-layered barricading and deployment of personnel. Measures have also been taken to ensure commuters do not face inconvenience at places where protests are being staged, a senior police officer said.

The Delhi Traffic Police has deployed its personnel across important border points to ensure commuters do not face difficulties and is constantly updating people about open and closed routes on its Twitter handle.

The developments come after farmer leaders on Wednesday rejected a government proposal to amend the new agri laws and announced they would intensify their agitation by blocking the Jaipur-Delhi and the Yamuna expressway by Saturday. But no such protests were witnessed on the said borders on

Saturday.

The Tikri and the Dhanasa borders are also closed for traffic movement but the Jhatikara border is open only for two-wheelers and pedestrian movement, the traffic police said in a tweet on Sunday.

Those going towards Haryana, can take Jharkhoda (only single carriage-way), Daurala, Kapashera, Badusarai, Rajokri NH 8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam Vihar and Dundahera borders as they are open, the traffic police said.

The Gazipur borders is closed for traffic from Noida & Gaziabad to Delhi due to farmers protests. People are advised to take alternate route for coming to Delhi via chilla, Anand Vihar, DNDPS, Apsara & bhopra borders," it tweeted.

It also informed commuters about the closure of the Singhu, Auchandi, Piau, Maniyari and Mangesh borders.

Since these borders are closed, it suggested that motorists take alternative routes via Lajpura, Sufiabad, Saboli and Singhu School toll tax borders.

Thousands of farmers have been protesting at various areas on Delhi's borders for the last 17 days and demanding that the laws be withdrawn.

right to comment on what a farmer should eat or wear.

"Few people just cannot digest that a farmer can have a car, wear good clothes and have a pizza. The farmer has moved on from dhoti-kurta to jeans and T-shirt," the 25-year-old student says.

"It's about time these people grew up. One of the reasons for organising a 'pizza langar' was to change the public perception about farmers," he added.

Gill says no one has the right to comment on what a farmer should eat or wear. "People have been calling us 'so-called farmers'. Before making any such comment, they should come and meet us first. They will get to know that our thinking is much better than theirs," he said.

The five friends have decided to organise another such langar, which they say will be better and bigger. It can be pizza or burger or something else, too, Sandhu said. — PTI

## Five friends from Amritsar distributed around 400 pizzas to protesting peasants

## Pizza langar made due to shortage of time

New Delhi, Dec. 13: A group of five friends set out from Amritsar on a cold Saturday morning. They didn't have much time to organise a regular langar, so they collected 'regular-sized' pizzas from a Haryana mall and set up a stall at the Singhu border.

Around 400 pizzas were distributed within minutes as a huge crowd, including the protesting peasants and residents from nearby areas, queued up. The 'pizza langar' has

since hogged headlines and garnered compliments from different quarters, and also brickbats from a certain section.

"The farmers who gave the dough for pizzas can also afford to have one themselves," says Sharbir Singh Sandhu, who organised the 'pizza langar' with his four friends for the peasants protesting at the Delhi-Haryana border against the contentious agri-marketing laws.

"We didn't have much time to organise a regular



## SHORT TAKES

**NIGERIA: GUNMEN ATTACK SCHOOL, 400 KIDS MISSING**

Lagos (Nigeria), Dec. 13: Hundreds of Nigerian students are missing after gunmen attacked a secondary school in the country's northwestern Katsina state, police have confirmed.

The Government Science Secondary School in Kankara was attacked Friday night by a large group of bandits who shot "with AK 47 rifles," Katsina State police spokesman Gambo Isaah said in a statement. Police engaged the attackers "in a gun duel which gave (some of) the students the opportunity to scale the fence of the school and run for safety," Isaah said. About 400 students are missing, while 200 are accounted for, Isaah said. The school is believed to have more than 600 students.

**AZERBAIJAN DECLARE BREACH IN PEACE DEAL**

Baku, Dec. 13: Azerbaijan announced on Sunday that four of its troops had been killed in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region since a peace deal with Armenian separatists was agreed in early November.

The defence ministry said a group of Armenian fighters remained in the mountainous province — breaking the terms of the Russian-brokered truce — and had recently launched fatal attacks on Azerbaijani forces.

The ministry said three servicemen were killed in a separatist ambush on November 26 and another sustained fatal injuries during an attack near the village of Hadrut on Tuesday last week.

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan accused each other breaching the truce that ended six weeks of fighting between the longstanding foes for control of the breakaway region.

**IRAN SUMMONS EU ENVOYS FOR PROTESTING**

Tehran, Dec. 13: Iran on Sunday summoned the German envoy to Tehran after the European Union condemned the execution of an Iranian journalist whose work helped inspire nationwide economic protests in 2017, Iranian state media has reported.

IRNA said that an Iranian foreign ministry official summoned the German ambassador because of EU statements on the exiled reporter Ruhollah Zam, 47, who was hanged on Saturday. Zam was being held in jail in Iran after Iranian authorities seized him while he was traveling in neighboring Iraq last year.

The German Foreign Ministry on Saturday expressed its shock about the circumstances of Zam's sentencing and what it described as his "abduction from abroad" and forced return to Iran. Iran will also summon today the French ambassador to Tehran over European reactions to the journalist's execution, IRNA added.

**MANY HELD AT PARIS STIR OVER SECURITY BILL**

Paris, Dec. 13: Paris police took nearly 150 people into custody at what quickly became a tense and sometimes ill-tempered protest Saturday against proposed security laws, with officers wading into the crowds of several thousand to haul away suspected trouble-makers.

Police targeted protesters they suspected might coalesce together into violent groups like those who vandalized stores and vehicles and attacked officers at previous demonstrations.

The interior minister said police detained 142 people. Long lines of riot officers and police vehicles with blue lights flashing escorted Saturday's march through rain-slickened streets. They hemmed in protesters, seeking to prevent the flare-up of violence that marked many previous demonstrations.

A police water cannon dispersed demonstrators at the end of the march, as night fell. Marchers were protesting against a proposed security law that has sparked successive weekends of demonstrations and against a draft law aimed at combating Islamist radicalism. The security bill's most contested measure could make it more difficult to film police officers. It aims to outlaw the publication of images with intent to cause harm to police.

**Brexit deadline goes 'extra mile'**

**Johnson feels Brexit failure still 'most likely'**

London, Dec. 13: UK businesses clamored for compromise on Sunday as Prime Minister Boris Johnson said failure remains the "most likely" outcome to marathon post-Brexit trade talks with the European Union.

"I'm afraid we're still very far apart on some key things, but where there's life there's hope," Johnson told reporters, after agreeing with EU commission chief Ursula von der Leyen to push on with negotiations.

The pair had said they would decide whether or not a deal was possible by the end of the weekend, but agreed in a phone call to "go the extra mile" before the UK leaves the EU's single market on December 31.

"The UK certainly won't be walking away from the talks. I still think there's a deal to be done if our partners want to do it," Johnson said at 10 Downing Street after briefing his cabinet about the call.

But Britain could not compromise on the "fundamental nature" of Brexit, controlling UK laws and fisheries, he said.

"The most likely thing now is of course we have to get ready for WTO terms," Johnson added, referring to tariffs and quotas on the basic rules of trade set by the World Trade Organisation.

"There is a clarity and a



Ursula von der Leyen

simplicity in that approach that has its own advantages. It's not where we wanted to get to... but the UK is prepared," he said.

"Either way, whatever happens, the UK will do very, very well." UK businesses welcomed the agreement to keep talking, but disagreed strongly with Johnson's cheerful forecasts for Britain's future if it severs all ties with its biggest overall trading partner from the New Year.

"We now need negotiators to finish the job and agree the deal we all so desperately need," Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders chief executive Mike Hawes tweeted.

Hawes added: "No deal" would be nothing less than catastrophic for the automotive sector, its workers and their families, and represent a stunning failure of statecraft. Quite simply, it has to be

ruled out." Nissan has warned that a no-deal Brexit would make its Sunderland car factory in northeast England, which employs more than 6,000 workers, unviable due to the restoration of tariffs on cross-Channel trade.

Last week, Japanese automaker Honda suspended production at its British plant for a day after suffering a shortfall in parts, owing to blockages at ports caused by the coronavirus pandemic and Brexit stockpiling.

Even with a trade deal, Britain will still be out of the EU's common market and businesses will face new customs regulations and paper work.

They warn the government has failed to get vital IT systems ready in time, leading to fears of transport gridlock on roads and at ports.

Confederation of British Industry director-general Tony Danker said the news of talks continuing "gives hope", but demanded the government fix the IT rollout and offer more support to businesses.

"A deal is both essential and possible. It is the only way to build upon the extensive support for the economy given by all governments during the pandemic. Without it, that progress is undermined," he said in a statement.

The British Chambers of Commerce appealed to London and Brussels not to give up. — AFP



Thousands of red-hatted protesters filled Washington streets to demand 'four more years' for Donald Trump's presidency and to denounce, without proof, the 'massive fraud' they insist gave the election to Joe Biden. — AFP

**Clashes erupt after pro-Trump rallies**

Washington, Dec. 13:

Four people were stabbed and one shot as rallies backing President Donald Trump's baseless claims of election fraud led to clashes in major US cities on Saturday.

Scuffles broke out in many places between rally-goers and counter-protesters who turned up to criticize the president, who lost the November 3 election to Democrat Joe Biden but is yet to concede.

Washington State Police said in a tweet late Saturday that a shooting had taken place after clashes near the capitol building in Olympia, and that a suspect had been detained.

In the US capital, DC Fire and EMS Department communications chief Doug Buchanan said that four people had been stabbed and were now hospitalized "with serious injuries."

The New York Times reported that 23 had been arrested throughout the day.

There was no indication of whether any of the victims had been involved in the protests, on either side of the divide.

The day had begun with a festive atmosphere as thousands of red-hatted protesters filled Washington's streets to support the president, undeterred by the US Supreme Court's rejection

on Friday of what may have been his last chance to overturn the results.

Similar events took place in Olympia, Atlanta and St. Paul, Minnesota, as well as in smaller towns in Nebraska, Alabama and elsewhere.

Demonstrators at the DC rally — noticeably smaller than a similar protest last month — said they were steadfast in their support for the embattled president.

"We're not gonna give up," said Luke Wilson, a sixty-something protester who had come all the way from the western state of Idaho.

"I believe there is a big injustice being done to the American people," added

Dell Quick, a regular at Trump's political rallies, as he brandished a flag defending gun rights.

Protesters offered no shortage of explanations for the poll results, even though they have been affirmed by state election officials — several of them Republican — and by judges in several key states.

Every state has now certified the results, giving Biden 306 votes in the Electoral College to Trump's 232. Electors are to formally cast their votes on Monday. But protesters insisted, as Trump has repeatedly, that there was widespread fraud in the election. — AFP

**US set for Covid vaccine rollout****Non-essential shops, schools to close in Germany, says Merkel**

Washington, Dec. 13: The first trucks carrying a Covid-19 vaccine for widespread use in the US were set to pull out of a Michigan manufacturing plant Sunday, with the shots that are critical to stopping the nation's Coronavirus outbreak destined to reach states a day later.

Shipments of the Pfizer vaccine will set in motion the biggest vaccination effort in American history at a critical juncture of the pandemic that has killed 1.6 million and sickened 71 million worldwide. Initially, about 3 million doses were expected to be sent out, and the priority is health care workers and nursing home residents as infections, hospitalizations and deaths soar in the US. With numbers likely to get worse over the holidays, the vaccine is offering a bright spot in the fight against the pandemic that's killed nearly 3,000,000 Americans.

Federal officials say the first shipments of Pfizer's vaccine will be staggered, arriving in 145 distribution centers Monday, with an additional 425 sites getting shipments on Tuesday, and the remaining 66 on Wednesday.

The vaccine, co-developed by German partner BioNTech, is being doled out based on each state's adult population. Pennsylvania health care giant UPMC has chosen staff who are critical to operating its facilities as among those getting the first round of vaccinations, said Dr. Graham Snyder, who led the center's vaccine task force. "It's very exciting. I will be thrilled, that moment when we administer our first dose," Snyder said Saturday. — AP

essentially outlawing the business of mulled wine stands, which have proved popular in the days running up to Christmas.

"The Corona situation is out of control," said Bavarian state premier Markus Soeder, welcoming the tougher restrictions which he pledged to implement in his state.

Germany in November closed leisure and cultural facilities and banned indoor dining in restaurants.

The measures had helped to halt rapid growth of infections after the autumn school holidays, but numbers had plateaued at a high rate.

Alcohol sales would be banned in public places,

Over the last week however, the country's disease control agency reported that the infections trend has taken a worrying turn.

"With increasing mobility and the therefore linked additional contacts in the pre-Christmas period, Germany is now in exponential growth of infections numbers," said the policy paper agreed by regional leaders and Merkel.

It was therefore "our task to prevent an overload of our health systems and that's why there is an urgent need to take action," said the chancellor. — AFP

**Country music star Charley Pride dies**

Dallas, Dec. 13: Charley Pride, country music's first Black superstar, has died of complications from Coronavirus at age 86.

Pride, known for hits like "Kiss an Angel Good Mornin'" and "Is Anybody Goin' to San Antone?", died Saturday in Dallas, Texas, according to a statement shared on the singer's official website. Born a sharecropper's son in Sledge, Mississippi, on March 18, 1934, Pride emerged from Southern cotton fields to also become the first Black member of the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Veteran country singer

and Pride's friend, Dolly Parton was among the first to pay tributes on social media. "I'm so heartbroken that one of my dearest and oldest friends, Charley Pride, has passed away. It's even worse to know that he passed away from Covid-19. What a horrible, horrible virus," Parton tweeted.

"Charley, we will always love you. Rest In Peace. My love and thoughts go out to his family and all of his fans," she added. Singer-songwriter Billy Ray Cyrus remembered Pride as a "gentleman, legend and true trail blazer."

— AP

**JAPAN, S. KOREA SET NEW DAILY COVID RECORDS**

Tokyo, Dec. 13: Japan's daily Coronavirus cases have exceeded 3,000 for the first time while the government delays stricter measures for fear of hurting the economy ahead of the holiday season.

The 3,030 new cases, including 621 in Tokyo, took Japan's national tally to 1,77,287 with 2,562 deaths, the Health Ministry said on Sunday.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region: — South Korea has set another record for its daily coronavirus tally with 1,030, as authorities struggle to suppress the viral spread. — AP

**Pakistan Oppn set to stage final showdown in Lahore****Slain Taliban chief took life insurance**

Islamabad, Dec. 13: The Pakistan Democratic Movement, an 11-party opposition alliance seeking the ouster of "puppet" Prime Minister Imran Khan, is set to hold its final rally here on Sunday, despite a ban on the gathering of more than 300 people owing to an increase in Covid-19 cases across the country.

A number of workers of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) have reached Minar-i-Pakistan. They broke the locks of its main gate, placed chairs and have installed lights for Sunday's much-hyped power show of the Opposition.

The rally will be addressed by former prime minister and PML-N supreme leader Nawaz Sharif from London, his daughter Maryam Nawaz, Jamiat Ulema Islam chief and PDM head Maulana Fazlur Rehman and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

"The government has

not given permission to the PDM to hold a rally at Minar-e-Pakistan Lahore because of the rise in Covid-19 cases. Action will be taken against those who will take the law into their hands," Punjab Law Minister Basharat Raja said.

So far, police in Lahore

have booked more than

3,000 workers of the

Pakistan Muslim League-

Nawaz (PML-N) for violating Covid-19 SOPs during this week's meetings held here by its vice-president Maryam, he said. PDM's Minar-i-Pakistan public meeting will be the last one in its first phase of rallies that had begun

during the hearing of the case registered against Mansour and his accomplices by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) last year, Dawn news reported.

It emerged during the investigation that the Taliban leader and his accomplices were involved in generating funds for terrorist activities through the purchase of properties on the basis of "forged identities".

He had purchased five properties including plots and houses, estimated to be valued at \$32 million (\$1,99,812) in Karachi.

The report said that it surfaced during the investigation that Mullah Akhtar Mansour had purchased the "life insurance" policy by using a fake identity and had paid up to \$3,00,000 to the company before his death in the drone attack on May 21, 2016.

PTI

over two months ago. The PDM will announce the 'decisive phase' of its struggle against Prime Minister Usman Buzdar as the PDM to delay its Minar-e-Pakistan rally in light of 'terror threat alerts' and the Coronavirus situation.

The alliance has already announced that all Opposition parties will resign from the national and provincial assemblies to pressure the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government for fresh elections.

The long march towards Islamabad is also on the cards for the PDM. Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar has asked the PDM to delay its Minar-e-Pakistan rally in light of 'terror threat alerts' and the Coronavirus situation.

The alliance has already announced that all Opposition parties will resign from the national and provincial assemblies to pressure the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government for fresh elections.

**Congressman Ro Khanna seeks fair, peaceful solution to farmers**

Washington, Dec. 13: Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna has hoped for a peaceful and fair solution to the farmers' issues in India, saying he is encouraged by the ongoing dialogue between the Department of State for an early investigation and action against the culprits under the applicable law.

Khanna, 44, was recently elected for a third consecutive term from the congressional district representing Silicon Valley. "India and the US share a rich tradition of democracy and peaceful protests.

Farmworkers are the backbone of both our nations and must have their voices heard. "I hope there's a peaceful and fair solution so they can provide for their families," Khanna said in a tweet on Saturday. "I am encouraged by the ongoing dialogue," he said, joining other American lawmakers who have expressed their views on the ongoing farmers' protest in India, several of whom have expressed their concerns. — PTI

**FARMERS SUPPORT****Car rally to Indian embassy hijacked by separatist Sikhs who were carrying Khalistani flags****Khalistan supporters vandalise Gandhi's statue in US**

Washington, Dec. 13: A violent group of Khalistani separatists has desecrated Mahatma Gandhi's statue outside the Indian embassy here in the US during a demonstration by Sikh-American youths in support of farmers protesting against the recently enacted agriculture laws in India.

Hundreds of Sikhs from in and around Greater Washington DC area, Maryland

## quick BITES

### INDICATORS %

Sensex	46,099.01	0.30
Nifty 50	13,513.85	0.26
S&P 500*	3,663.46	-0.39
Dollar (₹)	73.64	0.03
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.75	0.35
Euro (₹)	89.31	-0.17
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,594 ▲102	0.20
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	50.03	-0.22
INR 10-Yr bond yield	5.956	0.040
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.883	-0.025

\* As of Friday/Saturday

### Third tranche of Bharat Bond ETF likely this fiscal

The Centre is likely to launch the third tranche of Bharat Bond ETF, the exchange traded fund that invests in PSU debt, this fiscal. "Central public sector enterprises have fund raising plans of about Rs 12,000 crore. We are thinking of launching the next tranche of Bharat Bond ETF in a couple of months," a source said. The second tranche of Bharat Bond ETF, launched in July, was oversubscribed more than three times.

### EPFO may credit 8.5% interest on EPF by Dec.-end



Retirement fund body EPFO is likely to credit 8.5 per cent rate of interest for 2019-20 in the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) accounts of around six crore subscribers in one go by the end of December. Earlier in September this year, the EPFO had decided to split 8.5 per cent interest into two installments of 8.15 per cent and 0.35 per cent in its trustees meet headed by labour minister Santosh Gangwar.

### Triumph plans 9 new bikes in India in H1

Triumph Motorcycles has an aggressive product pipeline for India market in the next six months, with nine new bike models, including some special editions, slated for launch as the British premium bike-maker looks to consolidate its position further in the niche space, an official said. Triumph India has 16 motorcycles in its portfolio ranging from modern classics to adventure motorcycles, including the iconic Rocket 3R.

### Bharti Infratel gets nod to be Indus Towers

Bharti Infratel has got approval from the RoC for changing its name to Indus Towers, following the recent merger of the two firms. The company has initiated due process for final approval from stock exchanges for updating the name change. In a BSE filing, Bharti Infratel said it "has received approval from the Registrar of Companies, NCT of Delhi and Haryana for change of name of the company."

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## ■ Person days rise but fewer households get 100 days job Job guarantee scheme utilises 90% of funds

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, DEC. 13

Person days generated by the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guaranteed Scheme have already crossed last year's numbers and fewer people are turning up for work in rural areas from September. However, the total number of households which have received 100 days of guaranteed employment is lagging far behind compared to last year.

The scheme has used up over 90 per cent of the allocation for the fiscal so far.

With the government increasing the allocation of MGNREGA this year due to the pandemic, the number of person days have already touched 276.51 crore against 265.43 crore in last fiscal.

However, the goal of providing 100 days of employment to households has been met only for 20.81



lakh households. This is almost half of 40.60 lakh households covered last fiscal.

Average days of employment per household too are lower at 41.76 days against 48.4 days last year.

But a larger number of households, 6.62 crore, participated in the job guarantee scheme this year against 5.48 crore households last year. The total number of individuals too

has been higher at 9.6 crore against 7.89 crore last year.

"People from a single household participating in the scheme would have been more this time. Both individuals and households are higher," said Kruti Shah, economist, Emkay Global Financial Services.

The work demand—or those seeking work—has been tapering down since September. This month, the work demand stood at 1.44 crore households against 2.27 crore in November. Work demand was the highest in June at

4.47 crore. At 3.89 crore, the employment provided to households was also at the highest level in June.

The scheme has undertaken 1.84 crore new and spillover works this fiscal against 1.91 crore last year. The expenditure on agriculture and allied works has been higher this year at 69.42 per cent against 66.12 per cent last year.

The scheme has utilised 90.85 per cent of the Rs 85,124 crore available till now. The total expenses made till now stood at Rs 77,337 crore against Rs 68,286 crore last fiscal. The scheme had utilised 90.43 per cent of the available funds last year.

The government had increased the allocation for MGNREGA this year by Rs 40,000 crore and this had taken the total allocation to Rs 1 lakh crore. With the work demand tapering and four more months left, it will have to be seen whether the scheme utilises the total allocation.

While businesses file GSTR-1 of a particular month by the 11th day of the subsequent month, GSTR-3B is filed in a staggered manner between 20th-24th day of the succeeding month.

Also, the facility of communication between taxpayers has been enabled on the GST portal.

EY tax partner Abhishek Jain said the GSTN has enabled the facility for suppliers and recipients to communicate with one another over the online portal itself.

"This shall enable the businesses to raise a red flag to their suppliers/recipients in relation to various discrepancies at their end, as well as receive their comments.

This development by the GSTN should facilitate better reconciliation of GST credits," Jain said. —PTI

### GSTN enables auto-populated GSTR-3B return form from Nov.

New Delhi, Dec. 13: Businesses will now get complete auto-populated monthly sales return form GSTR-3B, the GSTN said on Sunday.

For ease of taxpayers, now the system will auto-populate GSTR-3B (monthly) on the basis of details filed in GSTR-1 and auto-drafted ITC statement GSTR-2B from November 2020 tax period onwards,

the Goods and Services

Tax Network said.

Based on the supplies return GSTR-1 filed by businesses, GSTN will auto-populate the liabilities, while input tax credit (ITC) would be populated from system-drafted statement GSTR-2B.

If the total liability of a particular period is negative on account of debit/credit notes, the same will be auto-populated as zero," GSTN said.

EY tax partner Abhishek Jain said the GSTN has enabled the facility for sup-

pliers and recipients to communicate with one another over the online portal itself.

"This shall enable the businesses to raise a red flag to their suppliers/recipients in relation to various discrepancies at their end, as well as receive their comments.

This development by the GSTN should facilitate better reconciliation of GST credits," Jain said. —PTI

## Maruti Suzuki to re-enter diesel segment next year

New Delhi, Dec. 13: The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSIL) is looking to enter the diesel segment once again next year as the vertical continues to draw customers, especially in the high-selling SUV and multipurpose vehicle segments, as per industry sources.

The auto major had discontinued diesel models from its portfolio with the onset of stricter BS-VI emission norms from April this year.

As per the sources, MSIL has initiated the process to upgrade its Manesar-based powertrain plant so that it can start rolling out BS-VI diesel engines starting the middle of festive season next year.

Sources also confirmed that the company plans to utilise the BS-VI compliant diesel powertrain in the Ertiga and Vitara Brezza to start with in the domestic market.

The auto major, however, did not specify any



reasons for reentering the diesel segment.

When contacted, an MSIL spokesperson said in a statement: "We cannot give any guidance on future technologies."

Sources said the company is looking to upgrade the current set-up at the Manesar plant, which earlier used to produce its in-house developed BS-IV compliant 1,500-cc diesel engine.

MSIL had used this powertrain briefly in its mid-sized sedan Ciaz and Ertiga before deciding to pull the plug on diesel.

The company's other models like Vitara Brezza, Dzire, Swift, S-Cross and Baleno at that time used to be powered by the Fiat-sourced 1,300 diesel unit.

MSI's entire model range is currently powered by BS-VI compliant 1 litre, 1.2 litre and 1.5 litre gasoline engines. The company sells CNG versions of some of the models.

On April 26, 2019, MSI chairman R.C. Bhargava had announced that the company will phase out all diesel cars from its portfolio with effect from April 1, 2020.

He reasoned that small diesel cars would see the maximum impact in terms of pricing with the coming of BS-VI compliant engines.

He, however, at that time had added that if there is a demand for BS-VI diesel cars the company might go ahead and cater to that demand.

—PTI

## Investors keen on how Vedanta deal with structural challenges

RAHUL SATIJA,  
BIJOU GEORGE &  
AMEYA KARVE  
DEC. 13

Investors in Vedanta Resources Ltd are turning their attention to the miner's longer-term plan to streamline a complex group structure that has kept the parent from easily accessing cash at its units.

Vedanta Resources, controlled by billionaire Anil Agarwal, allayed some immediate concerns this week when it received vital funding by selling \$1 billion notes due 2024 at 13.875 per cent, albeit at one of the highest yields for a dollar bond in Asia this year.

The company plans to use that cash to finance a buy-back offer for \$670 million of notes due next year, and the rest to repay other debt or to increase stakes in its Indian units.

However, the company has yet to announce a plan on how it wants to address its structural challenges. A failed plan to simplify its corporate layout by delist-

ing its Indian unit Vedanta Ltd in October had triggered concerns on its ability to refinance its biggest wall of debt maturities in years.

Neel Gopalakrishnan, an analyst at S&P Global Ratings, expects the company to again focus on the inefficient structure after the bond sale. "We believe the company intends to improve its corporate structure by increasing its ownership in Vedanta Limited," he said.

The company had called the privatisation in May as "the next logical step" in addressing the structure to provide more financial flexibility in the business.

A spokesperson for Vedanta Resources declined to discuss the next steps, only saying the \$1 billion bond sale last week amounted to a vote of confidence from investors in the company.

But another attempt at the buyout of the Indian unit won't be easy. In October, shareholders of Vedanta Ltd thwarted the plan to delist it as some

investors including LIC of India, among the biggest public shareholders, demanded a higher price for tendering their shares.

If the company tries to privatise the unit at too high a price, "it might encounter funding issues again," said R. Lakshmanan, an analyst at CreditSights Singapore LLC.

Moody's Investors Service, which is reviewing the credit ratings for down-grade, said it could confirm Vedanta Resources's grades if it simplifies its group structure and refinances debt maturities with long-term debt.

Analysts expect liquidity concerns to persist at Vedanta Resources, worsened by the difficulty in accessing cash from the money-spinning Indian units.

The trouble resurfaced last month when a \$956 million loan from Vedanta Ltd—channelled through Cairn India Holdings Ltd—to parent Vedanta Resources led to a spat with a hedge fund.

—Bloomberg

## UP okays sops for Samsung display factory



New Delhi, Dec. 13: Uttar Pradesh said it will give financial incentives to South Korea's Samsung Electronics Co to set up a Rs 4,825 crore (\$654.36 million) display factory.

Samsung is re-locating the factory to the state from China, the Uttar Pradesh administration said in a statement, a move that will help boost Prime Minister Narendra Modi's flagship drive to make India a manufacturing hub.

India is the world's second-biggest smartphone market with significant growth potential, which has driven companies such as Samsung to expand locally.

New Delhi earlier this year also approved financial incentives—under a \$6.65 billion central plan to boost domestic smartphone production—for 16 companies, including Samsung and top Apple suppliers Foxconn, Wistron and Pegatron.

On Friday, Uttar Pradesh said Samsung will receive Rs 700 crore in financial benefits and will also get an exemption from a tax payable on the transfer of land for the factory.

Samsung had sought tax and other incentives from Uttar Pradesh for this smartphone display manufacturing plant, Reuters previously reported.

The unit, expected to create 510 direct jobs, is expected to be operational next year.

Samsung already operates one of the world's biggest mobile phone manufacturing plants in Uttar Pradesh.

—Reuters

## HOT MONEY AGAIN Positive global trends buoying traders' desire for both real and paper barrels

## Oil rises from the ashes as a Covid recovery bet

ALEX LONGLEY  
& JAVIER BLAS  
DEC. 13

Brent crude topped \$50 a barrel last week for the first time since March, a milestone for an oil market that's been grinding its way back out of a deep slump for months.

Things aren't back to normal yet, but the positive signals are proliferating. The enormous glut of fuel that accumulated this year on everything from tiny barges to giant super tankers is being steadily depleted.

While the coronavirus pandemic is worse than ever in the US, demand in Europe is bouncing back as a second wave of lockdowns eases and Asia continues to pull in huge volumes of crude.

But there's more to this

### THREE-SPEED RECOVERY Road usage compared to pre-coronavirus levels



Source: Bloomberg News based on traffic congestion and road usage data

— Bloomberg

pre-Covid levels in China and Japan, the world's second and fourth biggest oil consumers.

European motorists are hitting the roads again as governments relax national lockdowns in countries including the UK, Spain, and France, according to an index of road usage and traffic compiled by Bloomberg News. Road freight

## SHORT TAKES

**Joshua pummels Pulev, eyes Fury**

**London:** Anthony Joshua insists a blockbuster bout against Tyson Fury will "bring out the best in me" after his British rival claimed he would beat the world heavyweight champion in three rounds.

Joshua earned a ninth-round stoppage win against Kubrat Pulev on Saturday to retain his WBA, WBO, IBF and IBO belts at Wembley Arena. After a successful return to the ring in his first fight for 12 months, Joshua immediately found himself thrown into the debate about a mooted all-British showdown with WBC champion Fury.

Amid reports the hotly-anticipated fight is set for 2021, Fury took to social media to say: "I want the fight, I want the fight next and I will knock him out inside three rounds."

Joshua has no intention of backing down from the Fury clash, although hurdles in the way of the super-fight include his WBO mandatory challenger Oleksandr Usyk and another possible meeting between Fury and Deontay Wilder. "I said he's talented and he will bring out the best in me. So that's brilliant," he said. — AFP

**Gesture against racism fine: Coe**

**New Delhi:** World Athletics President Sebastian Coe says he is happy to "accommodate" athletes expressing their views against issues like racism but made it clear that such gestures should not infringe on other sportspersons' right to celebrate their moments of glory.

However, Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter bans any form of protest including taking a knee, raising a fist or refusing to follow protocol at medal ceremonies. Coe finds nothing wrong in expression of a view. "It is pretty evident that everybody is reviewing their view about their approach within their own sport.

I am very happy for the athletes if they choose to restate their opposition to discrimination or to racism in sport, anti-racist initiatives etc," Coe said. He said such expression of views should be "within a framework" and "cannot be in detriment of somebody else's intrinsic enjoyment and celebration of their achievement". — PTI

**Belotti 100th goal fails to save Torino**

**Milan:** Captain Andrea Belotti struck his 100th goal for Torino in a 3-2 defeat to Udinese which pushed the northerners to second last in the Italian League table on Saturday.

Torino matched their worst run of eight consecutive league defeats at home in Serie A, last achieved in 1959.

Ignacio Pussetto had put the visitors ahead on 24 minutes, after Udinese's Brazilian midfielder Wallace dispossessed Soualhino Meite, with play waved on despite protests of a foul from the home side.

Gerard Deulofeu sent the ball through for Argentine Pussetto to break through for a solo run to beat an outrushing Salvatore Sirigu in the Torino goal. Rodrigo De Paul added a second for the visitors from the edge of the box nine minutes after the break before Belotti reignited Torino hopes. Bonazzi found the back of the net in 67th minute but Nestorovski's 69th minute goal earned win for Udinese. — AP

**Lewa saves Bayern blushes**

**Berlin:** Robert Lewandowski marked his 200th Bundesliga appearance for Bayern Munich with a second-half equaliser in Saturday's 1-1 draw at Union Berlin which keeps the defending champions top on goal difference.

After Grischa Proemel put Union ahead with four minutes gone, Lewandowski, the Bundesliga's top-scorer, slotted his 13th goal in his 10th league game to rescue a point on 67th minutes.

Bayern have drawn their last two league games and Bayer Leverkusen can go top with a home win against Hoffenheim on Sunday.

The game in eastern Berlin was played behind closed doors, but Union fans fired a barrage of fireworks when the Bayern team bus arrived at the Alten Foersterei stadium. Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer pulled off a superb save after 52 seconds to deny Union's Liverpool loanee Taiwo Awoniyi. Proemel beat Neuer soon after when his deft header flew inside the far post. — AP

# DRAB DERBY

**City, United fire blanks in Manchester's big game**

**London, Dec. 13:** Manchester United failed to ease the pressure on Ole Gunnar Solskjaer after a limp display in their 0-0 draw against Manchester City, while Miguel Almiron scored in 20 seconds as Newcastle beat West Bromwich Albion 2-1 on Saturday.

Solskjaer faced calls for his sacking after United crashed out of the Champions League with a midweek defeat at Leipzig.

The beleaguered United manager desperately needed an uplifting result in the Manchester derby to win back some support.

But, with Paul Pogba restored to the starting line-up, United laboured to a drab draw that left them in seventh place on the table.

Meanwhile, Newcastle took less than a minute to grab the lead when Almiron swept his shot past West Brom keeper Sam Johnstone.

West Brom drew level five minutes into the second half at St James' Park.

Newcastle clinched the points in the 82nd minute when Dwight Gayle met a superb cross by fellow substitute Jacob Murphy to head past Johnstone.

Newcastle's second successive victory lifted the gloom from their virus issues, but struggling West Brom stay second bottom.

**EVERTON PIP CHELSEA**

The People's Club welcomed back its fans and Chelsea felt the full force.

With 2,000 supporters allowed back into Goodison Park after nine months, Everton won 1-0 on Saturday to end Chelsea's 17-match unbeaten run in all competitions.

It means third-place Chelsea can be overtaken if Leicester beats Brighton on Sunday and front-runners Tottenham and Liverpool can pull further away at the top of the Premier League.

It was an uncharacteristic mistake by Chelsea goalkeeper Edouard Mendy — bringing down Dominic Calvert-Lewin that allowed Gylfi Sigurdsson to score a penalty in the 22nd minute and spark home celebrations as Everton rose to seventh.

"The impact was really strong, we were really pleased," Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti said. "It is really important to have the support. It's a totally different environment, completely," he further added.

— Agencies

**THE RESULTS**

**Manchester United** 0  
**Manchester City** 0  
**Newcastle** 2  
(Almiron 1, Gayle 82)  
**West Bromwich** 1  
(Furlong 50)

**Everton** 1  
(Gylfi Sigurdsson)  
**Chelsea** 0



Raheem Sterling (front) of Manchester City vies with Manchester United's Harry Maguire during their English Premier League match at Old Trafford in Manchester, North West England, on Saturday. — AFP

## Casemiro stars in Real victory

**Barcelona, Dec. 13:** Real Madrid beat city rival Atletico Madrid 2-0 to tighten the Spanish league title race, dealing the leader its first loss in the competition in 10 months.

Casemiro opened the scoring for Zinedine Zidane's team in the 15th minute on Saturday.

A long strike by Dani Carvajal, that ricocheted off the post and the back of goalkeeper Jan Oblak before going in, sealed the victory midway through the second half.

Atletico entered the match at Alfredo Di Stefano Stadium with the chance to damage Madrid's title defense. Instead, Madrid was able to move to within three points of Atletico, climbing into third place with one of its best performances this campaign.

Atletico still has a game in hand, but the loss also gives second-place Real Sociedad the opportunity to move ahead when it hosts Eibar on Sunday.

Atletico had not lost in 26 straight league matches, dating back to Feb. 1 when it fell 1-0 at Madrid.

Diego Simeone's side entered the derby as favorite after winning seven straight rounds and



Casemiro (centre) of Real Madrid celebrates after scoring a goal against Club Atletico de Madrid during their Spanish league match at the Alfredo di Stefano stadium in Madrid on Saturday. Real Madrid won 2-0. — AFP

only conceding two goals in the entire 10 league matches it had played this season.

But despite its irregular season with unexpected losses to smaller rivals, Madrid was up to the challenge against another high-profile opponent.

Madrid disrupted

Atletico's attack from the start. With Toni Kroos excelling with his long passes from midfield, Madrid established a fluid attack that dominated the near post.

Also, Sevilla edged Getafe 1-0 with a late own-goal by Xabier Etxeita. Manu Vallejo also scored late to salvage a point for Valencia in a 2-2 draw with Athletic Bilbao. — AP

do nothing to stop Casemiro from heading in Kroos' corner kick to the near post.

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Dario Benedetto (left) of Marseille shoots and scores a goal against AS Monaco during their French League football match at the Velodrome Stadium in Marseille, Southeastern France, on Saturday. Marseille won 2-1. — AFP

## Marseille trample Monaco in France

**Paris, Dec. 13:** Marseille climbed to second in Ligue 1 on Saturday after scoring twice in the first 13 minutes and resisting late pressure to beat Monaco 2-1.

Marseille slumped out of Europe on Wednesday after a disastrous Champions League campaign which ended with a defeat at Manchester City, but this was their sixth straight French League victory.

With coach Andre Villas-Boas absent, suspended after receiving a red card on the bench in the game against Nimes last Friday, Marseille pounced on two early turnovers by Monaco.

After Monaco gave the ball away on the edge of their box in the fifth minute, Dario Benedetto burst down the left edge of

Monaco pressed in the second half, Thauvin headed in a goal.

Ben Yedder sent Steve Mandanda the wrong way from the spot kick, but the Marseille goalkeeper dealt serenely with Monaco's desperate attempts in the closing minutes.

— AFP



Wreckage from the car crash which killed footballer Motjeka Madisha in Ekurhuleni, South Africa, on Sunday.

## SA star Madisha dies in car crash

**Johannesburg, Dec. 13:** Mamelodi Sundowns and South Africa defender Motjeka Madisha died early Sunday after crawling out of a burning car wreckage following an accident, a club official said.

The 25-year-old star was one of two occupants of a car that went out of control, hit an advertising board and burst into flames in eastern Johannesburg, according to the official, who requested anonymity.

"I spoke to someone who arrived at the crash scene soon after the accident and he described a horrific scene with one body burnt beyond recognition," he said.

"Motjeka apparently managed to crawl out of the burning vehicle, but was declared dead by medical personnel at the scene of the accident," he added.

Madisha is the second Sundowns defender to die in a car accident within two months after Anele Ngconga, near the eastern city of Durban.

Ngconga spent nine years with Belgian club Genk and was loaned to French outfit Troyes before returning to South Africa four years ago.

Madisha was capped 13 times by South Africa on the back of becoming an established first choice centre-back in a Sundowns team that has been among the strongest in Africa during the past five years.

Known as "The Brazilians", they won the 2016 CAF Champions League and have been semi-finalists once and quarter-finalists twice since.

Sundowns won the Premiership FA Cup League Cup treble in South Africa last season and are top of the table after six rounds of the new league campaign.

— AFP

## Verstappen ends season with win

**Yas Marina (UAE), Dec. 13:** Max Verstappen claimed his second win of the season and the 10th of his career on Sunday when he drove to a clinical victory for Red Bull in a pedestrian season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

The 23-year-old Dutchman dominated from start to finish as he turned his third pole position into a demonstration of speed, talent and flawless strategy to leave both Mercedes men well beaten behind him.

It was the first time he had claimed a lights-to-flag victory in Formula One.

"What a way to close a season — fantastic mate," said his Red Bull engineer at the end on team radio.

"After such a busy year, I think everyone was a bit tired at the end, but it is amazing," he replied.

Verstappen eased home 15.976 seconds clear of Valtteri Bottas, who at least recovered some pride by taking second after his forlorn showing at the

Sakhir Grand Prix, and 18.415 ahead of seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton.

"I am so happy," said Verstappen. "I really enjoyed that and it is a great day for the team. I am going to enjoy the podium — and enjoy going home!" he added.

On his return to action after recovering from a bout of Covid-19, Hamilton struggled to make any impact as he battled through ahead of Alex Albon, who finished fourth in the second Red Bull just 1.5 seconds adrift of the out-of-form champion.

"Congratulations to Max. It was a hard race for me and I am glad it's all over. It's a fantastic result anyway to get two podium finishes," said Hamilton.

Lando Norris came home fifth ahead of his Ferrari-bound McLaren team-mate Carlos Sainz. Daniel Ricciardo, in his last race for Renault before replacing Sainz at McLaren, was seventh.

&lt;p

## SHORT TAKES

## Border slams poor show by Oz 'A'

**Sydney:** Former captain Allan Border on Sunday slammed Australia's lack of fight in the final session of second day's play in the pink ball warm-up game against India here, calling it an "absolute disgrace".

Rishabh Pant's brutal hitting and Hanuma Vihari's solidity saw India clobber 170 runs for the loss of just one wicket in the last session. Both got to their hundreds during that phase of the game, with Pant getting it off the day's final ball after a 22-run over. "One of the worst, (most) lethargic performances I have seen in the last session of any cricket. This is Australia A, they are representing Australia, they are young blokes trying to make their way. That fielding performance, bowling performance, captaincy performance — an absolute disgrace," Border said. — PTI

## Westwood bags Dubai golf title

**Dubai:** Lee Westwood secured his second Race to Dubai title and finished top European golfer for the third time, as Matt Fitzpatrick secured the DP World Tour Championship on Sunday. Fitzpatrick entered the final day on the Earth Course in Dubai sharing the lead with Patrick Reed, who was vying to become the first American to win the Race to Dubai.

After starting his round with four birdies, Fitzpatrick held a commanding lead and was on course to win the Race to Dubai. Westwood, however, birdied two of his last three holes to finish with a final round 68. "It's been a bizarre season for so many reasons, the European Tour have done an incredible job to pick the season up again from July and have tournaments on every week," Lee said. — AFP

## Honda Erula finish with 7 podiums

**Chennai:** The curtain went down on Sunday at the Madras Motor Race Track with final day of 2020 Indian National Motorcycle Racing Championship & IDEMITSU Honda India Talent Cup Round 1. Marking their dominance, ENEOS Honda Erula Racing team now lead the ProStock 165cc class of the total 7 podiums including 2 wins. Sunday's races saw Mathana Kumar stamping his first victory and a total of 4 podium finish while Rajiv Sethu bagged another podium finish for Honda in P165cc category. Alongside the national championship, the IDEMITSU Honda India Talent Cup saw the energetic young guns Sarthak Chavan, Kavin Quintal & Varoon S leading at top 3 in the NSP 250 open class whereas Shyam Babu leads the CBR150R Novice class.

## Datta signs off with a double

**Coimbatore:** Chennai's Ashwin Datta (Dark Don Racing) and Kottayam's Amir Sayed (MSport) signed off with a double each in the first round of the 23rd JK Tyre FMSCI National Racing Championship here on Sunday. Datta cashed in on the chances that came his way to win both races in the national championship class for Formula LGB4 cars. However, it wasn't a great start to the day for the youngster from Chennai as the placings had changed, based on protests and official observation, for Saturdays final race, which Datta won. The revised result saw him placed 12th and Sarosh Hataria was declared the winner. That did not deter Datta who won an incident-free first race in the morning. He followed it up with yet another fighting win in the second race.

## Live on TV

**CRICKET**  
Big Bash League: Sydney Thunder vs Brisbane Heat from 145 pm on Sony Six, HD

Lanka Premier League: Semifinal-2 from 7.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

**WWE**  
RAW: Bouts from 6.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

## HANUMAN ON FIRE

## Vihari confident of contributing to team's cause



Hanuma Vihari in action during the warm-up match against Australia 'A'. — BCCI

## GILLY CALLS FOR CLARITY OVER SMITH'S ROLE

**Sydney, Dec. 13:** Former Australia cricketer Adam Gilchrist has urged the national selectors to end all speculations around Steve Smith's captaincy, saying that the ex-skipper should be named vice-captain if they want him back at the top job.

Smith and his deputy David Warner had stepped down from their posts after they were slapped with a one-year international bans for their role in the 2018 ball-tampering scandal. Since then Tim Paine has been leading the Test team while Aaron Finch is at the helm of the white-ball sides.

"I see no reason why someone shouldn't have a second chance and if part of that is the captaincy for Steve Smith, if he's the right guy and the most obvious candidate, I can't see a reason why he shouldn't be allowed to do it," Gilchrist told Fox Cricket.

"If Cricket Australia and the selectors feel that way, and Steve Smith is keen to do it, I think they should make him vice-captain immediately."

Smith recently revealed that there have been discussions in the team about him returning to the top job again. — PTI

## Raina bags doubles crown Ankita ends year on high

**Dubai, Dec. 13:** Top Indian tennis player Ankita Raina won her third doubles title of the pandemic-hit 2020 season, clinching the Al Habtoor Challenge with Ekaterine Gorgodze here.

The 27-year-old said returning to the circuit after a long break too was relieving.

"It's really good that I am able to travel again. I was doing a bit of training, both physical and mental at home and it was different coming back to tour. Europe had already opened up and their players already had two months of match sharpness behind them."

"Most of the matches were on clay at that time and I had never played so many back-to-back clay court matches. It was a good learning curve."

During the last three months, Ankita also got exposure of playing on the US circuit.

"I have mostly played on hard courts and this time I got to play a lot in the US. Thankfully I had my coach Hemant Bendre's friend Shirish Deshpande to help me out. He has been there for long as a coach."

"It was good to have someone watching your matches and giving feedback." — PTI



## Mushtaq Ali T20 from January 10

**New Delhi, Dec. 13:** The BCCI will start its much-delayed domestic season with the Svet Mushtaq Ali Trophy from January 10 to 31 in six different states where bio-secure hubs will be created. The participating teams will be expected to report to their respective hubs on January 2.

Shah, however, said that a decision on Ranji Trophy and the Vijay Hazare Trophy will be taken once the group stage of the Mushtaq Ali gets over. Feedback from members will be factored in.

"BCCI will subsequently seek feedback from the members on organising any other domestic tournament after the group stage of Syed Mushtaq Ali trophy," he stated.

It is understood that Mushtaq Ali is being held because the BCCI wants to have a mega players' auction in early February ahead of the next IPL which may have nine or 10 teams. — PTI

## Vihari has made a strong case for his inclusion

## NEW ZEALAND CLOSE IN ON VICTORY IN SECOND TEST

**Wellington, Dec. 13:** New Zealand were in touching distance of an innings win and series sweep over the West Indies on Sunday when bad light stopped play on the third day of the second cricket Test.

The West Indies were 244/6 in their second innings at stumps drawn early because of the light still trailing New Zealand by 85 runs after being forced to follow on 329 behind.

West Indies captain Jason Holder was 60 not out and involved in an unbroken seventh-wicket stand with Joshua da Silva (25) which was worth 74 by stumps and frustrated

on 305/4 riding on Ben McDermott and Jack Wildermuth's centuries.

Both the batsmen survived a barrage of bouncers under lights from Indian pacers.

The talented McDermott (107 off 167 balls), younger son of



Bengaluru FC players celebrate their 4-2 win over Kerala Blasters in an ISL-7 match in Fatorda on Sunday. — ISL

in quick succession to give BFC breathing space but Jordan Murray (61') gave some hope to the away team. Sunil Chhetri (65') put the game to rest with a fine header. — Agencies

McDermott who was India's tormentor during the forgettable 91-92 series, along with his skipper Alex Carey (58, 111 balls) added 117 runs in a counter-attacking fourth wicket partnership to partially save the game. — PTI

**Brief scores:** New Zealand 460 vs West Indies 131 & 244/6 (Campbell 68, Holder 60\*, Boult 3/75, Jamieson 2/43).

**Vasco, Dec. 13:** NorthEast United extended their unbeaten run in the Indian Super League after a goalless draw with Chennaiyin FC here on Sunday.

With one point from the match, the Highlanders are placed joint second with ATK Mohun Bagan on 10 points while Chennaiyin FC have now failed to pick up a win in their last four matches. NorthEast United made three changes to their side as Idriss Sylla started upfront ahead of Kwesi Appiah.

**BFC CLIP KERALA WINGS**

Bengaluru FC walked away with three points after a 4-2 win over Kerala Blasters at the Fatorda Stadium.

The teams were tied 1-1 at the break with Rahul K.P. (17') giving Kerala a surprise lead which was called out by Cleiton Silva (29').

The second half saw four goals being scored in the span of 14 minutes. Erik Paartalu (51') and Dimas Delgado (53') scored

in quick succession to give BFC breathing space but Jordan Murray (61') gave some hope to the away team.

Sunil Chhetri (65') put the game to rest with a fine header. — Agencies

due to a groin injury he suffered during the second One Day International. Will Pucovski, the likely debutant, was declared out of contention due to the concussion he suffered after being hit on the head while batting in the first practice match against India A.

Joe Burns, the third opener is in miserable form notching just 5 runs in 4 innings against the visitors. Marcus Harris who was drafted into the Aussie Test squad as a replacement for Pucovski will probably open the innings with Burns, unless the hosts decide to take a punt with Marnus Labuschagne who has had a tremendous run in Test cricket over the last season. The ominous form shown by the Indian pacers, particularly

Mohammed Shami (who accounted for Burns and Harris in the last practice match) and Jasprit Bumrah has made the task of the Australian selectors a bit more difficult.

For India, the two practice matches in Sydney gave their batsmen an opportunity to test their form in the middle which was grabbed by those who intend to make the cut for the Adelaide Test. Currently, three batsmen (in the top/middle order) are certainties to be on the list to be exchanged at the toss: Cheteshwar Pujara, skipper Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane.

The dilemma that the Indian team management faces centres around the openers, the number six position, the wicket keeper and the bowling attack. For the opening slots, the choice will be between the experienced Mayank Agarwal, Prithvi Shaw and the uncapped Shubman Gill. Of these three, Agarwal looks to be more certain to walk out to bat at Adelaide considering his past record playing Test cricket in Australia.

Gill, who had a fruitful outing in the two practice matches and has impressed many with his technique in trying conditions, will be a strong contender as the second opener.

The point is will the Indians open with Gill, a debutant, in a crucial game or go in with Shaw who has four four positions, the wicket keeper and the bowling attack.

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