

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
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WEATHER

Max: 29.4°C
Min: 23.0°C
RH: 84%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: clear.
Max/Min temp. 29/23 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+35,994)	(+481)
94,98,721	1,38,129
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+502)	(+3)
TS: 2,70,318	1,461
(+685)	(+4)
AP: 8,68,749	6,996

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

6,38,77,889

DEATHS

14,80,081

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana

Tithi: Kartika Bahula

Vidya till 6.19 pm

Star: Mrigashira till 10.35 am

Varjyam: 7.35 pm to 9.18 pm

Durmuhurtam: 11.43 am to 12.27 pm

Rahukalam: 12 pm to 1.30 pm

HILARI CALENDAR

Rabbi-ul Aakhir 16, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

(SHAHI MASJID)

Fajar: 5.04 am

Zohar: 11.59 pm

Asar: 4.03 pm

Maghrib: 5.40 pm

Isha: 6.54 pm

SUNSET TODAY 5.39 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.20 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 7.19 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 8.41 AM

COUNTER POINT



If the situation continues like this, all the film stars will have to join politics!

BRIEF

Nobel Prize event goes online

New Delhi: The Nobel Prize week this year will primarily be digital with laureates getting their medals and diplomas in their respective countries in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, a Nobel Foundation official said on Tuesday. The Nobel Laureates will receive their medals and diplomas on December 7 and 8 in ceremonial presentations in their countries which will be shown in the online prize award ceremonies from Oslo and Stockholm on December 10. Sweden King Carl XVI Gustaf will participate through a digital greeting at the Stockholm City Hall on December 10.

Car sales get festive boost

New Delhi: Leading automakers Maruti Suzuki India, Hyundai Motor, Kia Motors and Tata Motors reported sales growth in the domestic market in November, aided by robust offtakes amid the festive season. While the country's largest car maker Maruti Suzuki India reported marginal growth, Hyundai logged in its highest ever monthly sales in November. Others like Honda Cars India, Toyota Kirloskar Motor, Mahindra & Mahindra and MG Motor India also reported sales growth in November as compared with the same month last year.

CM blames TD for stalling distribution of 3.65L houses

Jagan accused Desam, CPM leaders of filing cases against distribution on flimsy grounds

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy blamed the Telugu Desam for stalling distribution of 3.65 lakh house sites to poor by filing false cases in courts and getting stay orders. He expressed confidence that he will get these orders vacated and distribute the house sites to poor in the state.

Replying to a discussion on housing schemes in the State Legislative Assembly here on Tuesday, the CM charged that followers of senior Telugu Desam leaders, including Paritala Sunita in Prakasam, and others in East Godavari, Anantapur, Kurnool, Vizianagaram and Amaravati districts, apart from CPI-M in Visakhapatnam, had filed false cases on fictitious grounds to stop distribution of house sites on nearly

JAGAN PROVES TD'S CLAIM ON INSURANCE PAYMENT WRONG

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday slammed the erstwhile TD government while showing data in State Legislative Assembly on crop insurance payments made by the erstwhile TD government.

Refuting charges of Leader of Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu about

non-payment of insurance by the the government, the Chief Minister clarified that ₹1,227 crore will be paid directly into the accounts of farmers on December 15. Accusing the TD leader of lying outright about insurance claims, he said the opposition is trying to make an issue out of a non-issue.

■ Page 2: 'Whatever Jagan promises, he will do'

grounds that distribution of house sites could lead to a demographic imbalance. He regretted that Telugu Desam politics had degraded to such low levels.

■ Page 2: CM blames TD for state's indebtedness

Jagan: Send Naidu to Erragadda Hosp

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday suggested to Speaker Thammineni Seetharam that Leader of Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu be admitted in a mental hospital "as the latter was speaking about irrelevant matters".

Reddy made this statement after Naidu tried to pick faults in functioning of the state government while taking part in a short discussion on house sites and Tidco houses.

While speaking, Naidu repeatedly insisted on the Speaker to provide him more time to continue the discussion and spoke on issues unrelated to Tidco houses and house sites.

At this stage, Reddy suggested that the Speaker give Naidu another two to three minutes to wind up his statement, so that he (CM) could make his statement on the issue.

Reddy said people are eagerly waiting to know what the Chief Minister will say on the housing scheme. The CM even advised the Speaker to suspend TD MLAs who were disrupting proceedings in the House.

Reddy had recalled speeches he made during his padayatra that TD regime was giving houses of 300 square feet each costing ₹6 lakh in which ₹1.5 lakh each paid by both the state and Centre while the remaining ₹3 lakh had to be raised as bank loan.

When the CM said he had given an assurance that he would waive the beneficiaries' contribution, Naidu tried to pick a fault in the statement. Jagan then suggested to the Speaker that Naidu be sent to a mental asylum.

"I wonder if he has turned mad. What is wrong with him? He should be taken to Erragadda Hospital as he is staying in Hyderabad," he said.

SPEAKER ANGRY OVER TD CHIEF'S FINGER WAGGING

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

Speaker T. Seetharam warned Opposition leader N. Chandrababu Naidu to be careful when the latter made a threatening gesture and pointing a finger at him and flung papers towards the podium.

The Assembly was discussing housing schemes when the Speaker allowed ministers Botsa Satyanarayana and Ch. Sri Ranganatha Raju and YSRC MLAs to speak.

Naidu began persistently asking for time to speak. When Seetharam asked Naidu to wait, the latter raised his hand with his finger pointed at the Speaker. The Speaker became furious and said: "Be careful. So what if you are Leader of Opposition?"

■ Page 2: Speaker leaves it to Naidu

Stall PR polls, govt asks HC

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

The state government filed a petition in the High Court challenging the State Election Commission (SEC)'s decision to conduct gram panchayat polls in February, and sought its intervention to revoke the proceedings issued by the SEC.

Panchayat raj and rural development principal secretary Gopala Krishna Dwivedi filed the petition stating that the SEC had taken a unilateral decision to conduct the polls.

The petitioner said the government was according top priority to protect the health of the people from Covid-19, and the SEC had taken the decision without consulting the government despite a Supreme Court direction to do so.

The principal secretary said that by November 29, AP had registered 8.67 lakh Covid-19 positive cases and on an average, 1,000 positive cases were being reported per day in the state and informed the

court that the entire administration in the state was preoccupied to contain the spread of the virus. He said that once the prevalence of Covid-19 was under control, they would express their readiness to go for conduct of polls.

He said that the SEC had issued proceedings on November 17 to conduct gram panchayat polls in February 2021 and asked the court for its direction to the SEC not to go ahead with conduct of polls in February, 2021.

LEGAL | EAGLE

Court rejects plea to act against CM for comments

SC junks plea to sack Jagan

New Delhi, Dec. 1: The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed a batch of public interest litigations (PILs) seeking action against Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for his statements against a top court judge and the judiciary.

The apex court also said that prayer in a PIL filed by advocate G.S. Mani seeking direction for removal of the Chief Minister from his office for

his remarks was not maintainable.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Dinesh Maheshwari and Hrishikesh Roy refused to grant liberty to the petitioners from intervening in another matter, pending before another bench.

"That court has to make a decision. We cannot allow hundreds of petitioners to file intervention applications on the same issue. You pick up something

from the newspaper and file whatever you want under Article 32. If we allow one advocate to do so, tomorrow some other advocate will come forward with his intervention application," the bench observed, when one of the petitioners sought liberty to intervene in the matter.

The top court also dealt with the prayer of a CBI probe or an enquiry by a retired high court judge against the Chief Minister

Centre, farmers fail to find common ground

Talks fail as both stick to stated demands; next meeting tomorrow

SANJAY KAW and BHASKAR HARI SHANKAR | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 1

As the farmers' agitation completed six days on Tuesday, there seemed to be no resolution in sight at ending the crisis as both the sides remained adamant on their demands. While the government wants the farmers to end their protest and join a committee of experts to sort out issues related to the three recently enacted farm laws, farmers' leaders say they want the new laws withdrawn or they will intensify their agitation.

With the marathon meeting between farmers' leaders and the government remaining inconclusive on Tuesday, a second meeting is now scheduled to take place on December 3.

A delegation of 35 farmer unions, who held a meeting with three Union ministers on Tuesday, rejected the Central government's offer to nominate their five members to a committee of experts to sort out issues related to the farm laws and said they would continue their agitation at the Delhi-Haryana border



Farmers stage a protest at Tikri border during their ongoing Delhi Chalo agitation against Centres new farm laws in New Delhi on Tuesday.

until their demands are fully met.

Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar, who led the meeting which was also attended by commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal and minister of state for commerce and industry Som Parkash, said the government will continue its dialogue with the protesting farmers on Thursday.

"The meeting was good and we have decided that the talks will be held on 3 December. We wanted a small group to be constituted but farmers' leaders wanted that the talks should be held with everyone, we do not have a problem with it... We have requested the farmers to suspend their protests and come for the talks," Tomar said.

TRUDEAU WADES INTO FARM STIR, GETS SLAMMED

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 1

India on Tuesday criticised the remarks by Canadian PM Justin Trudeau on the farmers' protests in Delhi without naming him directly, saying these were "ill-informed and unwarranted". This came after Trudeau expressed concern about protests and that Canada always backed the right to protest peacefully.

■ Full report on Page 4

Tuesday's meeting was reportedly the third round of talks between the farmers and the government in the last few months.

At the first round of the meeting, chaired by agriculture secretary Sanjay Aggarwal, the farmers had walked out and tore up copies of the new farm laws. The second round of meeting lasted for seven hours.

TUNGABHADRA PUSHKARALU COMES TO END

DC CORRESPONDENT KURNOOL, DEC. 1

The 12-day Tungabhadra Pushkaralu concluded with traditional *pur-nahuthi* on Tuesday. As many as 1.65 lakh of people visited the pushkaralu ghats along the course of the river in the district, and all of them were screened for Covid-19. About 20,000 performed *pinda pradanam* and other rituals.

Speaking with media-persons, Kurnool collector G. Veera Pandian said pushkaralu ghats would be developed as tourist and entertainment spots. He ordered officials to make an action plan to develop these areas for walking, jogging, skating and spiritual activities and provide food courts as early as possible.

Devotees from the state and also from Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra took part in the pushkaralu at Mantralayam and Sankal Bagh in Kurnool.

The footfall was just a fraction of what it was in the 2008 pushkaralu when 30 lakh pilgrims turned up. Enthusiasm was put down to Covid-19 fears and restrictions placed on the presence of children below 12 years of age and elderly. This, however, was unofficially relaxed later.

■ Page 3: People in city prefer traditional rice

Farmer cultivates 15 rare paddy crops in E Godavari

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, DEC. 1

Some of the enterprising farmers in East Godavari district have shifted to cultivating traditional varieties of paddy using natural farming methods for earning a higher income than what the modern hybrid varieties are fetching now.

A farmer Ulli Suryanarayana, also called Suresh, is cultivating 14 traditional varieties of paddy like Navara, Kalapatti, Dehra-

dun Red Rice, Parimala Sannalu, Burma Black, Ratna, Chintalapudi Sannalu, Kanani-bogg, Bossbogg, Kuji Patiala, Mysore Malliga, Sidda Sannalu, Indrani and Rakthasali.

According to Suresh, the expense for growing these paddy varieties is ₹20,000 per acre, including labour charges. Their yield is 20 bags per acre without application of any pesticides or fertilisers. "Present varieties like Swarna, Samba (BPT), Sona Masoori and

others yield 28-30 bags per acre. Rice millers purchase them for between ₹1,800 and ₹2,000 per quintal. But many people are purchasing traditional varieties of paddy from ₹3,000 to ₹4,000 per quintal. Though the yield per acre of traditional varieties is lower, we can still earn ₹50,000 more, as these rice varieties sell for ₹80 to ₹130 per kg," the progressive explained.

Ex-judge moves SC against HC probe into phone conversation

New Delhi, Dec. 1: A former Andhra Pradesh High Court judge has moved the Supreme Court against an order of the High Court directing a probe into an alleged phone conversation between him and a suspended trial court magistrate.

Justice (retd) V. Eswaraiah in his petition alleged that the incident was a serious conspiracy against the judiciary.

The plea sought a stay of the High Court's order for

the enquiry on the ground that it was unwarranted and illegal and has been passed without a notice to Justice Eswaraiah and has caused undue harassment to him. The High Court, in its order, had requested former Supreme Court judge Justice R.V. Raveendran to inquire into the matter.

The phone conversation, according to the plea purportedly pertained to the corruption allegations in the Amaravati land scam.

The former judge said the High Court's order was made on the basis of an application for reopening an intervention filed by the suspended District Munsif Magistrate (S. Ramakrishna) in an unrelated PIL seeking implementation of the Covid guidelines in the court building and premises. The order was made by the high court on the basis of the intervention and without even issuing a notice, the plea said.

—PTI

OTHER STORIES

HC PRAISES GOVT FOR INITIATING MANY SCHEMES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

The AP High Court on Tuesday praised the state government for initiating a series of welfare schemes for the benefit of women belonging to SC, ST and BC communities and minorities and for helping them with financial sustenance.

A High Court bench comprising justice B. Devanand expressed concern over the apathy of a section of officials as it was resulting in beneficiaries failing to get the benefits of the schemes. He said that though the government was coming up with several welfare schemes intending to enhance the living standards of the beneficiaries, lack of commitment on the part of a section of officials to implement the schemes effectively was resulting in deprival of benefits to them.

The Judge was referring to a petition filed by Velpula Vimalamma and 19 others hailing from Chandralapadu village, complaining that though women aged between 45 and 60 were eligible for the YSR Cheyutha scheme for financial support, they were being denied the same.

Petitioners' counsel Patibandla Prabhakar Rao informed the court that though the gram panchayat had sent the list of eligible persons for the scheme to the concerned MPDO, the latter failed to forward it to the project director of the DRDA. He further said that even as the petitioners submitted representations to the district collector, there was no response from the collector. The judge directed officials to provide all the benefits under the scheme to the petitioners.

PETITIONER TOLD TO FILE AFFIDAVIT WITH ALL DETAILS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

The Andhra Pradesh High Court dealing with a petition asked the petitioner on what basis was expenditure arrived at ₹4,000 crore for the cost of painting gram panchayat buildings. The petition also wanted ministers and officials as respondents in their individual capacity in the issue.

A two-judge division bench comprising justice Ch. Praveen Kumar and justice D. Ramesh while hearing a petition filed by Dr Maddipati Sailaja here on Tuesday, expressed surprise and said that even if 10,000 government offices were painted with the ruling party colours each at a cost of ₹4,000, it could not cost ₹4,000 crore.

The court said that it could not take the amount into consideration which was arrived at without proper calculations. The court also found fault with the petitioner for holding the ministers and officers as respondents and asking for recovery of ₹4,000 crore from them.

The court adjourned the case after 10 days and asked the petitioner to file an affidavit with proper details.

MODI AND JAGAN CHEATING FARMERS, SAYS SAILAJANATH

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 1

Narendra Modi at the Centre and the YSRC government in Andhra Pradesh are cheating farmers, alleged AP Congress Committee president Dr Sake Sailajanath.

Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday, Sailajanath said the Central government is terrorising the farmers who have been peaceful all along their protest braving severe cold conditions. He said the farm bills would benefit the corporate entities and the farmers would be reduced to labourers in their own agricultural fields.

“Modi is working as an agent for the corporate bodies,” the PCC president alleged. He said when all the states have been supporting the agitating farmers, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy backed the Bills for his personal gain.

Even now the AP Chief Minister should apologise to the farmers and pass a resolution in the ongoing Assembly sessions, he suggested.

He also demanded that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi withdraw the Bills in the interest of crores of farmers in the country. Appealing to the Congress cadre to launch a state-wide agitation, Sailajanath said his party would join all the political parties that have been opposing the Bills.

Senior leaders of the Congress were present at the press briefing.

Govt firm on rooting out online gambling: CM

TD MLA alleges gambling being promoted by YSRC leaders at over 100 places; CM says won't spare anyone

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy asserted in the State Legislative Assembly on Tuesday that his government is firm on rooting out all gambling, including online, in Andhra Pradesh.

The CM was responding to allegations of Telugu Desam MLA Anagani Satyaprasad who, during a discussion on AP Gaming (Amendment) Bill on Tuesday, alleged that unabated gambling was being promoted by the ruling YSRC leaders at over 100 places in the state.

Several ruling party MLAs rose and took vehement objection to these allegations and challenged Satyaprasad to produce any evidence.

The TD legislator retorted that gambling is going on round-the-clock at Nizampatnam. He said he had tried to lodge complaint with police, including DGP, against it. But he could not succeed as he failed to get an appointment from the police chief.

Government chief whip Gadikota Srikanth Reddy described Satyaprasad utterances as “false allegations”.

Intervening into the discussion, the CM asserted that his government will not spare anyone and pointed out that action had been taken against the relative of minister for labour G. Jayaram over such allegations. The Chief Minister went on to charge that the TD government never tried to restrain online gambling that ruined the lives of many, but their government has brought in a new bill to curb it.

Explaining provisions of online gambling bill, home minister Mekathoti Sucharitha underlined that it proposes stringent action and increased penalty, including imprisonment, for both online and offline gambling. She announced starting of a toll free number for receiving complaints on gambling.

The Legislative Assembly subsequently passed the bill.

OPPOSITION OBJECTED TO TAX AMENDMENT BILL

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

The Telugu Desam severely objected to proposed hike in taxes on properties in accordance with market value when the State Legislative Assembly was discussing on Tuesday Andhra Pradesh Municipal Laws (Second Amendment) Bill 2020.

TDLP deputy leader Gorantla Buchaiah Chowdary pointed out that this would put a huge financial burden on owners of residential houses in case their residences are around commercial areas.

When municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana assured that there would be no burden on residential buildings, TD MLAs pointed out that such a clause does not exist in the Bill.

The minister, however, maintained that there will be no burden on people living in houses spread over up to 375 square feet, as the tax would be just ₹50 per annum. Later, the House passed the bill with voice vote.

Lokesh moves privilege notice against Guntur urban SP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

Telugu Desam national general-secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh on Tuesday moved a privilege notice against Guntur Urban SP Ammi Reddy in the AP Legislative Council. He made a formal complaint to the Council Chairman saying that Ammi Reddy had threatened him through posts on social media.

The TD MLC said that when he found fault with the false arrest of TD activist Mani Ratnam, the SP put his comments on social media, threatening him of taking legal action. He claimed that if the police officer had any



Policemen chasing away a cow on the way to Assembly Hall at Velagapudi in Guntur district on Tuesday.

—DC

Pandemonium continues in Assembly on Day Two

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

Pandemonium prevailed in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly on the second consecutive day of the Winter Session on Tuesday even as one Opposition Telugu Desam MLA was suspended from the House.

Telugu Desam legislators demanded their adjournment motion on crop insurance and TIDCO houses at the podium with TD legislators. The ruckus started when minister for fisheries Seediri Appalaraju started explaining about the Bill and TD objected to the same demand allowing adjournment motion on crop insurance and TIDCO houses.

Leader of Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu and TD MLAs claimed that the government released ₹590.51 lakh for crop insurance on Monday night due to their protest which was objected to by the ruling party. TD MLAs rushed to the podium and continued sloganeering. Naidu also staged a protest by standing at his seat.

Minister for revenue Buggana Rajendranath Reddy stated that the process of crop insurance disbursement is under progress and the government is all set to pay ₹1,227 crore funds directly into the accounts of farmers on December 15. He stated that the earlier TD government paid crop insurance with two years to 18 months delay and farmers did not show interest in crop insurance due to negligence of the

SPEAKER LEAVES IT TO NAIDU TO APOLOGISE

From Page 1

“You should behave properly. I had asked you to wait until I give you the time to speak. I did not say that I will not give you the time to speak,” Speaker Sitaram told TD chief Chandrababu Naidu.

Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy condemned such behaviour of Naidu. He advised the latter to learn how to behave properly in the Assembly. Subsequently, several YSRC legislators demanded that Naidu apologise to the Speaker.

At this, Speaker said he left it to the discretion of Naidu to apologise or not.

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TD stages stir over TIDCO houses

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

Telugu Desam MLAs and MLCs, led by leader of Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu, staged a rally at the State Legislative Assembly on day two of its Winter Session on Tuesday demanding that state government hand over the completed TIDCO houses to eligible families immediately.

Holding placards and raising slogans, they claimed construction of the houses had already been completed during the earlier Naidu regime. But the current state government is not handing them over to intended benefici-

aries due to political reasons. Opposition will continue its struggle until TIDCO houses are allotted to the deserving poor families, they asserted.

In addition to Chandrababu Naidu, Telugu Desam Legislature Party deputy leaders K. Atchannaaidu and

Nimmala Rama Naidu, apart from others, took part in the rally.

Addressing the rally, TD leaders questioned the state government about Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's promise to construct five lakh houses per year. As per this, nearly 7.5 lakh houses should have been constructed within the past 18 months.

But ruling party leaders are not at all talking about these houses.

“The CM only knows how to make empty statements and break them without feeling any accountability,” the opposition leaders alleged.

They claimed that lakhs of houses had been con-

TD MLAs EXCEPT NAIDU SUSPENDED FROM ASSEMBLY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

All the Telugu Desam MLAs except leader of the Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu were suspended from the Assembly for one day for the second consecutive day as they were disrupting the proceedings here on Tuesday.

Earlier in the day, as the Assembly took up discussion on the housing scheme, TD MLA Nimmala Ramanaidu was suspended for the day as he was disrupting the proceedings.

Subsequently, as the Assembly was continuing its discussion, Naidu was asking for more time to speak. When the Speaker asked him wind up his statement, the remaining TD MLAs raised slogans causing pandemonium in the Assembly.

To bring the order in the Assembly, the Speaker suspended all the TD MLAs present in the House except Naidu, for the day and called the marshals in to move them out.

However, the TD MLAs resisted the marshals from lifting them out of the Assembly while some even clashed with them.

Subsequently, marshals complained to the Speaker stating that they were assaulted by the TD MLAs and sought an inquiry on the issue and action on the erring MLAs.

‘Whatever Jagan promises, he will do’

From Page 1

The CM maintained that there has been no instance when YSRC had gone back on its promises.

“Whatever Jagan promises, he will do it. That is the credibility I have,” the CM asserted commenting that Chandrababu Naidu never fulfilled his words.

Castigating TD for creating ruckus on crop insurance, he said, “We have fulfilled 90 per cent of the promises made in our manifesto. Payment of insurance is a work in progress as procedures have to be completed.

“If opposition TD continues telling such lies, in the next elections, the number of 23 (MLAs of Telugu Desam) will deplete to two or three,” he remarked.

The Chief Minister said, “We have announced five programmes in December, which include Amul-AP procuring milk on December 2, cattle distribution on December 10, crediting insurance amount on December 15, starting resurvey of lands on December 21, and distribution of house site pattas on December 25,” he pointed out.

CM Jagan asked Speaker Thammineni Seetharam to display details of insurance premium payments

on screens in the Assembly.

“During the rule of the previous TD government, farmers feared paying a heavy premium. Thus, they did not show any interest in insuring their crops. During Chandrababu's term, only ₹415 crore claims were received in October 2019 for 2018

Kharif and only ₹537 crore insurance claims were processed in 2018 Rabi and even fewer claims were received earlier. But, in our government, as many as 58.77 lakh farmers have been brought under insurance cover. The state government has taken the responsibility of paying ₹1,030 crore as premium,” he underlined.

Refuting allegations of TD, the Chief Minister said, “Our government has paid insurance for 2018 in October 2019 amounting to ₹415 crores. The 2019 amount will be paid as scheduled. We have been paying premium without burdening farmers by just collecting ₹1 from them. When everything is very clear, the opposition leaders are intentionally creating chaos in the House without having any meaningful discussion,” he remarked.

CM blames TD for state's indebtedness

From Page 1

The Chief Minister, however, made it clear that his government is committed to giving away 30.66 lakh house sites located on about 68,677 acres and worth of over ₹23,535 crore to the poor on December 25. He said in the first phase, construction of 15.60 lakh houses will be taken up.

He asserted that this itself would boost economic activity to the extent of ₹28,084 crore for purchase of materials like cement, steel and metal, among

others, apart from generating direct employment of 21.70 crore man-days and indirect employment of 10 crore man-days.

Each house would be coming up over about 340 square feet area, where each beneficiary had to pay only ₹1, he stated.

Jagan Mohan Reddy found fault with former chief minister Chandrababu Naidu for failing to complete execution of houses taken up under several schemes but leaving huge arrears to be cleared by the YSR Congress regime.

Naidu stages standing protest

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

Leader of Opposition in the AP Legislative Assembly N. Chandrababu Naidu conducted a “standing protest” near his seat and avoided going near the podium on Tuesday.

On Monday, he faced suspension due to squatting on the floor at the podium. The rest of TD legislators went to the podium and staged a protest but interestingly Naidu opted to protest near his seat.

The ruling YSR Congress MLAs commented that Naidu realised his mistake and wrongdoing hence he was staging a protest by restraining himself from going to the podium floor.

They said that Naidu and his MLAs feared the exposure of their failure in the TIDCO housing scheme during discussion on

housing scheme hence they are creating disturbances to avoid the discussion.

Later, Naidu addressing a press meet accused the YSRC government of hijacking the projects and programmes launched by the previous TD government and renaming them after Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy without any scruples.

He said he had no objection for this strange practice since it would be only Jagan Mohan Reddy who would go down into history as a ‘sticker CM’ forever.

Naidu challenged the CM to construct new houses as per his promise and compare the same to the TIDCO houses built during the TD regime.

He said that instead of that, the YSR Congress regime was giving advertisements, renaming TIDCO project after the CM's name.

LAND | SCAM Probe agency followed due procedure laid down by SC, filed case: AG

CID submits to HC WhatsApp transcripts

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

In a startling development, the state government on Tuesday informed the Andhra Pradesh High Court about WhatsApp messages exchanged between people involved in the “Amaravati land scam” and their overseas investors.

On behalf of the government, the Crime Investigation Department (CID) also submitted transcripts of these WhatsApp messages to the court in support of its claims.

The state government urged the High Court to allow investigation into

the alleged scam in which people close to former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and his son Lokesh had bought lands, as they had prior knowledge about location of the new capital city at Amaravati.

Justice Ch. Manavendra-nath Roy heard the CID arguments while taking up criminal petitions filed by several individuals, including Lokesh's close associate K. Rajesh and his wife Srihasa seeking quashing of First Information Report filed by the Crime Investigation Department.

Dr. P. V. Raghava Sarma of Lalitha Super Speciality Hospital, Guntur, apart

from T. Venkateswarlu and Tejasvi Chekuri of North Phase Holdings, also filed petitions in the High Court seeking similar relief.

Appearing on behalf of CID, Advocate General S. Sriram said the investigating agency followed due procedure laid down by the Supreme Court and filed the case only after ascertaining facts in a preliminary investigation. A detailed investigation is required to unearth the land scam and book people, who were in top positions, for misusing their official position for personal gains.

The AG told the High

Court that mobile phones of the accused containing the WhatsApp messages had been seized. It was clear that the accused had shared confidential information about locating the new capital with their near and dear staying overseas. Further, the accused asked the overseas persons to transfer huge amounts for buying lands before the news appeared in the public domain.

The AG said Tejasvi Chekuri is a director in several companies and has links with international companies. She enjoyed a good rapport with senior officials occupying important

positions in the previous government. She thus got information on the new capital, which led to her buying land accordingly. There is a need to investigate the issue of money laundering too, the AG underlined.

According to CID, Rajesh, who worked with the Heritage Group belonging to former chief minister Naidu's wife Bhuvaneshwari Devi, had close links with Lokesh. Thus the involvement of Rajesh in Amaravati land scam as well as other financial frauds had to be thoroughly investigated, Sriram maintained.

SHORT TAKES

Cyclone Bueri to cross SL coast today

Visakhapatnam: The deep depression over southwest and adjoining southeast Bay of Bengal moved westwards with a speed of 13 kmph during past six hours and lay centred over southwest Bay of Bengal about 460 km east-southeast of Trincomalee (Sri Lanka) and 860 km east-southeast of Kanniyakumari (India). It is very likely to intensify further into a cyclonic storm.

Tenders: TD alleges irregularities

Nellore: TD State spokesperson Anam Venkataramana Reddy alleged that the reverse tendering process is meant for benefiting people important to the government. He alleged that ₹83 crore worth of works funded by National Development Bank in SPSR Nellore district had been cancelled after the tender process is completed in a bid to offer the same to a particular company, owing allegiance to bigwigs in the government, through reverse tendering. Speaking to media persons at NTR Bhavan, on Tuesday, Mr Venkataramana Reddy alleged that reverse tendering on strengthening a road in Kavali scheduled for November 17 was postponed simply because the local legislator Ramireddy Pratapakumar Reddy is not available. Stressing that tenders are not postponed because of the absence of local MLA, he said the process is halted since the legislator is keen on offering the work to his close follower for kickbacks to the extent of 7 per cent of the value of the work. He said reverse tendering should be named as reversible tender as the ruling MLAs were making cores of rupees as commission. He lamented over the silence of officials towards this daylight robbery.

EX- MAYOR SLAMS GGH FOR ITS SHORTCOMINGS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 1

Former Mayor and TD Nellore Lok Sabha segment in-charge S.K. Abdul Aziz has found faults with the administration of Government General Hospital (GGH) for their failure to address 230 shortcomings in the hospital highlighted by the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals (NABH) and health providers.

The TD leader inspected the records of the GGH during a visit to the hospital on Tuesday. He expressed surprise over NABH observation over lack of minimum facilities in the hospital.

He alleged that patients had a harrowing experience during a power failure on November 29 after water entered the power room.

He advised the officials to shift the power room to the first floor from the basement to prevent future problems.

HOSPITAL BLAMED FOR DEATH OF NEWBORN

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 1

A woman and her family members resorted to a protest before the government hospital in Atmakur, blaming the nursing staff for the death of her newborn child after delivery.

The victim, Suvarthamma, 22, belongs to Depuru in Atmakur mandal and she was admitted in the hospital on Monday night suffering from labour pains.

As there were no doctors available in the hospital, the on-duty nursing staff performed C-section to deliver the baby.

After a few hours, the nursing staff of the hospital informed the relatives that the delivered baby died due to some health issues.

Suspecting foul-play behind the claims of hospital staff, the relatives of the victim staged a protest accusing the staff and doctors of the incident.

They alleged that there was no duty doctor to perform delivery on Monday night. They demanded action against the duty doctors for their absence. The victim's husband, Prakash, complained to the police against the hospital staff while demanding action.

● As there were no doctors available in the hospital, the on-duty nursing staff performed C-section to deliver the baby. They alleged that there was no duty doctor to perform delivery on Monday night

Rain impact



Kavali legislator Ramireddy Pratapakumar Reddy and Collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu inspect rain damages in Kavali revenue division on Tuesday.

JC kin get ₹100cr notice for illegal mining in AP

YSRC govt cancelled that lease and ordered probe

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, DEC. 1

In a major development, former minister J.C. Diwakar Reddy's family has been served notices under Revenue Recovery Act for recouping ₹100.24 crore for illegal mining of limestone in the name of Trishul Cements in Yadiki mandal of Anantapur district "without establishing the unit itself".

According to deputy director of Mines and Geology, the company representatives failed to respond to notices served on November 26. Even though the lessee company had acknowledged the demand notice, the company failed to pay the due amount within the stipulated time, the notice revealed.

The company had to pay ₹100,24,44,802 towards value, royalty and other taxes for illegal transportation of 13,91,0133 metric tonnes of limestone from the

● According to deputy director of Mines and Geology, the company representatives failed to respond to notices served on November 26.

● The company had to pay ₹100,24,44,802 towards value, royalty and other taxes for illegal transportation of 13,91,0133 metric tonnes of limestone from the leased area without valid permits and for misuse of permitted quantity of 1,21,956 tonnes.

● The notices were issued to J.C. Diwakar Reddy's son J.C. Pavan Reddy, daughter-in-law Samyuktha Reddy, Venu Gopal Reddy and close aides of JC family S. Hussian Basha, S. Gopal Rao, Timmapuram Devaputrudu, J. Naga Subbarayudu and K. Silas

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The state government

had allotted 649.86 hectares of limestone mines to Trishul Cements in Konuppalapadu village in Yadiki mandal.

The previous government had reportedly extended the lease period for five more years towards construction of a factory.

The YSRC government cancelled that lease and also ordered a probe into illicit mining of about 38,212 metric tonnes of limestone from the

leased mines without constructing the cement unit.

Family members of Diwakar Reddy had also received notices from the High Court in 2019 November over misuse of limestone leases based on a PIL filed by V. Muraliprasad Reddy, a native of Tadipathi who is presently YSRC state secretary, seeking a CBI probe into alleged fraud by the company in 2011.

Mines and Geology Department deputy director S. V. Ramana Rao ordered tahsildars of Yadiki, Tadipathi, Peddapur and Puttur mandals to furnish information about the movable and immovable properties of shareholders of Trishul Cements Company and recover ₹100.24 crore.

The family of J.C. Diwakar Reddy has, however, accused that the notices are part of YSRC government's political vendetta against TD leaders in the state.

₹37 LAKH PROPERTY RECOVERED

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 1

The Kavali police have apprehended two notorious property offenders involved in several house break cases and motorcycle thefts and recovered ₹37 lakh worth of gold, bikes and cash from them. The accused have been identified as Nellore Shafi alias Ashok, 27, and Sk. Ghouse Basha from Chinna Harijanawada of North Mopuru in Allur mandal in Nellore district.

Speaking to media persons at Umesh Chandra conference hall in Nellore city on Tuesday, Superintendent of Police Bhaskar Bhushan said that the duo was in stealing spree since 2018 but managing to cover their tracks to avoid the attention of the police.

The two criminals became friends being from the same village and joined together to carry out housebreaking offences both during the night as well as the day in various parts of SPSR Nellore district.

The duo managed to escape when locals chased them while they were returning after stealing ₹66,00 cash from a house located in Yengulabaavi village in Bitragunta mandal on November 23.

AMENDMENT ACT TO REDUCE ACCIDENTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR DEC. 1

The state government directed district administrations to implement the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act 2019, over revise the rates of compounding fee against violation of traffic rules in the state.

The GO on the amendment of Motor Vehicles Act was issued in October along with revising the penalty against violators. The district administration during a review with transport, police, RTC and other wings sought the transport department to create awareness among the students and also parents in the schools, colleges and other educational institutions.

Anantapur Deputy Transport Commissioner Shivaram Prasad said as per the Act after amendment, the minors driving will be treated offence and their parents will face punishment even three years of imprisonment. The district administrations were asked to highlight the amendment and cautioning the students and their parents from providing vehicles without a license. About ₹11.25 crore penalties were imposed by registering cases against 4.55 lakh people in the state.

According to reports, 979 accidents occurred and 506 persons died while 1,333 persons suffered injuries in the district in 2019. However, the accidents have come down as 468 persons died and 981 persons suffered injuries in the present year.

Anantapur joint collector, Nisanth Kumar, directed the police and other wings to identify the accident-prone areas to take more preventive measures.

State records 685 new Covid-19 cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

AP registered 685 new Covid-19 cases raising tally to 8,68,749 and four deaths taking toll to 6,996.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin here on Tuesday reporting that out of 51,854 samples tested, 685 persons were found infected with the virus.

Out of a total number of 1,01,09,708 samples tested so far, 8,54,326 patients were recovered while 7,427 patients are still active with the virus.

Among daily Covid-19 cases, Krishna reported the highest of 146 followed by 95 in Chittoor, 87 in Guntur, 77 in West Godavari, 71 in

Visakhapatnam, 70 in East Godavari, 39 in Nellore, 30 each in Kadapa and Prakasam, 18 in Anantapur, 10 in Kurnool, nine in Vizianagaram and three in Srikakulam.

Krishna topped the state with the highest number of total Covid-19 active cases with 1,263 followed by 1,142 in Guntur, 1,098 in East Godavari, 714 in Nellore, 707 in Visakhapatnam, 613 in West Godavari, 547 in Chittoor, 363 in Prakasam, 234 in Srikakulam, 215 in Anantapur, 182 in Kadapa, 179 in Vizianagaram and 170 in Kurnool.

Among daily cases of death of Covid-19 infected patients, Anantapur, Chittoor, Guntur and West Godavari reported one each.

People in city prefer traditional rice: Farmer

FROM PAGE 1

He went on to point out that Navara rice controls diabetes and costs ₹120 to ₹125 per kilo in the market.

Indrani variety strengthens bones, apart from being very tasty with a fragrant smell. Children are very fond of eating this rice, which is also a very short duration crop. Rakthasali variety of rice increases haemoglobin levels in the body. "People, in particular those living in cities, prefer traditional varieties of rice for protecting their health," Suresh underlined.

However, he said due to recent cyclones and rains, the yield of traditional varieties had come down to only

12 bags. He also pointed out that there are many traditional varieties of rice about to go extinct.

Bharatiya Swaraj Manch leader Sivarama Raju is another progressive farmer promoting traditional varieties of rice. He is even selling them to people in Hyderabad. He disclosed that farmers cultivating traditional varieties can make "seed" of their own for subsequent plantings.

U. Kothapalli agriculture officer K. Satyanarayana said farmers are indeed paying attention to cultivating traditional varieties. Such farmers have even exhibited their products at several agricultural exhibitions last year.

Mutt seer offers prayers at Tirumala

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 1

Shri Vidyaprasanna Theertharu Swamiji of Shri Subrahmanya Matha, Kukke Subrahmanya, Dakshina Kannada offered prayers to the presiding deity at Sri Vari Temple, Tirumala on Tuesday.

On his arrival in front of Sri Vari Temple, Temple

DyEO Haridranath and temple priests welcomed him with Temple honours and led him to Sanctum Sanctorum. Temple Peishkar Jaganmohanacharya, VGO Bali Reddy and others were present.

Meanwhile, Dhatri Vishnu Pooja held at Vasanta Mandapam in Tirumala on Tuesday as part of Karthika Masa Deeksha.

AQUA SECTOR SUFFERS A HUGE LOSS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 1

Aquaculture has suffered huge losses because of recent heavy rains in Kavali revenue division.

District Collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu has disclosed this while directing the officials of the fisheries department to prepare estimates over the

loss to the aqua sector in the region.

The Collector, along with Kavali legislator R. Pratap Kumar Reddy, visited the flood-affected villages in Kavali segment on Tuesday. Mr Pratapakumar Reddy explained to the Collector Chakradhar Babu that around 15 villages were inundated with floodwaters in Bogole mandal.

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Alcoholic tries to sell his daughter for ₹5,000, Childline foils attempt

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 1

A drunkard tried to sell his infant baby for ₹5,000 at Vijayawada on Tuesday. The Childline with the help of police foiled the attempt.

According to the Childline Krishna district coordinator A. Ramesh, a couple Satish and Meena with their two children arrived in Pandit Nehru Bus Station at Vijayawada on Tuesday. Husband Satish



Sakshi

came out from the bus stand with one and half year old daughter Sakshi and went to a bar near

Samarangam Chowk in One Town of the city. He put his baby for sale for ₹5,000 near the bar hence the locals suspecting his behaviour lodged a complaint with the police.

The police immediately rushed to the spot and shifted father and daughter to the police station. During inquiry they came to know that father Satish without the consent of mother brought Sakshi and put her on sale. He claimed that he was native of Nanded of

Maharashtra State and was working at Vetapalem near Chirala of Prakasam district. He further claimed that he had no money to go to Vetapalem hence put his daughter on sale.

Mr Ramesh with the police went to the bus stand and handed over Sakshi to mother. Mr Ramesh said that they conducted counselling to father Satish and mother Meena. He said that the couple agreed to nurture their daughter.

SHORT TAKES

KAMAL WANTS PM TO HAVE DIALOGUE WITH FARMERS

Chennai, Dec. 1: Makkal Needhi Maiam chief and actor Kamal Haasan on Tuesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should have a dialogue with farmers agitating in Delhi and redress their grievances.

Addressing a press conference here to announce former IAS official Santhosh Babu joining his party, Haasan, answering a question, said a dialogue with farmers was overdue.

“All he (Prime Minister) has to do is look at my farmers. Have a dialogue, it is long overdue. You must have a dialogue. Because it is very important for the nation. You also believe in the good of the nation. Agriculture must be taken care of. This is not a request,” Haasan said. Party lines should blur in matters like these and efforts must be taken to address the concerns, he said.

The MNM chief said it was not good for the country to allow more and more voices to support protesters, apparently indicating that before the agitation intensified further, government should intervene and redress the grievances of farmers.

On the Modi government's handling of the farmers agitation, he said, “I like the sound of the violin. But not now. You can't be playing the violin now, when Rome is aflame.”

Thousands of farmers were camping at various Delhi border points for the sixth consecutive day on Tuesday protesting against the new farm laws, which they fear would dismantle the minimum support price system and corporatise farming.

BILKIS DADI TURNED AWAY FROM BORDER

New Delhi, Dec. 1: Bilkis Dadi, the octogenarian who was the face of the months-long anti-citizenship law protest in the national capital and featured in the *Time* magazine, was on Tuesday stopped by Delhi Police personnel at the Singhu Border where thousands of farmers have been demonstrating against the centre's new farm laws, officials said.

Bilkis, popularly known as the Shaheen Bagh Dadi, had expressed her willingness to join the farmers' protest at the Delhi-Haryana border at Singhu.

Soon after she reached the border point to extend her support to the agitating farmers, she was stopped by Delhi Police personnel at the border. “She was stopped at the Singhu Border and was escorted by the police back to her home in southeast Delhi,” a senior police officer said.

Bilkis shot into limelight last year during the months-long anti-citizenship law protest at Shaheen Bagh here and was also recognised by the American weekly *Time* magazine as one of the 100 most influential people of 2020 alongside Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bollywood actor Ayushman Khurrana.

During the protest which began in December last year, the 82-year-old sat under a tent with hundreds of women and children, braving the extremely cold weather.

DELHI GOVT NOTIFIES ONE FARM LAW

New Delhi, Dec. 1: The Delhi government has notified one of the three central farm laws and is examining the remaining two, officials said on Tuesday. The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020 was notified on November 23, said a senior Delhi government official.

“The remaining two laws are under examination by the development department of the Delhi government,” he said.

The ruling AAP said the notification allows farmers to sell their crop anywhere, including outside mandis. Selling of fruits and vegetables was already de-regulated in Delhi many years ago; now this holds for grains too, it said.

The party has openly supported the farmers demands to scrap the laws. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had also demanded withdrawing of the laws in a protest by AAP at Jantar Mantar last month.

Officials said that vegetables and fruits were deregulated in 2014 enabling trading beyond agricultural produce marketing committee managed mandis. The notified law adds food-grains and poultry to the list, they said.

Sportspersons to return awards

On Dec. 5, Kartar Singh, Sajjan Singh Cheema & Rajbir Kaur will join agitation

Chandigarh, Dec. 1: Several former sportspersons including Padma Shri and Arjuna awardees have extended their support to the agitating farmers and said they will return their awards in protest against the “force” used against the peasants en route to Delhi.

Among them are Padma Shri and Arjuna awardee wrestler Kartar Singh, Arjuna awardee basketball player Sajjan Singh Cheema and Arjuna awardee hockey player Rajbir Kaur.

They said they will proceed to Delhi on December 5 and will place their awards outside the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

They slammed the Centre and Haryana government for using water cannons and teargas against the protesting farmers to stop them from going to Delhi.

“We are the children of farmers and they have been holding peaceful agitation for the last several months. Not even a single incident of violence took place.

“But water cannons and teargas shells were used against them when they were going to Delhi. If turbans of our elders and brothers are tossed, then what will we do with our awards and honour? We are in support of our farmers. We do not want such awards and that is why we are returning the same,” said Cheema on Tuesday.

Farmers had faced water cannons and teargas when they were heading



Farmers eat a meal during their 'Delhi Chalo' protest against new farm laws, at Ghazipur Delhi-UP border, New Delhi on Tuesday.

- PTI

towards the national capital as part of their 'Delhi Chalo' march against the farm laws. Singh said several former players will go to Delhi on December 5 and will return their awards.

“If farmers do not want such laws, then why the central government was imposing on them,” asked Singh, who has retired as Inspector General in the

Punjab Police.

He said that former players would also join farmers' stir at the Delhi borders on December 5.

Singh said they are also trying to contact former players in Haryana for coming out in support of farmers agitation.

Cheema said several former players including Kaur and Arjuna awardee (shotput) Balwinder Singh

have backed them.

Thousands of farmers from Punjab and Haryana have stayed put at various Delhi border points for the sixth consecutive day on Tuesday protesting against the new farm laws, which they fear will dismantle the minimum support price system, leaving them at the “mercy” of big corporates.

- PTI

SHOW RESTRAINT, CENTRE TELLS SECURITYMEN

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC 1

Even as intelligence inputs suggest that the number and strength of agitating farmers on outskirts of Delhi could increase substantially in the coming days, the Home Ministry has categorically asked all security forces deployed all along the borders of the national capital to “show utmost restraint and sensitise their security personnel accordingly.”

Sources claimed that Home Ministry wants the security forces to adopt a “humane approach” towards the farmers and ensure that no force, even in terms of use of water cannon or tear gas should be used against the farmers.

“We want to have a humanitarian approach towards the protesting farmers as it has been peaceful so far. Even if there is slight or some small provocation from them, the security forces have been asked to handle the situation with a lot of restraint,” a senior Home Ministry official said.

Meanwhile, inputs from multiple agencies available with the Centre suggests that the number of agitating farmers is likely to increase substantially in the coming days as farmer organisations and unions from Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh too will join the ongoing agitation.

Further, more farmer from Punjab and Haryana are expected to join the agitation as they will try and block all major highways and entry and exit points from Delhi.

As many as 500 tractor trolleys are expected to reach Delhi border over the next two to three days, officials claimed.

India fumes as Trudeau backs farmers

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, DEC 1

India on Tuesday slammed remarks made by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the raging farmers' protest in some states of northern India Without naming him directly, saying these were “ill-informed and unwarranted” and pertained to the “internal affairs of a democratic country.”

New Delhi also said “diplomatic conversations” should “not be misrepresented for political

purposes”. The reaction came after the Canadian PM said the protests were “concerning” and that Canada always backed the right to protest peacefully, adding that the Canadian Government had raised the issue with Indian authorities.

In remarks made while wishing the large Canadian Sikh community in his country on the occasion of the Gurupurab, Mr. Trudeau said, “I would be remiss if I didn't start off by recognising the news coming out of India about the protests by farmers. The

situation is concerning and we're all very worried about family and friends ... Let me remind you, Canada will always be there to defend the right of peaceful protest. We believe in the importance of dialogue and that's why we reached out in multiple means directly to the Indian authorities to highlight our concerns.”

India hit back sharply, with the Ministry of External Affairs stating, “We have seen some ill-informed comments by Canadian leaders relating to farmers in India. Such comments are unwarrant-

ed, especially when pertaining to the internal affairs of a democratic country. It is also best that diplomatic conversations are not misrepresented for political purposes.”

With fringe elements in the Canadian Sikh community often raising the issue of Khalistan, India has been uncomfortable with the perceived reluctance of the Trudeau Government in cracking down hard on such pro-Khalistan radical elements. In fact, the week-long visit of Mr. Trudeau to India in 2018, had been marred by controversy.

Up in arms



A farmer holds a flag, with a picture of Shaheed Bhagat Singh printed on it, as they stage a protest at Singhu border during their Delhi Chalo march against the Centre's new farm laws, in New Delhi on Tuesday.

- PTI

TWO VOICES Rahul backs farmers, others concerned over Khalistani angle

Differences in Cong over stir

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 1

As the farmers' protest continued for the sixth day on Tuesday, differences surfaced within the Congress on the nature of the agitation. While Congress top brass led by former party president Rahul Gandhi came out in full support of the protests, a certain section of Congress leaders in Punjab expressed apprehension about the agitation being hijacked by rogue elements including

Khalistanis. Mr Gandhi began the day by asking the government to wake up and shed “arrogance” to provide protesting farmers their rights.

Observing that everyone was indebted to the farmers for their hard work, he said this debt could be repaid only by giving them justice.

“The food grower is sitting in protest on the roads and fields and speeches are being given on TV. We all are indebted to the hard work of farmers. This debt will be over

only by giving them justice and their rights, and not by mistreating them or by beating them with batons or using tear gas against them,” the former Congress President tweeted.

“Wake up and come down from the chair of arrogance and think of giving the farmers their rights,” he added.

However, sources said that within the Congress, specially in Punjab, there was a deep concern over the turn the movement was taking.

Ravneet Singh Bittu, Congress MP from Ludhiana, came out in the open and said that rogue elements including Khalistanis entering the agitation remained a concern.

Sources said that Punjab Congress Chief Sunil Jhakhar held a meeting with Chief Minister Amarinder Singh over this.

It might be recalled that Haryana Chief Minister M L Khattar had been the first to claim that the agitation had been infiltrated

by Khalistanis.

The Centre had invited agitating farmer unions for talks on December 3 but looking at the seriousness of the issue and in view of Covid pandemic and cold, the meeting was preponed to Tuesday.

The stir by farmers appeared to intensify despite a strong defence of the legislation by the government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has accused the opposition of “playing tricks” on farmers again through misinformation.

We will always stand by farmers: Hooda

Q&A

Bhupinder Singh Hooda



How do you see these protests by farmers on the borders of Delhi?

Let me at the outset state clearly that until the farmers win this battle, we stand firmly with their demands. The attitude adopted by the government to crush the movement is completely undemocratic as every citizen and every class has the right to demonstrate peacefully for their just demands in democracy. We have been trying to bring to the notice of the government that there are serious lapses in these three bills that have now become laws but the government is refusing to listen to their woes.

There are questions being raised that the farmers are being instigated by vested interests? Also, that they are being fed false information about the laws. Your comments?

This is blatantly false. There is no such thing like this happening. The farmers of Haryana have been agitating against the three agricultural laws for many months and I have repeatedly urged the government to withdraw these laws or bring in a new law to guarantee minimum support price (MSP) for farmers. Similarly, we have seen in neighboring states also there have been protests for long but the central government and the BJP just refused to see and acknowledge the unease and injustice being met out to farmers. Also Mr. Khattar should tell us whether he does not consider the agitating farmers as residents of Haryana? If the farmers of Haryana are not part of the movement, then who did the government lathi-charge in Pipli? Who are the people who were detained by the Haryana Police before their Delhi march? Who where are the thousands of farmers against whom the Haryana government has filed cases. They are just trying to deflect attention from the real issue.

The way the farmers were stopped from marching to Delhi like water cannon was used, tear gas was fired and roads were dug up. What is your response?

The government's job is to keep the roads and highways open, not to close them down. The government's job is to make roads but this government blocked roads and dug roads to stop the farmers. The government has completely lost the trust of the farmers and this is why the farmers do not believe in the assurances given by it and now wants a law that guarantees MSP. I don't understand why is it so difficult for the political leadership to hear out the grievances of the farmers. Till now the entire agitation of the farmers has been peaceful. But the Haryana government's role in the entire movement has been negative.

What are the issues that you have with these three laws?

The three anti agricultural laws, as I would call them, will give vested interests the opportunity to grab the ₹20-25 lakh crores agriculture commodities market by subverting and subjugating the interest of farmers, farm labourers, the small grain merchants, the labourer work and the employees working in the grain markets across India. It tantamounts to finishing forever the Minimum Support Price Mechanism which will be a death knell for the interest of the farmer.

The laws have provisions which have an overriding effect on the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee and MSP regime.

to their demands, then they should be ready for a bigger movement. It is strange that why the Agriculture Minister in the first instance gave a date so far away to have a conversation. The government should understand that farmers are on roads there grievances should immediately be heard and their issues dealt with.

We have heard the government saying that these laws are not anti-farmers and the farmers say that they are so now what happens next?

I feel that the farmers have made up their mind on this issue. The government should know that the farmers of Haryana and Punjab have stood shoulder to shoulder in this movement. They are also getting support from farmers of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and other states. Ignoring them is an insult to those who work hard to put food on our tables. As a responsible Opposition, we fully support the demands of the farmers. Until the farmers win this battle, we stand firmly with the demands of the farmers. Again I do not understand what is the problem in passing a law that makes adhering to MSP compulsory? High handedness in all these issues will not get us anywhere. The government should adopt a humane approach and ensure that the issue is resolved at the earliest instead of putting conditions and giving future dates.

What will the Congress do in all this?

Obviously we will stand with the farmers. The Congress has taken a principled stand on this since the monsoon session of parliament when this issue came up. We were not allowed to put our points across and the government brazenly passed all legislation. Several Congress ruled states have already passed legislations to nullify the impact of the centers legislations. Infact I have several times asked the state government to do away with the law but no avail. I often find that the state government's ignorance towards such a large movement is not only shocking but also disturbing.

What are the issues that you have with these three laws?

The three anti agricultural laws, as I would call them, will give vested interests the opportunity to grab the ₹20-25 lakh crores agriculture commodities market by subverting and subjugating the interest of farmers, farm labourers, the small grain merchants, the labourer work and the employees working in the grain markets across India. It tantamounts to finishing forever the Minimum Support Price Mechanism which will be a death knell for the interest of the farmer.

The laws have provisions which have an overriding effect on the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee and MSP regime.

SHORT TAKES
GERMANY BANS
FAR-RIGHT,
PRO-NAZI GROUP

Berlin, Dec. 1: Police raided homes in three German states early Tuesday after the German government banned a far-right group, a spokesman for the interior ministry said.

The homes of 13 members of the far-right group Wolfbrigade 44 were searched in Hesse, Mecklenburg West-Pomerania and North Rhine-Westphalia to confiscate the group's funds and far-right propaganda material, the German news agency *DPA* reported.

"Whoever fights against the basic values of our free society will get to feel the resolute reaction of our government," Interior Minister Horst Seehofer said, according to his spokesman, Steve Alter. The group's goal is to re-establish a Nazi dictatorship, according to security officials. The 44 in their name stands for the fourth letter in the alphabet, DD, and is an abbreviation for Division Dirlewanger. Oskar Dirlewanger was a known Nazi war criminal and commander of a Nazi SS special unit. The far-right group was founded in 2016. It is known for possessing illegal weapons and members have participated in far-right protests. Earlier this year, the German government banned other far-right groups, including the Combat 18 and the Nordadler.

TAINTED RICE
WINE KILLS 7 IN
CAMBODIA

Phnom Penh, Dec. 1: Seven people died and more than 130 others were hospitalised in Cambodia after drinking rice wine that health authorities believe was adulterated with a toxic substance.

The Health Ministry said the incident happened Saturday in a remote rural area of central Cambodia's Kampong Chhnang province, where villagers drank the wine at a funeral ceremony. It said a toxic substance in the wine was the cause of the deaths. Most of the people who were sickened are recovering, with some already released from the hospital, it said in a statement Monday.

Dangerous cheap but powerful alcoholic drinks are a perennial problem in Cambodia's poor rural areas, and several accidental poisonings are reported each year. Often the alcohol is not distilled properly and contains methanol, which can kill even in small amounts.

Rice wine is typically home-made and is popular at social gatherings, although in at least one case the tainted wine was a bottled brand made in the capital, Phnom Penh, that had been sold in provincial markets for several years without incident.

The Health Ministry said it sent three experts to the village on the day of the incident to investigate the situation and make sure sales and consumption of the wine were immediately stopped. In one of the worst incidents, 14 villagers died and more than 200 others were sickened in the province of Kratie in May 2018.

BIDEN, HARRIS
GREET ON GURU
NANAK B' ANNIV

Washington, Dec. 1: US President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris have greeted the Sikh community on the 551st birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev, emphasising that the timeless and universal message of compassion and unity from the founder of Sikhism can inspire and help Americans heal as people and as a nation.

In a joint statement issued by the offices of Biden and Harris, the two leaders said that for more than five centuries, Guru Nanak's teachings on spiritual enlightenment, service to humanity and moral integrity have endured and embodied each day by Sikhs in America and around the world. "For more than five centuries, Guru Nanak's teachings on spiritual enlightenment, service to humanity and moral integrity have endured and are embodied each day by Sikhs in America and around the world, as we have seen during this challenging year," Biden and Harris said.

"We are grateful to all of the Sikh Americans who continue to stand by their neighbours as essential workers of the pandemic, and who open their hearts and community kitchens in their gurdwaras to prepare, serve, and deliver countless meals for people most in need," they said. "During the summer of protest, we saw Sikhs of all ages marching peacefully for racial and gender equality, religious pluralism, and fidelity to truth and justice — core tenets of the Sikh faith," they said.

Euphoria in Azerbaijan



Azerbaijani soldiers hold national flags and a portrait of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev as they celebrate the transfer of the Lachin region to Azerbaijan's control, as part of a peace deal that required Armenian forces to cede the Azerbaijani territories they held outside Nagorno-Karabakh, in Aghjabadi, Azerbaijan, on Tuesday. Azerbaijan has completed the return of territory under a Russia-brokered peace deal that ended six weeks of fierce fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh.

— AP

Vaccine: Europe agency
to decide on Dec. 29

It will convene meet to find efficacy for it to be approved

Berlin, Dec. 1: The European Medicines Agency will convene a meeting on December 29 to decide if there is enough data about the safety and efficacy of the Covid-19 vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech for it to be approved, the regulator said Tuesday.

The agency also said Tuesday it could decide as early as January 12 whether to approve a rival Covid-19 vaccine developed by Moderna Inc. The German pharmaceutical company BioNTech and its US partner Pfizer said earlier Tuesday that they had asked the regulator for speeded-up, conditional approval of their Coronavirus vaccine, concluding the rolling review process they initiated with the agency on October 6.

The move comes a day after rival Moderna said it was asking US and European regulators to allow the use of its Covid-19 vaccine. BioNTech said if the vaccine, currently named BNT162b2, is approved, its use in Europe could begin before the end of 2020.

The companies said last month that clinical trials with 44,000 participants showed the vaccine is 95% effective. The efficacy rate in particularly vulnerable older age groups was more than 94%, they said. In a statement, the EU medicines regulator said it had already begun a "rolling review" of the Moderna vaccine based on laboratory data previously submitted by the company and would now assess data on how well that vaccine triggers an immune response and whether it is safe enough for broad use across Europe. The agency said that "if the data are robust enough to conclude on quality, safety and effectiveness," then it could approve the Moderna vaccine at a meeting scheduled for January 12.

BioNTech and Pfizer have already submitted a request for emergency approval with the US Food and Drug Administration and the UK regulator MHRA, as well as rolling submissions in other countries including in Australia, Canada and Japan.

— AP

Trump Coronavirus
adviser Atlas resigns

Washington, Dec. 1: US President Donald Trump's controversial special adviser on the Coronavirus, Dr Scott Atlas, has resigned. During his four months in the role, Atlas, who had no formal experience in public health or infectious diseases, questioned the need for masks and other measures to control the pandemic that has killed over 268,000 people in America.

While questioning the usefulness of masks he was against lockdowns and promoted the idea of herd immunity. The 65-

year-old the Stanford University neuroradiologist resigned on Monday at the end of his 130-day temporary assignment, according to US media reports.

Atlas tweeted a photo of his resignation letter on Monday. In the letter, he said his "advice was always focused on minimising all the harms from both the pandemic and the structural policies themselves, especially to the working class and the poor." "I sincerely wish the new team all the best as they guide the nation," he wrote.

— PTI

UK MPs to vote on
tier-based lockdown

London, Dec. 1: UK Parliamentarians on Tuesday are set to vote on the government's tier-based Coronavirus lockdown as the country's health minister said the Covid-19 situation was "back under control" but vigilance was necessary. UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock attempted to rally lockdown sceptics at a Downing Street briefing on Monday evening, reiterating the need for a regional system of tiers, which come in force after England's current nationwide lockdown imposed in wake of Covid ends on

Wednesday.

"While we can let up a little, we can't afford to let up a lot," said Hancock.

"We've reduced pressures on the NHS (National Health System), we've brought down the number of Coronavirus cases, we've got this virus back under control... The success of our collective efforts means that from Wednesday, everyone in England, even those in tier three, can have some greater freedoms — but we don't have much headroom," he said.

— PTI

Trafficking up: Nobel winner

United Nations, Dec. 1: Nobel Peace Prize laureate Nadia Murad said the Coronavirus pandemic has increased trafficking of women and gender-based violence, leaving the health and safety of women "on the line." The 27-year-old activist, who was forced into sexual slavery by Islamic State fighters in Iraq, said curfews, lockdowns and travel restric-

tions imposed by governments to slow the spread of the virus "have had unintended consequences on women worldwide."

"Rather than reducing human trafficking and gender-based violence, the pandemic has increased the risk of exploitation and brutality against those most vulnerable," she said. "Numerous countries have seen increases in

VIRUS: BIBLICAL
BETHLEHEM LOSES
CHRISTMAS CHEER

Bethlehem, Dec. 1: The Coronavirus has cast a pall over Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem, all but shutting down the biblical town revered as Jesus' birthplace at the height of the normally cheery holiday season. Missing are the thousands of international pilgrims who normally descend upon the town. Restaurants, hotels and souvenir shops are closed.

The renowned Christmas tree lighting service will be limited to a small group of authorised people, as will church services on Christmas Eve, "Bethlehem is dead," said Maryana al-Arja, owner of the 120-room Angel Hotel on the outskirts of Bethlehem.

The hotel was the site of the West Bank's first Coronavirus outbreak — when a group of Greek tourists came down with the virus last March. She kept her 25 workers on staff for several months but ultimately couldn't continue to pay them.

Al-Arja, who herself was infected with the virus, said she has been forced to close the hotel and lay off the entire staff because there is no sign of the pandemic ending or tourists visiting anytime soon.

— AP

US opposes release
of Tahawwur Rana

Washington, Dec. 1: The US government has moved a motion in a federal court in California opposing the release of Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, who has been declared a fugitive by India for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack case, describing him a flight risk.

Rana, 59, a childhood friend of David Coleman Headley, was re-arrested on June 10 in Los Angeles on an extradition request by India for his involvement in the 26/11 Mumbai terror strike in which 166 people, including six Americans, were killed.

Pakistani-American LeT terrorist Headley was involved in plotting the 2008 Mumbai terror attack. He was made an approver in the case, and is currently serving a 35-year prison term in the US for his role in the attack. Rana is a declared fugitive in India. His extradition hearing is scheduled for February 12. In a motion filed before

the US District Court Judge in Los Angeles Jacqueline Chelonian on Monday, US attorney Nicola T Hanna urged the court to deny Rana's motion for release for failure to prove that he is not a flight risk or that special circumstances exist and continue to detain him pending resolution of this extradition proceeding.

Hanna's motion comes in opposition to the latest effort of Rana to avoid detention pending extradition, by capitalising on the developments of the Covid-19 pandemic. Rana's attorney has argued that pandemic warrants his release from custody. Hanna said a fugitive facing extradition is entitled to bail only if he can demonstrate that he is not a flight risk, is not a danger to the community, and that "special circumstances" warrant his release from custody.

Rana in his court filing has said the Bureau of Prison (BOP) was unable to manage the Covid-19

pandemic and as such he should be released from custody. Hanna argued that BOP is committed to fighting Covid-19 and protecting the inmates in its custody. "In addition to ignoring the BOP's ability to manage the pandemic, Rana ignores the significant increase of Covid-19 cases in the population in which he wishes to be released," Hanna said, adding, unlike the BOP, Rana will not have immediate access to frequent Covid-19 testing, and should he test positive, treatment.

Following the increase of Covid-19 cases, Metropolitan Detention Centre Los Angeles began testing inmates, including Rana. MDC-LA has not received the results of his Covid-19 test conducted on November 27. Accordingly, it has placed Rana in isolation, pending confirmation that he is not positive for Covid-19. In denying Rana's initial motion for release in July, the court had said he constituted a flight risk.

— PTI



Nirav Modi

NIRAV REMAND
EXTENDED, FINAL
HEARINGS IN '21

London, Dec. 1: Nirav Modi, wanted in connection with the estimated \$2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, was further remanded in custody on Tuesday by a court in London hearing India's extradition request for the diamond merchant.

The 49-year-old appeared on Tuesday via video-link from Wandsworth Prison in south-west London, dressed in a maroon sweater and sporting a full beard, for his regular 28-day "call-over hearing" at Westminster Magistrates' Court, where Chief Magistrate Emma Arbuthnot extended his remand for another 28 days until December 29.

"It will be another short videolink call-over hearing and then there is just over a week before closing submissions in the case," she told Modi, who spoke only to confirm his name and date of birth. The final hearings in the extradition case are scheduled over two days, on January 7 and 8 next year, when District Judge Samuel Goozee is scheduled to hear closing arguments from both sides before he hands down his judgment a few weeks later.

At the last hearing in the case on November 3, Judge Goozee heard the arguments for and against the admissibility of certain witness statements provided by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) and ruled that the evidence to establish a prima facie case of fraud and money laundering against the fugitive diamondaire is broadly admissible.

— PTI

SPACE | RESOURCES

Research may radically change logistics of future missions to the Red Planet and beyond

Novel system can extract oxygen, fuel from Mars water

Washington, Dec. 1: A team led by an Indian-origin scientist in the US has developed a new system that can extract oxygen and hydrogen fuel from the salty water on Mars, and may radically change the logistics of future missions to the Red Planet and beyond.

The researchers noted that Mars is very cold, and water that is not frozen is almost certainly full of salt from the Martian soil, which lowers its freezing temperature. Using electricity to break the briny

water down into oxygen and hydrogen fuel requires removing the salt, which is a cumbersome and a costly endeavour in a harsh, dangerous martian environment, they said.

The team, led by Vijay Ramani, a professor at the Washington University in the US, examined the new system in a simulated Martian atmosphere at minus 36 degrees Celsius. "Our Martian brine electrolyser radically changes the logistical calculus of missions to Mars and beyond. This technology is equally

useful on Earth where it opens up the oceans as a viable oxygen and fuel source," said Ramani.

In 2008, NASA's Phoenix Mars Lander "touched and tasted" Martian water, vapours from melted ice dug up by the lander. Since then, the European Space Agency's Mars Express has discovered several underground ponds of water which remain in a liquid state thanks to the presence of magnesium perchlorate salt.

In the journal *Proceedings of the National Acad-*

emy of Sciences (PNAS), the researchers noted that in order to live — even

temporarily — on Mars, not to mention to return to Earth, astronauts will need to manufacture some of the necessities, including water and fuel, on the Red Planet.

NASA's Perseverance rover is en-route to Mars, carrying instruments that will use high-temperature electrolysis. However, the Mars Oxygen In-Situ Resource Utilisation Experiment (MOXIE) will be producing oxygen only, from the carbon dioxide in the air. The system developed in Ramani's lab can produce

25 times more oxygen than MOXIE using the same amount of power, said the researchers, adding it also produces hydrogen, which could be used to fuel astronauts' trip home.

"Our novel brine electrolyser incorporates a lead ruthenate pyrochlore anode developed by our team in conjunction with a platinum on carbon cathode" Ramani said. "These carefully designed components coupled with the optimal use of traditional electrochemical engineering principles has yielded this

high performance," he said. The careful design and unique anode allow the system to function without the need for heating or purifying the water source, the researchers said.

"Paradoxically, the dissolved perchlorate in the water, so-called impurities, actually help in an environment like that of Mars," said Shrihari Sankarasubramanian, a research scientist in Ramani's group and joint first author of the research paper on the study.

— PTI

DECCAN
Chronicle

2 DECEMBER 2020

Regulators amiss in not probing vaccine ‘effect’

India, which has the world’s second largest total Covid-19 caseload, has been an active participant in the global effort to find a vaccine against the coronavirus. Several Indian manufacturers are in tie-ups with foreign pharma majors and laboratories for conducting clinical trials here, while some others are developing their own vaccines. If one were to go by the optimism they exude, then we have a solution to the pandemic in the weeks ahead, or months.

Vaccine production is a complex process, which involves science, technology, protocol, practice and ethics. World over, regulators have been willing to relax some norms, primarily administrative in nature, so that the process can be expedited and a vaccine comes out at the earliest. However, none has ever been willing to compromise on core protocols.

India, a major player in the manufacture of vaccines, has not been that active in their development, though. There are allegations that clinical trials conducted in India, whether for vaccines or for other medical formulations, are less than transparent and that international norms and protocols are not observed in the full. There have been different views about the information passed on to participants before their consent was taken in many such trials.

We have not heard about the government or a regulator ordering a halt to the trial. A more thorough investigation was warranted considering the importance of the vaccine projects.

It is in this background that reports of the Serum Institute of India, one of the leading players with a global reputation in the field of vaccine manufacturing, planning to sue a participant who flagged a serious adverse event that occurred during the trial for Covid vaccine must be seen. A more thorough investigation was warranted considering the importance of the vaccine projects.

There are many issues involved here. The immediate one is the response of the regulatory authorities. The global practice has been, even in the midst of the pandemic, to halt the trial, study the event when one is reported, and then decide whether to go ahead with it or not. Most leading vaccine candidates for Covid-19, too, have reported such instances. It is not yet clear if India, too, has followed the pattern; we have not heard about the government or a regulator ordering a halt to the trial. The scientific and regulatory bodies involved in the process, such as the Indian Council for Medical Research or the Drugs Controller General of India, have also been silent. This is unacceptable.

The safety of the participants of the trials is another major concern. It should not be left to the participant to take up the issue; there must be independent institutions that must go to the bottom of such charges and come up with the truth. While genuine complaints must be addressed with all seriousness, those with ulterior motives, if any, must be dealt with accordingly.

The Prime Minister has reportedly directed various government agencies to work with vaccine manufacturers and sort out the issues they face. This is a welcome move. At the same time, the government must also look for regulatory deficiencies and meet them on par with global practices. It should not allow expediency to get the better of ethical practices in the name of the pandemic.

Is Rajini under pressure?

After a series of false starts since 1996, actor Rajnikanth almost made it clear in late October that he was not game for politics. Though his fans show desperation in seeing him as a political leader and, in due course, chief minister, the superstar displayed no inclination of joining politics and even cited his health as one impeding reason. So even after that bunch of ardent fans who turned up at his Poes Garden residence to persuade him to change his mind was sent off and it almost became clear that Rajinikanth would keep off the humdrum of politics, why did he call for a meeting on Monday?

Are some political parties like the DMK and the AIADMK, which trace their lineage to the Dravidian tradition that Rajinikanth purportedly abhors, wary of fighting him electorally?

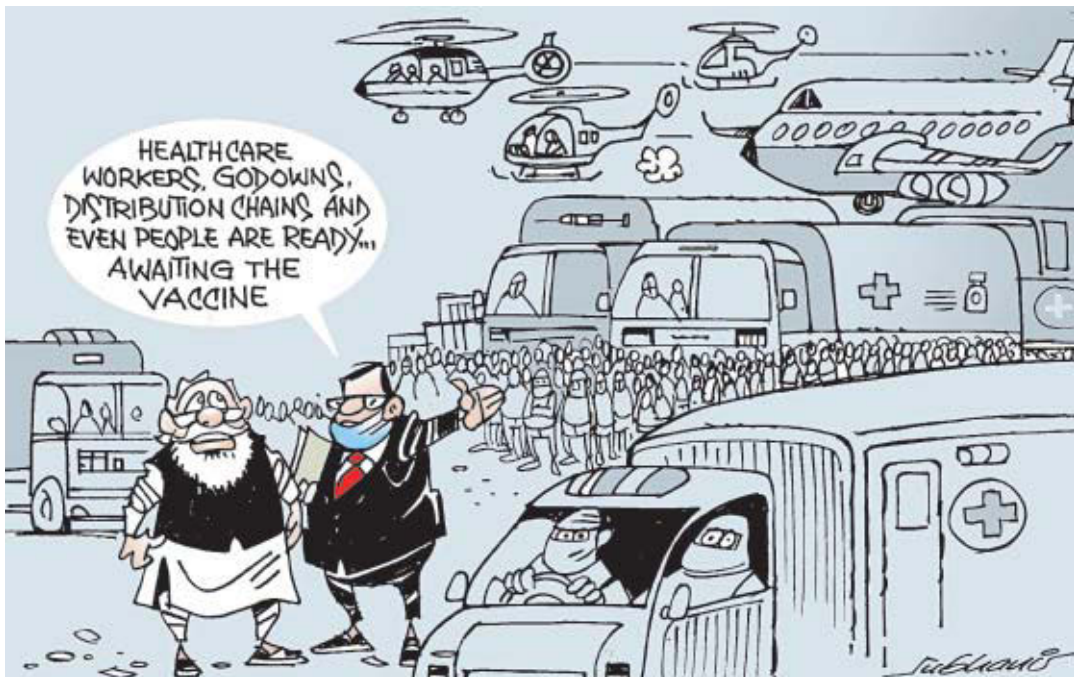
While it’s a totally different matter if Rajinikanth would provide clean governance, as his fans tout, or bring about a change in Tamil Nadu or not, why is his impending arrival, or the lack of it, on the political scene engendering palpable anticipation. Are some political parties like the DMK and the AIADMK, which trace their lineage to the Dravidian tradition that Rajinikanth purportedly abhors, wary of fighting him electorally, as his supporters see it? No, those parties show no sign of fright.

Then, does he hope to turn a Pied Piper leading the masses on a so far untrodden garden path and turn the affairs of the state upside down, thus unsettling existing social structures and disconcerting cultural mores? Does he have a plan and an agenda for revolutionary changes that would go against the status quo, upending socio-politico systems for a better future? Of course there have been no such indications.

So, what is beckoning him? What’s that that makes him go back-and-forth, repeatedly? If it is the clarion call from fans, he would have easily said “no” and quit. So, the call emanates from somewhere else, suddenly evolving into a command, as someone believes that he alone can break the State’s electoral strangleholds.

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Subhani



Are America’s days over as world’s moral arbiter?



Indranil Banerjee

The Donald Trump era may be drawing to a close in the United States, but America will never be the same again. At least not the America that once shone proud, flashing its democratic credentials, hoist on its self-made pedestal.

Mr Trump and the recent US presidential elections have irrevocably tarnished the American democratic model and eroded its moral authority. Today, America increasingly looks like a tired, somewhat tattered democracy, struggling with its inherent inefficiencies and flaws, clawed by manipulators and creased by unwieldy procedures.

The bitter and highly polarised November 2020 election was watched with disbelief and distaste across the world. Even nations at the bottom of the democratic ladder couldn’t restrain their delight and disdain at America’s tortured electoral process.

“What a spectacle!” exclaimed Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei of the US elections. Khamenei, a champion of one of the world’s most repressive regimes, tweeted: “One says this is the most fraudulent election in US history. Who says that? The President who is in office. His rival says Trump intends to rig the election! This is how #USElections & US democracy are.”

The incoming US President, Joseph R. Biden, who will be sworn in on January 20, 2021, knows that he has his job cut out for him. Before the elections he pledged to unite America and end the “grim era of demonisation”.

“It is time to heal America”, he declared, adding he fought this election “to restore the soul of America, to rebuild the backbone of this nation, the middle class and to make America respected

around the world again, and to unite us here at home”.

But all that is easier said than done. America remains totally polarised, like never before, and having once slipped from the top of the the global hierarchy, it might be difficult if not impossible to crawl back. Mr Biden’s democratic credentials, statements and world-view hark back to an era forever lost. The old days of American hegemony are not lamented by the world. Internally too, Mr Biden will find it hard to restore those values so missed by liberal, egalitarian Americans.

The world will take a lot of convincing to believe that the core values of democracy, liberty and equality that America once preached is indeed being practised there again. Faith once lost is always difficult to restore. Like Sisyphus’s rock, it keeps rolling down.

The implications for the global order are profound. With moral authority came power and the United States unabashedly wielded it. Toppling regimes became acceptable worldwide if it was seen as a benevolent act by the United States for the greater glory of democracy and liberty.

Iraq’s Saddam Hussain could be hunted down and hanged as he was a despot responsible for killing opponents and throttling democracy. This disguised the real reason for the killing, which was the dismantling of the Ba’athist regime in Iraq and forever destroying that country’s strategic capabilities in the Middle East. By hanging Saddam and bombing Iraq to the ground, Washington ensured Iraq would never again pose a threat to its allies and interests in the region.

Not surprisingly, the US could similarly get away with helping repressive regimes, like the Shah’s Iran, Gen. Pervez Musharraf’s Pakistan

and the dozens of dictatorships it supports the world over.

In other words, the torch of liberty and democratic values has been used as a weapon of coercion, cajolement and manipulation by Washington in the post-World War II era. The most powerful use of these values was the vilification and undermining of enemy regimes that don’t necessarily adhere to them.

Thus, the democratic ideal and values of personal freedoms played a large part in undermining and ultimately bringing down the Soviet empire. This was a huge strategic victory, which demonstrated the advantage of holding the moral high ground and espousing a value system eagerly sought after by people from other cultures and nations.

The US has for long used its democratic credentials to further its geopolitical aims and civilisational narrative which equated good with the American way of life. This narrative has broken down. The breakdown of this dynamic is bound to have severe repercussions around the world.

While the end of using democratic credentials as a tool for hegemonic objectives will not be lamented, what will be is the erosion of those core values. All said and done, those values did serve to rescue many societies from various forms of utter despotism.

Who will shine the moral beacon in the years to come? With America’s democratic ideal broken and suspect, Europe cringing and unable to come to terms with growing ethnic and religious diversity, it will be the despotic ascendant powers like the People’s Republic of China that will seek to assume the

America remains totally polarised, like never before, and having once slipped from the top of the the global hierarchy, it might be difficult if not impossible to crawl back

status of global role model. This cannot but be a terrible portent. Something better must emerge. But from where, in this wilderness of ideologies and systems currently prevailing all over the world?

One unusual suggestion has recently been made by Singapore’s best-known diplomat-academic Kishore Mahbubani. In a recent piece in the *South China Morning Post*, he wrote: “India is entering a geopolitical sweet spot. What does this mean? In a world crying out for a strong, independent voice to provide moral guidance to a troubled planet, the only realistic candidate is India. None of the three other obvious candidates — the United States, the European Union and China — can step up to the plate now.”

“India’s rise is ‘reassuring’ because it is not perceived as a threat by other powers. Given this trusted position, India can take advantage of it by providing the world ethical leadership, of the kind that Gandhiji would have provided if he were alive today”, Mahbubani wrote, adding that India could become the global champion of multilateralism and a rules-based behaviour.

Within India, however, there is widespread disillusionment and a sense of dejection arising out of the uncontrolled spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and sustained economic contraction. Massive job losses, economic dislocation and disappearing public savings have left a nation bewildered and despondent.

Internally too, India is acutely polarised and fragmented; and few in the world are looking up to it as a potential role model. Yet, as Mahbubani argues, India has the potential to emerge as the world’s ethical flag bearer. But for that to happen, the country will require a benevolent, consensual, farsighted statesman as a leader, who is capable of unifying a vast and diversified nation — and perhaps the world as well.

The writer is an independent commentator on political and security issues

LETTERS

FARMERS’ PROTESTS

The need of hour to stop farmer protests is a farm regulatory authority on the lines of RBI, SEBI, TRAI etc., which will protect the interests of farmers. This will help the government to check private companies with proper framework which in turn will give confidence among farmers on prices.

Chaitanya Susarla
Visakhapatnam

NAIDU’S TACTICS

Former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has the knack of hogging headlines. He had relegated the discussion on farmers’ issues to the background by disturbing the proceedings of the Assembly. His strategy is to provoke the treasury benches and create a ruckus so that young Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy loses his cool and breaks business rules. TD should concentrate on wrongdoing, if any, of YSRCP instead of adopting cheap tricks.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

AIDS CONTROL

Since 1987 the December 1 is being observed as world AIDS day. There are 3.5 crore AIDS patients across the globe. There are 21 lakh people suffering from this dreaded disease in India. People must be careful in their sexual activities besides taking proper food to build their immunity. Care is also necessary during blood transfusions.

Pratapa Reddy Yaramala
Krishna

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Foreign offers pour in to make small car

NEW DELHI, DEC. 1. Collaboration offers for manufacture, in the public sector of small car are understood to have been received yesterday by the Ministry of Industrial Development from Fiat of Italy and Ford Motor Company.

The proposals are in addition to the offer received earlier this month of Renault of France which has proposed manufacture of one of its latest models, R-26, exhibited at the October Car Festival of Paris. Though November 30 was the last date for receipt of collaboration proposals from automobile manufacturers the world over the Ministry is expecting some more offers to be received in the course of this month. Two Japanese firms Nissan and Mazda, have also evinced interest in the project.

A.G. Noorani

Congress in crisis, but India needs strong Opp.

Parliamentary government, as it is understood in the UK, works by the interaction of four essential factors: the principle of majority rule; the willingness of the minority for the time being to accept the decisions of the majority; the existence of great political parties divided by broad issues of policy, rather than by sectional interests; and finally the existence of a mobile body of political opinion, owing no permanent allegiance to any party and therefore able, by its instinctive reaction against extravagant movements on one side or the other, to keep the vessel on an even keel. In India none of these factors can be said to exist today,” the British Parliament’s joint committee on constitutional reform observed in 1933-34.

These words, as a pretext for denying independence as well as a slur, offended Indians.

Today, it is hard to deny the truth of these observations. India has done remarkably well in many spheres, yet its one glaring failure lies in the political sphere. It has failed to evolve

a vibrant political system in which political parties alternate in occupying power. Instead, the pattern has been one of monolithic power that drives others to forge a coalition, which falls apart shortly after it comes to power.

Jawaharlal Nehru governed as Prime Minister from August 1947 till he died in May 1964. In this moment of trial, Congress leaders failed the nation. The correct procedure was to hold a leadership election. However, no one wanted the hated but ambitious Morarji Desai. So Congress president K. Kamaraj met the MPs individually and declared the consensus: Lal Bahadur Shastri.

When he died in January 1966, an election was held for the first time. Indira Gandhi defeated Desai by 355 votes to 169. In the 1967 election, the Congress was re-elected and elected Indira as leader. She appointed Desai as deputy prime minister, but he did not reconcile himself to his defeat.

This came to be known as the so-called “Congress culture” — democratic in form but barren of the spirit of democracy. Indira’s opponents

selected a presidential candidate who would checkmate her as Prime Minister. She split the party and her faction swept the polls in 1971. She ruled autocratically till 1977. To defeat this monolith, the Opposition parties united in a bid for power — only to break up in ego.

Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980. On her assassination in 1984, her son Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister and presided over a corrupt, authoritarian regime. Once again, a coalition of egos united to oust him, only to fall apart.

This pattern continues. A monolith opposed by a conglomeration whose leaders cannot unite. A naked contest for power on both sides, with one difference — the monolith is led by a strong leader; the conglomerate is a house divided by a clash of egos. Certain features stand out. There is no internal democratic working in any political party. Cabals rule them all.

The BJP, the political front of the RSS, came to power under Atal Behari Vajpayee, a liberal. It lost the 2004 election to a Congress-led coalition

that ruled till 2014. As Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh won international and domestic acclaim. But his second term was torn apart by internal conflict, corruption and Sonia Gandhi’s baleful influence as Congress president.

The situation changed in 2014. The BJP returned to power, but under the leadership of autocrat Narendra Modi. He consigned the old guard to the shelf, starting with L.K. Advani, who had opposed Mr Modi’s claim to be Prime Minister. He foisted his henchman of Gujarat days, Amit Shah, upon the party as its president.

There is no one to challenge it. The Congress is like a duke in reduced circumstances. Its president no longer commands the respect she once did. Imitating Indira, Sonia promoted her son Rahul.

Three of the tallest leaders in the Congress have demanded “reforms”, specifically elections to the party’s committees and posts, including president. The chickens have come home to roost. The “strong” leader no longer commands the respect she once did. Leaders are only followed

so long as they can get the party elected and provide jobs for the minions.

Sonia Gandhi has two fatal defects - her anointed heir is not respected or liked. And she has no contribution to make to ideology or programmes. Worse, she has reduced the Congress to the level of a “B-team” of the BJP. Sonia and Rahul ostentatiously pay obeisance at temples, devotion neither revealed till recently. On Ayodhya, Kashmir and similar issues, the Congress supports the BJP. Designed to compete for the Hindu vote, this cheap stratagem has done the Congress no good. It is in a stage of decline.

Yet it would be tragic and dangerous for India’s democracy if the Congress were to pass into oblivion. India needs a powerful opposition to the Narendra Modi government’s arbitrary and rabidly communal ways.

The writer is an author and lawyer, and one of India’s top constitutional experts

By arrangement with Dawn

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	44,655.44	1.15
Nifty 50	13,109.05	1.08
S&P 500*	3,669.50	1.32
Dollar (₹)	73.63	0.56
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.54	0.13
Euro (₹)	88.06	0.23
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,273.45	0.09
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	47.51	-0.37
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.930	0.019
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.914	0.072

* As of 8:30 PM IST

UK retailer Debenhams to be liquidated

British department store retailer Debenhams is to be liquidated after failing to find a buyer, administrators FRP Advisory said. It said it would start a wind-down of Debenhams, whilst continuing to seek offers for all or parts of the business. The collapse of Debenhams, which trades from 124 UK stores and employs 12,000, came a day after Philip Green's Arcadia fashion group entered administration.

Sinha to head group strategy at Mahindra



Mahindra Group announced the appointment of Bain & Co. veteran Amit Sinha as president, group strategy. It said Sinha will work with the group businesses to help drive growth and returns. "He will also oversee synergy, risk and economist functions and play a key role in coordinating international synergies between Americas, Asia Pacific and Africa." Sinha will report to Navratni Shah, deputy MD and Group CFO.

Paytm waives merchant transaction fee

Paytm said it will waive all charges on merchant transactions, and enable its merchant partners to accept payments from Paytm wallet, UPI apps and RuPay cards at zero charges. Paytm will absorb Rs 600 crore in MDR charges annually by banks and other charges to support MSMEs during the ongoing pandemic, a statement said. This initiative will benefit over 17 million merchants on the Paytm ecosystem.

PLI schemes for drugs, devices get good response

Production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes for bulk drugs and medical devices have received a positive response from the industry, the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers said. For the PLI scheme for bulk drugs, 215 applications have been received from 83 pharmaceutical manufacturers. The PLI scheme for medical devices attracted 28 applications from 23 medical device manufacturers.



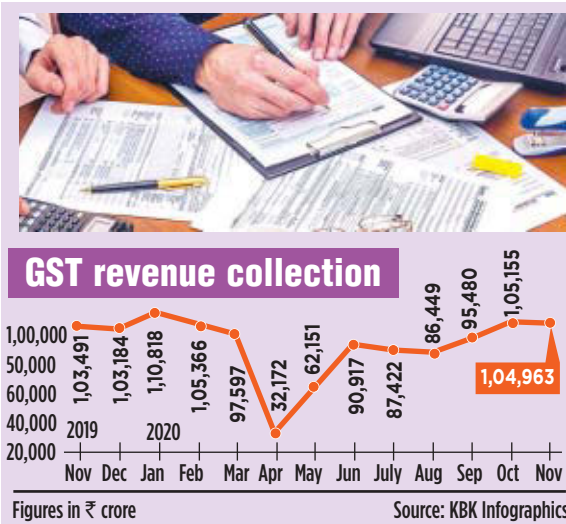
Manufacturing PMI at 56.3 in November GST collections cross ₹1-L crore mark again

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, DEC.1

Goods and services tax (GST) collections rose for the third month in a row in November, recording a mop-up of nearly at Rs 1.05 lakh crore, government data released on Tuesday showed.

After marking year-on-year contraction during the April-August period, gross GST receipts have been showing a positive trend from September, indicating economic recovery in line with the lifting of lockdown restrictions across the country. The November 2020 collections of Rs 1,04,963 crore were higher than Rs 1.03 lakh crore recorded in November 2019 but lower by Rs 192 crore compared to October 2020 figures.

In last month's mop-up, the share of CGST was Rs 19,189 crore and SGST was Rs 25,540 crore. IGST and cess amounted to Rs 51,992 crore and Rs 8,242 crore,



respectively. The total number of GSTR-3B returns filed for the month was 82 lakh, the finance ministry said in a statement. However, manufacturing activity showed a decline in November from the decadal high recorded by the Nikkei Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) in October. As per the survey compiled by IHS Markit, Manufacturing PMI declined to 56.3 in November from October's 58.9, still remaining well above the 50-level separating growth from contraction for the fourth month.

"Growth in the Indian manufacturing sector lost momentum in November, but the latest PMI reading was still consistent with a sharp rate of expansion. There were slower increases in factory orders, exports, buying levels and output," the survey noted.

Commenting on the index, Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit, said, "Although the softening of rates of expansion seen in the latest month does not represent a major setback, since these are down from over decade highs in October, a spike in Covid-19 cases and the possibility of associated restrictions could undermine the recovery. The companies noted that the pandemic was the key factor weighing on growth during November, with Covid-related uncertainty also restricting business confidence."

Businesses expect quicker return to profitability

New Delhi, Dec. 1: Indian businesses expect a quicker return to pre-Covid levels of profitability than most others, and are positive about international trade, says a survey.

According to HSBC's annual Navigator survey, which covered more than 10,000 companies across 39 global markets, including 350 firms from India, Indian businesses continue

to have an appetite for growth and investment.

As per the survey, 87 per cent of Indian businesses, notably higher than the global average (73 per cent), expect to return to pre-Covid levels of profitability within two years, by the end of 2022.

Besides, 90 per cent of Indian businesses intend to increase financial investment to become

more successful over the next year, notably higher than the global average of 67 per cent.

On business outlook, almost half (45 per cent) of the surveyed Indian businesses are optimistic about business growth, far higher than the global average of 29 per cent.

"The overall business sentiment is understandably muted, given the chal-

lenging environment over the course of the year. However, we are witnessing signs of recovery as companies are charting new pathways to recovery," said Rajat Verma, head of commercial banking, HSBC India.

The outlook towards international trade is positive with 93 per cent of Indian firms (against 72 per cent globally). —PTI

Festivals, wedding season aid car sales

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, DEC. 1

Car sales, an indication of healthy economy, has seen a sharp turnaround from the Covid-19 led slowdown earlier this year, primarily due to a strong boost from good festive demand, upcoming wedding season, and soft base due to the overlapping of Diwali in November this year.

Sales in November at Hyundai, India's second biggest car maker sold 9.4 per cent more cars, Tata Motors 108 per cent, Kia Motor 108 per cent, Mahindra and Mahindra 24 per cent and Toyota Kirloskar Motor 2.4 per cent, Honda Cars 55 per cent, MG Motors 28 per cent more cars.

Sales at Hyundai Motor jumped 9.4 per cent at 48,800 units. "Building on the strong sales momentum that was driven by festive demand this year, the recently introduced i20 has helped carry forward the festive momentum even in the post-Diwali period," Tarun Garg, director (sales, marketing and service at Hyundai Motor India, said.

Tata Motors, India's

largest automaker by revenues, sold whopping 108 per cent more cars at 21,641 units last month, up from 10,400 units it sold last year.

Kia Motors saw 50 per cent year-on-year growth at 21,022 units last month. Kia Sonet sold 11,417 units.

"While there is still a lot of uncertainty in the market due to the pandemic, the overall consumer sentiment has significantly improved...We are expecting the market sentiment to improve more in coming months," Kookhyun Shim, MD and CEO at Kia Motors India, said.

Mahindra and Mahindra sold 24 per cent more cars at 18,212 units last month. Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest car maker, which sells one out of two cars bought in the country, sold 135,775 units in November. Sales at Honda Cars shot up 55 per cent at 9,990 units last month while Toyota Kirloskar Motor sold 8,508 units. MG Motor, which overtook Ford in the sales rankings for the first time in November, retailed 4,163 units, a rise of 28.5 per cent.

Gas use returns to pre-Covid level

SHWETHA SUNIL & DEBJIT CHAKRABORTY
DEC. 1

India's natural gas demand has rebounded to above pre-pandemic levels amid the country's drive to boost consumption of the cleanest fossil fuel to rid the skies of toxic smog.

Demand is rising across several sectors, especially city gas, fertilisers and petrochemicals, with long-haul transport poised to start using LNG in trucks, said E.S. Ranganathan, marketing director of Gail India Ltd, the nation's biggest gas utility. Consumption in October was above 2019 levels for the first time since June. The rebound comes as

Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeks to double gas's share to 15 per cent of the country's energy mix by 2030. The country, which the World Bank said in 2016 was home to 14 of the 30 most polluted cities on the planet, will see \$60 billion in investment in new pipelines and import facilities to increase use of the fuel.

"India's gas consumption has already surpassed pre-Covid levels," Ranganathan said in an interview. "All the big industries have actually come back full swing."

The rebound comes after pandemic lockdowns sapped demand, forcing Gail to cancel one US cargo and postpone another from Gazprom PJSC,

which will now arrive this month, he said.

Meanwhile, rival Indian gas importers – including Indian Oil Corp. and Gujarat State Petroleum Corp. – have jumped back into the LNG spot market recently, issuing tenders seeking prompt shipments.

India has aggressively auctioned out areas for city-gas supplies covering 70 per cent of its population while starting LNG fuel stations on highways and industrial areas to convert diesel-guzzling trucks and mining vehicles. Oil refineries alone will boost consumption to 50 million cubic meters a day by 2025 from about 10 million now, Ranganathan said. —Bloomberg

Consumer durables set to become costlier

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, DEC. 1

After aggressive price cuts for the online channels during the festive season, consumer durables will soon see prices moving northwards. Prices may go up by 8-15 per cent across categories in a month or two.

"With higher commodity prices, input cost has gone up by around 15 per cent. Prices of aluminum, zinc, copper have gone up and MDI foam prices are up 200 per cent. While washing machines and air conditioners might see 7-8 per cent price rise, refrigerator and chest freezer prices may go up by even 15 per cent due to higher MDI prices," said Kamal Nandi, president, Consumer Electronics and Appliances Manufacturers Association.

MDI, or methylenediphenyl diisocyanate, is used in the production of polyurethanes.

According to Emkay Global Financial Services, on an average, copper prices have increased 20 per cent over last year and 4.5 per cent over the previous quarter. Aluminum prices have inched up 12 per cent and polypropylene prices have also rebounded 8.5 per cent over the previous quarter.

In the next one to two months, prices of consumer durables will move up as the companies have considerably reduced their inventory levels during the festive season. Most of the consumer durable companies had resorted to price cuts for the online channel during the festive sea-



son in order to clear inventory. The price cuts were evident in air conditioners, washing machines and refrigerators.

While there were no major price changes in the offline channel, brands have resorted to aggressive pricing online, says Emkay. As a result, online channels saw strong growth in white goods, with a large number of shoppers coming from tier 2 towns. Footfalls for large format retail stores saw a single digit decline as mall-based stores continued to see challenges during the festive season.

Refrigerators and ACs were the most impacted category due to the lockdown, as it coincided with the peak summer season. Brands had adopted aggressive online pricing in May and June and then during the festive season to clear off old inventory and start fresh for the next summer season.

According to Emkay, on an average, there has been an 11 per cent price decline in the category against last year, with LG, Panasonic, Lloyd, Daikin and Whirlpool reducing

prices in the range of 13-22 per cent and Voltas by 6.2 per cent.

In washing machines, there were steep price cuts in entry-level semi-automatic washing machines as demand for them has been low. Semi-automatic category, on average, saw 14 per cent price cuts. Voltas Beko had the most aggressive pricing for both categories of washing machine. The fully-automatic segment saw minimal price cuts of 2 to 3 per cent. While all the brands in the front-load category implemented price cuts, Haier went for a price increase of 7 per cent over last year.

According to Eric Braganza, president, Haier Appliances India, without resorting to price cut, the brand saw good growth. "October saw 25 per cent growth in sales over last October and October and November combined grew by 38 per cent. We usually do not go for any price cut as customers see the value proposition," he said.

The refrigerator category witnessed high-double digit demand growth this festive season.

ETFs gaining traction, MFs' profit may get affected

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, DEC. 1

Passive investment in equity indices-based exchange traded funds (ETFs) have beaten investment skills of all fund managers in the pandemic period, with Sensex and Nifty ETFs' giving returns above 70 per cent.

Investment in ETFs by pension funds like the Employee Provident Fund Organisation—which were hard-pressed to pay high interest of as much as 8.5 per cent on contributions in FY20—are now sitting pretty with market value of their investments hitting all-time highs.

Reports say mutual funds are now getting robust inflows in ETFs while there is profit taking in other equity funds. This may dent their profitability going ahead as ETFs are cost-effective for investors compared to traditional equity funds where asset management fees are higher.

ETF/index funds continue to gain traction as



individual folios have grown at a CAGR of 64.8 per cent to 3.6 million during FY15-FY21 (till September 2020) while assets have increased to Rs 21,300 crore at a CAGR of 59 per cent, said a report by HDFC Securities.

"While increased volatility and active equity outflows of Rs 20,480 crore in FY21 till date have dented the performance of asset management companies (AMC), we do expect a more benign environment as markets are near all-time high levels and 4QFY21 will see ELSS inflows," HDFC Securities said.

"Performance at most listed fund houses except for UTI AMC continued to disappoint as a higher percentage of rated active equity AUM

slipped to underperforming," HDFC Securities added.

FY21 (till date) ETF net inflows continue to be robust at Rs 27,310 crore, while active equity assets continued to witness outflows of Rs 20,480 crore. Gross SIP flows have declined 9.7 per cent since March-20 to Rs 7,800 crore in October 2020 as uncertain markets tested investors' nerves.

The brokerage said it expects flows to improve as markets stabilise and individuals invest in tax savings schemes over the fourth quarter.

"Passive ETF plus index funds are gaining traction. Passive funds individual AUM has displayed phenomenal growth at FY15-FY21 (Sep20) at CAGR of 59.0 per cent to Rs 21,300 crore. Strong traction from individual investors has resulted in a robust folio growth at CAGR of 64.8 per cent. We continue to keenly watch this space as any sustained growth in this segment can dent profitability," the report said.

Oyo has \$1 billion to fund operations until IPO: CEO

SARITHA RAI
DEC. 1

Ritesh Agarwal, founder and chief executive officer of Oyo Hotels, told employees the startup is making progress in recovering from the coronavirus fall-out and has about \$1 billion to fund operations until an initial public offering.

The 27-year-old entrepreneur made the comments in a fireside chat with Oyo board member Troy Alstead, after the once high-flying company endured months of layoffs and losses as Covid-19 hampered its business. Oyo is one of the largest startups in the portfolio of SoftBank Group Corp,



reaching a valuation of \$10 billion before the downturn.

Agarwal said the company's focus is on getting revenue per available room to 60 per cent to 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels across all markets. India, China, Japan and Southeast Asia are making progress in reaching that range, he added. "We are still not at the

best place, a lot more work to be done," Agarwal said, according to a transcript of the discussion. "We continue to hold close to a billion dollars of cash, including all our group companies."

Alstead, the former COO of Starbucks Corp, is an independent director. Board members include Gerry Lopez and Munish Varma of SoftBank.

Oyo's breakneck expansion, encouraged and financed by SoftBank founder Masayoshi Son, led to operational missteps and soured partnerships. The company ended up laying off or furloughing thousands of employees, cutting its headcount by two-thirds. —Bloomberg

Wockhardt UK lends facility for vaccine supply



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, DEC. 1

The UK government has reserved one fill and finish production line at Wockhardt UK, a subsidiary of Indian drug maker Wockhardt, for its exclusive use for 18 months in order to guarantee the supply of vaccines required to fight against Covid-19.

On November 30 Wockhardt UK hosted a visit at its Wrexham facility in North Wales of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Boris Johnson.

Wockhardt said. Wockhardt UK specialises in the supply of generic and speciality medicines and is one of the leading suppliers to the National Health Service of the United Kingdom.

Founder chairman of Wockhardt Habi Khorakiwala said, "The visit by the Prime Minister of the UK demonstrates our global strength in sterile injectable facilities."

NEW PRESS SECY FOR RAMGARHIA BOARD



Patiala, Dec. 1: Manmohan Singh, under secretary-public relations, Punjab State Power Corporation Limited, has been appointed as spokesman-cum-press secretary, All-India Ramgarhia Board. Mohan Singh, president of the Board, welcomed Manmohan Singh and hoped that he would project the social welfare activities of the Ramgarhia community.

Business NOTE

SHORT TAKES

Hamilton tests Covid-19 positive

Sakhir, Bahrain: The Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 Team says seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton has tested positive for Covid-19 and will miss the Sakhir Grand Prix this weekend.

The team issued a statement saying Hamilton was tested three times last week and returned a negative result each time, the last on Sunday afternoon at the Bahrain International Circuit where he won the Grand Prix. “He woke up on Monday morning with mild symptoms and was informed at the same time that a contact prior to arrival in Bahrain had subsequently tested positive,” the team said. “Lewis, therefore, took a further test and returned a positive result. This has since been confirmed by a retest. Hamilton is in isolation in accordance with the health protocols in Bahrain. Apart from mild symptoms, he is otherwise fit and well, and the entire team sends him its very best wishes for a swift recovery,” the team statement said. — *AP*

Bach unopposed in bid for 2nd term

Lausanne: Thomas Bach will stand unopposed to serve a second term as International Olympic Committee president, the body said on Tuesday. Bach, a 66-year-old German lawyer, is set to be confirmed for a second and final four-year term at an IOC session in March in Athens.

Bach was initially elected for an eight-year term as Olympic chief in September 2013, taking over from Belgian Jacques Rogge. If re-elected, Bach's term will end in 2025, a year after the Paris Olympics. The next term for the IOC presidency will start after the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, which will now take place from July 23-Aug 8, 2021, having been postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic. Bach, who won gold for West Germany in the foil fencing team event at the 1976 Olympics, was elected an IOC member at the age of 37. — *AFP*

Olympic rings back in Tokyo Bay

Tokyo: The five Olympic rings are back in Tokyo Bay. They were removed for maintenance four months ago shortly after the Tokyo Olympics were postponed until next year because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The rings arrived on Tuesday after a short cruise from Yokohama and are positioned on a barge in the shadow on Tokyo's Rainbow Bridge. The rings painted blue, black, red, green, and yellow are gigantic. They stand about 15 meters tall and 33 meters in length about 50 feet tall and 100 feet in length. The rings will be lighted at night and herald the coming of the Olympics, which are to open on July 23, 2021, followed by the Paralympics on August 24. The rings made their first appearance early in 2020, just a few months before the Olympics were postponed late in March. — *AP*

Lopez banned 8 years for fixing

London: Spanish tennis player Enrique Lopez was banned for eight years on Tuesday for fixing matches at tournaments in 2017.

The Tennis Integrity Unit said Lopez cannot play in or attend any officially recognized tournament while banned. He was fined 25,000.

The 29-year-old Lopez reached a career high singles ranking of No. 154 in 2018, though never qualified for the main draw at a Grand Slam event. His best doubles ranking was No. 135. The TIU said three charges of match fixing were proven and two charges were not proven. The tournaments Lopez tried to corrupt were not identified. — *AP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

Australia vs India: Third ODI from 9.10 am on Sony Six, Ten 1, HD

FOOTBALL

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

Champions League: Istanbul Basaksehir vs RB Leipzig from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Manchester United vs PSG from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2; Ferencvaros vs Barcelona from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1; Juventus vs Dynamo Kyiv from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Six; Sevilla vs Chelsea from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 3

Third time lucky?

India look to salvage pride in third ODI against Oz

Canberra, Dec. 1: Left chasing shadows in the first two games, a listless Indian team would most certainly tweak their bowling combination in order to avoid a second successive clean-sweep when they take on Australia in the third and final ODI here on Wednesday.

A 0-3 defeat against Australia would be their second rout in consecutive ODI series having met the same fate in New Zealand earlier this year.

“We are very much determined to go out there to win the next match and see that it's not a clean sweep,” top-order batsman Shreyas Iyer said when asked what his team can do to stop Australia's first in 20 years.

“Our bowlers are really positive with their work ethic and we could see that during training, a few of the bowlers practising with certain plans,” he added.

The first two games turned out to be run-fests in which Australia outbatted Virat Kohli's men and before they switch over to the T20 series, a win at the picturesque Manuka Oval could do their confidence a world of good.

Skipper Kohli has been the first to admit that they have been “out-played” in the two games and it is expected that some corrective measures will be taken in order to get their campaign back on track.

Navdeep Saini, India's fastest bowler, like a lot of others on his first tour of Australia, has looked clueless.

It could well be possible that one among Shardul Thakur, with an experience of 27 international games, or the ‘yorker sensation’ rookie left-armers Thangarasu Natarajan will be seen replacing Saini.

In case of Natarajan, it could be his international debut. — *PTI*



India captain Virat Kohli (left) talks with teammate Mohammed Shami during the second One-Day International match against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday.

Iyer glad that Oz have plan against him

Canberra, Dec. 1: Overwhelmed that the Australians devised a short ball strategy against him, Indian batsman Shreyas Iyer says it can best be tackled by adopting a counter-offensive approach and taking advantage of the field placement.

Josh Hazlewood got Iyer into a tangle with a well-directed bouncer in the first ODI while he gave a better account of himself in the second game where

he scored 38 off 36 balls.

“I am really happy that they are coming up with a plan (against me),” Iyer said on the eve of the inconsequential third ODI when asked about the home team peppering him with short-pitched stuff.

“I feel overwhelmed and take it as a challenge. But I thrive under pressure and it motivates me to go against them. I feel it (a short leg and leg gully) helps to take advantage

● **Hazlewood got Iyer into a tangle with a well-directed bouncer in the first ODI while he gave a better account of himself in the second game where he scored 38 off 36 balls.**

and score more runs and make best use of it.” Playing the short stuff

is all about mind-set for Iyer along with the adjustment while batting at the nets.

“It's all about mind-set that you need to adjust. How you need to place yourself on the wicket. Rather than bending down too much (during stance), you stand upright. It easier to pick up the short one.

“I have set a pattern for myself. Every time I play, I give myself a little bit of time and get set.” — *PTI*

CAPTAIN FINCH STANDS FOR STRUGGLING STARC

Canberra, Dec. 1: Top pacer Mitchell Starc's patchy form is among the few worries for a rampaging Australia in the ongoing series against India but skipper Aaron Finch on Tuesday threw his weight behind the seasoned campaigner, saying there is no need to panic just yet.

The left-arm seamer, who has an outstanding record with the new ball in white-ball cricket, has been far from his best in the ongoing series against India. In the two ODIs, Starc has managed to claim just one wicket while giving away 147 runs in 18 overs. Australia won both the games.

“He hasn't been at his very best, and you have to understand his standards are a lot higher than what you expect from most other people because of how dominant he's been over

the last eight or nine years, especially in the white-ball formats,” Finch said.

“He'd love to be swinging the ball and getting it right early on, but the reality is when you're defending big totals and playing against good players, they're coming hard at you,” he added.

With star pacer Pat Cummins rested for the final ODI, Finch said there will be discussions on how to use Starc.

“So, there'll be conversations today about what we can do slightly different.

“We'll chat about that today. But, definitely no panic stations here from my point of view,” Finch said.

Since the World Cup last year, Starc has endured a dip in form. The pacer has picked just 12 wickets while bleeding runs at an economy of 6.28 in 11 matches. — *PTI*

SHAH RUKH INVESTS IN USA CRICKET LEAGUE

Kolkata, Dec. 1: Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan's Knight Riders Group, on Tuesday, announced their foray into the untapped US cricket market investing in development of Major League Cricket with a multi-million dollar T20 tournament.

As per the deal, Knight Riders, will join hands with American Cricket Enterprises (ACE) to become a stakeholder in development of the sport in the region.

“For several years now, we have been expanding the Knight Riders brand globally and closely watching the potential for T20 cricket in the USA,” Shah Rukh, the principal owner of the Knight Riders group, said in a media statement. — *PTI*

Mumbai sweep aside East Bengal

Goa, Dec. 1: A thumping 3-0 victory over newcomers SC East Bengal helped Mumbai City FC climb top of the Hero Indian Super League table at the GMC Stadium here on Tuesday.

Hugo Boumous assisted all three goals as a brace from Adam Le Fondre (20', 48') and a strike from Hernan Santana (58') saw Mumbai register their second straight win with SCEB yet to open their account.

Mumbai made four changes from their 1-0 win against FC Goa, with Ahmed Jahouh returning to the eleven. Meanwhile, SCEB made two changes to the side that lost the Kolkata derby.

SCEB suffered a huge blow early on as defender Daniel Fox was replaced by Mohammad Rafique.

Mumbai had the opportunity to break the deadlock in the 10th minute but they failed to convert.

Six minutes later, Mumbai goalkeeper Amrinder Singh was also called into action. Rafique pounced on a misplaced pass from Jahouh before firing a shot from long range that was kept away by Amrinder. But it didn't take long for Mumbai to grab the lead. Mumbai won the ball outside their own box and Rowlin Borges provided a sublime diagonal ball towards Boumous on the left. The Frenchman displayed brilliant compo-

HYDERABAD FC LOOK TO EXTEND UNBEATEN RUN

Vasco, Dec. 1: Hyderabad FC will look to continue their unbeaten run when they play their third game in 10 days, taking on Jamshedpur FC in an Indian Super League match here on Wednesday.

While the league has seen a series of draws over the weekend, Hyderabad and Jamshedpur are coming into the game on the back of contrasting form.

While Hyderabad are unbeaten in two games to be currently placed at the fourth position, Owen Coyle's Jamshedpur are ninth in the table.

JFC played two eventful games so far a season opening 1-2 loss to Chennaiyin FC followed by a 2-2 draw against Odisha FC on Sunday. — *PTI*

sure in the box to beat his marker and find Le Fondre, who made an easy tap in.

The Islanders continued to dominate the game after taking the lead.

— *Agencies*

PELLEGRINI'S BETIS LOSE AGAIN IN LIGA

Seville, Dec. 1: Eibar defeated Real Betis 2-0 in the Spanish league, handing Manuel Pellegrini's team their fifth loss in six matches.

Japan forward Yoshinori Muto and Esteban Burgos scored five minutes apart early in the second half to give Eibar the away victory.

The Basque Country club moved to 12th place, while Betis dropped to 15th after their third defeat in a row. It was outscored 17-5 in their last six games, with their only win against promoted Elche.

Pellegrini has been trying to rebuild his team without Spain midfielder Sergio Canales, who injured a tendon two weeks ago with the national side and is expected to be out until next year.

Eibar has lost only one of their last seven games. They won in Seville despite playing without defender Paulo Oliveira and forward Quique Gonz lez because of injuries, and without striker Kike Garcia because of a suspension. — *AP*



Fulham's Ademola Lookman (left) celebrates with Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa after scoring against Leicester City in their English Premier League match at King Power Stadium in Leicester on Monday.

— *AFP*

Fulham escape relegation zone

London, Dec. 1: The first ballooned over the crossbar. The second was a dreadful attempt at a “Panenka” that flopped into the goalkeeper's arms. The third flew off target because of an unfortunate slip.

Three embarrassing penalty misses have summed up Fulham's miserable start to life back in the English Premier League, so hopes weren't exactly high when the team was awarded another against Leicester on Monday.

This time, no mistake. Ivan Cavaleiro one of the spot kick culprits from previous matches stepped up and curled his effort high into the net for a goal that ultimately proved the winners at King Power Stadium.

A 2-1 victory was only Fulham's second in 10 games since promotion

back to the top-flight and it lifted the team out of the relegation zone.

It also ended Fulham's penalty nightmare.

“I didn't feel pressure,” said Cavaleiro, who slipped before shanking a penalty over the bar in last week's 3-2 home loss to Everton. “That happens in football and the manager just gave me confidence to take it and I did.”

A penalty proved to be pivotal in Monday's late match, with Aston Villa striker Ollie Watkins hitting the bar with a second-half effort to allow West Ham to hold on for a 2-1 win at their Olympic Stadium and climb to fifth place. Watkins also had a stoppage-time goal ruled out by the video assistant referee when his outstretched arm was adjudged to have made him offside before he turned in a cross from the left. — *AP*

