

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | MONDAY 28 | DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 29°C
Min: 24°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Margazhi 13
Tithi: Chaturtashi
Star: Rohini
Rahukalam: .30 am to 9 am
Yamagandam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.11 am
Zohar: 12.13 pm
Asar: 3.23 pm
Maghrib: 5.48 pm
Isha: 7.04 pm

COUNTER POINT



Shh! They are political infiltrators!



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Kamal launches 3-day poll campaign in delta



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Bid to mislead farmers will not succeed: Rajnath

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MSD named captain of ICC's ODI and T20 teams of the decade



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No plan to share power, AIADMK tells partners

‘Opportunists and betrayers target Dravidian parties’

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, DEC. 27

The leaders and cadre of ruling party AIADMK rallied behind Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami as the CM candidate for the forthcoming Assembly election of 2021.

“The government will be led by the AIADMK and there is no necessity for a coalition government,” the party’s deputy coordinator K.P. Munusamy said in a veiled attack on the BJP at its maiden election rally in the city on Sunday. “If any political party comes forward for an alliance arrangement with an idea of a coalition government, let them please think about it again.” This was tantamount to telling the BJP to fall in line or



At its first election rally before 2021 Assembly polls, AIADMK leaders - Chief Minister Palaniswami, Deputy CM O Panneerselvam and other seniors addressed the gathering in Chennai on Sunday.

rework its poll options for Tamil Nadu.

The demise of AIADMK supremo J. Jayalalithaa and DMK’s M. Karunanidhi, who opposed her, may have emboldened “many national parties” to try

and make a political entry into Tamil Nadu, he said.

Boldly terming them as “opportunists and betrayers” who were blaming the Dravidian outfits in alleging that they had ruined Tamil Nadu in their five-decade rule, Mr

Munusamy wondered how accusations of inefficiency could be hurled against the AIADMK government when the Centre had given so many awards to Tamil Nadu for its meritorious performance in many sectors. The State had superior infrastructure and facilities, be it education or health care amenities, he pointed out.

The state is wedded to Dravidian ideology and it is the bedrock of Tamil Nadu’s social and cultural milieu. The TN socio-political landscape had been nurtured by the Dravidian movement, which was built on the ethos of Tamil culture, language and valour and hence the state is entirely different from the rest of the country, he said.

Go for local next year, urges Modi

MANN KI BAAT

New Delhi, Dec. 27: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged people to substitute foreign-made products they use with items produced in India, and said they should make this resolution for the country in the new year.

In his last ‘Mann Ki Baat’ radio broadcast of the year, he said people have supported the ‘vocal for local’ campaign started by his government as part of its Aatmanirbhar Bharat programme and asked manufacturers and industry leaders to ensure that world-class products are made in the country.

The outgoing year saw

the spirit of Aatmanirbhar Bharat echo in society, he said. “The call of ‘vocal for local’ is reverberating in each and every household...In such a scenario, it is time to ensure that our products meet global standards,” he said, sharing feedback from people about the campaign.

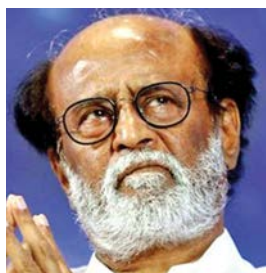
Urging people to prepare a list of items they use and find out those which were manufactured abroad, the Prime Minister said they should substitute them with ‘made in India’ products.

Validity of vehicle papers extended

New Delhi, Dec. 27: The Union transport ministry on Sunday extended the validity of motor vehicle documents like driving licence (DL), registration certificate (RC) and permits till March 31, 2021, in view of the ongoing pandemic Covid-19.

“The Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has extended the validity of vehicular documents like DLs, RCs,

permits etc till March 31, 2021 in the light of need to prevent spread of Covid-19. Ministry has today issued a directory to the states and Union Territory administrations in the regard,” a ministry statement said. It had earlier advised that the validity of fitness, permits, licence, registration or other concerned document(s) may be treated to be valid till December 31.



RAJINIKANTH BETTER, BACK IN CHENNAI

DC CORRESPONDENTS
HYDERABAD, CHENNAI
DEC. 27:

Actor-politician Rajinikanth was discharged on Sunday afternoon from Apollo Hospitals in Hyderabad where he was being treated for blood pressure fluctuation.

He was allowed to go home after his condition improved with an advice to take rest for at least a week and not to involve in any activity that may risk his picking up the Covid-19 infection.

Rajini flew back to Chennai on Sunday evening with his daughter Aishwarya Dhanush and was driven straight to his Poes Garden residence.

His political functionary Tamilaruvi Manian told the media that preparations for the launch of Rajinikanth’s party were at an advanced stage and that an announcement could be expected in mid January 2021.

PM hails TN teacher for making video lessons

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 27

The Villupuram Tamil Teacher is on cloud nine after she was appreciated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for introducing innovations in teaching amid pandemic

Covid-19 when schools were shut for teaching.

The Prime Minister, while addressing the nation through the 72nd edition of his monthly radio programme and the last ‘Mann Ki Baat’ of 2020 on Sunday lauded her for making animation videos of lessons



Hemalatha

and distributing them to the students in pen drives.

“I am happy that the Prime Minister appreciated our work,” said N. K. Hemalatha, the teacher. “I dedicate this to everyone behind making these videos.”

“I converted the 53 topics

into animation videos with the help of three students including Shahul Hamid. This was done to assist the students in learning the subjects easily during the lockdown period.”

“I read about a teacher from Tamil Nadu. Her name is Hemalata N.K...” ■ P3

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SHORT TAKES

Nigerian national held with cocaine in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 27

A Nigerian national was arrested by the Chennai police on Saturday night for being in possession of cocaine, said officials. The person arrested by the police was identified as Aarif Oluwaseun Ibrahim (46).

On Saturday night, based on a specific tip-off, the Thiruvanniyur police team comprising of Inspector Vasantharaj, Sub Inspector Rajagopal and a constable, intercepted a foreigner, later found to be from Nigeria, about to board a bus to Pudukcherry from Thiruvanniyur bus stand on the East Coast Road. His possessions were checked when police found 55 grams of cocaine along with Rs 65,000 in cash.

Police said that the recovered cocaine was worth approximately ₹2.75 lakh in street price and added that they have also recovered a mobile phone from the Nigerian national.

Thiruvanniyur police registered a case and further investigation into the matter is underway.

EPS: What did Stalin do as Mayor or minister?

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, DEC. 27

Chief Minister Edappadi K Palanisamy slammed DMK president MK Stalin for diverting the attention of people ahead of every election by doling out false promises. Kickstarting a poll rally in Chennai on Sunday, Palanisamy said that ahead of every election Stalin and his party leaders come out with false promises to the people to divert their attention.

He recalled that ahead of the Lok Sabha poll last year, Stalin toured the state by launching a slanderous campaign against AIADMK and doled out false promises such as waiver of farm loans and those obtained against jewels which were pledged with nationalised banks and private banks. Stalin also collected petitions from the people. He said



the state was being ruled by AIADMK when he collected those petitions. "What happened to those petitions – have they gone to the dust bin," he asked. What has the DMK done with those petitions, which should have been handed over to the government.

On similar lines, Stalin and his party leaders are now touring the State and holding grama sabha meetings to launch

attacks against the government. They also give false promises. Stalin is spreading lies about AIADMK in stating that the government had not done anything for the people. He asked the people to be vigilant. Stalin must stop such a slanderous campaign against the government, said Palanisamy.

He recalled that the AIADMK governments under the leadership MG Ramachandran and J Jayalalithaa had been tirelessly working for the welfare of the people and protecting their rights. The present government has been fulfilling the dreams of party founder MGR and Jaya.

Detailing the number of schemes implemented by the government, CM said among other popular schemes the government implemented 7.5 percent horizontal reservation for NEET-qualified State

Government school students in medical admissions and Kudimaramathu work. As a result of steps taken by the Government, Chennai City has become inundation free. In earlier days, flooding was a major problem in the City during rainy days and flood water used to stagnate at more than 3,000 places and because of the government action this has come down to 19 places now.

People had selected Stalin as Mayor of Chennai in the past. CM asked what he did for solving the problems of the people and the city. Stalin had time only to look after his family. The issues were not solved when he served as Minister for Local Administration. Palanisamy appealed to the people not to trust Stalin's slanderous and false campaign against the government.

New Covid variants hit tourism sector

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, DEC. 27

The new variant of Covid 19, reported in various cities across Europe, has now cast a grim shadow on the tourism sector which was looking forward to a revival since the roll out of vaccines. The industry was one of worst hit sectors by the pandemic. But with private travel picking up after the government allowed tourist sites to open, the sector was hopeful of the momentum picking up.

Industry people say the reports of new variants in UK and South Africa and uncertainty on the efficacy of vaccines on the new variants have now become a dampener for potential travellers.

M.K. Ajit Kumar, spokesperson of South India MICE Association (SIMA), said that the disruption in flight service after new variants have

Industry people say the reports of new variants in UK and South Africa and uncertainty on the efficacy of vaccines on the new variants have now become a dampener for potential travellers

created a lot of anxieties among travellers. Since the pandemic started, the arrival of foreign tourists to India was way down.

"We were hoping that the vaccine roll out in the west would make some momentum in the tourism sector in the months to come. But the reports on new variants snuffed out all hopes", he says.

"For the last couple of months, we had got some momentum as domestic tourism picked up resulting in the increasing

demand for hotel rooms. The restrictions on New Year celebrations has also affected the plans of domestic tourists", he pointed out.

Senthan Amuthan, a Chennai tour operator, said that they were getting many enquiries about accommodation facilities instead of tour packages per se since the government opened up the sector. But since the reports of the new variant, the flow of enquiries came down.

"People want to be safe. Though the flight services started to open up, nobody wants to fly now. As the information on the new variants and efficacy of vaccines is limited, people have started changing their decision. We hoped that there would be a strong momentum in the industry by April next year. But a kind of uncertainty started casting a shadow after new variants appeared", he said.

TN records 1,009 new Covid-19 cases, 10 deaths

Chennai, Dec. 27: Tamil Nadu added 1,009 fresh infections to its coronavirus tally on Sunday, taking the total count to 8.14 lakh while 10 more fatalities pushed the toll to 12,069, the health department said. Daily recoveries continued to outnumber the new cases with 1,091 people getting cured, taking the aggregate to 7,93,154, a bulletin said. The number of active cases stood at 8,947. A total of 64,283 samples were tested on Sunday, taking the cumulative to 1.39 crore specimens examined so far.

According to the bulletin, three more returnees from the United Kingdom tested positive for the virus, raising the total number of such cases to 13. Five were from Chennai, three from Thanjavur and two from Nilgiris. One each from Theni, Madurai and



Chengalpet, it said. All the UK returnee patients have been kept in separate isolation wards.

The state capital logged 290 new coronavirus cases, while the rest were scattered across other districts. Chennai continued to top the list of cases in the state with 2.24 lakh infections.

Fifteen districts added new cases in single digits, while 31 districts reported zero fatalities. Addressing reporters, State Health Minister C Vijayabaskar

said 120 special beds have been set up at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital here to treat returnees from the UK. "As many as 120 special beds have been set up at the hospital to treat patients of COVID-19 new strain imported from the United Kingdom. Till date 13 returnees from the United Kingdom have tested positive and they were under constant monitoring by a team of doctors", he said. The Minister said the swab samples of the returnees have been sent to the National Institute of Virology in Pune and the results were expected shortly.

Recently, Health secretary J Radhakrishnan had said the swab samples of UK returnees have been sent to NIV for genomic analysis to ascertain whether they were infected with old or the

new strain that has caused many scares across the globe. Vijayabaskar said "we are treating the patients (UK returnees) and they are all well now."

Appealing to the public "not to panic", the Minister said the government has taken enough steps to control the spread of the virus and added that people should extend their cooperation by wearing masks and by maintaining social distancing.

To a query, he said once the COVID-19 vaccine was ready it would be provided to the people free of charge as announced earlier by Chief Minister K Palaniswami.

In October, Palaniswami had promised free immunisation against coronavirus for all sections of the people in the state as soon as the vaccine was made available.

— PTI

THREE AMONG 72 LONDON RETURNEES TEST CORONA +VE

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, DEC. 27

A total of 72 persons who have returned from London to Thanjavur district recently are being monitored in view of the latest spread of the mutated version of corona in England, said Collector M Govinda Rao here on Sunday. Three of them tested positive and are being treated at the Thanjavur medical college hospital, he added.

The collector asked those who returned from London to get themselves tested. He also stressed on the need to wear masks, maintain social distancing, wash hands with soap and use sanitisers to prevent the spread of corona.

Saffronisation of Thiruvalluvar on television condemned

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 27

Former School Education Minister and DMK MLA Thangam Thennarasu slammed the AIADMK government for allowing poet Thiruvalluvar to be saffronised in State run Educational Channel "Kalvi TV".

In a statement on Sunday, Thennarasu said that, apart from mortgaging their party, the AIADMK, has mortgaged Tamil culture and tradition to the BJP. There are several examples of how this government has not challenged the onslaught by the BJP on Tamils for their 'personal interest'.

Thennarasu recalls how Minister for Tamil Official Language and Tamil Culture K.

Pandiarajan, claimed that the Keezhadi heritage site as Indian heritage. "When the BJP is trying to Sanskritise education through New Educational Policy, these are the same Ministers who gave a red carpet welcome to such a move", says Thennarasu.

The saffronisation of Thiruvalluvar in a TV channel functioning under the School Education Department is nothing but poisoning of young minds, Thennarasu said.

"The people will teach a fitting lesson in 2021 general assembly polls," he said while demanding strict action against all officials responsible for the Saffronised Valluvar that appeared on Kalvi TV on Sunday.

Amma Makkal

Munnetra Kazhagam Chief TTV Dinakaran also condemned the action of Tamil Nadu School Education Department in saffronising Thiruvalluvar.

In a series of tweets, he said Tirukkural is a world literature for entire human kind and it should not be confined to a religion by saffronising Thiruvalluvar.

And the action of the School Education Department is highly condemnable. Tiruvalluvar is for entire human kind and his Thirukurals need to be followed by one and all.

The intention should be to ensure Tirukkural reaches all students but not with restraints. He demanded that the Department rectify the error immediately.

2020 served up chilling reminders of our mortality

R. Mohan

Namma Chennai diary

The year will turn soon enough. Cold logic may suggest flipping calendars during the inevitable march of time is just a chronological convenience. But then the mind is also a ticking entity that fights its eternal battle between optimism and gloom and it is not going to stop doing that just because a New Year by the Gregorian count may have arrived.

There is rum irony in the fact that the year with the cricket terminology of 2020 has proved so eminently forgettable. All that the number which signifies excitement did in real life outside the theatre of sport was to serve us chilling reminders of our own mortality. It awakened us to the reality of death. With personal experience I can say this with more than a modicum of certainty.

Those who have been through the seeming timelessness of an ICU - patients stay in a state of suspended animation in a hospital gown and day and night are indistinguishable save for the change of shift at the nurses' station daybreak - got a closer look at their own mortality. While it is quite difficult to accept that death may not be far away, it becomes easier to acknowledge the death of others. The Covid pandemic taught us that.

Being just over that physical milestone of 70 years and a diabetic to boot, I could so easily have become a statistic, a convenient peg to be consigned to comorbid categorisation. The specialist doctors of Apollo Hospital are far more evolved than being just care givers. They save lives in their practice of intensive medicine round the clock and that is what they did in my case. I had, however, argued volubly one evening to stave off what



Imparting breathing exercises to Covid-19 stricken patients was common in 2020 when the pandemic raged around the world. A Chennai corona ward was representative of the major problem of the year as people fought the coronavirus.

— N. Sampath

seemed an impending passage to the mechanical help of a ventilator. Intubation was a no-no, its horrors worse than death even.

The blessing of a second innings did not come without great pain as Covid had been unkind to many members of my family despite all the precautions taken in a life in virtual hibernation in the home environment for months on end. The insidious pathogen had found a way to sneak into homes and it carried away my 91-year-old mother. As human beings, we have consciousness, emotions and ties. But those who pass live on in the hearts and minds of others whose lives they have touched.

The fear of the great unknown could be a burden for individuals. But, as society grieved the loss of more than a million to Covid-19, many without even being given the opportunity for kin to see them off, it seemed almost unfair to believe fate had been unkind to any one person. Such was the sweeping cruelty of this pandemic that spared none, rich or poor, black, brown or white. As the antivirals, anticoagu-

lants and corticosteroids did their bit to save lives as much as oxygen for assisted breathing, it was strange to see WHO come out with a definitive statement that Remdesivir, the life-saving antiviral, was not all that effective.

The organisation has picked up such a poor record though. It was sucked into China versus the rest of the world politics in the aftermath of the Wuhan outbreak that created this once in a century pandemic sweeping the entire globe, including Antarctica. So this was par for the course for WHO. Or, should one see this as a curse of a world body divided by political loyalties. This is, however, the time to seek solutions rather than waste time in recriminations and it should be everyone's duty to promote the vaccine as the key to getting back to what was normal life before Covid felled the world.

"Don't hesitate," was the message friends from the US and Bahrain conveyed as the vulnerable got to the head of the queue and got their Pfizer jabs. India dithers over authorising vaccines while USA and Europe have begun their operations to

inoculate the population, beginning with the frontline health workers who have braved Covid with just thin pieces of plastic that make the PPEs. They are being thorough is the message that the Indian health authorities are spreading as they study the data of trials. The urgency is clear as new mutations gather force in several continents and they are probably in India already, which we don't know about because we don't do enough of genome sequencing of samples.

The vaccine is the greatest hope that life will be near pre-Covid normal in the New Year. Clanging pots and pans is not going to do the trick even if we do so to celebrate the bravery of health workers who are Covid care givers rather than give way to superstition amid the fear of the unknown. This is another thing that 2020 taught us afresh - to fear. None would grudge bidding goodbye to the year 2020, thanks but no thanks - if you get my drift.

(R. Mohan is the Resident Editor of Deccan Chronicle, Chennai and Tamil Nadu editions)

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 27

Senior Congress leader and former legislator D Yasodha, 74, died in Chennai on Sunday following health complications. Yasodha was a prominent Dalit leader of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. Yasodha collapsed during a recent party meeting and was rushed to a hospital where she died on Sunday morning.

She was elected to the Tamil Nadu Assembly from the Sripurambudur constituency on four occasions, first in 1980 and



later in 1984, 2001 and 2006 elections. Yasodha had also served as the Vice-President of the TNCC and as President of Women's Wing, TNCC. She was also one of the trustees of the TNCC Charitable Trust.

Separate lists for orderly 'mentioning in court'



If a patient needs to be rushed to a hospital for a life saving procedure, would it make sense to insist on registration formalities and prior appointments? In a similar vein, can justice be restricted to a Cause List? If the answer is 'no', then there is no need to grudge this emergency measure of 'mentioning' in our courts. When the rights of citizens are intertwined with expeditious or even urgent judicial intervention, proactive advocacy makes justice shine.

The Supreme Court, in Imtiyaz Ahmad Vs State of Uttar Pradesh (2012), was eloquent as ever: "Unduly long delay has the effect of bringing about blatant violation of the rule of law and adverse impact on the common man's access

to justice, which is a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution. Denial of this right undermines public confidence in the justice delivery system and incentivises people to look for short-cuts and other fora where they feel that justice will be done quicker."

Truth be told, mentioning is an unavoidable facet in the dispensation of justice and needs to be streamlined. Be it anticipatory bail on a Friday, or an interim stay before a vacation, or an urgent writ petition to safeguard a litigant's fundamental rights, this practice of bringing a genuinely urgent matter to the attention of the court, must not be construed as jumping the queue. Braving the pandemic and the initial lockdown, it was commendable that our courts put in place a reasonably robust infrastructure for e-filing and video conferencing, the teething problems notwithstanding.

With a 48 hour quaran-



tine of case bundles filed, the wait for matters to be passed, numbered and listed is inevitably longer. This lends itself to a need for mentioning in many cases. For mentioning, a single paragraph Memo of Urgency emailed to the registry before a stipulated cut-off time, is a prerequisite expressly laid down in notifications. Understandably onerous as it may be, it is from such memos that genuine cases will need to be gauged and filtered from those that fall short.

Such requests are routinely forwarded by the registrar to the concerned court officers attached to

judges. The concerned advocates are requested to prefix 'mentioning' before their names while logging in. From that point till the judge arrives, there is a gap that needs to be filled to prevent chaos and a scramble to be heard. For the initial couple of minutes, the screens are almost akin to prime time TV debates with panellists speaking over each other to get a word in!

Subject to what is feasible, I humbly suggest a quick compilation of a 'Mentioning List' based on memos filed and screened to ensure that this process is befitting the dignity and majesty of the institution. The Bench, Bar & Registry must bear in mind that mentioning is neither a right, nor a favour. For the wheels of justice to keep moving for all, tatkal tickets, emergency quotas or unreserved compartments are needed!

(The writer is an advocate at the Madras high court, columnist & author)

TVS bring farmers back to agriculture activity

SANJEEVI ANANDAN | DC
KRISHNAGIRI, DEC. 27

TVS has changed the lives of farmers from rags to riches in 497 villages surrounding its Hosur unit. These farmers have planned to abandon their profession due to various reasons including water resources.

Here is an inspiring story of one such farmer who earlier planned to sell his farm before the two wheeler manufacturer entered in his life.

57-years-old V.Jayaram Reddy of Saragapalli village in Denkanikottai taluk of Krishnagiri district, earlier owned 18 acres of land. He was able to cultivate minor millets because his agricultural activity has to depend on monsoon when others in his village are blessed with having wet land that helped them to grown vegetables and flowers and that gave a decent livelihood for them.

Jayaram also tried to chase the poverty from his life and make a decent income by growing cash crops like vegetables and rose flowers as others in his Saragapalli. His daring attempt ended as the failed experiment and that has brought him new trouble to an extent of selling his agricultural plot for



Jayaram in his farm where flowers are grown for export market.

loans taken by him. "Tried various methods to get rid of poverty in my life. Nothing gave positive results. Finally decided to be as my ancestors who lived a life with what they got from our land" Jayaram told

Deccan Chronicle.

He with tears filled eyes and lips trembling have continued "The loan amount of rupees 30 lakhs taken for digging bore well has troubled me to an extent of selling my property. This would

have taken place if 'Sreenivasa seva trust (SST)' has not entered into my life" Jayaram has to dig a new bore well each year after the existing one has dried up. He before getting SST support have sunk around 30 bore

wells by taking loans and he spent rupees one lakh for each bore well.

SST, a trust run by the two wheeler manufacturer for the upliftment of poor women, farmer and others had visited Saraganapalli, ten years ago, after coming to know of Jayaram's plight. They gave courage and also the technical knowledge of how to make his agricultural business successful.

A small of around 30 cents was used to make a pond to store water during the monsoon period.

SST also helped Jayaram to get loans from banks and erect green houses fitted with drip irrigation system. Today, Jayaram is the most successful farmer of his village and busy with growing crops having export value.

Swaran Singh, former IAS officer and presently working as the chairman for the SST said "We have many success stories like that of Jayaram. This was because of our SST that works relentless towards enabling achieving enabling sustainable solution to empower farmers through education about scientific cultivation methods and also in water management techniques."

Police ban New Year Eve parties in OMR, ECR resorts

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 27

With the New Year just a few days away, the police have put out guidelines for resorts and party places along ECR and OMR.

Kancheepuram Superintendent of Police D Kannan announced on Dec. 27 that resorts located on East Coast Road (ECR) and Old Mahabalipuram Road (OMR), the two main highways in Chennai connecting several suburban neighbourhoods, will not be allowed to organise New Year's Eve parties owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Resorts, farm houses and restaurants are well known for hosting the annual New Year bashes

on NYE and on New Year Day. However, this year, owing to Covid-19 pandemic, the celebrations have been prohibited. On Sunday, a meeting was held between resort and farm house owners and the police department to decide on protocols to be followed. SP Kannan warned of severe action against those who violate these protocols. The police have also banned New Year parties along the beach from Muttukadu to Mahabalipuram.

According to reports, beachside resorts cannot allow their guests to enter the beach area on New Year's Eve. Moreover, guests staying at resorts located along ECR or OMR will be allowed to

take these routes until 10 pm on December 31, provided they produce a valid ID proof.

While check-posts have been set up in ten spots along the two highways, close to 500 police personnel will be deployed to carefully monitor speeding vehicles, starting on the afternoon of December 31. Police said they will set up 500 CCTV cameras along the ECR and OMR stretches.

It may be noted that the TN Government had announced the ban on celebrations on New Year's Eve and on January 1 in beaches, hotels, clubs, resorts and on public roads as part of preventive measures to combat the spread of coronavirus.

PM: TEACHER FINDS INNOVATIVE WAY

From P1

"She teaches the oldest language of the world Tamil at a school in Villupuram. Even the Covid-19 pandemic could not create hurdles in her teaching. Challenges definitely were there but she found out an innovative way," the Prime Minister said.

"She recorded all the 53 chapters of the course, creat-

ed animated videos, put them in a pen drive and distributed that amongst her students. Her students got a lot of help from this, they understood the chapters visually. Along with this, she kept interacting with her students telephonically. Thus, the study became quite interesting for the students," the Prime Minister said.

14 DSPS TRANSFERRED IN TN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 27

Tamil Nadu Director General of Police J.K. Tripathy has ordered transfers for 14 DSPs.

P. Maheshwaran, Deputy Superintendent of police, District crime record bureau, Nilgiris district has been transferred as Deputy superintendent of police, Ooty town subdivision, Nilgiris district, replacing T. Saravanan Deputy Superintendent of Police.

T. Saravanan, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Ooty town subdivision, Nilgiris District, Deputy Superintendent of police, District crime record bureau, Nilgiris district in the post held by P Maheshwaran Deputy Superintendent of Police.

R. Prakash, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Investigative unit for crime against women-1, Tirunelveli district has been transferred as Deputy Superintendent of Police Vilathikulam subdivision, Thoothukudi district as in the place of Peer Mohideen, who is now transferred.

K. Peer Mohideen, Deputy Superintendent of Police Vilathikulam subdivision Thoothukudi district, has been transferred as assistant commissioner of police anti land grabbing special cell Madurai city replacing R. Mohan assistant commissioner of police.

R. Mohan, Assistant commissioner of police anti land grabbing special cell, Madurai city has been transferred and posted as Deputy Superintendent of Police Virudhachalam subdivision Cuddalore district in the post held by T. Ramachandran.

T. Ramachandran, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Virudhachalam subdivision has been transferred as Deputy Superintendent of Police, Vigilance and Anti

Corruption in the existing vacancy.

A. Rajendran, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Economic Offences Wing Coimbatore district is now Deputy Superintendent of Police, Prohibition Enforcement Wing Salem District.

A.V. Elamurugan, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Special Task Force, Erode district is now Superintendent of Police, district crime branch Salem District.

V. Tamilvanan, Deputy Superintendent of Police, crime branch CID Thanjavur has been transferred and posted as assistant commissioner of police security, Greater Chennai police replacing Desigan, assistant commissioner of police.

S. Desigan, assistant commissioner of police security, Greater Chennai police has been posted as Deputy Superintendent of Police, Economic Offences Wing II headquarters.

M. Thanraj Ganesh, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Economic Offences Wing II headquarters, Chennai. Has been posted as Deputy superintendent of police crime branch CID, anti trafficking cell, Chennai replacing S Murugesan who has been transferred as Deputy superintendent of police, Tamil Nadu uniformed services recruitment board, Chennai

R. Sharma, Deputy Superintendent of Police crime branch CID, police research centre, Chennai has been assistant commissioner of police anti vice squad, greater Chennai police in the post held by M.Sarasvathi, assistant commissioner of police.

M. Sarasvathi, assistant commissioner of police anti vice squad, greater Chennai police has been transferred to a post held by R. Sharma.



Kamal used a helicopter from Madurai to Tiruchy during a hectic first day of a 3-day campaign tour of the central TN districts on Sunday.

Kamal launches 3-day poll campaign in delta

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, DEC. 27

Actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan commenced his three-day election campaign in the Cauvery delta region, on Sunday. Kamal, who landed here by a chartered helicopter from Madurai by 2

pm, met the people who assembled in different places in and around the airport area, and greeted them by waving his hands. After a brief rest, Kamal Haasan addressed members of the civil engineers association, Tiruchy, and also addressed a gathering near the Central bus stand here.

ENSURING ACCESS TO BIGGER OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMERS



Flagging off of India's 100th Kisan Rail

from Sangola, Maharashtra to Shalimar, West Bengal

SALIENT FEATURES

- 100th Kisan Rail will cover distance of 2132 km within 40 hours
- Fresh farm produce like pomegranates from Sangola, oranges from Nagpur, musk melon and other produce from Jeur, Belvandi and Kopargaon will be easily transported to regions across eastern & north eastern parts of the country

KISAN RAIL: A GAME CHANGER INITIATIVE FURTHERING FARMERS' PROSPERITY

- Kisan Rail is enabling farmers from various regions to sell agricultural produce to far off markets all across the country
- 50% subsidy makes transportation of fruits and vegetables cheaper
- With access to urban markets, farmers are ensured better profit margins
- Within 3 months, 27 thousand tonnes of agricultural produce has already been transported through Kisan Rail
- Enroute halts of Kisan Rail have loading and unloading facilities that will especially benefit local produce

by

Narendra Modi

Prime Minister

(Through Video Conferencing)

In the August presence of

Narendra Singh Tomar

Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Food Processing Industries, Government of India

Piyush Goyal

Minister of Railways, Commerce & Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Government of India

28 December, 2020 at 4:30 pm

Join the event live at -

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Use #100thKisanRail to widely spread information about the work done for agricultural development and farmer welfare.

SHORT TAKES

SHOPIAN FAKE ENCOUNTER: CASE ON ARMY OFFICER

Srinagar, Dec 27: Police have filed a chargesheet against three men, including an Army officer, in the Shopian “fake” encounter case of three civilians in July, officials said on Sunday.

The 1,400-page chargesheet was filed in the court of principal district and sessions judge, Shopian on Saturday by the head of the Special Investigation Team (SIT), the officials said. Captain Bhupinder of the Army’s 62 Rashtriya Rifles, Bilal Ahmed Lone and Tabish Nazir were named as accused in the chargesheet for their role in the alleged fake encounter killing of the three men hailing from Rajouri District, they added.

A police spokesperson said the court has issued an order, giving an option to the Army under the relevant sections of law for a trial of Captain Bhupinder alias Major Basheer Khan in a criminal court of ordinary jurisdiction or court martial. The spokesperson said during investigation, it came to light that a conspiracy was hatched by the accused captain and civilians Nazir and Lone to abduct the three civilians and stage the encounter.

“They deliberately and purposefully chose not to follow SOPs, planted illegally-acquired weapons and material on their bodies after stripping them of their identities and tagged them as hardcore terrorists in possession of war-like stores, deliberately providing false information to colleagues and seniors,” he said.

The information obtained from the accused led the SIT to recreate the scenes of the crime, including the routes used after meeting the victims and the place where they were killed, the spokesperson said.

COVID CASE LOAD DROPS LOWEST IN SIX MONTHS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 27

India on Sunday recorded the lowest daily rise in the Covid-19 cases in the last six months as fresh detections dropped to 18,732. The last time fresh cases were around this figure was on July 1. The active cases too have slipped to 2.78 lakh after 170 days. The total active cases were 2.76 lakh on July 10. India’s present active caseload consists of 2.74 per cent of the country’s total positive cases.

Union health ministry said the country has reported a trend of sustained decrease in the number of active cases and there has been a sharp rise in recoveries, taking the Recovery rate to 95.82 per cent. Officials said 72.37 per cent of the new recovered cases are observed to be concentrated in 10 states and union territories. Kerala has reported the maximum number of single day recoveries with 3,782 newly recovered cases followed by West Bengal (1,861) and Chhattisgarh (1,764).

India’s Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5. It went past 50 lakh on September 16, 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11 and crossed 80 lakh on October 29 and 90 lakh on November 20.

Among the new cases 76.52 per cent are concentrated in 10 states and UTs. Kerala reported the highest daily new cases at 3,527, followed by Maharashtra (2,854). Delhi, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.



Women and children shout slogans as they take part farmers ongoing agitation over new farm laws, at Tikri border in New Delhi on Sunday

— PTI

Farmers beat thalis, raise slogans

Unions were protesting when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was delivering ‘Mann ki Baat’ address

Nadda shares Rahul video to slam Cong on farm laws

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 27

Noida (UP), Dec. 27: The farmers protesting in Noida against the new farm laws beat ‘thali’ (metal plates) during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s monthly radio broadcast ‘Mann Ki Baat’ on Sunday, while scores of them also fed birds as they took out a foot march in the city.

Bharatiya Kisan Union’s (BKU) Bhanu and Lok Shakti factions, with supporters hailing from various western Uttar Pradesh districts, are protesting at separate sites here since the first week of December, demanding that the three farm laws be repealed and a guarantee on the minimum support price (MSP) on crops.

At the Chilla border, scores of BKU (Bhanu) members beat utensils and raised slogans hailing the farmers during the prime minister’s “Mann ki Baat” to express their dissatisfaction with the government over the impasse on the new laws.

Yogesh Pratap Singh, the Uttar Pradesh unit chief of the BKU (Bhanu), reiterated that his union “will not leave the ground” until the demands of the farmers are met by the Centre.

Separately, around 200 members of the BKU (Lok Shakti) took out a foot march from the Dalit Prerna Sthal in Sector 95 to Sector 27 and fed birds en route.

“The farmers were carrying mixed seeds in their bags to feed the birds. This was our way of telling the government that we are firm in our resolve but also peaceful and Gandhian in our approach,” BKU (Lok Shakti) spokesperson Shailesh Kumar Giri said.

According to a Noida Police official, the Noida Delhi Link Road via Chilla remained partially closed due to the stir, allowing only the commuters from Delhi to come to Noida but not the other way round.

There was no other law-and-order situation due to the stir, the official said.

Thousands of farmers are staying put at Delhi’s borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh in protest against the Farmers’ Produce Trade and

● **FARMER UNIONS** are alleging that these laws will weaken the existing government’s support for the farm sector which has been vehemently denied by the Centre.

● **MR GANDHI** charged that farmers and labourers of Amethi and 10-12 districts of Uttar Pradesh have been fighting for a food park, which the government had denied saying the park never had land.

The Congress and some other Opposition parties are backing the protest against the three agriculture-marketing laws which give cultivators an option to sell their produce directly to private players.

Farmer unions are alleging that these laws will weaken the existing government’s support for the

farm sector which has been vehemently denied by the Centre.

In the video, Mr Gandhi, then an MP representing Amethi parliamentary seat in Uttar Pradesh, can be heard saying that a farmer in UP had asked him to explain the “magic” behind a packet of potato chips costing ₹10 while farmers sell potato for ₹2 per kg. When he asked what they thought was the reason for this, the farmer said factories are located very far from them and if they could sell their products directly there, they will get all the money without middlemen earning any cut.

Mr Gandhi charged that farmers and labourers of Amethi and 10-12 districts of Uttar Pradesh have been fighting for a food park, which the government had denied saying the park never had land.

Chandigarh, Dec. 27: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh’s appeal to protesting farmers to not damage telecom infrastructure seems to have failed to deter new attacks, with more than 176 signal transmitting sites being vandalised in the last 24 hours, sources said on Sunday.

While firms belonging to billionaires Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani do not procure foodgrains from farmers, the narrative that new farm laws are to benefit them has made them easy targets, with protesting farmers in different places in Punjab having vandalised and damaged Reliance Jio towers, snapping connectivity.

As many as 176 towers have been damaged since Saturday, two sources with direct knowledge of the matter said.

This has taken the total number of telecom tower

sites damaged to 1,411, they said. Incidents of snapping of power lines to attempts to axe the towers have been reported from different parts of Punjab, one of the sources said.

“Site managers are slapped and abused for trying to persuade protestors from damaging sites,” he said.

The second source said the telecom towers damaged belong to Jio and common access infrastructure of telecom industry.

The attacks have impacted telecom services and operators are struggling to maintain services in absence of action by law enforcement agencies, the source said.

The Punjab chief minister had on Friday appealed protesting farmers to not cause inconvenience to the general public with such actions and continue to exercise the same restraint as they had shown over the past several months. — PTI

Lawyer from Punjab commits suicide

Jhajjar (Haryana), Dec. 27: A lawyer from Punjab allegedly committed suicide by consuming poison on Sunday a few kilometres from the site of a farmers’ protest at Tikri border.

Amarjit Singh from Jalalabad in Punjab’s Fazilka district was taken to the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS) in Rohtak where doctors declared him dead on arrival, police said.

In a purported suicide note, Singh said he was sacrificing his life in support of the farmers’ agitation against the Centre’s new farm laws so that the

government is compelled to listen to the voice of the people.

Singh wrote that the common people like farmers and labourers are feeling “defrauded” due to the three “black” agriculture laws and “the worst life is inevitable”.

The police said they are verifying the authenticity of the suicide note, dated December 18.

“We have informed the relatives of the deceased and once they reach here their statements will be recorded and further proceedings will be conducted,” a police officer from Haryana’s Jhajjar district

said, adding that they were informed about the suicide by the hospital authorities.

Earlier, at least two suicides have been linked to the farmers’ stir, under way at various border points of Delhi for over a month now.

A Sikh preacher, Sant Ram Singh, allegedly committing suicide near the Singhu border protest site earlier this month claiming that he was “unable to bear the pain of the farmers”.

A 22-year-old farmer had allegedly committed suicide in Punjab’s Bathinda after returning from a

protest site near the Delhi border.

A week ago, a 65-year-old farmer from Punjab had attempted suicide by consuming some poisonous substance near the Singhu border.

Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and some other states have been protesting at various border points of Delhi against the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, and

the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act.

Enacted in September, the three farm laws have been projected by the central government as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove the middlemen and allow farmers to sell anywhere in the country.

However, the protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of Minimum Support Price and do away with the mandi system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates.

— PTI

Yadav accuses govt of hurting democracy

Lucknow, Dec 27: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday accused the BJP-led state government of hurting the foundation of democracy by dissolving village panchayats without conducting elections for them.

Yadav’s allegation prompted a rebuttal from UP BJP vice-president and party’s in-charge of panchayat elections Vijay Bahadur Pathak who said Yadav had been the state’s chief minister and should know that the panchayat elections could not have been held amid the Covid-19. Pathak also expressed the UP government’s commitment to holding the panchayat elections within six months.

“The BJP government in UP has dissolved the village panchayats without conducting the fresh elections for them. Major elections are being conducted, but the government has been finding itself unable to hold elections of the smallest units of public representation. How will this government run Uttar Pradesh?” Yadav said in a tweet in Hindi on Sunday.

“The BJP must not hurt the foundation of democracy,” the former UP chief minister added in his tweet. Rebutting Yadav’s claims, Pathak told PTI, Akhilesh Yadav had been the chief minister of UP. He should know that elections should have been conducted at the stipulated time. — PTI

BIG | HURDLES

Disparity in income limits for open category, tribal category biggest hurdle

Tribal girl struggles to get overseas scholarship

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, DEC. 27

A 21-year-old tribal girl Annie Atram, who wants to pursue higher education abroad through a government scholarship scheme, namely ‘National Overseas Scholarship for higher studies’, is running from pillar to post of Maharashtra’s secretariat (Mantralaya) to prove her eligibility for the scheme from last three months.

According to her father, who is a senior official in Mantralaya, the disparity between the income limits of open category and trib-

al category is the biggest hurdle for getting the benefit of the scheme for tribal community. State agriculture minister Dada Bhuse has recommended her name to the tribal minister for the scheme in October 2020, but even that has not helped her.

As per the government resolution (GR) issued by the tribal development department, the income of the candidate’s family should be less than ₹6,00,000 (Rupees six lakhs) for the overseas education. But as per the GR issued by the higher and technical education

department, the income limit for open category is ₹20 lakh (₹ 20 Lakh). The disparity between the income limits for open category and tribal community caused a hurdle for the tribal girl in pursuing of higher education in abroad. The girl’s family hails from Gadchiroli district and earns more than ₹6 lakh per year.

Ms Atram wrote a letter to K.C. Padavi, minister of tribal development department urging him to treat her case as a special case her family can’t afford the expense of her education abroad.

Deccan Chronicle is in possession of her letter in which she has stated, “I have fulfilled the main criteria of the said GR but the income criteria is the hurdle in my overseas education. My family is native from Gadchiroli district which is a remote and naxal affected area. I have completed my B’Tech (four years of Bachelor of Technology) in Textile. I have applied to North Carolina State University (NCTU) for Master of Science in Textile. This university is a public school, has QS world ranking of 295, and is well known for Master

of Science in Textile, and this field comes under Engineering (STEM-Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). The University has approved my admission for fall 2021 (August 2021) in Master of Science in Textile.”

“Since I come under ST category, there is a National Overseas Scholarship, in which I am interested. For this, I have appeared for GRE and TOEFL. I have secured a preliminary offer of admission, and I have passed my B’Tech with first class distinction, which makes me an exemplary student. But

I am an independent student and I can’t afford the expenditure in the said university. With all due respect, my father too cannot afford the expenditure state by NCSU for a year is approximately \$ 50,000 USD,” she said in the letter.

The student also requested the tribal development minister to remove the barrier of income and consider her for this scholarship on basis merit.

Ms Atram also questioned the rationality behind the different yardstick of income for overseas studies for students of open categories and ST categories.

NITISH QUILTS AS PARTY CHIEF, PICKS CLOSE AIDE TO POST

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, DEC. 27

Amid strains with alliance partner BJP, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar resigned from the post of JD(U) national president on Sunday and handed over charge to one of his closest aides and a member of the Rajya Sabha, R.C.P Singh.

The decision was taken during the national executive meeting of the JD(U). Mr Singh’s elevation was on expected lines since he was actively involved in most of the party’s policy decisions including advising Mr Kumar during Bihar Assembly elections.

Mr Singh will now look after the party’s affairs, including its dealings with the BJP. His appointment to the party’s top post is also crucial from the perspective of upcoming Assembly elections in West Bengal and Assam.

The development comes at a time when the JD(U) is on the backfoot after six of its seven legislators in Arunachal Pradesh quit the party and joined the BJP. The JD(U) has been indirectly referring to it as poaching and saying it is “against the coalition dharma”.

Maintaining that the BJP is an ally only in Bihar, JD(U) leader K.C. Tyagi said that “strengthening party’s base in other states is on the top of the agenda” and also hinted that the JD(U) may contest Assembly elections in West Bengal and Assam on its own.

“The JD(U) is deeply hurt by the political development in Arunachal Pradesh,” Mr Tyagi said.

TERROR PLOT IN POONCH FOILED, 3 ARRESTED, SAYS POLICE

Jammu, Dec. 27: The Jammu and Kashmir Police on Sunday said it has arrested three Pakistan-linked militant associates and recovered six grenades from them, foiling a terror plot to attack a temple in the border district of Poonch and disturb communal harmony.

Poonch Senior Superintendent of Police Ramesh Kumar Angral said the arrested persons were planning to carry out a grenade attack on a temple at the behest of their Pakistani handler to disturb peace and communal amity in the district.

The officer told reporters in Poonch that the play was revealed after Special Operations Group (SOG) of the local police along with troops of the 49 Rashtriya Rifles detained two brothers – Mustafa Iqbal Khan and Murtaza Iqbal of Gahuta village – from their vehicle near Basooni in Mendhar sector at around 8 pm on Saturday. He said it was found that Mustafa had received a call from a Pakistani number and was directed to execute the grenade attack. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

TURKEY HIT BY
5.5 MAGNITUDE
EARTHQUAKE

Istanbul, Dec. 27: A 5.5 magnitude earthquake struck eastern Turkey on Sunday, the US Geological Survey said, with initial reports indicating no immediate casualties.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu said there were no reports of material damage or casualties so far.

The USGS said the quake was registered in the Sivrice district in Elazig province at 0637 GMT and struck at a depth of 10 kilometres.

The Turkish government's disaster agency AFAD reported a lower magnitude of 5.3 for the quake.

Turkey is situated in one of the world's most active earthquake zones.

A magnitude 6.8 quake hit Elazig in January, killing more than 40 people.

EIGHT KILLED IN
AVALANCHES
NORTH OF TEHRAN

Tehran, Dec. 27: Eight climbers have died and at least seven others are missing after a blizzard and avalanches hit the mountains north of Tehran, Iranian media reported on Saturday.

"The bodies of eight missing climbers were recovered in the mountains above Tehran thanks to the efforts of Red Crescent rescue teams and operations," said Iranian Red Crescent deputy head, Mohammad Baqer Mohammadi, according to the official IRNA news agency.

A group of mountaineers had gone missing on Friday due to avalanches and a blizzard in the mountains north of Tehran, IRNA reported.

State TV reported seven climbers were missing.

It broadcast footage of a helicopter rescue operation on the Tochal and Kolakchal peaks of the Alborz mountain chain overlooking Tehran showing Red Crescent personnel carrying a body on a stretcher along a snowy mountainside.

THREE KILLED, 3
WOUNDED IN
ILLINOIS SHOOTING

Washington, Dec. 27: Three people were killed and another three wounded on Saturday in the US state of Illinois when a shooter opened fire at a bowling alley, police said.

A suspect in his 30s was in police custody.

Rockford city police urged people on Twitter to stay away from the area near the Don Carter Lanes bowling alley, as it was an "active situation" and officers were clearing the site.

The force posted on Twitter shortly after midnight: "37-year-old white male suspect is in custody. There are no others being sought at this time." "It's still an ongoing investigation. We do have three individuals that are confirmed deceased," police chief Dan O'Shea earlier told a press conference near the scene of the shooting.

He said three other people had been wounded from the gunfire and were being treated at local hospitals.

He did not specify whether the shooter had a motive.

Don Carter Lanes posted a simple message on Facebook after the shooting asking people to "pray please."

2 WOMEN, 3 GIRLS
FOUND DEAD IN
ARKANSAS HOME

Atkins (US), Dec. 27: Two women and three girls have been found dead in a home in northwest Arkansas in what authorities said are being investigated as suspected homicides.

Deputies responded to a call around 5 pm on Friday and found the five people dead in a home in Atkins, a city about 65 miles (105 kilometers) northwest of Little Rock, Pope County Sheriff Shane Jones said in a statement.

The dead were between 8 and 50 years old and are all believed to have been related, he said. Jones said during a short news conference Saturday that authorities did not immediately have a suspect and that at least some of the people were shot. He did not provide further details. "At this time, we believe this to be an isolated incident, and do not feel that there is any continued danger to the local public," he said. "We do believe that this is domestic related, possibly." Deputies are investigating the deaths with the help of the Arkansas State Police. A spokesman for the sheriff's office did not immediately respond to questions.

EU nations roll out vaccine campaign

Europeans unwilling to take vaccine, could impede its effectiveness as it takes months to vaccinate all

Paris, Dec. 27: EU countries on Sunday embarked on a vaccination campaign to defeat the "nightmare" of Covid-19, as the growing spread of a new Coronavirus variant intensified fears the pandemic could wreak further devastation.

The jab is a glimmer of hope for a continent yearning for a return to normal from a pandemic that has killed 1.76 million people worldwide since emerging in China late last year and caused at least 80 million confirmed cases, according to an AFP tally.

But polls have shown many Europeans are unwilling to take the vaccine, which could impede its effectiveness in beating the virus, while it will take months for large chunks of the population to be immunised.

"It is with deep pride and a deep sense of responsibility that I got the vaccine today. A small gesture but a fundamental gesture for all of us," said Claudia Alivernini, 29, an Italian nurse who was the first in her country to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech jab Sunday morning.

EU commission chief Ursula von der Leyen hailed the campaign start as a "touching moment of unity and a European success story", even if some European states started a day early on Saturday.

Countries are also showing different strategies in their vaccination targeting, with Italy focusing on health workers, France the elderly and in the Czech Republic the prime minister himself at the front of the queue.

In a sign of impatience, some EU countries began vaccinating on Saturday, a day before the official start, with a 101-year-old woman in a care home becoming the first person in Germany to be inoculated and Hungary and Slovakia also handing out their first shots.

Araceli Rosario Hidalgo Sanchez, a 96-year-old living in a care home in central Spain became the first person in the country to be vaccinated on Sunday, in an event broadcast by national television. She said smilingly she felt "nothing" from the shot.

France began its campaign in care homes for the elderly in the Paris suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis, a low-income area hard hit by Covid-19, with a 78-year-old woman named Mauricette the first to receive the jab to applause from staff. — AFP



84-year-old Karin Sievers becomes the first to be inoculated with a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19, virus vaccine by Doctor Dirk Heinrich at the 'Hospital zum Heiligen Geist' retirement home in the northern German city of Hamburg, on Sunday. — AFP

CANADA DETECTS
FIRST COVID-19
VARIANT CASES

Montreal, Dec. 27: The first two cases of a particularly infectious Coronavirus variant that recently emerged in Britain have been confirmed in Canada, health authorities said on Saturday. "The cases are a couple from Durham with no known travel history, exposure or high-risk contacts," Barbara Yaffe, acting chief medical officer for Ontario, said in a statement.

The couple have been placed in isolation, according to the statement, the same day that Ontario reimposed a lockdown for several weeks due to a spike in Covid-19 cases in the province since early December. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Wednesday his country would prolong its suspension of passenger flights from the UK until January 6 in light of the Coronavirus strain sweeping Britain.

The discovery of two cases in Ontario "further reinforces the need for Ontarians to stay home as much as possible and continue to follow all public health advice, including the province-wide shutdown measures beginning today," said Yaffe. — AFP

96-year-old is first Spaniard
vaccinated for Coronavirus

Madrid, Dec. 27: A 96-year-old living in a care home in central Spain became the first person in the country to be vaccinated against Covid-19 on Sunday, in an event broadcast by national television. She felt "nothing" from the shot, Araceli Rosario Hidalgo Sanchez said with a smile after being injected. With her short white hair, the pensioner living in the Los Olmos retirement home in Guadalajara got up

slowly after pulling on her black jacket and walked off using a frame for support.

Carer Monica Tapias followed as the second Spaniard to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. The Los Olmos home was picked to kick off the country's inoculation campaign because it sits near a Pfizer storage depot, where vaccines were delivered from Belgium Saturday ahead of nationwide distribution.

No cases of Covid-19 have

so far been detected among the staff or residents.

"It's a great source of pride and a great satisfaction for us, we're representing all the retirement homes in Spain," director Marina Vellido said on Thursday. After the European Medicines Agency (EMA) approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine last Monday, the way is open for injections across the 27-member bloc. — AFP

Covid-19 pandemic will not
be the last, says WHO chief

Geneva, Dec. 27: The Coronavirus crisis will not be the last pandemic, and attempts to improve human health are "doomed" without tackling climate change and animal welfare, the World Health Organisation's chief said.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus also condemned the "dangerously short-sighted" cycle of throwing cash at outbreaks but doing nothing

to prepare for the next one, in a video message marking Sunday's first International Day of Epidemic Preparedness.

The WHO director-general said it was time to learn the lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic. "For too long, the world has operated on a cycle of panic and neglect," he said.

"We throw money at an outbreak, and when it's over, we forget about it and

do nothing to prevent the next one. This is dangerously short-sighted, and frankly difficult to understand." The Global Preparedness Monitoring Board's September 2019 first annual report on world readiness for health emergencies — published a few months before the Coronavirus broke out — said the planet was woefully unprepared for potentially devastating pandemics. — AFP

Investigators search home
in Nashville bomb probe

Washington, Dec. 27: Authorities searched a house in the Nashville area on Saturday as they probed the large blast that ripped through the downtown of the southern US city on Christmas morning, injuring several people and damaging dozens of buildings.

The operation in Antioch came as US media reports said a 63-year-old "person of interest" had been identified in connection with the explosion, which came from a parked motorhome that blared a warning minutes before it blew up.

Some US media outlets reported Saturday evening that the bomber may have been killed in the blast, but authorities have not officially confirmed anything.

Friday's explosion in historic downtown Nashville, the United States' country music capital, damaged about 40 buildings and injured at least three people, with the streets largely abandoned at that hour.

Authorities were examining tissue found at the blast site that they believe could be human remains. Police say the blast was

an "intentional act" but the motive remained unclear, and FBI behavioral analysts were involved in the investigation.

"The damage is shocking and it is a miracle that no residents were killed," Tennessee Governor Bill Lee said on Twitter on Saturday.

Media reports said neighbors had previously spotted a motorhome outside the residence that was being searched Saturday by authorities, and that it appeared to be similar to the one that exploded in Nashville. — AFP

Troubled Central African
Republic goes to elections

Bangui, Central African Republic, Dec. 27: Voting began in presidential and legislative elections in the Central African Republic on Sunday, in a key test for one of the world's most troubled nations.

The polls take place after a week of turbulence, marked by accusations of an attempted coup, the brief seizure of the CAR's fourth-largest town and the dispatch of military personnel by Russia and Rwanda to help its beleaguered government.

UN peacekeepers and local and Rwandan soldiers were patrolling the streets throughout the capital, with armoured vehicles posted outside voting places armed with machine guns, AFP journalists saw.

There was a delay of around 50 minutes before some polling stations in Bangui opened as voting materials had not been delivered on time.

"It's very important for me to be here, as a citizen. I think this vote will change our country, whoever the president will be," teacher Hortense Reine said outside a vot-

ing place in Boganda secondary school in the city's east, where around 30 people were queueing.

Senior officials at the election organising authority said that where polling stations had opened late, voting would continue for an additional 50 minutes.

The frontrunner for the presidency is incumbent Faustin Archange Touadera, who was elected in 2016. The mineral-rich but poverty-stricken country has been chronically unstable since independence 60 years ago. — AFP

Biden warns over
'devastating' delay
in aid package

Washington, Dec. 27: US President-elect Joe Biden warned on Saturday of "devastating consequences" if President Donald Trump continues to delay signing a Covid-19 economic relief bill passed by Congress.

Biden spoke out as millions of Americans saw their jobless benefits expire after Trump threw a long-awaited pandemic aid package into doubt — demanding lawmakers more than triple the \$600 direct payments to US taxpayers.

"This abdication of responsibility has devastating consequences. Today, about 10 million Americans will lose unemployment insurance benefits," Biden said in a statement.

The stimulus measure is wrapped up with a \$1.4 trillion funding bill, without which the government will be forced to shut down at midnight Monday.

"In just a few days, government funding will expire, putting vital serv-

ices and paychecks for military personnel at risk," Biden added. "In less than a week, a moratorium on evictions expires, putting millions at risk of being forced from their homes over the holidays."

In a video late Tuesday, Trump, who is due to leave office in less than a month, called the \$900 million bill "a disgrace" — despite it being passed Monday with a large bipartisan majority after months of negotiation. The legislation was designed to throw a lifeline to businesses and people struggling to keep their heads above water. — AFP

Israel braces for
3rd virus lockdown

Jerusalem, Dec. 27: Israel was set on Sunday to begin its third Coronavirus lockdown, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu voiced optimism that a "world record" vaccination drive will restore a degree of normality within weeks.

After a sharp rebound in detected infections, Netanyahu's government announced three days ago that it would re-impose the strict measures that had previously helped limit transmission.

From 5:00pm (1500 GMT) on Sunday, most people will be forced to stay within 1,000 metres of their home. There are a range of exceptions, including seeking medical care, attending legal proceedings or exercising. A key difference in

Israel's third lockdown compared to previous versions relates to schools, with more students able to attend classes.

Instead of near total closures, Israel is keeping schools open for children under six, as well as grades one to four and teenagers finishing secondary school in grades 11 and 12.

Israel's National Council for the Child criticised the decision to close grades five through 10.

"The decision to ignore this age bracket means the abandonment of hundreds of thousands of children, only because in theory they can be left at home alone while (their parents) go to work," NCC head Vered Windman was quoted as saying by the Ma'ariv newspaper. — AFP

Lebanon seizes 8 for
burning refugee camp

Beirut, Dec. 27: Lebanon's army said Sunday it had arrested eight people after a dispute led a group of Lebanese nationals to set fire to an informal refugee settlement in the country's north.

The army said it "arrested two Lebanese nationals and six Syrians". — AFP

ANCIENT | TASTES

Discovery in Pompeii buried under lava when volcano erupted in 79 AD

2,000-year-old fast food shop unearthed

Rome, Dec. 27: A 2,000-year-old fast food stall unearthed from the ash of Pompeii has given researchers new clues about the snacking habits of the ancient Romans.

The ornate snack bar counter, decorated with polychrome patterns and frozen by volcanic ash, was partially exhumed last year but archaeologists extended work on the site to reveal it in its full glory.

Pompeii was buried in a sea of boiling lava when the volcano on nearby Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD, killing between 2,000 and 15,000 people.

Archaeologists continue to make discoveries there. The thermopolium —

from the Greek "thermos" for hot and "poleo" to sell — at what was a busy intersection of Silver Wedding Street and Alley of Balconies, was the Roman era equivalent of a fast-food snack stall.

The team found duck bone fragments as well as the remains of pigs, goats, fish and snails in earthenware pots. Some of the ingredients had been cooked together like a Roman era paella.

Crushed fava beans, used to modify the taste of wine, were found at the bottom of one jar.

The counter appears to have been closed in a hurry and abandoned by its owners — perhaps as

the first rumblings of the eruption were felt — Massimo Osanna, director general at the Archaeological Park of Pompeii, told *Ansa* news agency.

Amphorae, a water tower and a fountain were found alongside human remains, including those of a man believed to have been aged around 50 and discovered near a child's bed.

"It is possible that someone, perhaps the oldest man, stayed behind and perished during the first phase of the eruption," Osanna told *Ansa* news agency.

In the latest stage of their work, archaeologists uncovered a number of still life scenes. — AFP



Archaeologists uncovered a number of still life scenes, including depictions of animals believed to have been on the menu, notably mallard ducks and also a rooster, for serving with wine or hot beverages. — AFP

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY	
E-Tender Notice No. 04-CWM-JBL-2020-21	
Dated: 17-12-2020	
The undersigned, on behalf of The President of India, invites E-Tenders for the following work:	
Description of Work	Approx. Value
Loading, transportation and incineration of 166 MT of oil / paint soaked cotton and waste of Carriage Repair Workshop, Hubballi in common hazardous waste incinerator approved by KSPCB through authorized hazardous waste cyclor.	Rs. 33,19,834/-
Last date for submission of bids: Upto 15.00 Hrs. of 08-01-2021	
For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in	
Chief Workshop Manager, Hubballi	
PUB/22/AAS/PRB/SWR/2020-21	

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY	
E-Tender Notice No. MYS-HAS-MAJN_Tele_12_2020-21	
Dated: 15-12-2020	
The undersigned, on behalf of The President of India, invites E-Tenders for the following work:	
Name of Work	Estimated Cost
Augmentation of the existing telecommunication system to meet the requirement of 25 KV AC Railway Electrification and Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Way station equipments with power supplies, emergency sockets etc. in SP / SSP / TSS including Trenching, Laying, Jointing of 6-Quad, OFC, PUJF cable for providing communication to SP / SSP / TSS and other miscellaneous telecom works in Mysuru Jn. (excl.) - Hassan Jn. - Mangaluru Jn. (excl.) section including Hassan Jn. - Arsikere Jn. (excl.) section of Mysuru Division in South Western Railway (Group - 299).	Rs. 4,57,00,867/-
Last date for submission of bids: Upto 15.00 Hrs. of 15-01-2021	
For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in	
Keep visiting the website for any corrigendum till closing date	
Deputy Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer Railway Electrification, Bengaluru	
PUB/22/AAS/PRB/SWR/2020-21	

DECCAN Chronicle

28 DECEMBER 2020

Challenge to Vodafone ill-advised, withdraw it

Just a day after India lost its case against the UK-based oil major Cairn Energy Plc at an arbitration court at The Hague over nearly ₹9,000 crore in past taxes, the Indian government announced its decision to challenge the tribunal's verdict in nearly ₹22,000-crore worth retrospective tax case against Vodafone Plc.

In both cases, the central government's tax demands emerge from an amendment introduced by then finance minister Pranab Mukherjee to the Income Tax Act. The legislation was aimed at plugging a loophole in the Income Tax Act, which allowed Hutchison Whampoa to avoid paying ₹ 7,990 crore in capital gains tax while transferring its Indian telecom business to Vodafone in May 2007.

Months later, the government held Vodafone liable for its failure to deduct tax at source from the payment that it had made to Hutchison. The Bombay high court favoured the government, while the Supreme Court upheld Vodafone's interpretation. However, the United Progressive Alliance government amended the law, empowering officials to levy tax with retrospective effect on any foreign transaction that resulted in direct or indirect transfer of an asset located in India.

In 2018, Arun Jaitley, the finance minister of the day, categorised the retrospective taxation as an erroneous decision

The result of the amendment was that Vodafone had overnight become of one of the biggest tax defaulters in the country. The legislation attracted harsh criticism inside and outside the country. The Bharatiya Janata Party, the prime Opposition of the day, was the harshest critic of the retrospective taxation, though it did not vote against the amendment in Parliament.

In 2018, Arun Jaitley, the finance minister of the day, categorised the retrospective taxation as an erroneous decision. Given Jaitley's official stand, it was expected that the BJP government would graciously accept the awards of the arbitration court and consider the matter to be closed. However, the government — despite its claims of being investor-friendly — continued to keep the issue alive by opting for an appeal, which does no good for the country's image.

A stable and predictable policy framework is the bedrock of a good investment climate. While it was obvious that Hutchison and Vodafone had attempted to avoid paying tax by effecting their deal in a foreign country, the government must recognise the difference between tax avoidance and tax evasion. Tax avoidance using loopholes in the law is legal, while tax evasion is not.

The Vodafone case is clearly an issue of tax avoidance that emerged from poor drafting of the income tax law 50 years ago. The country should, therefore, not seek to penalise investors for the follies of our past administrators. As a country that is governed by the law, India cannot be seen overriding the judgement of its own apex court, regardless of the reason and provocation. More importantly, India should stop living in the past and look ahead to the future, especially when the country is seeking to position itself as the world's factory.

A step forward, two back

Two young women, both second year degree students, represent two faces of Kerala today. Arya Rajendran, the 21-year-old daughter of an electrician and an LIC agent, will be anointed the mayor of the capital city today. Her election is a foregone conclusion as the CPI(M), her party which leads the Left Democratic Front, has a comfortable majority in the council. She is all set to become the youngest mayor in the country. It's not for want of others that the LDF chose a student; the LDF has 25 other women councillors there. In so doing, the party was acknowledging the role of the youth brigade that it fielded in the local bodies' election in weathering the anti-incumbency factor and the impact of the incessant, and often one-sided, media scrutiny. Ms Rajendran is a dyed-in-the-wool Communist, having joined Balasamgham, the children's organisation of the CPI(M), at five. At present, she heads it, and is sure to bring that experience to address the issues that plague the city.

Contrast her experience with that of Haritha, wife of Aneesh. Aneesh was hacked to death by Haritha's father and uncle on Friday. Unable to stand the "horror" of their daughter becoming the wife of a man whose caste and economic status came a notch below theirs, the patriarchs, in their early forties, did away with the young man even before his marriage had lasted 90 days. It is not the first time that honour killing had claimed the life of a young person in the state: it was in 2018 that a dalit boy, Kevin, was killed by his wife's relatives for similar reasons.

Kerala has a history of more than a century of fighting social and economic oppression. The young mayor represents its success and the young widow the work left unfinished. The state must take it forward aggressively now, lest it slips back into the madhouse that it once was.

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Faizan Mustafa

By not letting Assembly meet, did Arif fulfil governor's role?

Historically speaking, the governor's office has been there in India since antiquity. Though loyalists were always appointed as governors, still most governors in ancient and medieval times, in fact, revolted against the Centre and declared themselves as independent. British governors were the most loyal servants of the imperial government and governors of free India preferred to follow the path of their immediate predecessors. Arif Mohammad Khan, just like other governors of the Indian republic, seems to care more for the interests of central government than the Constitution, though under Article 159 of the Constitution he has taken the oath to preserve, protect and defend it. Be refusing to convene the Kerala Assembly session, he has yet again crossed the *lakshman-rekha*. Subsequently, like a true statesman, in an extremely polite letter, he has clarified that since there is nothing like an emergency session, he had to decline the request. He has also emphasized the importance of 15 days' notice. Such technicalities do not deserve much importance as the governor's acting on the advice of government is a constitutional mandate. Last

month itself, he himself assented to a controversial ordinance without even exercising his right to seek reconsideration. Clearly, he was more concerned about the possibility of the Assembly passing a resolution against central farm laws rather than people's rights.

The Constitution gives no discretion to the governors in the matter of convening the session of the Assembly. Parliamentary democracy being the basic structure of our Constitution, this is the prerogative of the Cabinet though Article 174 does say that the governor from time to time summon the Assembly to meet at such time and place 'he thinks fit'. A few months back, Rajasthan governor Kalraj Mishra, too, behaved in a similar way and delayed the convening of the Assembly session as was recommended by the Ashok Gehlot government. Here, the governor doubted the 'purpose' of convening the session. The governor was strangely coming in the way of the chief minister proving his majority.

Even in the context of the state of Kerala's filing of petition challenging the constitutionality of Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, Khan had asserted that he is not a rubber stamp and was unhappy

that he was not kept in loop before filing the case. A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court in *Nabam Rebia (2016)* had explicitly observed that the governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Rajkhowa, who had advanced the session of Assembly without the advice of chief minister, had exceeded his jurisdiction as he had no discretion in convening the Assembly session.

Article 163(1) does permit governor to act 'in discretion' wherever constitution requires him to act in his discretion. According to Edward Cook, "discretion" is a science or understanding to discern between falsity and truth, between right and wrong, and not to do according to will and private affection. Justice Douglas in *United States v. Wenderlick (1951)* said that absolute discretion is a ruthless master. It is in fact constitutional blasphemy and is more destructive for freedom than any of man's inventions.

The Kerala governor is certainly aware that there are established rules for the exercise of discretion. First, discretion should always be exercised with caution and in a reasonable manner. Second, discretion cannot be exercised under dictation. Thus, in convening

Assembly sessions, the Kerala governor should have ignored it if at all any directive came from Delhi. The Kerala governor has not acted as an independent and impartial constitutional functionary. Third, discretion is to be exercised after proper application of mind. It cannot be exercised for an improper purpose or with bad faith or by taking into account irrelevant considerations. Fourth, discretion cannot be exercised in an arbitrary or whimsical manner. Any action of governor is arbitrary if he has acted on the basis of prejudice or preference rather than on reason or fact. As per the constitution bench judgment in *Nabam Rebia (2016)*, the expression "as he thinks fit" in Article 174(1) gives no "discretion" to the governor in convening the Assembly session.

The moot question is why our governors behave like this. The worst thing which happened to this office is that the governor is the only constitutional authority who has no security of tenure like the President, judges, CAG, chairman, UPSC, Election Commissioner, CIC, etc. He is worse than an IAS officer who under Article 311 is entitled to a proper inquiry and cannot be terminated without a def-

inite finding of 'misconduct'. But the governor remains in office only so long he enjoys the "pleasure of the President" which, in reality, means the pleasure of the political dispensation in Delhi and he can be removed on the whims and fancies of Prime Minister.

This is in spite of the Supreme Court's decision in *Hargovind Pant v. Raghukul Tilak (1979)* where the court held that governor is not an "employee of the central government". He is neither under its control nor accountable to it and is "an independent constitutional officer".

Mr Khan is clearly aware that the Kerala Assembly resolution against the controversial farm laws would be far more serious than the resolution against CAA as unlike citizenship on which the Parliament has exclusive jurisdiction, agricultural market is state subject in respect of which Parliament lacks legislative competence. One hopes better sense will prevail and the governor would accept a fresh request for the session.

The writer is a constitutional law expert and currently vice-chancellor of NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad

Subhani



Kashmir looks ahead at a winter of discontent



A.S. Dulat

James Baldwin once wrote: "It comes as a great shock to discover that the country which is your birthplace and to which you owe your life and identity has not in its whole system of reality evolved any place for you."

Such is the plight the Kashmiri considers himself in.

Kashmir has been frozen for some time and desperately needs thawing. Chillai Kalan, the harshest part of winter, has just begun, but Kashmir has been freezing since late November. An old friend who called from Srinagar a month ago said Kashmir was frozen not only on the ground but emotionally as well. Kashmiris, he said, were in deep contemplation but no one knew, or no one could tell, what they were thinking. Sounding defeated, he said Kashmir may now remain in perpetual winter bereft of its seasons.

Another Kashmiri friend, a liberal businessman who spends more time out of the Valley than in Srinagar, said in frustration the Kashmiris could not easily get over the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution.

The recently concluded District Development Council elections may provide a silver lining. Kashmir can always change overnight. Election results rarely, if ever, satisfy everybody in J&K; such is its arithmetic, but the recent results have been almost, perfect providing an opportunity for peace, reconciliation, and resolution. Predictably, the BJP dominated Jammu, and the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration

(PAGD) the Kashmir Valley. The BJP's three seats in the Valley are significant, but the PAGD's 35 in Jammu even more so. The National Conference again demonstrated that it was the only party with a significant following in both the Jammu and Kashmir divisions of the erstwhile state. The polarisation of Jammu and Kashmir on a religious basis was dangerous as the scholarly Balraj Puri had warned in his relentless pleading for regional autonomy.

Democracy has, in a sense, as Union home minister Amit Shah said, "been revived in J&K", but democracy can only flourish, as Mufti Mohammed Sayeed went to say, with a level playing field, without buying and selling, bullying and locking up. The leprechaun cannot easily replace the towering Sher-e-Kashmir in the Kashmiri psyche. New Delhi must demonstrate accommodation, grab the opportunity, and break the lockjam in Kashmir.

Notwithstanding the political rhetoric across the board, Article 370 is not the issue, done and dusted on August 5, 2019, and left only for the Supreme Court to sanctify its burial. It was, in any event, a hollow provision at best, a fig leaf to assuage Kashmiri pride whose erosion had begun as far back as August 9, 1953 with the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah. Sheikh Sahib, who had steadfastly stood for peace and reconciliation, had himself endorsed the mainstreaming of Kashmir with the 1975 Accord. When the Hurriyat Conference leaders agreed to talks with then deputy prime min-

Dr Farooq Abdullah remains the key to peace in Kashmir. The Sphinx must solve his own riddle.

ister Lal Krishna Advani, in early 2004, it was virtually the beginning of the end of separatism. What Kashmir needs is peace, justice, honour and dignity.

Former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, whose birth anniversary was celebrated last Friday, believed that we needed to move forward in Kashmir and end the permanent confrontation with Pakistan.

Force has never worked in Kashmir, nor has our muscular policy since the abrogation of Article 370. Terrorism has increased; almost 200 local boys mainly from South Kashmir have joined militancy in the last one year, not for *azaadi* or Pakistan but in the name of Allah. These figures are higher than any time since 2007. Pakistan too is back fishing once again in the troubled waters of Kashmir.

The security forces have suffered substantial losses. Suicide and fratricide among the forces, particularly the CRPF, who are in the thick of the anti-terror war, has grown due to stress, duress and trauma due to long-term duties in unfamiliar surroundings.

There is no other way but dialogue and a revival of the political process. Getting the mainstream political parties on board is the primary requirement for achieving peace in J&K today. The establishment of the PAGD makes political sense for Kashmir and also provides an opening for the Centre. How long the three main parties — National Conference, People's Democratic Party and People's Conference — stick together, only time will tell. Kashmiris normally do not, and a crack

or two are already visible. However, it is in New Delhi's interest that they do to further the political and democratic process.

Togetherness would have virtually been impossible without the initiative and resoluteness of the "Big Man". Sadly, New Delhi has never tried to understand Dr Farooq Abdullah, nor does he make it easy for anyone to do so. Earlier, it was his openness which puzzled Delhi, now it is his determination. As a senior colleague in the PAGD said: "Doctor Sahib in his new avatar is like a man possessed, in whose sincerity no one can doubt."

Recently, when the Enforcement Directorate threatened to attach his properties, Dr Abdullah, echoing James Baldwin, said, "I will not bow; I will do what I have to." Yet, when he was released from detention on March 14, people who spoke to him would vouch that Farooq bore no ill will and was gracious enough to admit that his meeting with Prime Minister a couple of days before August 5, 2019 went unbelievably well. Dr Farooq Abdullah has always stood by India, dedicating himself as a bridge between Srinagar and New Delhi but during his last visit to Delhi, somewhat disillusioned, Farooq said: "What is there to talk now, they call me a thief?"

Yet Dr Farooq Abdullah remains the key to peace in Kashmir. The Sphinx must solve his own riddle. There is no one half his stature in the political spectrum in J&K. Statehood assured to the people in Parliament needs to be restored, rather than a carrot kept dangling. And then, hopefully, as in 1996, Assembly elections in October-November next year may pave the way for peace.

Amarjit Singh Dulat is a former chief of the Research and Analysis Wing, India's external intelligence agency

LETTERS

VIOLATION OF MV ACT

The Tamil Nadu government has decided to remove bull bars, crash guards, and protruding bumpers in the official vehicles of VIPs as these fittings are in violation of the Motor Vehicles Act. During the movement of VIPs, the authorities bring all the vehicular traffic to a grinding halt for long and normal traffic is allowed only after the VIPs' passage. Even ambulances are not spared at times. Does the government not know that causing obstruction to other road users is also a violation of the M.V. Act? Why can't they look into this aspect, too?

P.G. Menon,
Chennai

INJUSTICE TO THE AUTISTIC

Apropos the editorial, "2020, the year I learn I am neurodivergent". It is indeed pathetic to note that the autistic ones face societal excommunication resulting in their getting ostracised right from being mercilessly bullied at school. The salvo of the writer against such injustice meted to autistic persons expounding the term that neurodivergence is strength and should be treated as joy and not a sickness is justified on humanitarian grounds.

E.S.Chandrasekaran,
Chennai

GREAT COMEBACK

This is with reference to Ayaz Memon's article. The first-day performance of our team is uplifting to cast off the acute gloom after the Adelaide Test's second innings fiasco. To make such a robust comeback was admirable. Hats off to stand-in captain, Ajinkye Rahane, who marshalled his team marvellously to bundle out the Aussie batsmen for a paltry score of 195. It is also great that Rishabh Pant input had plotted the downfall of Mathew Wade. Fortunately, our fielders were on their toes to take each and every catch that came their way. Well done Rahane & team. It is now up to our captain and other batsmen to be patient to put up a healthy score to put pressure on the Aussies the second time to level the series at Melbourne and keep alive our chances to figure in the World Test Championship final.

N. Mahadevan,
Chennai

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	46,973.54	1.14
Nifty 50	13,749.25	1.09
S&P 500*	3,700.86	0.29
Dollar (₹)	73.54	0.30
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.01	-1.04
Euro (₹)	89.66	0.29
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,030.119	0.24
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	51.10	-0.10
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.929	-0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.936	-0.019

* As of 9:30 PM IST, Friday

India's crude steel output up 3.5% in Nov.

India registered a growth of 3.5 per cent in crude steel production at 9.245 million tonne (MT) in November, according to World Steel Association. The country had produced 8.933 MT crude steel during the same month last year, the global industry body said in its latest report. According to the worldsteel data, China registered eight per cent year-on-year growth in steel output at 87.660 MT during November.

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Centre for biz-friendly laws

Directs ministries and states to reduce compliance burden on businesses

LEGAL MAZE

● Chief Secretaries of all the states have been advised to identify burdensome regulations and ways to reduce that burden for businesses.

● Central ministries and states would have to examine central laws which can be repealed or subsumed or replaced.

● Issues which are being looked into include removing licence renewals, risk-based inspection system, simplification of number of filings, etc

New Delhi, Dec. 27: Central government ministries, departments and states have been asked to relook at the laws and regulations with an objective to reduce the regulatory compliance burden for industry, an official said. "Reducing the regulatory compliance burden is a priority area for the government. There are a lot of compliance burdens and we have to reduce that. Every ministry is doing this on a war footing," a senior official in the commerce and industry ministry said.

Citing an example, the official said the ministry handles several Acts such

as two laws for Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO), intellectual property rights, and boilers.

"So we are looking at wherever there is any section where criminal prosecution is involved, can it be relooked. Whether it is necessary to have criminal punishments or civil punishment will also do like penalty or something else," the official added.

According to a recent

Ease of Doing Business rankings released by the World Bank, India stands at 63rd position, which is a great leap from 142nd rank in 2015.

In 2015, the government had aimed to break into the top 50 countries in the ease of doing business index by 2020. The country, however, failed to achieve its goal because of lacklustre performance in six of the 10 indicators.

According to a report, the government has decided to focus on six laggard segments such as enforcing contracts, registering property and starting a business.

Chief Secretaries of all

the states have been advised to identify burdensome regulations and ways to reduce that burden for businesses.

The ministries and states would have to examine central laws which can be repealed or subsumed or replaced. Issues which are being looked into for the exercise include removing licence renewals or increasing its periodicity, risk-based inspection system, simplification of number of filings, removal or rationalisation of maintaining registers or records, and minimising or eliminating number of display requirements for licences.

Panel cites PM to reject India's Cairn tax claim

New Delhi, Dec. 27: A three-member tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague cited statements by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other ministers pledging not to use retrospective taxation to overturn a ₹10,247 crore tax demand on British oil and gas firm Cairn Energy Plc.

The tribunal, in a 582-page judgment on December 21, ordered return of the value of shares that the income-tax department sold as also the dividend it seized and tax refunds it withheld to recover tax demand that was levied following the 2012 amendment to the Income-Tax Act that gave authorities powers to seek taxes on past deals.

It ruled that the 2006 reorganisation of Cairn Energy's India business prior to listing on local bourses was not "unlawful tax avoidance" and ordered tax authorities to drop the tax demand.

In the order, the tribunal, which consisted of one member appointed by the Indian government, said the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) 2014 "election manifesto criticised the preceding government for having unleashed 'tax terrorism' and 'uncertainty', which 'negatively impact[ed] the investment climate'."

In his first Budget speech in July 2014, the new finance minister, Arun Jaitley, proposed that a CBDT-supervised 'High Level Committee' be implemented to scrutinise fresh cases that had arisen

following the 2012 Amendments.

After stating that, "this government will not ordinarily bring about any change retrospectively which creates a fresh liability", he announced that "henceforth, all fresh cases arising out of the retrospective amendments of 2012 in respect of indirect transfers and coming to the notice of the Assessing Officers will be scrutinised by a High Level Committee to be constituted by the CBDT before any action is initiated in such cases," the order said.

On November 7, 2014, Jaitley, according to the order, insisted that his government had taken a "policy decision that as far as this government is concerned, even though there is a sovereign power of retrospective taxation, we are not going to exercise that power".

On January 13, 2015, Jaitley was quoted as saying that the 2012 Amendment had "scared away investors from India" and that "the government had no intention of using the retrospective tax provision".

"This view was confirmed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 14, 2016. The Prime Minister was quoted in the *Financial Times* as saying that the government "will not resort to retrospective taxation; we are making our tax regime transparent, stable and predictable", the tribunal said.

—PTI

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: You will get out and do your best to change things, knowing it will make a positive impact somewhere. You may decide to make short term goals your agenda today.



Taurus: Romantic life is likely to take some twists and turns. Jealous colleagues might try to create professional obstacles. Friends may not extend a helping hand.



Gemini: A trustworthy romantic relationship would turn into a lifelong bond for some. Child's inclination towards outdoor activities would create domestic problems.



Cancer: You are likely to have a hectic schedule on the professional front. Trust in friendship would augur well for future. Do not forget to appreciate achievements.



Leo: Being choosy about your work should be avoided, today is about unexpected jackpots, keep yourself flexible. Some of you take help of holistic healing to benefit health.



Virgo: You are likely to realise the importance of reaching out to people. Do not underestimate your own capabilities and set yourself up for traps. Some of you are likely to face disappointment in a legal battle.

You share your b'day with

Denzel Washington, an American actor, director, and producer. He is best known for his roles in *Malcolm X*, *The Hurricane*, *Training Day*, *Flight*, *Fences*, *Cry Freedom*, *Glory*, *American Gangster* and *Roman J. Israel, Esq.* amongst others.



Libra: The road to success is easy, just believe in your vision and path. It's a good time to move from yourself and look at others and their growing needs.



Scorpio: Property deals that are in the midst of litigation will get settled out of court. Celebrate a happy occasion with family tonight. Deadlines may keep you busy.



Sagittarius: Success is short-lived. Small entrepreneurs plan on expansion and building their infrastructure, this may require you to merge with other organisations.



Capricorn: It is not a great time to make new investments. Family life may be full of issues due to minor a misunderstanding. Be wary of deceptive people around you, some of them may be close relatives.

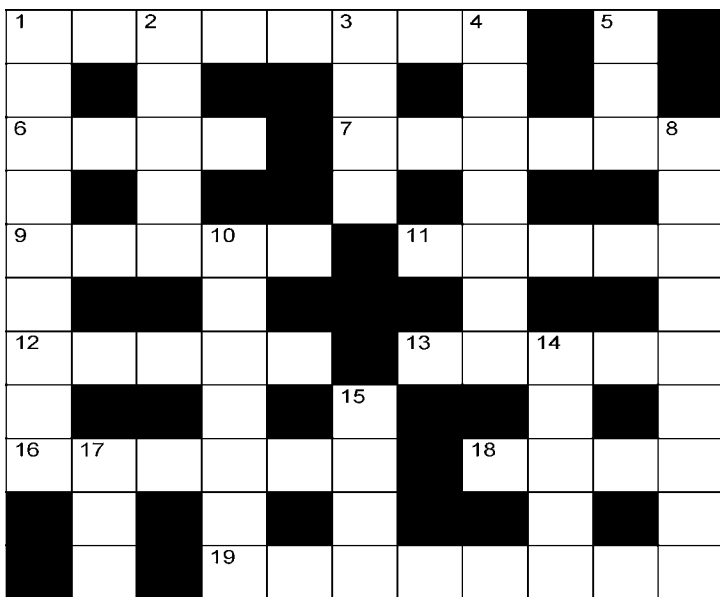


Aquarius: The universe teaches you to be a giver, be grateful, there are very few who receive this great opportunity to serve others. You move towards progress in great leaps and bounds.



Pisces: Working towards your goals with a time frame in mind is what is required of you today, be practical or you will lag behind. You tend to stick to old choices and stay put at work, instead break free and embrace the new. Live life to the fullest.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

1. Gifted (8)
6. Advantage (4)
7. Intimate friends (6)
9. Completely satisfied (5)
11. Confidence (5)
12. Primed (5)
13. Ward off (5)
16. Default on a deal (6)
18. Wound mark (4)
19. Careless and untidy (8)

Down

1. Funds manager (9)
2. Kindle (5)
3. Make known (4)
4. Stray from normal (7)
5. Tune (3)
8. Academic (9)
10. Eternal (7)
14. Type of nut (5)
15. Refuse consent (4)
17. Tree (3)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 6. Fellowship, 8. Haste, 10. Spoil, 13. Anaesthetic, 14. Ruled, 17. Demon, 19. Courthouse. Down: 1. Pegs, 2. Flue, 3. Owe, 4. Shoo, 5. Applicant, 7. Theatrics, 9. Theme, 11. Piece, 12. Sty, 15. Lout, 16. Duty, 17. Dhow, 18. Mesh.

Word Mine

R
TAY
OOMSN

TODAY'S RATINGS: 34 AVERAGE: 44
GOOD: 43 OUTSTANDING

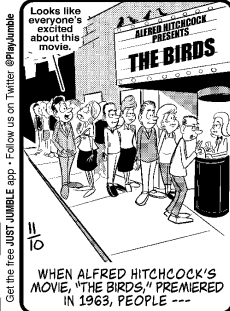
How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

West: A J 7 5 2, A B 5 4 3, J. South: Q 4, A Q 10 7 5 4, A Q 7 2. Dealable: Vulnerable: North: South. South: West: North: East. Opening lead: ♠ A.

jumble

CCA OO
FINEK
TILLET
FDESEU

Yesterday's Jumbles: DRESS SWUNG MILDEW CATCHY
Answer: When they visited Arizona's famous canyon, the family had a — GRAND TIME



Looks like everyone's excited about the movie. When Alfred Hitchcock's movie, 'THE BIRDS,' premiered in 1963, people...

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon. (Answers tomorrow)

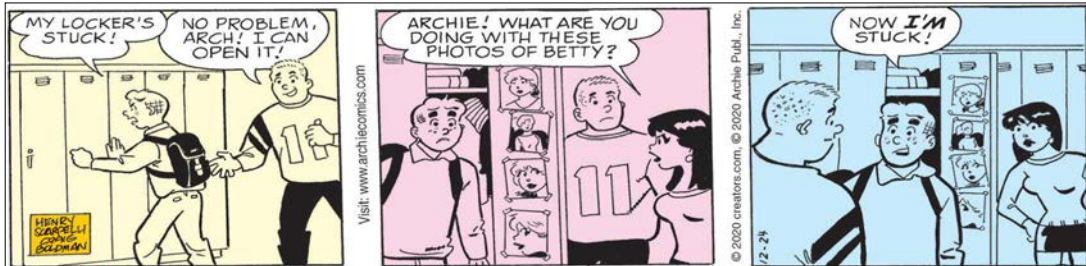
CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & Craig Boldman



BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



THE POSSIBILITIES WERE NUMEROUS

The nonduplicate tables at Bridge Base Online feature robots and various levels of play. But I find it interesting to see what people and bots do. Yes, the robots are more consistent in the bidding. I remember one deal where all 15 pairs of robots had the same short auction to the wrong slam. In this deal, though, what should South do next after the given start to the auction? West's two-diamond overall is a

Michael Cue-Bid, showing at least 5-5 in the majors. Also, how do contracts of four hearts and five diamonds fare? This start happened seven times. The choices, all made by humans, were pass (once), double (twice), five clubs (once) and five diamonds (three). Pass could easily be the winner but is too cautious. Double indicates a strong hand, expecting partner to pass unless long in

one of the minors. Five clubs is wrong because it shows at least 5-5 in the minors. With 6-4 in the minors, you should bid four no-trump. I think it is close between double and four no-trump. Four hearts can be defeated but is almost certain to make. South must lead a low diamond. Then North can win with his ace and shift to the club 10, giving the defenders the first three tricks. And the icing is laded

onto the cake when South plays a third club, promoting a trump trick for his side: East ruffs with dummy's heart eight, and North over-ruffs with the nine. Five diamonds fails after any lead except a low heart, the simplest route being via a spade ruff by East.

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SHORT TAKES

GM Harikrishna holds Carlsen

Chennai: Indian Grandmaster P. Harikrishna held world number one and world champion Magnus Carlsen in the fourth round of the preliminary stage of the Champions Chess Tour Airthings Masters online chess championship. Both Harikrishna and Carlsen drew all their four games on the opening day of the tournament as matches ended late on Saturday. The game between Harikrishna and the Norwegian ended in 24 moves after the players repeated the moves.

SA batsmen fight back on Day Two

Centurion, South Africa: South Africa's batsmen scored freely against a depleted Sri Lankan bowling attack as the host nation fought back on the second day of the first Test on Sunday. South Africa were 317 for four at the close in reply to Sri Lanka's first innings total of 396.

Dean Elgar (95) and Aiden Markram (68) put on 141 for the first wicket, while former captain Faf du Plessis (55 not out) and Temba Bavuma (41 not out) added an unbeaten 97 for the fifth wicket as the hosts scored at better than four runs an over. Sri Lanka went into the match without leading fast bowler Suranga Lakmal because of a hamstring strain and suffered a major blow when opening bowler Kasun Rajitha limped off the field with what appeared to be a groin injury after bowling one ball in his third over. — **AFP**

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 396 (Chandimal 85, Shanaka 66*, Sipamla 4-76) vs **South Africa 317/4** (Elgar 95, Markram 68, du Plessis 55 batting).

Man City ease past Newcastle

Manchester: Manchester City secured a routine 2-0 win over Newcastle thanks to goals from Ilkay Gundogan and Ferran Torres to climb to fifth place in the Premier League. Gundogan tucked home a cut-back from Raheem Sterling to score in consecutive home games in the league and put City ahead in the 14th minute. Torres, a winger, was playing as the lone striker in the absence of Gabriel Jesus who has contracted the coronavirus and scored for the second time in the league this season to make it 2-0. He showed a striker's instinct to hold back as Federico Fernandez blocked a cross from the right and the ball arrived at the feet of Torres, who stroked in a finish from eight meters in the 55th. Bernardo Silva struck the post as City threatened more goals in the pouring rain. — **AP**

Kerala grab first win of season

Goa: Kerala Blasters dished out a complete performance as they edged Hyderabad 2-0 to secure their first win of the Indian Super League season here on Sunday. Abdul Hakkur's header (29') put Kerala ahead in the first half before Jordan Murray (88') sealed three points for Kibru Vicuna's side. Vicuna rang in five changes to the side that drew against SC East Bengal while Hyderabad made two changes with Liston Colaco returning to the starting eleven. Both sides created chances in the first half but it was Kerala who headed into the break with a lead. Kerala started on a bright note and had a chance to break the deadlock early on when an error from Asish Rai got Hyderabad in trouble.

Live on TV

CRICKET

India vs Australia: Second Test — Day 4 from 5 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, 3, Sony Six, HD

Sri Lanka vs South Africa: First Test — Day 3 from 1.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

FOOTBALL

Premier League: Crystal Palace vs Leicester City from 8.30 pm, Chelsea FC v Aston Villa from 11 pm on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Indian Super League: Bengaluru FC vs Jamshedpur FC from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

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Editor: **KAUSHIK MITTER**

JINKLE BELLS!

Ajinkya punches ton, India land second blow in Boxing Day Test

Melbourne, Dec. 27: Ajinkya Rahane played a captain's knock, a workmanlike century that steered India into a dominant position and took the sting out of Australia's potent bowling attack in the second Test here on Sunday.

Trailing 0-1 in the four-match series, India ended the second day at 277 for five for a handy 82-run lead after bowling out Australia for 195.

At stumps, which was brought early owing to rain, Rahane was going strong on 104 and giving him company was Ravindra Jadeja on 40, the two having added what might prove to be a game-changing 104-run partnership for the sixth wicket.

This was Rahane's 12th Test hundred and his second at the iconic venue, after a fine 147 during the 2014 tour.

A day after earning rich praise for his tactical acumen while marshalling the bowlers, Rahane shone bright with the bat and was spot on with his reading of match situations during his stay in the middle.

Rahane got a life when Steve Smith dropped him on 73 at second slip in Australia's first over with the second new ball, the unlucky bowler being Mitchell Starc, who was taken off the attack after just two overs with the shining red cherry.

That particular phase was crucial from both the team's point of view and by not losing a wicket to the second new ball, India ensured they finished the day ahead of Australia, in terms of runs as well as psychologically.

Rahane got another reprieve when substitute fielder Travis Head put one down after diving forward from gully, but that was after he had got to the three-figure mark.

To start with, Rahane was more watchful that he had ever been but as the day progressed, he went on to play some sumptuous shots and one of his day's best was the classic off-drive against Pat Cummins.

Earlier, Rishabh Pant (29) and Hanuma Vihari (21) frittered away promising starts after doing all the hard work, but Jadeja was determined not to do anything of that sort.

SCORECARD

Australia 1st Innings: 195
India 1st Innings (Ovenight 36/1): Mayank Agarwal lbw b Starc 0, Shubman Gill c Paine b Cummins 45, Cheteshwar Pujara c Paine b Cummins 17, Ajinkya Rahane (batting) 104, Hanuma Vihari c Smith b Lyon 21, Rishabh Pant c Paine b Starc 29, Ravindra Jadeja (batting) 40. Extras (b-12, lb-6, nb-2, wd-1) 21. **Total (for 5 wickets in 91.3 overs) 277.**

FOW: 1-0, 2-61, 3-64, 4-116, 5-173. **Bowling:** Mitchell Starc 18.3-3-61-2, Pat Cummins 22-7-71-2, Josh Hazlewood 21-6-44-0, Nathan Lyon 18-2-52-1, Cameron Green 12-1-31-0.



Indian captain Ajinkya Rahane celebrates after scoring a century as teammate Ravindra Jadeja applauds during the second day of the second Test against Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday.

— AP

GILL CREDITS RAHANE FOR HIS KNOCK

Melbourne, Dec. 27: Young India batsman Shubman Gill says watching Ajinkya Rahane's "magnificent" hundred from the sidelines was immensely educative for him and he learnt how not to get into a shell while facing a lethal bowling attack.

Stand-in skipper

Rahane scored an unbeaten 104 in tough conditions to steer India to 277 for five against Australia on the second day of the second Test here.

"This knock was all about patience, more importantly when you are playing such a high quality pace attack, sometimes you get into shell and not able to score runs, and the way Ajinkya *bhai* played, it was such a magnificent knock to watch from outside," Gill said during a virtual press conference.

"How to see off those tough periods, he made it sure that he put the loose balls away."

With Rahane going strong, India took a lead of 82 runs and Gill said the team will look to capitalise on it as batting will get more challenging from day three.

"On the first day, there was a bit turn for (Ravichandran Ashwin) Ash *bhai* and (Ravindra Jadeja) Jaddu *bhai* and even today we saw there was turn for Nathan (Lyon) and as the time goes on there will be more cracks and it will be more challenging for the batsmen."

Opening the innings, Gill scored a 65-ball 45 on debut before he nicked an outswinger from Pat Cummins. "When I came into bat, there was something in the pitch, it was lively but the only thing I told myself was that no matter what was in pitch, I should be able to play my game." — **PTI**

Strac rues missed chances for Oz

WARNER NOT CERTAIN TO PLAY THIRD TEST

Melbourne, Dec. 27: Star Australian opener David Warner is still struggling with his groin injury, coach Justin Langer said on Sunday, rendering him doubtful for the third Test against India starting January 7. He had missed the last ODI, three T20Is and the first two Tests against India due to the injury that he sustained during the second ODI.

Warner, whose absence was felt by Australia as they folded for 195 on the opening day of the ongoing Boxing Day Test, will hit the MCG nets on Sunday.

"We saw him bat the day before the game, he's batting again this afternoon at the MCG, so in terms of his batting he's flying, it's just trying to ... he's still having some trouble with his groin and we know how dynamic he is," Langer told Ricky Ponting during an interview on *Seven*. — **PTI**

really well there, he took his chances and we probably could have got him out three or four or maybe five times before he got a

hundred, but he's run his luck there and scored a good hundred. Well done to him, added the left-arm pacer, who had figures of

2/61.

Starc admitted Australia endured a tough day.

"Pretty much that (frustrating day for the bowlers). The last ball pretty much summed up the day, so again not our best day, not our worst, we created a fair few chances and unfortunately could not hang onto to those half ones or those changes we created," he said.

"So Jinxy (Rahane) batted pretty well throughout the day, (there were a) couple of really good partnerships. I thought there was really good stuff from us as well, we couldn't capitalise on some of the chances we created, to finish in a better position. So, just got to back up tomorrow and take five wickets as quick as we can," added Starc, summing up the day's play. — **PTI**

Furious Bedi attacks DDCA

■ Demands removal of his name from Kotla stand

New Delhi, Dec. 27: Spin legend Bishan Singh Bedi has threatened to take legal action against the DDCA if his name is not removed from a spectators' stand at the Feroz Shah Kotla ground with immediate effect.

On Wednesday, Bedi had shot a letter to the Delhi and District Cricket Association, lambasting it for installing a statue of its late former president Arun Jaitley at the Kotla.

In the absence of any response from DDCA, Bedi wrote another letter to the cricket body on Saturday.

"It's been a few days since I wrote to you ... While within minutes of my letter going public I had an overwhelming support of the cricket fraternity across the globe. But I'm sad there's been no reaction from you," Bedi wrote in his letter addressed to DDCA President Rohan Jaitley.

"... I hope in our country people still have a right to decide as individuals what they wish to be associated with & where their name plates can hang with dignity. Please don't push me to take a legal recourse."

Bedi had also decided to renounce his membership of the DDCA.

In his scathing letter, Bedi questioned the DDCA president's "ill advised" and "inexplicable" silence.

"Your seemingly ill advised silence to my letter that has triggered a public debate about perpetuating politicians at sporting venues exposes your naivety," he wrote.

● **On Wednesday, Bishan Singh Bedi had shot a letter to the Delhi and District Cricket Association, lambasting it for installing a statue of its late former president Arun Jaitley at the Kotla.**

"Your inexplicable silence also underlines guilt of occupying a position of power solely because of your family name, which, you obviously wish to promote, come what may."

"Finally, I hope you will have the basic courtesy to reply to a former cricketer who is not asking for a favour, but wants his cricketing integrity not to be bartered away."

The statue of Jaitley will be unveiled by BCCI president Sourav Ganguly at Kotla on Monday in the presence of union home minister Amit Shah and former BCCI chief Anurag Thakur, among others.

Bedi said he did not wish to be associated with the cricket stadium which has a statue of the late politician, who was a minister in the BJP-led NDA government and died last year owing to multiple health issues.

"I've been around long to know DDCA has a tradition of ignoring cricketers' voice, hence this reminder. There's a reason for my urgent request," the 74-year-old said. — **PTI**

MSD is ODI team of decade captain



Mahendra Singh Dhoni

Dubai, Dec. 27: The legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni was on Sunday named captain of ICC's ODI and T20 International teams of the decade while Virat Kohli stamped his pre-eminence in world cricket after being voted the skipper of the Test team.

Indians dominated the limited-over teams by having three and four players in the ODI and T20I respectively while England have maximum number of players — four — in the Test side.

The 39-year-old Dhoni, who retired from international cricket earlier this year, was one of the three Indians in the ODI team of the decade, the others being Rohit Sharma and skipper Virat Kohli.

Dhoni has three other compatriots in the T20I team — Rohit, Kohli and Jasprit Bumrah.

Besides being named captain of Test team, Kohli is the only player in the world to have been voted in the teams of the decade in all formats.

The teams of the decades were announced by the ICC ahead of the Awards of the Decade ceremony, to be held in virtual mode on Monday.

The top awards, includ-

ing ICC male cricketer as well as female cricketer of the decade, men's Test, ODI and T20I cricketers of the decade, women's ODI and T20I cricketers of the decade, will also be announced on Monday.

Kohli is also in the running for four awards — ICC male cricketer of the decade, men's Test cricketer, men's ODI cricketer and men's T20I cricketer of the decade.

In the Test team of the decade, senior spinner Ravichandran Ashwin is the other Indian while the four Englishmen are Alastair Cook, Ben Stokes, Stuart Broad and James Anderson. Australia are represented by Steve Smith and David Warner.

— **PTI**

Rahane has regained his mojo after a century at MCG



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

When Ajinkya Rahane dabbled a ball from Mitchell Starc for a boundary through the slips, in the 66th over of their first innings, he made a statement. On a day that was peppered with dodgy weather, not too many Indian fans had expected their team to go past the Australian total. And they did thanks to a gritty performance by their batsmen who defied the relentless Australian bowling and the 'four seasons in a day' kind of climes that Melbourne is known for.

Notwithstanding the efforts by debutant Shubman Gill and Cheteshwar Pujara who weathered the Aussie attack in tough conditions with a 61 run partnership, the lead coming off skipper Rahane's blade was apt for the situation.

Coming in after a bad loss at Adelaide wasn't going to be easy. With two senior players out (including captain, and batting warlord, Virat Kohli) and two debutants (Mohammed Siraj being the second) not too many fans could put a punt on the Indians to stand up and

take the game to the hosts.

Rahane's effort of marshalling his resources to skittle out the Australians under the 200 run mark drew praises from senior cricketers who were impressed by his acumen. The smart usage leg-side attacking fielding positions — leg slip, gully and forward short leg — a rarity in modern day cricket saw the demise of the three main thorns in the Indian flesh. Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith and skipper Tim Paine perished to a strategy used predominantly in the pre-80s era of the game.

There have been many thoughts and opinions about Rahane's calmness as a cricketer. Comparisons with Kohli, in terms of their individual approaches towards the game, are trending on social media with fans of

both players putting forth their points of view with the kind of passion usually exhibited by armchair experts. Legend Sunil Gavaskar, after day one, said Rahane has got a great sense of where the fielders should be kept and preferred to praise India's performance as a team effort rather than only Rahane's captaincy.

Effectively he took the focus back to the DNA of Mumbai, India's premier cricket city of the recent past, where coaches and seniors always gave importance to team efforts rather than individual performances.

Having watched Rahane break through to the top from his Under-19 days, one has always wondered why his classical approach hasn't given him the dividends he deserved. His average of 42.45 has belied

his ability for reasons that don't really have an explanation.

When he cut Pat Cummins past point to record his 12th Test century, the first of the series by either teams, Rahane took us back to 2014 when he had notched three tons at Wellington, Lord's and Melbourne. No matter what the expert's say, to me this ton was very special for it singled a certain intent that Rahane (and team India) have behind the 36-run episode but them as they slowly try and climb their way into the Border-Gavaskar series. More importantly, Rahane has regained his mojo, which augurs well for India as they go ahead in this series without Kohli.

Ending the second day with a lead of 82 runs with five wickets in hand, India

have given their fans two days of good cricket and plenty of hope of squaring the series. The team, with cameos coming from Hanuma Vihari and Rishabh Pant and a brave unbeaten knock by Ravindra Jadeja, are looking at putting a good distance between them and the hosts as they go into the third day at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). Adding valuable runs is going to be India's main task as they will look at chasing as less runs as possible considering they will be batting last.

There will be many opinions and arguments about Rahane's captaincy (irrespective of the result of the ongoing Test) after this game and comparisons with the leadership style of Kohli will be expected. Debates about 'calmness

vs aggression' will continue to happen as fans play their fantasy games pitting one captain against the other. For now, team India has gained brownie points in two days of play at the MCG. The bowlers are bang on target, the team is combining very well, looks balanced irrespective of the absence of key players.

As far as the question of captaincy in the immediate future of Indian Test cricket is concerned, Indian fans could do well to refrain from daydreaming and accept the reality. No matter what India does in the series going forward, Rahane is a 'stand-in' captain who will happily hand over the baton to main leader, Kohli. The best thing fans could do would be to accept this fact and leave all theories in the realm of fantasy.