

COVID-19

COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+32,388)	(+498)
95,31,109	1,38,627
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+565)	(+1)
TS: 2,70,883	1,462
(+663)	(+7)
AP: 8,69,412	7,003

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

6,45,26,022

DEATHS

14,93,487

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Bahula Tadiya
til 7.23 pm
Star: Ardra till 12.18 pm
Varjyam: 12.56 am to 2.37 am (Friday)
Durmuhurtam: 10.15 am to 10.59 am; 2.40 pm to 3.24 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Aakhir 17, 1442 AH
PRAYERS (SHAH MASJID)
Fajar: 5.04 am
Zohar: 11.59 pm
Asar: 4.03 pm
Maghrib: 5.40 pm
Isha: 6.54 pm
SUNSET TODAY 5.39 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.20 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 8.12 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 9.33 AM

COUNTER POINT



ONE | DAY

Tendulkar overtaken

Kohli fastest to hit 12,000

Virat Kohli has always been a young man in a hurry. On Wednesday, he switched gears, swung into the fast lane... and overtook the iconic Sachin Tendulkar.

The aggressive Indian cricket captain raced into the record books to become the fastest batsman to score 12,000 runs in One-Day Internationals, during the third ODI against Australia which India won by 13 runs at the Manuka Oval in Canberra.

Going into the match, he needed 23 to reach the milestone. He got 63 though, on the way blasting past the Master Blaster's mark, in his 242nd innings, 58 fewer than the Indian legend. That was really 'Schumacher speed' as Sachin had taken 300 innings to complete 12,000 runs in ODIs. Tendulkar, however, holds a clutch of world records still.

Having made his debut in 2008, the 32-year-old



Kohli was playing his 251st ODI. He has so far smashed 43 centuries, 59 half-tons and averages an impressive 59.31. With 12,040 runs, Kohli is also the second-highest scorer for India in ODIs behind Tendulkar's 18,426 from 463 games at an average of 44.83 with 49 tons and 96 half-centuries.

Only four others — Sri Lankans Kumar Sangakkara, Sanath Jayasuriya, Mahela Jayawardene and Ricky Ponting of Australia — have scored 12,000 runs in ODIs.

With age and consistency on his side, Kohli is surely in the driver's seat and is set to zoom past many more landmarks in his cricketing journey.

Assigned land in state's kitty

₹25k rent per annum for 1 acre to farmers giving land voluntarily

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 2

Jagan: Not an inch of Polavaram dam will be decreased

The state Assembly on Wednesday passed the Andhra Pradesh Assigned Lands (Prohibition and Transfers) (Amendment) Bill, 2020 by a voice vote. Deputy Chief Minister Dharmana Krishna Das, who tabled the Bill, explained the objective behind amending the Bill.

He said farmers will be given ₹25,000 per annum as rent for an acre and the land will be taken for lease only if the farmers give it voluntarily. Finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy said the districts in Rayalseema regions receive less rainfall and farmers would be very happy to get ₹25,000 for lease. The Bill was passed by voice vote and members welcomed it.

The House also passed the Andhra Pradesh State Agricultural Council Bill, 2020 which proposes to set up an Agricultural Council, an autonomous body. Agriculture minister Kurrasala Kannababu explained the salient features of the Bill and said AP will be the first state in India to set up an Agriculture Council, and all the activities related to agricultural graduates, entrepreneurs, extension, research, development and marketing would come under one roof through it.

The AP Value Added Tax (Second Amendment) Bill, 2020, AP Value Added Tax (Third Amendment) Bill, 2020 and the AP Tax on Professions, Trades, Calling And Employees (Amendment) Bill, 2020 proposed by Deputy Chief

Minister K. Narayana Swami (excise, commercial taxes) were also approved by the House. Minister Narayana explained the amendments in the three Bills and said they were needed as AP was in revenue deficit due to economic activity coming to a halt since Covid-19 lockdown.

The House also passed the AP Animal Feed (Regulation) of Manufacture, Quality Control, Sale and Distribution) Bill, 2020, the AP Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (Amendment) Bill, 2020, The AP State Development Corporation Bill, 2020 and AP Agricultural Land (Conversion for Non-Agricultural Purposes) Amendment Bill, 2020.

Regarding Animal Feed bill, animal husbandry minister Dr Seediri Appalaraju explained the salient features of the Bill and said it proposes to monitor feed being supplied to animals and supply quality feed to animals.

Explaining the amendments in Andhra Pradesh Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (Amendment) Bill, 2020, finance minister Buggana Rajenranath Reddy said

Mining hits Veera Bramhendra cave

A recent blast led to panic in Banaganapalle town. A police case was registered but nothing concrete came of it, residents rued.

Open blast mining is going on despite a ban on such activity close to residential areas in Banaganapalle town, said Rahamatullah, a resident. Ravvalakonda, believed to be the place where Seer Pothuluri Veera Bramhendra Swamy lives, is now the hotspot for mining activity. A cave where Bramham Swamy attained Siddhi, which is a tourist attraction, is now in danger of being destroyed, said B.C. Janardhan Reddy, a TD leader. He alleged the Banaganapalle MLA and his followers are

Telugus missing in Centre's language project

Bharathiya Bhasha Viswavidyalaya, a Central government project to highlight local languages, has no representation from the Telugu states to work out the modalities. However, it has members from Tamil Nadu and Kannada.

The 11-member committee was constituted to create modalities for the Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) in Mysuru, Karnataka. It has to recommend the aims and objectives of the Bharathiya Bhasha Viswavidyalaya (BBV) and IITI.

The Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) in Mysuru, set up over 50 years ago to promote Indian languages, will be upgraded to a Central University. The Union ministry of education had formed the 11-member committee to explore and suggest the governance structure, requirement of funds and the broad objectives of the proposed BBV.

The committee headed by retired Gujarat-cadre IAS officer N. Gopalaswami was given three months to submit a report. The other members include University Grants Commission chairman D.P. Singh, Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya vice-chancellor Rajnish Shukla, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri National Sanskrit University vice-chancellor Ramesh Kumar Pandey and Hari Singh Gaur University chancellor Balwant Shantilal Jani. The CIIL, set up in 1969, was functioning as

SC: Install CCTV outside CBI, ED offices

The apex court had in 2018 ordered installation of CCTV cameras in police stations to check human rights abuses. It said further that the CCTV systems must be equipped with night vision and have audio as well as video footage and it shall be mandatory for the Centre, states and UTs to purchase such systems which allow storage of data for maximum period possible, at least one year. "In addition, the Union of India is also directed to install CCTV cameras and recording equipment in the offices of: CBI, National Investigation Agency, Enforcement Directorate, Narcotics Control Bureau, Department of Revenue Intelligence, Serious Fraud

Investigation Office (SFIO), any other agency which carries out interrogations and has the power of arrest," said the bench, also comprising Justices K.M. Joseph and Aniruddha Bose.

"As most of these agencies carry out interrogation in their office(s), CCTVs shall be compulsorily installed in all offices where such interrogation and holding of accused takes place in the same manner as it would in a police station," the bench said in its order.

The top court said that in September this year, it had impleaded all the states and UTs in the matter to find out the exact position of CCTV cameras in each police station as well as constitution

of Oversight Committees in accordance with the April 3, 2018 order. The SC, while dealing with a matter related to custodial torture, had in July this year taken note of a 2017 case in which it had ordered installation of CCTV cameras in all the police stations to check human rights abuses, videography of crime scene and setting up of a Central Oversight Committee and such a panel in every states and Union Territory.

In its 12-page order, the bench noted that till November 24, compliance affidavits and action taken reports were filed by 14 states and majority of them have failed to disclose the exact position of CCTV cam-

Vaccine ahoy! UK to begin inoculation

Russia follows Britain to vaccinate people

London, Dec. 2: Britain approved Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine on Wednesday, jumping ahead of the rest of the world in the race to begin the most crucial mass inoculation programme in history with a shot tested in wide-scale clinical trials.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson touted the green light from Britain's medicine authority as a global win and a ray of hope amid the pandemic, though he recognised the logistical challenges of vaccinating a country of 6.7 crore.

Britain's move raised hopes that the tide could soon turn against a virus that has killed nearly 15 lakh people globally, hammered the world economy and upended normal life for billions since it emerged in Wuhan, China, a year ago. Britain's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) granted emergency use approval to the vaccine developed by Pfizer and German partner BioNTech, which they say is 95 per cent effective in preventing illness, just 23 days after Pfizer published the first data from its final stage clinical trial.

"Fantastic news," Johnson told parliament, though he cautioned that people should not get carried away. "I strongly urge people to take up the vaccine but it is no part of our culture or our ambition in this country to make vaccines mandatory," Johnson said.

Britain said it would start vaccinating those most at risk of dying early next week. Elderly people in care homes and care home staff are top of the

priority list, followed by over-80s and health and care staff.

The world's big powers have been racing for a vaccine for months and coming first may be seen as a coup for a government that has faced criticism over its handling of the crisis. Just hours after the British announcement, Russia's President Vladimir Putin ordered Russian authorities to begin mass voluntary vaccinations next week.

— Reuters

Farmers threaten nationwide protest

SANJAY KAW and RAJNISH SHARMA NEW DELHI, DEC. 2

With support pouring in from various quarters, the farmers protesting on the borders of Delhi seem all set to go for their meeting with Union ministers on Thursday in a belligerent and not a conciliatory mood.

On Wednesday, a day before their second round of talks with the Union government, the protesting farmers asked that a special session of Parliament be convened to repeal the three farm laws. They reiterated that if their demands are not met, they will intensify their stir by blocking all entry points to Delhi and hold a nationwide protest on December 5.

Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar and minister of commerce Piyush Goyal met at the home minister Amit Shah's residence to discuss ways to resolve the ongoing crisis

Most wanted RED SANDERS SMUGGLER HELD

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC TIRUPATI, DEC. 2

Pileru rural police on Tuesday night nabbed "Bithalodu" (a timid in Chittoor dialect), Uyyala Subrahmanyam, a dreaded red sanders smuggler who remained elusive for close to 17 years.

He was drawn to smuggling when he ventured into Seshachalam forest as a daily-wage woodcutter as a teenager.

Subrahmanyam's life could make a perfect story for a movie. Over a period of time, he went on to become the most wanted red sanders smuggler, whose network included close rapport with international smugglers.

The hunt for the 35-year-old bandit ended when police acting on a tip-off that he had sustained a leg injury tracked movement of medicines by his men and reached his hideout, somewhere deep in the Bodevandlapalli forest range.

"We formed special teams three month ago following an increase in smuggling operations post-lockdown and focussed on old offenders. As he is familiar with the topography, he often changed his locations. Finally, we could nab him by tracking his supply chain," Pileru rural CI S. Murali Krishna told Deccan Chronicle.

Though the worth of material seized from him and that smuggled and sold by him till date is yet to be ascertained, a detailed investigation might bring out the figure of the unaccounted material smuggled by him.

So lavish his lifestyle has been that during vacations, he would frequent casinos in Goa and consume liquor priced ₹75,000 a bottle. "He splurged money on models in five star hotels," said a senior cop. He easily switches over to life in caves of deep forests when work demands.

■ Pg 3: Smuggler caught cops attention in 2014.

OTHER STORIES

AMARAVATI
LAND SCAM: HC
RESERVES VERDICTDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 2

AP High Court completed hearings in the Amaravati land scam and reserved its judgement.

A division bench comprising justice Ch. Manavendranath Roy heard the arguments on a batch of petitions seeking quashing of FIR registered by the CID in the Amaravati land scam. The judge ordered the petitioners to submit documents pertaining to purchase of lands in the court.

Advocate general S. Sriram informed the court that as the information pertaining to the location of the upcoming capital city was leaked by those in power at that time, it was equivalent to breach of trust and abuse of power.

Maintaining that the previous government did not maintain any records on setting up the capital city, the AG informed the court that it indicated how the then government handled such an important issue in such a manner.

He expressed wonder as to how purchase of lands in key areas where capital city was proposed to be set up, could be accepted as coincidence. The AG informed the court that there was a major conspiracy on purchase of lands in select areas and said that they were having the evidence for it.

When the court asked whether bringing the private land transactions into the purview of the crime, the AG informed that as there was criminal conspiracy involved in them, a case was booked on purchase of lands.

The AG underlined the need to complete the investigation in the case and file a charge sheet and informed the court that though the accused were served notices under section 41 (A) of CrPC, nobody responded so far.

GOV: ENSURE SAFE
DRINKING WATER
TO ALL BY 2024DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 2

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan called for ensuring supply of safe and adequate drinking water to the people within their own premises by 2024

Taking part in seventh WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) Conclave on the theme 'Hygiene Matters' being held under the joint aegis of Unicef and National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj in virtual mode from Raj Bhavan here on Wednesday, the Governor stated that India had achieved major strides in water, sanitation and hygiene sectors by ensuring piped water supply and also in realisation of open-defecation free.

He said that the state-level programmes such as 'Manam Mana Parisubratha' in AP, Swachotsava Nityotsava' in Karnataka and 'Palle Pragathi' in Telangana had been contributing in a big way to ensure a healthy society.

INDIAN OIL TO
INVEST ₹1,689
CRORE IN APDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 2

IndianOil is slated to invest a total of ₹1,689 crore in projects across AP state under which it would invest ₹1,522 for Petro Products and ₹167 crore for LPG project. It would start a new terminal at Visakhapatnam and will revamp Vijayawada terminal besides starting new depot at Guntakal.

Executive Director and state head, IndianOil, AP and Telangana, R.S.S. Rao addressing the media at a programme here on Wednesday, said that IndianOil has always been ready for managing change.

He said that besides growing the existing fuel network and sprucing them up with state-of-art technologies like full automation and making them environment friendly.

He said that three Indane LPG Bottling Plants in AP at Kadapa, Visakhapatnam and Kondapalli (Vijayawada) with a total bottling capacity of 360 Thousand Metric Tonnes per Annum (TMTPA) and LPG storage capacity of 6,800 Metric Tonnes were operative in the state. Mr Rao said that to meet the increasing demand of LPG in AP, 120 TMTPA Grass Root LPG Bottling plant with an investment of ₹167 crore is coming up at Chittoor, which would add another 36,000 LPG Cylinders to the daily output of IndianOil in the state.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy launches Amul Bulk Milk unit at Secretariat on Wednesday.

— DC

War of words between
ruling YSRC, TD in House

Minister invites Naidu for Polavaram inagural function

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 2

War of words between ruling YSRC and opposition TDP over claims and counter claims with regard to Polavaram project marked the State Legislative Assembly session on Wednesday.

Irrigation minister P. Anil Kumar Yadav refuted the LOP's claims regarding Polavaram project. He counter attacked blaming the TD government for messing up the project. The minister showed documents stating that Naidu agreed to state government itself constructing the Polavaram project, which spoilt the spirit behind making it a national project.

Anil Kumar asserted that Polavaram project will be completed by December 2021 and went on to invite the Leader of Opposition and TD MLAs for inauguration of the project.

The minister showed copies of central government saying that Naidu agreed to 2014 estimates as the special package, which turned out to be the impediment in completion of the project.

He claimed that the former chief minister used Polavaram to quickly make money. He recalled Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his visit to AP in 2019, stating that Naidu used Polavaram as an ATM. He accused that Naidu was the reason for delay in the Polavaram project.

Anil Kumar claimed that Polavaram began in 2004 with efforts of the then chief minister Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy. All permissions were obtained during the YSR regime and Naidu did nothing for Polavaram.

In this context, he alleged that Naidu was earlier CM for nine years, he never worked for the Polavaram project.

The minister recalled that during the partition of the state in 2014, then PM Manmohan Singh had announced in Rajya Sabha that Polavaram project will be taken over by the centre and all expenditure will be borne by the Union government. Instead, Naidu asked the Centre to give Polavaram construction to the state, which the Union government agreed to on condition of funding being as per 2014 esti-

TD MLAs suspended
from Assembly for
3rd consecutive dayDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 2

Suspension of TD MLAs from the AP Legislative Assembly continued on the third consecutive day on Wednesday with nine of the party's legislators sent out for disrupting the House on the day.

Following this, all the remaining TD MLAs, including leader of Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu walked out from the Assembly protesting against continuous suspensions of the TD legislators.

Naidu and his party legislators expressed dissent over AP Electricity Duty (Amendment) Bill 2020 and AP Assigned Lands (Prohibition of Transfers) (Amendment) Bill 2020. TD MLAs led by TDLP deputy leader K. Atchannaidu went to the podium and staged a protest.

The Speaker repeatedly asked them to go back, but the TD members staged a walk out protesting against the assigned lands and electricity bills.

Later they came back to the House for the short discussion of Polavaram project.

Chandrababu Naidu claimed credit for Polavaram and accused YSRC of trying to shun the project due to their inefficiency. At this, YSRC ministers Anil Kumar Yadav and Buggana Rajendranath Reddy and ruling party MLAs counter attacked Naidu. This led to TD MLAs walking into the podium and launching protests despite warnings by the Speaker.

When CM Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy commenced his speech to conclude the discussion on Polavaram, TD legislators started shouting continuously in an attempt to drown the speech by the CM.

Speaker Thammamneni Sitaram several times appealed and warned

mates. Presenting details, Anil Kumar observed that the former chief minister did not complete even 20 percent of Polavaram work, though the TD government advertised that it

TD MLAS' ASSAULT ON
MARSHALS REFERRED
TO ETHICS PANELDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 2

Being critical of a section of TD MLAs for manhandling the marshals, Assembly Speaker Thammamneni Sitaram referred the issue to the Ethics Committee to inquire and assured to take action on the erring legislators.

The Speaker said that some marshals met him in his chamber and submitted a representation on Wednesday, explaining about how they were assaulted by some TD MLAs when they were being taken out of the Assembly following their suspension for disrupting the proceedings on Tuesday. He said that it pained him a lot when the victims complained to him that they were faulted for doing their duty.

Opposition legislators but in vain. The CM too joined the issue pointing out that every day, the opposition TD has been creating hurdles in letting the government's voice reach people. CM said the Opposition can go out if they are not interested in listening to the government and suggested that the TD MLAs be suspended if they continued their ruckus.

As the disturbance continued, minister for legislative affairs moved a motion seeking suspension of K. Atchannaidu, Nimmala Rama Naidu, G. Ravikumar, Dola Balaveeranjanyulu, Jogeswara Rao, Ramakrishna Babu, B. Ashok, Y. Sambasiva Rao and A. Satyaprasad for one day, following which the nine TD MLAs were suspended for the day.

has executed 70 per cent of the work. Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy accused Naidu of messing up the Polavaram project.

Amid the war of words between ruling and oppo-

HOUSE WITNESSES
PEALS OF LAUGHTER
AFTER SEEING SONG
PRAISING NAIDUDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 2

Assembly witnessed peals of laughter after seeing video of a group of women singing a song praising former CM N. Chandrababu Naidu at Polavaram project site in West Godavari.

The CM explained as to how a whopping amount of ₹83.45 crore was spent by the previous Telugu Desam regime to mobilise the people from several parts in the state to visit the project by arranging buses and food.

Maintaining that it was a wasteful expenditure of public money, he asked for playing a video clipping to enable the legislators to realise the purpose of the visit.

As a group of women started singing the song lauding the former CM Naidu for executing the project, the entire House led by the CM Jagan Mohan Reddy plunged into laughter.

The CM said that not a single rupee was spent wastefully on the project after their party assumed power and said they even saved ₹1,343 cr by taking up reverse tendering for execution of the project.

He also slammed former CM Naidu for organising several ceremonies either to set stone or to inaugurate some works related to various components of the project.

● **THE Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy said that not a single rupee was spent wastefully on the project after their party assumed power and said they even saved ₹1,343 crore by taking up reverse tendering for execution of the project.**

sition benches, the Leader of and his party MLAs staged a noisy protest near the podium, leading to suspension of nine TD MLAs, following which the Opposition walked out.

Leaders want 150 feet tall
YSR statue at PolavaramDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 2

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has agreed to install a 100-ft tall statue at the Polavaram project site when all the ruling party MLAs demanded installation of the statue of Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy to commemorate his commitment to expedite the execution of the project.

The Treasury benches sought installation of 150-foot statue of YSR at Polavaram project. They recalled that YSR completed the main canals, land acquisition and project works, which paved the way for further execution of the project.

According to party sources, as there were 151 legislators, it would be a symbolic gesture to install a 150-foot tall statue of YSR. Interestingly, Jagan Mohan Reddy announced the installation of a 100-foot statue at Polavaram while concluding the discussion on Polavaram project.

Polavaram MLA T. Balaramu recalled the efforts of Rajasekhara Reddy to start Polavaram project which was pending for decades. He said that N. Chandrababu Naidu worked as Chief Minister for nine years but never tried to construct Polavaram. He lamented that Naidu even after becoming the Chief Minister of residuary AP state did not work for the project.

He said that due to construction of cofferdam, nearly 20,000 houses were marooned and Naidu did not pay compensation to the inundated houses while his successor had paid the compensations to the inundated houses twice.

Minister for irrigation Anil Kumar Yadav explaining the efforts of Jagan Mohan Reddy to complete the dream of YSR to bring life to Polavaram, also sought a 150-foot YSR statue. Jagan Mohan Reddy cred-

Naidu objects to YSR
statue at PolavaramDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 2

Telugu Desam party chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday demanded that the YSR Congress government explain to people of Andhra Pradesh whether the central government has given any concrete assurance about releasing funds necessary for immediate completion of the state's lifeline Polavaram irrigation project.

Addressing a press conference at the party's central office here after walking out from the Assembly over the Polavaram project, Naidu wondered on what basis the YSRC government could install a 100-ft statue of Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy at the project site when it was being constructed with 100 per cent funds from the Central government.

He accused Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan or being reckless in proposing to spend over ₹200 crore on the 100-feet statue of YSR. He alleged that the CM was only interested in the statue but not the actual project that has the potential to serve the long-term interests of the entire state.

The former CM asked the Jagan regime to specify by which time it will complete the remaining 30 per cent Polavaram works so that the project's benefits could be passed on to

ited Rajasekhara Reddy for getting all major clearances for execution of the project and said that before 2014, overall works of the project were completed by 9.29 per cent and in the previous TD

● **NAIDU WONDERED on what basis the YSRC government could install a 100-ft statue of Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy at the project site when it was being constructed with 100 per cent funds from the Central government.**

farmers and general public in different parts of the state. He wanted the YSRC government to also come clean on the extent of land acquisition, rehabilitation and resettlement package it was going to give to project evacuees, including a timeframe for the same. Naidu claimed that the government itself had admitted that 69.54 per cent of dam works had been completed under the TD regime by 2019. He maintained that only the superstructure works were remaining.

The TD chief accused the Chief Minister of failing to bring pressure on the Central government for funds because of the cases pending against Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Naidu said ruling YSRC leaders would go down in history as 'traitors of AP people' if they caused any permanent harm to the state's lifeline and multi-purpose Polavaram project.

regime 20 per cent were completed. He said that by May, 2019, only 29.80 per cent of works were completed and assured to complete all the remaining works as the son of YSR.

CM: TOTAL WATER
STORAGE FROM
THIRD YEAR

From page 1

Explaining the implementation of Relief and Rehabilitation, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said that if the water was impounded at a level of 41.15 metres by storing 120 tmc ft of water in the reservoir having total storage capacity of 194 tmc ft, it would cost ₹3,383 crore. So is the case, if the water impounded at 44 metres level with storage of 158.39 tmc ft, it would cost ₹2,000 crore. If the impounding of water was further enhanced at 45 metres with storage of 180 tmc ft, it would cost an additional ₹4,500 crore and finally if the impounding of water was allowed at a level of 45.72 metres, it would cost ₹13,699 crore.

Reiterating his commitment to complete the project as per schedule, he said that as per Central Water Commission protocols and guidelines on dam security and stability, it would be possible to store only 33 per cent of total storage capacity in the first year and 50 per cent in second year and by the third year, water could be filled up to the total storage capacity and added that these precautionary measures were mandatory.

PROTEST | RALLY

The protesters held placards and demanded reintroduction of the free sand policy

TD demands relief for out of job construction workers

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 2

Telugu Desam MLAs and MLCs led by N. Chandrababu Naidu took out a protest rally up to the Legislative Assembly premises demanding the YSR Congress government to give relief assistance to construction workers in the state.

Naidu registered his strong protest against the government's 'indifference' by holding a *tapi* (mason's trowel) and a goldsmith's scales in his hands and also a cement pail on his head. TD

alleged that over 30 lakh construction workers were thrown onto the roads without any work because of the severe sand shortage in the past 18 months of Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's misrule.

The protesters held placards and raised anti-government slogans while demanding reintroduction of the free sand policy followed by the previous regime so as to create livelihood opportunities for workers. They said that the incumbent government had cancelled free sand policy and later caused artificial sand shortage

leading to collapse of the construction industry and throwing the lives of workers in jeopardy.

TD Legislature Party Deputy leader K. Atchannaidu deplored that many construction workers were committing suicides because of the severe crisis into which the YSRC has pushed the construction sector. He demanded that all suicides by construction workers should be treated as state-sponsored murders.

Stating that the sand mafia was ruling the roost, Atchannaidu blamed ministers and MLAs for 'ram-

pant exploitation' of sand resources in utter disregard for the interests of the construction industry, ordinary public and lakhs of workers dependent on real estate projects.

TDLP deputy leader Gorantla Butchaiah Chowdary said that the ruling party leaders have plundered over ₹5,000 crore worth of sand in the state till now.

He said that spurious and substandard sand was being given to the people while the best quality sand was being smuggled to other states for sale at exorbitant rates.



Former CM N. Chandrababu Naidu holds the gamela, Atchannaidu a sand packet and Lokesh a goldsmith's scale, with the demand to 'Save the Construction workers', outside the Assembly premises at Velagapudi in Guntur district on Wednesday.

—DC

SHORT TAKES

Cyclone Burevi to cross today

Visakhapatnam: The cyclonic storm 'Burevi' over southwest Bay of Bengal moved west-northwest wards with a speed of 15 kmph during past six hours and lay centred over southwest Bay of Bengal about 110 km east-northeast of Trincomalee (Sri Lanka), 330 km east-south-east of Pamban (India) and 520 km east-northeast of Kanniyakumari (India), on Wednesday afternoon. A report from IMD said it is very likely to move west-northwest wards and cross Sri Lanka coast north of Trincomalee during evening of December 3 as a cyclonic storm with a wind speed of 80-90 kmph gusting to 100 kmph. It is very likely to move nearly west-northwest wards thereafter, emerge into Gulf of Mannar and adjoining Comorin area on December 3 morning. The Cyclonic Storm with wind speed of 70-80 gusting to 90 kmph would be centred very close to Pamban around noon of December 3. It would then move nearly west-southwest wards across Pamban area by afternoon and cross south Tamil Nadu coast.

CI and constable remanded

Kurnool: Nandyal Additional District Judge Court remanded suspended circle inspector Somashekar Reddy and head constable Gangadhar to a 14 day jail term in the sensational Abdul Salam family suicide case. The accused police officers were alleged to have abetted the suicide of auto driver Abdul Salam, his wife and two children last month. The accused are lodged in Kurnool sub jail. Meanwhile Muslim organisations continue to agitate in Nandyal demanding complete justice to the deceased family which include dismissal from service of the accused.

Sweet shops must display best before

Tirupati: The food safety controller of Chittoor district, G. Prabhakar Rao instructed the management of local sweet shops across the district to strictly adhere to the protocol of FSSAI and declare "best before date" of non-packaged or loose sweets available in their shops. The food safety controller officials led by Prabhakar Rao and K. Shamim Basha, food inspector, Chittoor have conducted raids on sweet shops in Chittoor city. During the raids, the officials have found that many sweet shops in the city are not following the FSSAI guidelines and haven't declared the date of manufacturing and date of expiry. "Considering it as a first-time offence, we have given warning to the sweet shop owners and given them a last chance to change to the new FSSAI protocol. Stern action would be taken next time against those who found violating the protocol," Mr Rao said.

Kanchi Seer lauds TTD's parayanam

Tirupati: Kanchi Seer Vijayendra Saraswathi Swamy lauded the parayanam and other spiritual programmes mulled by TTD. The pontiff had the traditional customary Srivari temple honours at Tirumala before having darshan of Lord Venkateswara on Wednesday. He also took part in the Krishna Yajurveda Jatha Parayanam at Ranganayakula Mandapam inside the temple.

Search committee for JNTUA V-C

Anantapur: The state government on Wednesday issued GO to fill the vice-chancellor post for Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Anantapur as the present vice-chancellor Dr Srinivasa Kumar tenure will be completed by December 7. The government had constituted a search committee to suggest a panel of three members for the appointment of vice-chancellor. Government issued notification for the filling of the vice-chancellor post and a three member panel was appointed to screening the applications for the post. Dr K. Blaveera Reddy, will be chairman for search committee.

Nursing staff demands



Contract nursing staff stage protest against the government demanding to regularise their jobs near GVMC Gandhi Statue junction in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

— DC

Pullalacheruvu police crack murder mystery

Man killed by his ex-wife's kin over property dispute

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 2

Pullalacheruvu police along with 3 teams formed by Prakasam SP Siddharth Kaushal cracked the mystery behind a murder and cremation of body of an unidentified person at Gangavaram village limits of Pullalacheruvu mandal in Prakasam district on November 17, 2020.

Taking this case on a serious note, SP Siddharth Kaushal formed 3 teams with CI Y. Palem, SI Pullala Cheruvu, SI Dornala under the supervision of Markapuram DSP and allotted them Technology Assistants to inspect crime scene and take videos and photos of the crime spot.

The SP analysed the clues and ordered the teams to identify the deceased person first. As per the directions of the

● The accused who were keeping a tab on the movements of Subba Reddy, killed him by stabbing and slitting his throat while he was consuming liquor

● Later they shifted the dead body into the car of the deceased and set fire to the body by pouring petrol near Gangavaram.

SP, the teams with the help of technology assistants investigated the case and identified the deceased as Kaipu Subba Reddy, 32, of Yerragondapalem Village.

Giving the details of the case to the media persons at Ongole on Wednesday, the SP said the deceased Subba Reddy had married the younger sister of prime accused Avula Brahma Reddy, 36, about nine years back and he has been harassing her over property issues even after parting ways a few years back.

Infuriated by the attitude of Subba Reddy, Brahma Reddy devised a plan to eliminate the former with the help of his friends and executed the plan on November 16, 2020 in the outskirts of Gangavaram village. The accused who were keeping a tab on the movements of Subba Reddy, killed him by stabbing and slitting his throat while he was consuming liquor with a friend in a hut near Civil Supplies Godown near Yarragondapalem.

Later they shifted the dead body into the car of the deceased and set fire to the body by pouring petrol near Gangavaram. Earlier the accused threatened to kill Subba Reddy's friend if he talks about the murder.

The offenders pushed the car into the floating water in NSP (Nagarajan Sagar Project) Canal at Vellatur Kuruva Bollapalli mandal to destroy the evidence.

However, police teams caught hold of the accused near Vellaturu village of Bollapalli mandal, Guntur district on December 1.

They have been identified as Avula Brahmareddy of Kavalakuntla village, Sabbasani Baskar Reddy, 36, of Ummadivaram Village in Pullalacheruvu mandal, Desam Venkatereddy, 24, and Vanipenta Lakshmareddy 25 of Jangameswarapuram Village, Gurajala Mandal, Guntur District.

Mr Siddharth Kaushal appreciated the investigation teams and Dr M. Kishor Kumar, SDPO, Markapur for their commendable role in the detection of the case.



An artist engaged in painting the artifacts at the premises of Navy War Memorial, Victory at Sea on the beach road for the upcoming Navy Day celebrations in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

— DC

ACB raids SE of APSPDCL

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 2

A team of Anti Corruption Bureau sleuths unearthed ₹3 crore worth of assets disproportionate to the known source of income of Kandra Vijayakumar Reddy, Superintendent Engineer of Andhra Pradesh Southern Distribution Company at Nellore during a raid

on Wednesday.

Vijayakumar Reddy had joined the AP State Electricity Board in July 1989 and he was promoted as Assistant Divisional Engineer in December 1997 and went on to become Divisional Engineer in 2006 and Superintendent Engineer in 2017.

The ACB team led by department Nellore wing DSP Devendra

Santro found documents pertaining to 2 houses worth ₹1.44 crore, 5 house sites worth ₹78.27 lakh, 13.81 acres of agriculture land worth ₹42.54 lakh and two motor vehicles worth ₹8 lakh.

Vijayakumar had invested ₹50 lakh in Simhapuri Ferro Alloys. ACB team also noticed cash of ₹59,130, gold worth ₹25 lakh.

OFFICIAL | APATHY

Ramesh submitted a letter to irrigation wing

BJP blames water mismanagement

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 2

BJP blamed the irrigation officials for the large-scale damage in the district because of the sudden release of huge quantities of water from Somasila project into Penna river downstream. Party State Executive Committee member Midathal Ramesh said that the situation would have been avoided if water was released in advance from Somasila

● Negligence resulted in a loss to the extent of ₹250cr: BJP

reservoir based on a warning received 12 hours before on large scale discharge from Rayalaseema projects.

In a representation submitted to the Executive Engineer of Irrigation Krishna Kumar here on Wednesday, Mr Ramesh alleged that the negligence of district officials in water management

resulted in a loss to the extent of ₹250 crore.

"Officials filled all the tanks under Penna delta even though there have been conditions since British era against full water storage before October and November months which usually bring copious rains to the Nellore region" Mr Ramesh alleged.

He also found fault with them for storing water in Somasila to its brim and waiting for permission from ruling party big-

AP RECORDS 663 COVID-19 CASES, SEVEN DEATHS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 2

AP registered 663 new Covid-19 cases raising tally to 8,69,412 and seven deaths taking toll to 7,003.

The state health authorities released Covid-19 bulletin here on Wednesday reporting that out of 56,988 samples tested, 663 persons were found infected with Covid-19. Out of a total number of 1,01,66,696 samples tested so far, 8,55,485 patients were recovered while 6,924 patients are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of Covid-19, Krishna topped the state with 117 followed by 106 in Chittoor, 96 in West Godavari, 86 in Guntur, 60 in East Godavari, 54 in Visakhapatnam, 34 each in Anantapur and Nellore, 29 in Kadapa, 17 in Vizianagaram, 15 in Prakasam, 10 in Srikakulam and five in Kurnool.

Krishna reported the highest number of cumulative Covid-19 active cases with 1,233 followed by 1,067 in Guntur, 828 in East Godavari, 713 in Nellore, 636 in Visakhapatnam, 584 in Chittoor, 557 in West Godavari, 355 in Prakasam, 238 in Anantapur, 200 in Kadapa, 177 in Srikakulam, 171 in Vizianagaram and 165 in Kurnool.

Among daily cases of death of Covid-19 infected patients, Krishna reported two followed by one each in Anantapur, Guntur, Nellore, Visakhapatnam and West Godavari.

SMUGGLER CAUGHT COPS ATTENTION IN 2014

FROM PAGE 1

Hailing from Pulibonupalli village of Yerravaripalem mandal, Subrahmanyam caught police attention in 2014. Though arrested once earlier on the Palamaner-Bengaluru road with red sanders, he jumped bail and resumed felling and smuggling.

"He is accused in 12 cases filed in different police stations in the district and was arrested many times in the past few years. He was at large for the past eighteen months after he got a bail," pointed out the CI.

Subramanyam reportedly did business with notorious red sanders smugglers in other states. However, the sheer size of Subramanyam's operation came to light last year, when at least ₹40 lakh worth red sanders logs and vehicles were seized by Yerravaripalem police.

TD PULLS UP TIDCO FOR YSRC COLOURS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 2

Stressing that painting work for the 4,800 houses built by TIDCO near Nellore was completed already during TD regime, TD threatened to file cases against TIDCO officials if they spend public money to paint colours again to the housing colony.

Youth attacks girl, attempts suicide

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 2

A jilted lover in his twenties attacked a girl slashing her neck with a blade and later attempted to end his own life by slitting his throat after she spurned his marriage proposals. The incident took place at Thomson Street, near Kothaveehi under One-Town police station limits in Vizag city on Wednesday.

Identified as Addipalle Srikanth, a welder by profession, he attacked his neighbour, a 20-year-old victim Makina Sai Eswara Priyanka causing injuries to her. She was rushed to the hospital, where her condition is said to be stable. The accused was also admitted to the hospital with minor injuries.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Law and Order)

Aishwarya Rastogi said that families of Priyanka and Srikanth have been neighbours for past 25 years, staying in the same block.

Srikanth has proposed for the marriage and the both the families discussed and finally the girl's parents refused the proposal of Srikanth citing various reasons. The girl had broken off with the accused some-time back.

Though Srikanth threatened the girl on a few occasions, the police didn't receive any complaint in any form from the victim. Srikanth developed a grudge on her and as per plan, he went to the girl's house and slit her throat with a blade and later he also slashed his throat.

The DCP said that a case has been registered against the accused.



Officials inspect mining activity at Banaganapalle on Wednesday.

Blasts 100 ft from temple: Priest

FROM PAGE 1

The temple priest said the blasts are done within 100 feet from the cave temple and the walls are getting weak due to the blasts.

The tin roofed creeks and shudders due to the blast preventing visitors from coming, he said.

Vishnu, another resident of Banaganapalle said Sree Veerabrahmendra Swamy gave upadesha in this cave to sree Garimi Reddy Achamamba who gave him shelter when writing 'Sree Veerabrahmendra Kalagnana'. Now the hillocks near this place have been reduced to rubbles by blasts.

When contacted, assistant director of Mines and Geology, M. Rama Siva Reddy said notices were served on the lease holders and action would be taken against them. He said mining manual clearly mentions "control blasting" near human dwellings. It does not create sound while open blasting gives deafening sound. He said there are about 125 quarries engaged

in blasting activities. But in actual practice, the number is double than the official figure. However, Reddy denied this and said if such instances were brought to his notice, he would take action.

Banaganapalle circle inspector Suresh Kumar Reddy said a case was booked on one Ramesh, a qualified blaster, when a deafening sound led to panic among people. He said he had written to Mining and Geology department to provide names of units engaged in blasting Ravvalakonda but till date no information was provided. If details come I will proceed with the case or I have no option but close the case, he said.

A quarry blast in Kurnool in 2018 had killed 13 workers, all belonging to Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Bihar. Even now also only workers from these states are employed by quarry owners. They have no legal protection and work under highly hazardous conditions, said a labour department official.

19-YEAR-OLD DROWNS IN STREAM


DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 2

In a tragic incident, a 19-year-old Dudekula Basha was drowned in a stream 'Uppuvagu' located on the way to Chinna Cumbam at

Bestavaripeta in Prakasam district on Wednesday.

The mishap took place when he went to the stream for swimming.

He died after he got struck in a vent of a bridge on the stream.

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SHORT TAKES

MEA MUM ON R-DAY INVITE TO BORIS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC 2

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Wednesday did not comment on reports that said British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had been invited by India to be the chief guest at the Republic Day parade on January 26 and that he had accepted the invite.

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

The MEA had then said, “The two leaders exchanged thoughts about the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and reviewed the promising cooperation between India and UK in the area of vaccine development and manufacturing.”

The MEA had added, “The leaders reiterated their shared desire to impart a quantum jump to the India-UK partnership in the post-Covid, post-Brexit era, and agreed that there was tremendous potential for enhancing collaboration in trade and investment, scientific research, mobility of professionals and students, and defence and security. They laid particular emphasis on India and UK joining hands in the fight against Climate Change, and appreciated their collaboration under platforms like the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.”

British Acting High Commissioner Jan Thompson had recently said said there was a lot of potential for collaboration in the Indo-Pacific region between her country and India, adding that there has been an increased focus by her country on the crucial region. The latest development comes even as the “Quad” countries- United States, India, Japan and Australia have stepped up cooperation.

YOUTH KILLED IN BSF FIRING IN MURSHIDABAD

PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI | DC
BERHAMPORE, DEC. 2

A youth was shot dead allegedly by the Border Security Force (BSF) at the India-Bangladesh border in Murshidabad of West Bengal. Hasibur Rahaman (28), the victim, was a resident of Raninagar. His relatives and villagers accused the BSF jawans of gunning down him.

Mohobul Sheikh, a neighbour of the victim, claimed, “Hasibur went to a remote area of the border to graze cattle early Wednesday. We suddenly heard gun shots and later found him dead.”

The bullet-ridden body was recovered by the police from a field of Puratandighi village under the Singhapara border outpost manned by BSF 141st battalion in Raninagar. It was sent for post-mortem.

BSF DIG (Murshidabad) Kunal Majumdar, however, said that a group of smugglers was trying send cattle across the border. When the BSF jawans challenged them, they attacked the BSF forcing the jawans to fire in self-defence. Hasibul, who was part of the group, suffered bullet injuries while trying to escape.

INCOME OF FARMERS HAS BEEN HALVED, SAYS CONG

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 2

The Congress on Wednesday kept up its attack on the government over the farmers’ protest with former party President Rahul Gandhi alleging that instead of doubling, incomes of farmers has actually been halved.

“They said farmers income will be doubled. What they did was increase incomes of ‘friends’ four times and those of farmers will be halved. This suit-boot government is of lies and loot,” Mr Gandhi tweeted.

The Congress MP from Wayanad also shared a video of the atrocities and use of force against the protesting farmers with a voice-over of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s speech saying his government was taking steps to resolve the problems faced by farmers and double their income.

Farmers from Punjab and Haryana are protesting at the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders of the national capital for the seventh consecutive day against the Centre’s new agriculture reform laws. The farmers had an inconclusive meeting with the government on Tuesday and are scheduled to meet them again on Thursday.

The Congress has time and again asked the government to withdraw the new farm laws and redresses the grievances of the protestors.

The Congress, which is the chief Opposition party in Haryana also came down heavily on the JJP over its changing stance on farmers’ protest.

“Haryana’s history will never forget Dushyant Chautala’s betrayal of farmers. They sought votes from farmers against the BJP and promised a loan waiver but today the farmer is on the roads, facing water cannons and teargas shells,” Congress Spokesperson leader Randeep Singh Surjewala said. The 90-member Haryana Assembly has 40 BJP MLAs and 10 from the ally JJP.

The Congress has a strength of 31.

Wanted Sushil Kumar Modi in Cabinet, says Nitish



Former Deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi flashes the victory sign with Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and others after filing his nomination papers for Rajya Sabha as an NDA candidate in Patna on Wednesday. The Chief Minister said that he had wanted Sushil Kumar Modi to join his cabinet after the formation of the newly elected state government “but it seems that his party (BJP) wants him in a central role.

- PTI

Transporters threaten to stop movement of goods

All India Motor Transport Congress calls for strike to support farmers

SANJAY KAW AND
RAJNISH SHARMA | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 2

Heavy police force was deployed on the national capital’s border points on Wednesday as the standoff between the Centre and farmers continued, with commuters facing a harrowing time after the protesters blocked key entrances to the city for the seventh day.

While the police kept the Haryana-Delhi border at Singhu and Tikri closed for traffic, farmers from various districts of western Uttar Pradesh continued their sit-in at the Noida-Delhi border for the second day on Wednesday, leading to closure of a key route that connects the state with the national capital. Police had to use water cannons to prevent

Punjab Youth Congress workers from marching towards Haryana Chief Minister M L Khattar’s residence in Chandigarh.

An apex body of transporters has threatened to halt the movement of the goods across North India and subsequently the entire country if the demands of the protesting farmers are not met. The All-India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC), an umbrella body of goods’ vehicles operators, has called for a strike from December 8 in support of the farmers’ protest.

“From December 8 onwards, we will shut all our operations across North India and stop all our vehicles across North Indian states and Union Territories, including Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh,

Himachal, and Jammu & Kashmir. We have decided that if the government still does not agree to the demands of the protesting farmers, then we will call for a Chakka Jam all across India, and stop all our vehicles,” said AIMTC president K.S Atwal.

While Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar hopes to resolve the farmers’ issues, the home ministry is taking no chances and has kept 50 additional companies of para-military forces on standby to meet any eventuality. As the number of protesting farmers is likely to reach three lakh by the weekend, reinforcements have been kept ready so that they can be deployed at a short notice at Delhi borders.

More farmer groups and union from Uttarakhand,

Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh are scheduled to reach Delhi by the weekend.

Ahead of their second round of talks scheduled with the Central ministers on Thursday, the farmers reiterated to intensify their stir by blocking all entry points to Delhi if the three new farm laws are not immediately withdrawn. The farmer union leaders said that the Centre should call a special session of Parliament to fulfill their demands.

A day after “inconclusive” meeting with 35-odd farmer union leaders, Mr Tomar along with minister of commerce and industry Piyush Goyal held a marathon meeting at home minister Amit Shah’s residence to discuss ways to resolve the ongoing crisis. After the

meeting, Mr Tomar said, “We will hold discussions with farmers’ leaders tomorrow. Let’s see to what extent issues can be resolved.”

So far farmer groups have been protesting at some of the important borders like Singhu, Tikri, Bahadurgarh and Ghazipur. In the next few days, some other borders like the crucial one on National Highway-8 near Gurgaon are likely to be closed by the protesters.

So far more than 40 companies of central para-military forces and Delhi Police have been deployed all along Delhi border to ensure that the situation remains under control. Security officials claimed that they had concrete information that the farmers were prepared for a long haul.

China factored in casualties: US

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 2

Chinese government had planned the violent clash with the Indian army in Galwan Valley in the Ladakh sector in June “including the possibility for fatalities,” said a US commission report.

“Some evidence suggested the Chinese government had planned the incident, potentially including the possibility for fatalities,” said the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission in its annual report to the US Congress. For instance, the report said that several weeks prior to the clash, Defense Minister

Wei made his statement encouraging Beijing to “use fighting to promote stability.” “Satellite images depicted a large Chinese buildup in the Galwan Valley, including potentially 1,000 PLA soldiers, the week before the deadly skirmish,” said the report.

In June, the PLA and Indian troops engaged in a massive physical brawl in the Galwan Valley, located in the far-western Ladakh region along the Line of Actual Control separating the two countries. “The clash, which followed a series of stand-offs beginning in early May along multiple sectors of the LAC, led to at least 20 Indian deaths and

an unconfirmed number of Chinese casualties, the first time since 1975 that lives were lost in fighting between the two sides,” said the report.

“In the aftermath of the clash, Beijing asserted sovereignty over the entire Galwan Valley, a new claim and significant change to the territorial status quo,” it said.

The report said that China and India have engaged in multiple physical clashes along their border for decades, but since General Secretary Xi Jinping assumed power in 2012, the two countries have seen five major altercations along their border. It said that the exact motivations

behind the Chinese government’s provocative behavior on the LAC this year remain unclear.

“The proximate cause of the clash appeared to be India’s construction of a strategic access road to support troops stationed along the LAC. China has also built extensive infrastructure along the LAC in recent years,” said the report. The report pointed out that tensions have increased since the initial clash, with China reportedly building up its troop presence along the LAC since July.

“In September, shots were fired for the first time since 1975 along the border around Pangong Tso, a strategic area near

the site of the clash in June. Although no injuries were reported, both sides accused each other of violating a 1996 agreement barring the use of firearms along the LAC,” it said.

The report said that despite Chinese and Indian foreign ministers in Moscow in September pledging to defuse tensions “China subsequently conducted war games in Tibet.”

The report to the US Congress underlined that in 2020 Beijing ramped up its multiyear coercion campaign against its neighbors, provoking military or paramilitary standoffs with countries from Japan to India.

Spl teams to monitor marketplaces to curb spread of Coronavirus

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 2

With marketplaces being a bigger source of crowding and virus spread, the Union government on Wednesday issued Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on the precautionary measures to be followed to contain the spread of Covid-19 in these areas. The SOPs recommend opening shops on alternate days, having special teams to monitor Covid appropriate behaviour among customers and shopkeepers, and imposing penalty on violators.

India’s Covid-19 tally on Wednesday reached 95 lakh with 36,604 new detections. The total deaths so far have been 1.38 lakh out of which 501 fatalities are fresh. However, India’s total active caseload had significantly dropped to 4.28 lakh and this is the lowest after 132 days. The total active cases were 4.26 lakh on July 23. Health ministry officials said there has been a sustained decrease in the number of active cases and India’s present active caseload consists of just 4.51 per cent of its total positive cases. The daily new cases have stayed at around 30,000 for the past three days now and India’s Recovery Rate is 94.03 per cent.

“The health ministry in recognition of the fact that marketplaces are visited by a large number of people for their daily needs, shopping, entertainment, and food has designed a protocol to contain the spread of Covid-19. Amid the pandemic, with gradual opening of economic activities, markets are witnessing high

MAHARASHTRA FARMERS ALSO TO PROTEST TODAY

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, DEC. 2

Farmers holding mass protests in Delhi against Centre’s contentious farm laws will have support from their counterparts in Maharashtra, who have decided to express solidarity with them by staging agitation across the state on December 3.

They have also threatened to march towards Delhi to participate in the mass protests of farmers.

According to the state leaders of Akhil Bhartiya Kisan Sangharsh Samanvay Samiti, more than 80 organisations representing farmers, farm labourers, tribals and labour class organisations in Maharashtra will hold demonstrations at every collector and tehsildar office across the state to express dissent against the Centre’s agriculture reform laws and show support to protesting farmers at Delhi.

Farmers’ leader Ajit Navale said, “The farmers organisations in Maharashtra have decided to hold protests across the state on December 3. Organisations representing farmers, labourers and tribals of Maharashtra have also decided to join the protest march.”

Maharashtra’s minister of state for labour Bacchu Kadu has tweeted, “If the central government does not initiate satisfactory dialogue with farmers protesting in Delhi by December 3, then the farmers of Maharashtra will organise a mass protest called ‘Chalo Delhi’ and travel to the national capital on two-wheelers and four-wheelers.”

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Congress has also decided to stage statewide agitation to support the farmers’ protests at Delhi. Maharashtra Congress chief Balasaheb Thorat said, “The signature campaign carried out by the party against the farm laws had received the support of more than 60 lakh people in the state. The farmers are not ready to believe the BJP government.”

footfalls. Such large gatherings, without observance of Covid-19 appropriate behaviour have the potential to spread Coronavirus disease,” Union health ministry officials said.

These guidelines are for retail, wholesale markets, malls, supermarkets etc. As per new guidelines, market places in containment zones shall remain closed and only those outside the containment zones will be allowed to open-up. Employees who are at higher risk — older employees, pregnant women and employees who have underlying medical conditions — must take extra precautions and the market associations shall be advised that such persons should not be exposed to any front-line work requiring direct contact with the public. Covid-19 appropriate behaviour has to be followed in market places, which include physical distancing, use of face covers and masks, frequent hand washing with soap, use of alcohol-based hand sanitisers. Spitting is strictly prohibited in public places. The guidelines further said that in normal times, markets are usually crowded with high footfalls, suffer from lack of adequate sanitation amenities and have poor hygiene conditions. To prevent the risk of transmission of Covid, it is crucial that healthy environment is maintained at marketplaces. This includes all work areas inside the shop should be sanitised by shop owners before beginning their day, cleaning and regular disinfection of frequently touched surfaces at regular intervals.

REEL VS | REAL The Congress has alleged a conspiracy to shift Mumbai's film city to Uttar Pradesh

I’m not stealing anything: Yogi on film city row

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, DEC. 2

Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday said that the film industry is showing a lot of interest in the film city being developed in his state. Dismissing the apprehensions of Maha Vikas Aghadi, ruling alliance in Maharashtra, leaders, Mr Adityanath said he was not interested in stealing anything from anyone. “Why should they get so worried by my visit?” he asked.

Mr Adityanath is on a two-day visit in Mumbai in order to attract investment in UP.

In an apparent reference to UP chief minister’s visit to Mumbai, Maharashtra

chief minister Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday had said that he would not let anybody take away business forcibly from the state. Addressing an event of IMC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Thackeray had said the state is not scared of competition but it should be a fair one.

The Congress, which is a part of the ruling MVA government in Maharashtra, had alleged a conspiracy to shift Mumbai’s film city to UP.

After holding a discussion with industrialists and Bollywood people, the Uttar Pradesh chief minister said, “I have not come to Mumbai to snatch Bollywood. No one can take anything along.” However,



Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath with actor Akshay Kumar during a meeting in Mumbai.

- PTI

he also said that it is an open competition and the one who gives the right

atmosphere and security in which talent can work will get the investments.

“One who can give a safe atmosphere, better facilities and social security, in which one can work without discrimination, will get investments. We are creating something new. Why are you getting concerned? We are giving a new world class infrastructure to all. Hence, everybody will have to grow up, widen his thinking and better facilities will have to be given,” Mr Adityanath said.

Mr. Yogi said that instead of taking Bollywood to Uttar Pradesh, he wants to make a world class film city in his state. “For this, I am consulting people related to the film industry,” he added.

He said that the new film city would be built up in

one thousand acre land on the bank of Yamuna. The people of the film industry have shown their interest.

Earlier, the Shiv Sena spokesperson Sanjay Raut said that nobody can take away the 100 year old film industry from Mumbai.

“What is the status of Noida film city now? Can you create Mumbai’s Film City in Lucknow and Patna?” Raut asked.

“Earlier, attempts were made. It is difficult to replicate Mumbai’s film industry elsewhere. Mumbai has a glorious film history and past,” the Shiv Sena’s chief spokesperson said.

The Uttar Pradesh chief minister said that there is a huge scope in his state for the film industry.

SHORT TAKES
2 INJURED IN DUTCH STORE STABBING

The Hague, Dec. 2: Two people were injured in a stabbing Wednesday in a shop in the centre of The Hague and a suspect has fled the scene, police said. The city's police force tweeted that there also was a fire at the store that was quickly extinguished. The two injured people were being taken to a hospital by ambulance. Police launched an investigation and appealed for witnesses. Further details weren't immediately available and there was no word on a possible motive. A police spokesman didn't immediately return calls seeking comment.

ISRAEL READIES FOR FOURTH POLL IN 2 YEARS

Jerusalem, Dec. 2: Israel took a major step toward plunging into its fourth national election in under two years on Wednesday as lawmakers — supported by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's main coalition partner — passed a preliminary proposal to dissolve parliament. The 61-54 vote came just seven months after the coalition took office in a declaration of national unity to confront the Coronavirus crisis. But since then, the alliance between Netanyahu's Likud Party and Defence Minister Benny Gantz's Blue and White has been locked in infighting.

The vote gave only preliminary approval to ending the alliance and forcing a new election early next year. The legislation now heads to a committee before parliament as a whole takes up final approval, perhaps as soon as next week.

In the meantime, Gantz and Netanyahu are expected to continue negotiations in a last-ditch attempt to preserve their troubled alliance.

MISINTERPRETING CLIMATE: BRAVUS MINING PAYS FINE

Melbourne, Dec. 2: Adani Group's Australian division, Bravus Mining, has paid a fine of 26,000 Australian dollars for "misinterpreting" environmental approval conditions at its Carmichael Coal mine in central Queensland. The Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment issued an official statement on Tuesday, stating that it had fined the mining company and issued two infringement notices in October this year for not meeting a condition attached to their approval received under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

"The company failed to meet the requirements of condition 7 of the approval which requires them to implement the approved Species Management Plan. The department found that Adani Mining Pvt Ltd failed to implement the Species Management Plan by not undertaking pre-clearance surveys within the required timeframe prior to clearing," it said.

OSCARS '21 TO BE 'IN-PERSON' TELECAST

Los Angeles, Dec. 2: The 2021 Oscars ceremony will be an "in-person telecast", a representative from the Academy of Motion Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) and its award show's broadcast partner channel ABC has said. There is speculation that the biggest annual film awards show will be a virtual affair as the Coronavirus pandemic continues to rage on. But the representative told *Variety*, "The Oscars in-person telecast will happen."

In June, the Academy had announced that the 2021 Oscars will be held on April 25, 2021, eight weeks later than originally planned because of the pandemic's effects on the film industry. The eligibility window for feature films has also been pushed to February 28, 2021. Sources inside the Oscars say that by pushing the awards ceremony back, the institution hoped that theatres would be open again in the spring, thus allowing for more movies to compete at the ceremony.

But even if movie theatres stay shut, by holding the Oscars later in spring, organisers are now focusing to ensure the event continues as it always has live. It is still uncertain how many people will be allowed inside the 3,400-seat Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, where the ceremony takes place.

"The Academy has done a walkthrough of the Dolby recently to see all the multiple options," an awards publicist went on to add.

Single dose vaccine shows protection against Covid-19

Researchers at the Rega Institute, Belgium are preparing for its clinical trials

London, Dec. 2: Scientists have developed a new vaccine candidate against Covid-19 based on the yellow fever vaccine, a single dose of which protects hamsters and monkeys from infection with the SARS-CoV-2 Coronavirus.

The researchers at the Rega Institute at KU Leuven in Belgium are currently preparing for clinical trials of the vaccine candidate. To develop the vaccine, tentatively named RegaVax, the researchers inserted the genetic code of the SARS-CoV-2 virus spikes into that of the yellow fever vaccine.

RegaVax is a vector vaccine which uses the genetic code of the yellow fever vaccine virus as a carrier for the genetic code of the Coronavirus spikes.

According to an early version of the research paper accepted for publication in the journal *Nature*,

Virus infections may have hit US as early as Dec. '19

Washington, Dec. 2: The novel Coronavirus may have been introduced into the US as early as December 13 to 16, 2019, suggests a study which assessed archived samples from routine blood donations collected by the American Red Cross.

While the first confirmed case of Covid-19 in the US was identified on Jan-

uary 19, 2020, the scientists, including Sridhar V Basavaraju from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the US, noted that antibodies reactive against the virus were detected in 106 of the 7,389 specimens.

According to the research, published in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 84 of the samples specifically

had neutralising activity against the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which enables it to enter host cells. "The presence of these serum antibodies indicate that isolated SARS-CoV-2 infections may have occurred in the western portion of the US earlier than previously recognised," the researchers wrote. — *PTI*

The team also tested the vaccine in monkeys. "In some of the monkeys, we observed neutralising antibodies already seven days after vaccination. After 14 days, high titers of neutralising antibodies were measured in all animals," Neyts said.

"This is very fast. Moreover, in the vaccinated animals, the virus was completely or nearly completely gone from their throats," he said. "Ours is the only vaccine currently in development against Covid-19 that also protects against yellow fever," explained Neyts. Previously, the Rega team said they have used the yellow fever vaccine as the foundation for vaccine candidates against Zika, Ebola, and rabies. "The effectiveness and safety of the yellow fever vaccine, in use for 80 years, is well-established," Neyts said. — *PTI*

the researchers tested the vaccine in healthy hamsters and monkeys, with another group of the animals receiving a placebo. The researchers first vaccinated the hamsters and then dripped the virus into the

ir noses. They found that 10 days after a single vaccine dose, most of the hamsters were protected against the virus, adding that three weeks after vaccination, all hamsters were protected. "They also didn't

develop any lung infections. The lungs of the hamsters in the control groups, by contrast, showed clear signs of infection and disease," explained Professor Johan Neyts from KU Leuven.

Remembering road terror victims in Germany



Candles and flowers are placed at a makeshift memorial for the victims at the market column at Hauptmarkt square in Trier, southwestern Germany, on Wednesday, one day after a car drove into pedestrians. A baby was among five people killed when a car tore through a pedestrian shopping street in Trier on Tuesday. A prosecutor said that the driver, a 51-year-old Trier native, appeared to be suffering from "psychiatric problems" and had been under the influence of alcohol during the incident, in which 14 other people were hurt. — *AFP*

Provisional provincial status to Gilgit Baltistan priority: Imran

Islamabad, Dec. 2: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday said that his government would work on a priority basis to grant the provisional provincial status to Gilgit Baltistan, according to a media report.

His remarks came after he arrived in the disputed region to attend the oath-taking ceremony of the 14-member Gilgit Baltistan Cabinet. "What will the new government do? First, we will work on granting the region provisional provincial status so that the prevailing sense of deprivation [among the people] can be eradicated," *Dawn* newspaper quoted Khan as saying.

India has slammed Pakistan for its decision to hold elections in Gilgit-Baltistan and said any action to alter the status of the militarily-occupied region has no legal basis. India also clearly conveyed to Pakistan that the entire Union territories of

PAKISTAN LOADING FUEL IN 1,100MW CHINESE-ASSISTED N-POWER PLANT

Islamabad, Dec. 2: Pakistan has started loading fuel to its Chinese-assisted 1,100MW nuclear power plant in Karachi for testing in run-up to its commercial operations in April 2021, according to a media report on Wednesday. The fuel loading for the newly built Karachi Nuclear Power Plant Unit-2 (K-

2) began on Tuesday after obtaining fuel load permit from the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority. It was witnessed by DG of the Strategic Plan Division Lt Gen Nadeem Zaki Manj, Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Mohammad Naeem and Chinese and Pakistani officials. — *PTI*

Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, are an integral part of the country.

Elections were held on 23 seats of the legislative assembly in Gilgit-Baltistan on November 15. Polling on one seat was postponed after the death of one of the contestants. Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) won most of the seats in the legislative assembly election. — *PTI*

OVER 3000 PDM ACTIVISTS BOOKED

Lahore, Dec. 2: Over 3,000 activists of the Pakistan Democratic Movement, including three sons of former PM Yousuf Raza Gilani, have been booked by Punjab province police for holding an anti-government rally in violation of the Covid-19 and public safety guidelines. — *PTI*

HK ACTIVISTS SENTENCED TO PRISON TERM

Hong Kong, Dec. 2: Hong Kong pro-democracy activists Joshua Wong, Agnes Chow and Ivan Lam were sentenced to jail on Wednesday on charges related to an unauthorised anti-government protest last year at the city's police headquarters. Wong, who pleaded guilty to organising and participating in the protest, received 13 1/2 months behind bars.

Chow, who also pleaded guilty to participating in the protest and inciting others to take part, received 10 months, while Lam received 7 months after pleading guilty to incitement. The protest took place on June 21 last year, and saw thousands surround the police headquarters as they demonstrated against excessive force by police against protesters, as well as a now-withdrawn extradition bill. — *AP*

Iran President rejects uranium enrichment bill

Tehran, Dec. 2: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday rejected a bill approved by parliament that would have suspended United Nations inspections and boosted uranium enrichment, saying it was "harmful" to diplomatic efforts aimed at restoring the 2015 nuclear deal and easing US sanctions.

The tug-of-war over the bill, which gained momentum after the killing of a prominent Iranian nuclear scientist last month, reflects the rivalry between Rouhani, a relative moderate, and hard-line lawmakers who dominate parliament and favour a more confrontational approach to the West.

The bill would have suspended UN inspections and required the government to resume enriching uranium to 20 per cent if European nations fail to provide relief from crippling US sanctions on the country's oil and banking sectors. That level falls short of the threshold needed for nuclear weapons but is higher than that required for civilian purposes. Speaking at a Cabinet meeting, Rouhani said his administration, "does not agree with that and considers it harmful for the trend of diplomatic activities."

Rouhani implied the lawmakers were positioning themselves ahead of elections that are planned for June. The President added that "today, we are more powerful in the nuclear field than at any other time."

The bill is expected to have little if any impact, as Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has the final say on all major policies, including those related to the nuclear programme. — *AP*

Barr says no widespread US Prez election fraud

Washington, Dec. 2: Disputing President Donald Trump's persistent, baseless claims, Attorney General William Barr declared the US Justice Department has uncovered no evidence of widespread voter fraud that could change the outcome of the 2020 election.

Barr's comments, in an interview Tuesday with the *The Associated Press*, contradict the concerted effort by Trump, his boss, to subvert the results of last month's voting and block President-elect Joe Biden from taking his place in the White House. Barr told the *AP* that US attorneys and FBI agents have been working to follow up specific complaints and information they've received, but "to date, we have not seen fraud on a scale that could have effected a different outcome in the election."

The comments, which drew immediate criticism from Trump attorneys, were especially notable coming from Barr, who has been one of the president's most ardent allies. Before the election, he had repeatedly raised the notion that mail-in voting could be especially vulnerable to fraud during the coronavirus pandemic as Americans feared going to polls and instead chose to vote by mail. More to Trump's liking, Barr revealed in the *AP* interview that in October

Washington, Dec. 2: In a huge relief to tens of thousands of Indian professionals and top American IT firms, a US court has blocked two H-1B regulations proposed by the Trump administration to restrict the ability of American companies to hire foreign employees.

H-1B visas is a non-immigrant visa that allows American companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The US issues up to 85,000 H-1B visas each year. Usually, they're issued for three years and renewable. Most of the nearly 600,000 H-1B visa holders

are from India and China.

In his 23-page order on Tuesday, US District Judge Jeffrey White of Northern District of California blocked the Trump administration's recent policy that required employers to pay foreign workers on H-1B visas significantly higher wages. He also set aside another policy that narrowed the eligibility of H-1B valued by US tech firms and other employers.

As a result of the ruling, the Department of Homeland Security rule on occupations and other issues that was to come into effect from December 7, stands invalid. — *PTI*

TRUMP TEASES 2024 RUN AT WH PARTY

Washington, Dec. 2: President Donald Trump teased running again for president in 2024 as he hosted a holiday reception at the White House on Tuesday evening. "It's been an amazing four years," Trump told the crowd, which included many Republican National Committee members.

"We're trying to do another four years. Otherwise, I'll see you in four years." The video of Trump's appearance was streamed live on Facebook by one attendee, former Oklahoma Republican Party Chair Pam Pollard.

It showed dozens of people crammed into the Cross Hall of the White House state floor, standing closely together. Many seen in the video were not wearing masks. The Trumps began hosting holiday receptions this week, intent on celebrating a final season before Trump leaves office on January 20. — *AP*

Inauguration panel: Varghese is exec dir

Washington, Dec. 2: President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris have named Indian-American Maju Varghese in the four-member Presidential Inauguration Committee (PIC), which will organise the activities surrounding their swearing-in on January 20.

The team includes Tony Allen as the Chief Executive Officer, Maju Varghese as the Executive Director, Erin Wilson as the Deputy Executive Director and Yvanna Cancela as its

Deputy Executive Director. "It is an honour to help lead the team that will plan the inaugural activities for President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris while keeping their commitment to protecting the health and safety of Americans and demonstrating the strength and resilience of our nation," Varghese said.

Varghese is the fifth Indian-American to be given key positions by the Biden transition team. — *PTI*

GENUINE | CLASSIC 'The Patient Assassin: A True Tale of Massacre, Revenge and the Raj' beat six other titles Anita Anand's Jallianwala Bagh story wins history prize

London, Dec. 2: British Indian journalist and author Anita Anand's book that tells the story of a young man caught up in the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar has won a prestigious history-literary prize in the UK. "The Patient Assassin: A True Tale of Massacre, Revenge and the Raj" beat six other titles for the PEN Hessell-Tiltman Prize for History 2020, awarded annually for a non-fiction book of specifically historical content.

The judges described it

as a "genuine historical classic" which will be read for decades to come. "Anita Anand's 'The Patient Assassin' is the story of a murderer and his victim — a British colonial official assassinated by an Indian avenger more than two decades after the horrific Amritsar massacre of 1919, for which that official was partly responsible. Yet it is much more than the story of two men," said Rana Mitter, chair of judges. "It is an account of how global the spirit of anti-imperialist revolution

was in the early twentieth century. It is also an empathetic account of how categories of good and evil in the context of empire have to be understood in more nuanced and complex ways. For those looking to question empire in the present day, it is a book that provides many answers," he said.

The judges said that in seeking this year's winner, they wanted a book packed with historical rigour, a rich base of research, and an ability to speak to wider historical questions

● Anand, a political journalist who has presented television and radio programmes on the BBC for 20 years, said she is honoured and overwhelmed to be named winner of a prize that was packed with books by esteemed historians. "I will be pinching myself for some time to come," she said.

beyond its immediate subject. "We also hoped that it would be the kind of read

we couldn't put down. Getting all of that in one book might have been too much to ask — but as it turned out, our 2020 winner has displayed all those qualities and more," added Mitter. Anand, who is a political journalist who has presented television and radio programmes on the BBC for 20 years, said she is honoured and overwhelmed to be named winner of a prize that was packed with exceptional books by esteemed historians.

"I will be pinching myself for some time to come.

"The Patient Assassin" is very close to my heart. Having been weaned on the story of Jallianwala Bagh, thanks to our family connection, I wanted to write the history of the massacre and Udhham Singh's revenge as an antidote to the rose-tinted portrayals of the Raj — so popular in film and television," she said. "I also needed to understand how such unspeakable things could be allowed to happen. Faced by complicated characters, contrary accounts, obscure sources, the weight of

folklore and deliberate attempts to hide the truth, I sometimes doubted that I could do justice to this dark episode. I'm so glad I persevered," she said, adding that the recognition for the story would mean a lot to her father and grandfather.

"The Patient Assassin is a compelling and truth-telling portrayal of a dark time in modern history, and we're delighted to be able to throw a light on this impressive title," noted Hannah Trevarthen from English PEN. — *PTI*

DECCAN Chronicle

3 DECEMBER 2020

Trudeau's 'concern' on farmers unwarranted

Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has riled India by making public his observations on the ongoing farmers' protest in this county that had been made through diplomatic channels. This is unconventional to say the least, and the Canadian leader was ticked off, with the Indian spokesman referring on Tuesday to "ill-informed comments by Canadian leaders relating to farmers in India" being "unwarranted". The spokesman also pointed out that it was best that "diplomatic conversations are not misrepresented for political purposes".

There is a point here. Other than an outlier like the current US leader Donald Trump, who is perceived as an all-round embarrassment, heads of state or governments in the democratic world are not known to personally criticise specific policies in one another's country. If they did, meaningful and productive international life will be hard to construct. However, an important issue of concern need not be brushed under the carpet. When such concerns come up,

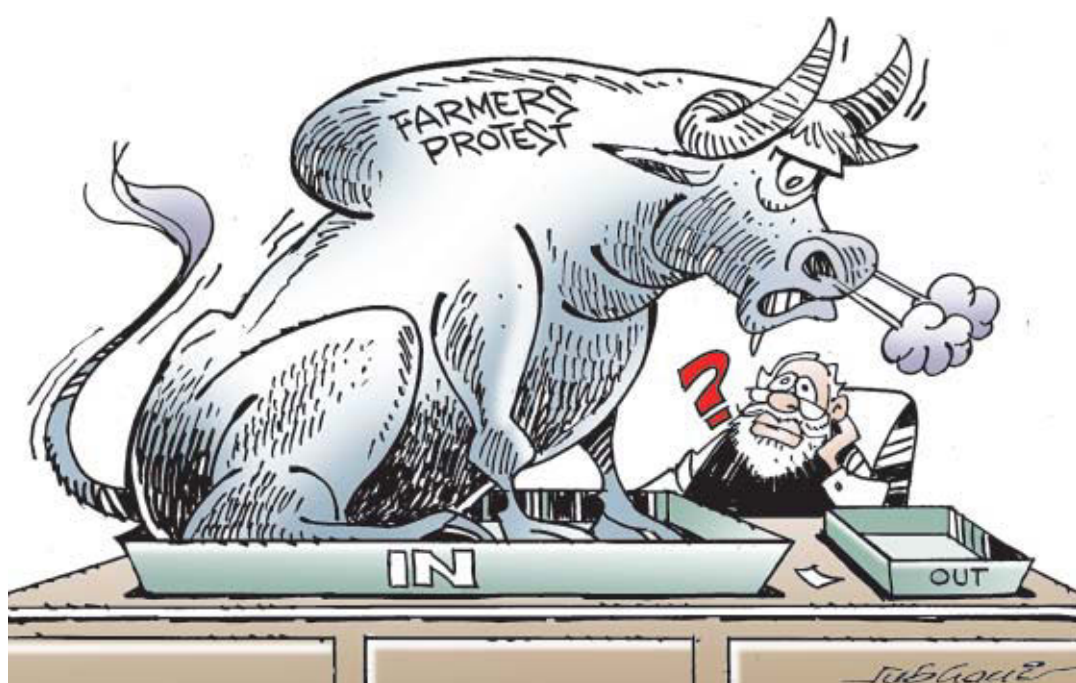
If Mr Trudeau had so wished, he could have had questions raised in the public domain on India's controversial farm laws through Canadian eminent persons or politicians of his Liberal Party

It may be recalled that two years ago Mr Trudeau had been cold-shouldered by the Modi government when he visited India to see the Golden Temple in Amritsar, although the demands of protocol were not breached. There had been some ground to think that pro-Khalistan elements among the large Sikh community in Canada had succeeded in influencing their PM somewhat. Are Mr Trudeau's public comments meant to be a payback of sorts? We hope that is not the case, for such actions can needlessly cast a shadow on otherwise positive inter-state relations.

Interestingly, the Canadian leader brought up his "concerns" regarding the "peaceful" farmers' protest in India at a Sikh gathering in his country when he addressed it on the occasion of the 551st anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of the Sikh faith. In order to appease the Canadian Sikhs, was he overlooking the fact that the ongoing farmers' protest is not a religious issue even if the largest contingent of farmers taking part in it so far are from Punjab? If so, it would appear he was indeed playing politics. An alternative explanation, of course, is that the Canadian mission here was fooled by appearances and failed to keep headquarters informed of the complexity of the farmers' protest.

India cannot deem itself above criticism from international quarters for acts of omission or commission provided the bonafides of the critics are above board. But it is useful to be mindful of protocol when dealing with questions at the official level.

Subhani



Pay heed to shadow pandemic of hunger



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

More than 1.3 lakh people have died in India since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. There may be an effective vaccine against the coronavirus in the not-too-distant future. But meanwhile, there is the lengthening shadow pandemic of hunger and malnutrition.

Despite the so-called green shoots of recovery in some sectors, demand remains very sluggish. Livelihoods have been gutted. Millions of informal workers are falling through the cracks.

Last month, the Delhi Rozhi Roti Adhikar Abhiyan organised an online public hearing on hunger and malnutrition. At the Hunger Hearings, many of the city's poorest and those without ration cards and access to the public distribution system narrated their stories.

The stories were similar to the ones I have heard in the past several months in walks through this city. Many people are back at work but at a hugely reduced salary.

Kumar, who works in a South Delhi beauty parlour, is not among the city's poorest but his take-home earnings are now a third of what he earned before Covid-19 struck.

"My children used to have fruits. Now, they don't. There is no money," he told me. Kumar is a father of three children and the sole breadwinner in his family.

If this is the situation in India's capital city, imagine the situation elsewhere across the country.

In urban areas, most people have to buy their food and therefore are more vulnerable to price fluctuations. A sudden and sharp decrease in their purchasing power can drastically affect the diets of poor people, especially in times of food inflation.

Worryingly, "food prices do not seem to be moderating contrary to earlier expectations, and from just fruits and veg-

etables the price surge has moved to all the major food components as well," Joseph Thomas, head of research at Emkay Wealth Management, told *Live Mint* newspaper last month.

"The urban poor are particularly vulnerable as the economy stagnates in a post-Covid scenario. It is imperative that the Central government should continue the additional foodgrains being provided under the PDS (public distribution system) for another year and supplement in with free pulses, eggs and oil. Without this minimal package, we are unlikely to be able to stave off hunger and starvation in urban areas," says Biraj Patnaik, executive director of the National Foundation for India and formerly the principal adviser to the commissioners of the Supreme Court in the Right to Food case for close to a decade.

Food security activists have been saying for quite some time now that the impact of the nationwide lockdown and the ensuing economic crisis continue to disproportionately impact the country's poor and unorganised sector workers. They argue that though the Central government has announced relief measures such as the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana and the Atma Nirbhar Bharat, many field studies are showing that a lot more needs to be done by way of social protection.

Hunger Watch, a rapid survey across 11 states, initiated by the Right to

Though the Centre has announced relief measures such as the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana and the Atma Nirbhar Bharat, field studies are showing that a lot more needs to be done by way of social protection

How steeply is malnutrition mounting in India? How severely have children been hit? The short answer: we don't know! There is no official data on this just as there is none on migrant workers who died during the lockdown.

Food Campaign in partnership with several civil society organisations from mid-September to mid-October, has thrown up grim insights.

Compared to February-March, that is before the nationwide lockdown was clamped, the situation between September and October in sampled households showed 50 per cent less cereal consumption, 62 per cent less pulse consumption, 67 per cent less egg consumption, and 70 per cent reduced green vegetable consumption, according to Hunger Watch findings presented at a recent webinar organised by the Peoples' Health Movement.

This is bad news, given that India already had a huge malnutrition problem, especially child and maternal malnutrition, even before the pandemic.

Globally, there is a red alert about the shadow pandemic of hunger in the time of Covid-19. The coronavirus pandemic will see over a quarter of a billion people suffering acute hunger by the end of the year, according to new figures from the World Food Programme (WFP), the food assistance wing of the United Nations. According to the WFP, the latest figures show that the lives and livelihoods of around 265 million people in low and middle-income countries will be under severe threat unless swift action is taken to tackle the pandemic, up from the current 135 million.

How steeply is malnutrition mounting in India? How severely have children been affected? The short answer — we don't know!

There is no official data on this in the public domain just as there is no official data on migrant workers who died during the lockdown.

"At a time when sur-

veys by civil society organisations, such as Hunger Watch by Right to Food campaign, are showing mounting hunger and reduced intake of pulses, vegetables, eggs etc across India, in both villages and cities, it would have been very helpful to have real time data on malnutrition. The Central government promised us real time data on child malnutrition in various districts across India at the click of a mouse, but where is this data?" asks Dipa Sinha, assistant professor (economics), School of Liberal Studies, Ambedkar University, who is part of the Right to Food campaign.

Ms Sinha says that "the massive nutrition portal that was developed at great cost and was supposed to be providing the Centre and states data on delivery of services to children and mothers across nearly 14 lakh anganwadis is not in the public domain and there is no official data on the magnitude of hunger and malnutrition in the country."

Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres, which are meant to take care of severely malnourished children (SAM), were also non-functional during the lockdown months, and we don't know what has happened to such children during the lockdown and how well or otherwise they have coped, she adds.

Last month, the Central government issued an order allowing the states to reopen anganwadis outside containment zones with immediate effect.

Hopefully, the anganwadi workers will now be enabled to record the height, weight, body mass index (BMI), body circumferences and other anthropometric data of children and monitor their growth, which took a hit during the nationwide lockdown. This data, if and when it materialises, will be critical for policy interventions for the most vulnerable.

Meanwhile, it is vital to track hunger stories in all their variations and demand action.

The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.

LETTERS

TRUST DEFICIT

There is a massive trust deficit between the Centre and representatives of farmers (Centre, farmers fail to find common ground, DC, Dec. 2). The ruling dispensation needs to mitigate the misgivings of farmers. Further, it may be worthy to note that "agriculture" was the only sector that managed to register growth in the lockdown. Hence, the sooner the problem is resolved the better it is for the economy.

Dr C. Ghanshyam Visakhapatnam

It is going to be more complicated as several former sportspersons have extended their support to the farmers agitation and decided to return their Padma, Arjun awards in protest against the force used against peasants en route Delhi. The Centre has to find an amicable solution to stop further damage of nation's reputation. If the farmer's agitation gets more support from other corners of the world, it is going to be a big setback for the Centre.

P. Govardhana Rao Kankipadu, Krishna

Why not include MSP guarantee in farm legislations? Farmers' fear private players may not even give MSP for their produce. This is the only burning issue between farmers and the new farm laws. Private players may exploit farmers in the absence of support price. Their concerns are genuine.

Kantichand Rampuria Jain Srikalahasti

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Major reform tenancy law in Andhra: CM

By a staff reporter

HYDERABAD, DEC. 2. The main considerations that prevailed on the government to bring in the amendment to the Andhra Tenancy Act of 1956 were to provide security of tenure and to improve the economic status of the tenant, the chief minister K. Brahma Reddy said today in the Legislative Assembly.

The Chief Minister while explaining salient features of the Andhra Pradesh (Andhra area) Tenancy Amendmending Bill 1970, as reported by the Joint Select Committee said that the measure if enacted would constitute the first major reform of the Tenancy Law in Andhra area, subsequent in 1956 Act.

Earlier, Mr C.V.K. Rao (Ind) objected to the consideration of the Bill since the CM, who was to move the Bill was not present. He also wanted that the House should be adjourned to facilitate the CM to move the Bill.

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Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Caste fraud stench in Chhattisgarh secretariat

A "high-level" certification investigation committee set up by the Chhattisgarh government has detected 267 cases of government employees with fake caste certificates. Sources say that chief minister Bhupesh Baghel has given instructions to the state chief secretary, R.P. Mandal, to dismiss all such employees from service, except those who got a stay order from the court.

Most of these cases are pending before the state high court or are adjournment orders. Apparently, in the last two years alone, 75 cases have been detected. Sources say that even after receiving the adjournment order from the court in these cases, several officers and employees are still working in important posts.

The state general administration department has stated that a total

of 758 complaints were received by the investigation committee, of which 267 cases of fake caste certificates were detected.

According to Baghel's instructions, all government servants whose caste certificates are false will be immediately removed from their posts. All such cases will be reviewed department-wise by GAD, which incidentally has 14 employees with fake certificates. The school education department apparently has the highest number of cases — 44!

GEHLOT SEEKS SUPPORT OF RETIRED BABUS

After surviving the Sachin Pilot threat, Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot is reportedly trying to strengthen his grip on the state administration and neutralise any potential threat. Sources say that

following his appointment of 1989-batch IAS officer Niranjan Arya as the state chief secretary, after superseding 10 IAS officers, Mr Gehlot is now in a placatory mode.

According to sources, Mr Gehlot is now seeking the support of retired scheduled caste officers, in a possible caste twist to an administrative move. He has recently profusely thanked former IAS officers like Mahendra Singh, Lalit Panwar and retired IPS officers Jaswant Sampatram and R.P. Singh, among others, for their acknowledging that Mr Arya's appointment was "a step in the right direction".

This will clearly dilute the eddy currents from many other senior officers. They, of course, are unhappy with Mr Gehlot's rather overt attempt to seek the support of retired officers for the successful tenure of his new chief secretary.

Was Mr Gehlot being merely polite in responding to the retired officers' congratulatory letter on Mr Arya's promotion or is it a step towards garnering support to consolidate his power base in the state administration? As a seasoned politician, he certainly knows the value of ticking off more checkboxes. We'll have to wait and see whether this works.

ED CHIEF GETS EXTENSION

S.K. Mishra will be the first director of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to serve for three years. The Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer, who is from the 1984-batch, was appointed to the post in November 2018 for a fixed tenure of two years. But just before his term was to end, the government modified the earlier order to the effect that the tenure will last for three years. The modi-

fication was reportedly done on the legal opinion by the solicitor general since the CVC Act has no mention of extension for the post of ED director.

Initially, sources say the government had considered taking the ordinance route but opted for the CVC committee since the appointment of the ED director is governed by the CVC Act.

As ED chief, Mr Mishra is in charge of several high profile and sensitive investigations including Augusta Westland, Congress leader D.K. Shivakumar, Yes Bank and others. Does the government want to ensure there is no disruption in the probes of these cases by appointing a new ED chief? We can only speculate.

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quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	44,618.04	-0.08
Nifty 50	13,113.75	0.04
S&P 500*	3,663.54	0.03
Dollar (₹)	73.80	0.21
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.57	0.18
Euro (₹)	88.92	0.75
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,169▲675	1.40
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	48.72	1.30
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.920	-0.010
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.955	0.022

UBI integrates all Corporation Bank branches



Union Bank of India has completed the IT integration after which all the branches of erstwhile Corporation Bank have come fully under its fold as part of the amalgamation exercise, the bank said. With this IT integration, all of Corporation Bank, including service and specialised branches, have been fully integrated with Union Bank of India, it said in a release. All Corporation Bank customers have been migrated.

■ 30% stake could fetch around \$4.8 bn
China's Ant plans Paytm stake sale

SUMEET CHATTERJEE, ADITI SHAH & ANIRBAN SEN
HONG KONG/NEW DELHI, DEC. 2

Chinese fintech giant Ant Group is considering selling its 30 per cent stake in Indian digital payment processor Paytm amid tensions between the two Asian neighbours and a toughening competitive landscape, people with direct knowledge of the matter said.

Financial details of the possible transaction have not been firmed up and Ant, the Alibaba-backed payments-to-consumer credit behemoth, has not launched a formal sale process yet, four people told Reuters.

Paytm, which is also backed by SoftBank Group Corp among others, was valued at about \$16 billion during its latest private fundraising round a year ago. At that valuation, Ant's stake in the Indian firm is worth about \$4.8 billion.

Both Ant and Paytm said that the information was incorrect. A Paytm spokesman said "there has been no discussion with any of our major shareholders ever, nor any plans, about selling their stake."

Ant's possible exit from Paytm would mark another reversal for the Chinese company hot on the heels of the dramatic suspension of its \$37 billion stock listing last month, which would have been the



world's largest.

It also would be a step back from its ambitions of becoming a global payments leader. Sources told Reuters in October that Ant was cutting its financial support to many of the overseas affiliated e-wallet firms.

The main trigger for Ant to consider the divestment of its stake in Paytm is the worsening diplomatic relations between India and China in the past few months, said the people, who declined to be named, as the deliberations are confidential.

Relations between the countries are at a nadir, with troops locked in a border face-off in the western Himalayas for months. "There is a growing realisation within Ant management that it would not be able to raise its stake in the company," one of the people with direct knowledge said, adding senior managers at Ant have discussed the idea recently.

Even so, Ant was in the middle of an investment review and it could still

decide to shelve a divestment if it failed to get the desired valuation, he said.

Two other sources said that as a result of the review Ant could end up retaining a small stake in Paytm.

Indian start-ups are heavily funded by Chinese investors such as Alibaba and Tencent. Bankers have previously said they were looking to bolster their presence in the country with an aim to grow their revenue outside China.

Alibaba has invested over \$4 billion in India so far and had plans to invest around \$5 billion in 2021, which have now been put on hold, one of the sources said.

Alibaba did not respond to a request for comment.

Ant first invested in Paytm in 2015 and owns its 30 per cent stake in the firm via its parent company, One97 Communications, according to Ant's initial public offering prospectus, which described the Indian firm as a major associate. —Reuters

TWO SAHARA FIRMS FILE CONTEMPT PLEA AGAINST SEBI

New Delhi, Dec. 2: Two Sahara group firms have moved the Supreme Court seeking initiation of contempt proceedings against the Sebi, alleging that the market regulator's demand of Rs 62,602 crore from them was not only contemptuous but a mischievous attempt to overreach the directions of the apex court.

The Sebi had moved the apex court seeking direction to the firms to pay the amount in compliance with the court's earlier orders, failing which the group's chief Subrata Roy be taken into custody.

Sahara India Real Estate Corporation Ltd. (SIRECL) and Sahara Housing Investment Corporation Ltd. (SHICL), in their contempt plea have alleged gross, blatant and willful disobedience of the directions of the top court by the regulator.

It said that the Sebi's demand asking the firms to deposit Rs 62,602 crore was in violation of the specific directions of the apex court in its order of February 6, 2017 that at present only the principal amount is to be concerned and the issue of interest will be adverted to later.

It said that Sebi's action of demanding money and filing of contempt against Sahara firms was not only contemptuous but a mischievous attempt to overreach the directions of the court. —PTI

E-com hired over 2.5 lakh temp staff for festivals

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, DEC. 2

In order to meet the delivery requirements of increased online sales during the recently concluded festive season, e-commerce companies had hired around 2.5 lakh to 3 lakh temporary employees. The jobs predominantly catered to delivery and warehouse management.

The festive season this year saw e-commerce players clocking gross sales of \$8.3 billion against \$5 billion last year, according to Bengaluru-based Red-Seer Consulting. This increased sales also reflected in their hiring numbers, which stood around 2.5 lakh to 3 lakh, as per the data from Teamlease Services.

A large part of the jobs were offered by market-place players like Amazon and Flipkart, while smaller players supported the hiring by third-party logistics com-



panies, which are into last mile delivery, as per the data from Teamlease. Post-lockdown, several brands have started selling through their websites, using logistics from third-party players.

"The hiring activity was more predominant in the southern states, while north and west saw almost similar levels of hiring. The hiring was also more spread out to cover newer locations, though large cities still accounted for a large part of the hiring," said Rituparna Chakraborty, co-founder and executive vice president, Teamlease Services.

The festive season sales

this year saw increased demand from tier-II, III and towns beyond. E-commerce companies were seen ramping up their supply chain in smaller towns as well. Amazon had added close to 200 delivery stations, including those operated by delivery service partners across the country.

Compared to pre-Covid times, companies this time took a conscious approach towards hiring more women workforce. Prior to the pandemic, women workforce made up for less than 10 per cent and many companies have set the target to take this up to 25 per cent.

Despite remunerations getting affected across industries, e-commerce continued to pay the temp staff as usual. However, Most of the contracts were for a period ranging from 45 days to three months.

Chakraborty says 15 to 20 per cent of the festive season temp staff would be retained by the firms.

China buys first Indian rice in three decades

RAJENDRA JADHAV
MUMBAI, DEC. 2

China has begun importing Indian rice for the first time in at least three decades due to tightening supplies from Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam and an offer of sharply discounted prices, Indian industry officials said.

India is the world's biggest rice exporter and China the biggest importer.

Beijing buys in around 4 million tonnes a year but has avoided purchases from India, citing quality issues. The rice imports come despite political tensions over a border dispute in the Himalayas.

For the first time China has made rice purchases. They may increase buying next year after seeing the quality of Indian crop," B.V. Krishna Rao, president of the Rice Exporters

Association, said. Indian traders have contracted to export 100,000 tonnes of broken rice for Dec-Feb. shipments at around \$300 per tonne on a free-on-board basis. China's traditional suppliers, such as Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar and Pakistan, have limited surplus for export and were quoting at least \$30 per tonne more compared with Indian prices. —Reuters

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Another Diego doc being probed

Buenos Aires: The investigation into Diego Maradona's death continued with police raids on the office and home of the psychiatrist who cared for the soccer star and is being investigated for possible medical negligence. By order of the attorney general's office of San Isidro, officers entered an apartment used by Agustina Cosachov for consultations in Buenos Aires on Tuesday, while another group of police searched her private home.

"The prosecutor let me know that her medical behaviours are being investigated. These are routine measures, as is the case in all the causes of a patient's death, to reconstruct his medical history," psychiatrist Vadim Mischanchuk told reporters. Cosachov was part of a medical team that treated Maradona after he underwent surgery for bleeding on the brain in early November. The 60-year-old former player died last Wednesday of heart attack at a house in a gated community of Buenos Aires where he was living during his rehabilitation. — AP

Hyderabad draw with Jamshedpur

Vasco, Goa: Stephen Eze salvaged a point for Jamshedpur FC with an 85th-minute strike to help his side hold Hyderabad FC to a 1-1 draw in an Indian Super League match on Wednesday. Aridane Santana scored his second goal of the campaign to give Hyderabad a 55th-minute lead.

Hyderabad were ahead five minutes after the restart with Santana scoring off a rebound. Narzary danced his way past Renthlei and pulled the trigger. Goalkeeper Kumar only succeeded in diverting it into the path of Santana, who rolled the ball into the net.

Jamshedpur's efforts finally paid off in the 85th minute when Eze fired home from inside the box. — PTI

Blues pull one back

Hardik, Bumrah win it for India; Australia clinch series

Canberra, Dec. 2: Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah found his mojo and the Indian team its winning ways in a morale-lifting 13-run triumph over Australia in the third and final ODI on Wednesday, salvaging some of the lost pride in a 1-2 series defeat.

An in-form Hardik Pandya blasted 92 not out off 76 balls and Ravindra Jadeja's useful 66 off 50 took India to a healthy 302 for 5 in 50 overs after an inept show in the first 30 overs.

It was at least 30 runs short of a par-score on a good batting track but a rejigged bowling attack managed to restrict the home team to 289 all out in 49.3 overs.

Shardul Thakur (3/51) and debutant Thangarasu Natarajan (2/70 in 10 overs) did their bit but it was Bumrah's (2/43 in 9.3 overs) controlled effort with some swing upfront and the dismissal of a marauding Glenn Maxwell in the nick of time which ultimately turned the match in India's favour.

Bumrah did the most important thing by bowling one in the block-hole that had the dangerous Maxwell (59 off 38 balls) having his own little "brain fade" moment trying to free his arms exposing the stumps.

The 'Big Show' was in a mood to punish the bowlers and all he needed was to see off Bumrah and attack the others as he was doing.

The cushion provided by his "senior" helped Natarajan to start bowling his yorkers under pressure and Thakur also chipped in with necessary wickets. The inconsequential match became something of consequence for Virat Kohli and his men as they gear up for the next white-ball series — three T20 Internationals in less than 48 hours.

India's bowling attack had a different look and it did perform way better. — PTI



Jasprit Bumrah (left) is congratulated by teammates after the dismissal of Australia's Glenn Maxwell during the third One-Day International match at Manuka Oval in Canberra, Australia, on Wednesday.

KOHLI FEELS RELIEVED AFTER WIN

Canberra, Dec. 2: India captain Virat Kohli on Wednesday said the consolation win over Australia in the third and final ODI was a timely "boost" for the remainder of the tour, made possible by the freshness that came with a changed squad.

India, who made four changes going into the game, got past Australia by 13 runs to pick up a win after losing the series. India will next take on the hosts in three T20 Internationals (starting Friday) followed by four Tests (starting December 17).

"We were put under the pump in the first half and in the second half of Australia's innings. Shubman (Gill) and others coming in, it brings in a bit freshness... The team needed that kind of a boost," Kohli said at the post-match presentation.

The India bowlers, who looked ordinary in the first two games, got a lot more purchase from the surface. Kohli said it was a much better pitch than Sydney where the first two games were played.

"I think the pitch was much better for the bowlers. So the confidence levels go up. Playing international cricket for so long, that's the challenge you face. We were clinical with the ball and in the field," he said.

Kohli made 63 but the unbeaten 150-run stand between Ravindra Jadeja (66) and Hardik Pandya (92) gave India a fighting chance. "Happy with the performance and hopefully we take the momentum forward. I would have liked to go on for a bit longer, but it was a great partnership between Pandya and Jadeja," said the India skipper. — PTI

Schumacher son set for F1 in 2021

Sakhir (Bahrain), Dec. 2: Mick Schumacher, the son of seven-time world champion Michael Schumacher, will drive in Formula One for the first time with Haas next season, the team announced on Wednesday, leaving their new recruit "emotionally exploding" at the realisation of a dream.

Schumacher junior, 21, will partner Russian driver Nikita Mazepin, also 21, in the Haas line-up.

Haas team principal Guenther Steiner welcomed the two F1 debuts in a tweet: "Super excited about having two rookies in our team for next year! Welcome, Mick!"

They replace Haas's current driver pairing of Romain Grosjean and Kevin Magnussen.

"I'm really looking forward to next year's challenge... It's really been a dream that I've always dreamed about and now it's finally coming true," Schumacher said in a video posted on Twitter.

"So I'm just really happy and emotionally exploding."

Mick Schumacher currently heads the Formula Two drivers' standings with one race to go in Bahrain this weekend.

Haas's new signing will



Mick Schumacher

get a taste of what is in store when he takes part in free practice ahead of the 2020 season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on December 11 before taking part in testing a few days later.

Schumacher leads the F2 standings by 14 points after achieving 10 podium finishes and feature race victories at Monza and Sochi.

Steiner said the Formula 2 championship had long served as a proving ground for talent to showcase their credentials.

He added: "Mick has won races, collected podiums and excelled against some pretty exceptional talent in 2020. I firmly believe he's earned the opportunity to graduate into Formula 1 based on his performances." — AFP

REDS, PORTO ADVANCE; REAL IN DEEP TROUBLE

Paris, Dec. 2: While former champions Liverpool and Porto eased to the knockout stage of the Champions League, record 13-time champion Real Madrid face an embarrassing group-stage exit after losing 2-0 at Shakhtar Donetsk.

Zinedine Zidane's side would have advanced with a win on Tuesday, but they have defended poorly all season and were undone by counterattack goals in the second half. Instead of progressing, Madrid dropped to third place in Group 'B' behind the Ukrainian side and Borussia Monchengladbach.

Liverpool overcame injury problems to beat four-time winners Ajax 1-0 at Anfield, thanks to a second-half goal from midfielder Curtis Jones.

Porto held already-qualified Manchester City to a 0-0 draw at home, although City ensured the top spot. No drama in those two groups, but plenty in Madrid's as Gladbach missed the chance to advance after losing 3-2 at home to Inter Milan, who had to win.

Atletico Madrid did not do enough, drawing 1-1 at home to Bayern Munich even though the defending champions fielded a weakened side having already qualified. — AP


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