

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | MONDAY 14 | DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 30°C
Min: 23°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Karthigai 29
Tithi: Amavasai
Star: Kettai
Rahukalam:
7.30 am to 9 pm
Yamagandam:
10.30 am to 12 noon

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.03 am
Zohar: 12.05 pm
Asar: 3.16 pm
Maghrib: 5.42 pm
Isha: 6.57 pm

SUNSET TODAY 5.45 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.24 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 5.47 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 6.30 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+27,092)	(+334)
98,84,472	1,43,389

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,195)
TN: 7,98,888 11,895

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

7,23,94,621

DEATHS

16,16,000

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
218

worldometers.info

TRP scam: Republic network's CEO arrested

Mumbai: Mumbai Police arrested Republic Media Network's Chief Executive Officer Vikas Khanchandani on Sunday morning in connection with the alleged TRP (Television Rating Points) rigging scam, a police official said. Khanchandani was arrested from his residence by the police's Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU), he said. He will be produced before a court for further remand.

Solar eclipse today

Chennai: For those tracking celestial events, the news is the last solar eclipse of 2020 is here. The last Surya Grahan of the year can be witnessed today (Dec. 14.) This total solar eclipse will best be visible from Chile and parts of Argentina in South America. The eclipse will begin at 7.03 pm (IST) on Dec. 14 and will continue till 12.23 am on Dec. 15 with its expected peak at around 9.43 pm on Monday.

COUNTER

POINT



It's a multi-purpose outfit... protects me from cold and Covid!

Temple treasure found, Govt takes it

DC CORRESPONDENT
KANCHIPURAM, DEC 13

The finding of a kilogram of gold in an ancient temple in Uthiramerur, Kanchipuram district, on Sunday, created a flutter in the area for a while.

Sources said partial renovation work in the 500-year-old ancient Kulambeswarar temple in Uthiramerur, said to have been built during the reign of Kulothunga Chola II, was underway. Members of the temple committee had decided on it, and the structure was being demolished.

When the workers lifted one of the black stones



which served as a step in the entrance of the temple sanctuary, they found a small bundle wrapped in old sack cloth. When they opened it, they were all surprised to see plenty of gold

ornaments in it.

It was then decided to completely demolish the temple, and rebuild it though no permission was taken from the revenue department. A heavy earth moving machine (JCB) was put into service and excavation of the temple began in full swing. To add to their surprise, workers found a treasure trove of gold below the temple as the work proceeded.

The revenue department was alerted, following which officials visited the spot and they wanted to seize the treasure, to which the locals objected and an argument broke. In the confusion, it is said that some

locals took away a few of the jewels.

Soon, the revenue officials informed the police department, and police are investigating the matter. The revenue department, the police and the temple treasury team are involved in estimating the value of the treasure found.

Sources said that gold had been in use in Tamil Nadu during the Nayakar period in the late 16th century. Due to invasion by foreign forces at that time, the priests could have buried these ornaments which were meant to adorn the idols of deities, in various parts of the temple. ■ P4



STATE | 3

DMDK will decide poll ties in January: Premalatha

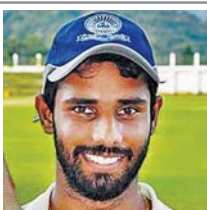


WORLD | 7

Brexit deadline goes 'extra mile'

SPORT | 8

Vihari confident of contributing to team's cause



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Farmer leaders to sit on hunger strike

■ **Ministers in huddle as stir builds up**

SANJAY KAW AND RAJNISH SHARMA
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

Scaling up their agitation against the Centre's three agriculture-related laws, the farmers will observe a day-long fast and organise dharnas at district headquarters all across the country on Monday. Not satisfied with the government's offer to amend the new farm laws, thousands of farmers from different states have started marching towards the Delhi borders, where protests have been going on for the past 18 days.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has said he too will hold a one-day fast in support of the protesting farmers. He also urged all Aam Aadmi Party workers and supporters to observe a day's fast in solidarity with the farmers. He said the Centre should immediately accept all demands by the farmers protesting against the agriculture laws and bring a bill to guarantee minimum support prices.

The Delhi-Jaipur highway was partially shut for about three hours on Sunday afternoon as farmers started a tractor march from Shahjahanpur on the Rajasthan-Haryana border as part of their escalating protest against the contentious farm laws.

In a bid to break the ongoing deadlock with the farmers' unions, Union home minister Amit Shah held a series of meetings on Sunday with agriculture minister Narendra



KHALISTANIS VANDALISE GANDHI STATUE

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

Hundreds of Sikhs from in and around Greater Washington DC area, Maryland and Virginia, along with many from other states, undertook a car rally on Saturday to the Indian embassy in downtown Washington DC, where they gathered to express solidarity with the protesting Indian farmers. — PTI

Singh Tomar and senior BJP leaders from Punjab. Even though the farmers are insistent that the Centre should withdraw the three farm laws, the Centre is keen to once again resume its dialogue

SHAH, TOMAR MEET ON AGRI LAWS ISSUE

New Delhi, Dec 13: Union ministers Narendra Singh Tomar and Som Parkash met Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday amidst farmers' protests against the Centre's three agriculture laws, officials said.

The ministers were accompanied by BJP leaders from Punjab. Tomar and Parkash, along with their ministerial colleague Piyush Goyal, had led the government's negotiations with the protesting farmers. Tomar and Parkash met the home minister, an official said. It was not immediately known what transpired in the meeting. Farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, have been protesting at Delhi's borders demanding the repeal of the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act 2020.

with the farmers' unions. Sources said there was a strong possibility that the Centre could send a fresh proposal to the farmers in the next two days and invite them for a renewed dialogue.

State has degenerated: Kamal

DC CORRESPONDENT
MADURAI, DEC. 13

Actor-politician Kamal Haasan kickstarted his poll campaign for the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections of 2021 in Madurai on Sunday stating he would always speak the truth in politics. Recalling the history of Madurai, he said the city had welcomed Mahatma Gandhi in 1919 with great enthusiasm and that he would strive to make MGR's dream of Madurai as the second capital of Tamil Nadu a reality.

Taking an aim at the two major Dravidian parties who have ruled the State since 1967, he said "There is no doubt about degeneration in the state as I see evidence of it in Madurai. People know that well and there is no point lamenting. MNM will talk about what needs to be done now."

He pointed to how bad the roads were and how the city was decaying and how MNM would do everything to change the way the administration is run for the people.

Having stated that the authorities had, at the last minute, not granted his party MNM to campaign within urban areas, he received enthusiastic reception as he was driven around villages near Madurai in a car with a sky window.

In Madurai city, he participated in a Town Hall kind of meeting in which he fielded questions at the Chamber of Commerce.



Makkal Needhi Maiam president Kamal Haasan is seen commencing his campaign for assembly election at Madurai on Sunday. — DC

Does hungry India need new Parliament?

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC 13

What is the rationale behind building a new Parliament for ₹1,000 crore "when half of India is hungry due to coronavirus pandemic triggered loss of livelihoods," said MNM chief Kamal Haasan. On the day he was heading to Madurai to launch his election campaign, the actor-politician tweeted that

Prime Minister Narendra Modi must spell out why the need for a new Parliament in the extravagant ₹20,000 cr Central Vista project.

Comparing the new edifice to the ancient Great Wall of China, he said "thousands of people perished" during its construction, but the Middle Kingdom rulers said the wall was to "guard the people."

■ P4

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SHORT TAKES

Gold concealed in aircraft seized by CustomsDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 13

The Customs department has seized ₹23.6 lakhs gold being smuggled into the city. In a statement, the Commissioner of Customs, Chennai International Airport, said a total of Rs 23.6 lakhs worth gold weighing 463 grams were seized.

Based on intelligence that gold was likely to be smuggled from Dubai by concealing it in the aircraft, an Indigo Airlines flight, which arrived from Dubai, was rummaged and two packets containing gold paste weighing 406 grams wrapped in adhesive tape was found concealed ingeniously in the inner panel of the aircraft body next to one of the seats. On extraction, 309 grams gold of 24 k purity valued at ₹15.72 lakhs was recovered and seized as unclaimed under the Customs Act.

In another case, Kalil Rahman (49) of Ramanathapuram who arrived by the same flight was intercepted at the exit. On personal search, one gold paste bundle weighing 176 grams was recovered, which on extraction yielded 154 grams of gold valued at ₹7.84 lakhs.

In all, 463 grams gold valued at ₹23.6 lakhs was recovered and seized by the Customs Act 1962. Further investigation is under progress.

House maid who fell from 6th floor of apartment succumbs to injuries

Kochi, Dec. 13: A house maid who was seriously injured after she fell while apparently trying to climb down from the sixth floor of an apartment here last week, succumbed to her injuries at a private hospital on Sunday, police said. Kumari, 55, from Salem in Tamil Nadu, suffered serious head injuries due to the fall on December 5.

She was first rushed to a government hospital here and then taken to the private hospital, where she was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit. Hospital sources said her condition worsened on Saturday evening and she was put on ventilator support. She died on Sunday morning, they said. Her family has alleged that the flat owner had kept Kumari locked up in the apartment and that he was responsible for her death. Kochi City Police Commissioner Vijay Sakhare has ordered a probe into the incident.

Police said that they registered a case of illegal confinement against the flat owner on the basis of the statements of her husband and son. "Legal action will be taken against the flat owner. We are trying to explore whether any other offences can be made out. The illegal confinement leads to serious charges. We are exploring that," a top police officer said.

Police said the incident occurred when the woman allegedly tried to escape from the apartment after her request for going back to her village on an urgent phone call by her husband was turned down by the apartment owner. The woman had allegedly tied two sarees together and tried to scale down from the balcony of the apartment located near Marine Drive here.

— PTI

DMDK will decide poll ties in Jan: Premalatha

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 13

The DMDK party led by Captain Vijayakanth, held a meeting on Sunday here, following which party treasurer, Premalatha Vijayakanth, declared that the party would announce alliance partners next month.

A series of resolutions were also passed at the meeting, but it was the talk on an alliance decision that set off a buzz, as

the DMDK is a member of the AIADMK alliance in which the BJP is also a partner.

Meanwhile, Fisheries minister Jayakumar, exuded confidence that the DMDK would be very much a part of the 'grand alliance' being built by the ruling AIADMK in which he named the PMK as one of the partners.

Besides, members during the meeting also congratulated the COVID-19 frontline warriors like doctors,



nurses, health officials, sanitary staff, the police department, the 108 ambulance staff and govern-

ment officials who rendered selfless service to tackle the epidemic.

The meeting also urged the Union government to consider the plea of the country's farmers and constitute a panel to study the subject and arrive at a lasting conclusion to the issue.

The meeting wanted the Centre and the state government to appropriately compensate farmers who have lost their crops in the recent 'Burevi' cyclone.

Ramapuram lake & park in bad shape

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, DEC. 13

The Ramapuram lake and park, inaugurated by the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) spending around Rs 1 crore in December last year, has failed to attract visitors due to poor maintenance and beautification.

After cyclone Nivar and subsequent weeks-long heavy rainfall hit the city, the entire lake area has turned unattractive. The lake is the only source of drinking water for more than one lakh villagers.

The civic body, as part of the rejuvenation, had set up an ecological park by constructing a walkway around the lake. But many portions of the walkway have now been damaged due to heavy rain, and weeds and

After cyclone Nivar and subsequent weeks-long heavy rainfall hit the city, the entire lake area has turned unattractive. The lake is the only source of drinking water for more than one lakh villagers

shrubs have grown uncontrolled all over the floor titles making walking difficult.

Mr. A. Paul Dhas, president, Ramapuram Social Welfare Federation, said the only thing looking good now there was a name board with the pictures of the present and former chief ministers that was erected on the day of inauguration.

The lake is filled with shrubs and algae. The concrete chairs placed around the lake turned useless due to the surroundings

turned filthy. Even after a year of inauguration, no pathway is laid to reach the walkway around the lake. Lot of electrical concrete boulders supposed to be brought in for beautification works are stacked at the frontage for many months. A little space available to reach the lake is blocked due to vehicle parking.

"The park and lake have now become a scarecrow as a result of poor maintenance. We are happy to provide support if the GCC comes forward to maintain the park. This lake was rejuvenated after the surrounding water bodies were encroached. Though the authorities claim that they would not allow further encroachments, the poor maintenance will only help the people to encroach the

ple, the members said.

Members also urged the state government to keep up its last poll promise of closing all TASMACH shops, which it has not done so far.

Regarding the toll collected at the tollgate in Sriperumbudur, Kanchipuram district, the members said the national highway in that stretch was full of potholes and mostly damaged, making it tough for travel.

Hence, toll should not be

collected before the highway is laid out afresh again.

On the recent rains, members expressed happiness about the copious rains and better water level in the state. But, most part of the water was released into the sea without any use.

Expressing displeasure about it, the members urged the government to desilt tanks and lakes at the appropriate time, and stock water for future use.



Corporation workers clean Marina beach on Sunday for the opening today. — DC

TVS family shows the way for India Inc.

R. MOHAN | DC
CHENNAI, DEC. 13

In shaping a scientific approach to relationship management among family members, the \$8.5 billion (Rs 62,000 crore) TVS family group of industries, whose fourth generation is now running many of the enterprises, has unfurled a novel share-holding mechanism. The process is such it would ensure that the ownership of shares in group firms would rest fully with the branch of the family that is running the enterprise. The old holding company pattern of common investment in all companies in the group through T V Sundram Iyengar & Sons Private Limited, Sundaram Industries and Southern Roadways is being dismantled through divestment of shares so that the control of the companies is formalised.

This might bear a crucial lesson for India Inc. in which families own a chunk of major factories, businesses and trade and, because of the generational shifts, invariably end up fighting in courts with protracted litigation bearing little fruit save keeping lawyers in clover. The TVS experiment shines through just as the Tatas and the Mistrys are fighting over one of India's oldest, most traditional and biggest conglomerates.

The TVS group came from Madurai to Chennai in 1960 and in that decade launched a cluster of four major factories in Padi,



near Ambattur. Over the years, the group has expanded into various manufacturing lines and business ranging from essentially auto parts to vehicle finance. Venu Srinivasan, son of TVS' youngest son TS Srinivasan, was the first in the family to venture into making two-wheelers (and three-wheelers) that is a whole product rather than just automobile parts.

The 110-year-old group is now well past old friction points and looks at a future of cooperation without inner family tussles. The four branches of the family descending from four sons of TV Sundram Iyengar — TS Rajam, Krishna, Santhanam and Srinivasan — has grown with the fourth generation running many of the group companies now, significantly without gender discrimination as women have an equal say in running the empire. The group has evolved into a

non-competing cooperative extended family with the division of ownership made clearer by the new pact. It is moot whether the template will be useful for feuding families but TVS has shown the way.

"The members of the TVS family have agreed to subscribe to the terms of a memorandum of family arrangement in order to record the terms of a family arrangement to align and synchronize the ownership of shares in various companies/businesses belonging to the TVS Group with the management of the respective companies/business," was the text of a statement from the group. By the terms, the same family members will continue to manage the enterprises. "The nominated members of the TVS family will now deliberate on the steps to be taken to further implement this arrangement," the statement read.

"The present shareholders of the TVS holding companies primarily consist of the third and fourth generations of the original founder, T.V. Sundaram Iyengar. The various businesses/entities of the TVS Group have been traditionally managed by members of the different branches of the TVS family. With the passage of time, the members of the TVS family felt that the ownership of shares in various companies/ businesses should align and synchronise with the management of the respective companies and, therefore, the memorandum of family arrangement has been entered into," the release said. The details of divestment are being worked out and if the plan of separate entities running different businesses without shares being held by the holding companies does succeed, it should be a working template for India Inc.

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, DEC. 13

The Covid19 pandemic made life miserable across sectors but a group of fishermen in Pattinapakam have now been making a mark. The "Nambikkai" fish farmers group recently won this year's 'Best Fisheries Self Help Group' award instituted by the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.

Set up by half a dozen fisher folk, including four women with the support of the ICAR-Central Institute of Brackish-water Aquaculture (ICAR-CIBA) in 2018, the group has now been able to successfully convert fish waste into value added products adopting modern technology.

T Kennit Raj, who is leading the group, said that they started the group as part of CIBA's 'Waste to Wealth' initiative. "We were trained to use this technology of recycling fish waste to develop value-added prod-

ucts named Plankton+ and Horti+. While the product Plankton+ is used in the aquaculture system to boost and maintain the healthy plankton blooms, Horti+ is used as an organic manure in horticulture", he said.

Under the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan Scheme (SCSPS) of the government of India, the group has now built capacity of producing 16,345 kg of value added products and made a year's turnover of ₹16.8 lakh.

"We were able to earn Rs. 2 lakh though Covid-19 hit the business adversely. We collect fish waste from markets and fish trimming from fish processing companies and make the value addition. We are very excited to receive this award in recognition for our hard work. It gives us enormous confidence to upscale production", said T Kennit Raj, Head of the SHG.

Velanganni, a group member, said her life had changed since she joined the initiative. "My family, before I joined the project, had depended upon fish-

ing to earn a livelihood. There was no guarantee in getting a decent income to make ends meet since fishing is a highly unpredictable and risky business. Today I earn ₹15,000 every month and I am more confident as well. Even in this tough time of pandemic, we did at least ₹2 lakh worth business", she said.

When CIBA approached the fishing community with the project nobody was willing to take it up. "But we formed the group and worked with dedication in November 2019 without expecting anything in return. Two years later, people started showing interest in joining us. So we are trying to expand the business and finding more clients with the support of CIBA. We produce two organic manure products," she said.

"This technology of CIBA has the potential to propagate across the country in cleaning the fish markets and also providing alternative livelihood to many as a circular economy", said Dr KK Vijayan, Director, CIBA.

Consumer fora under self-imposed quarantine?



Sanjay Pinto

A judicial body that is meant to run like a Ferrari can justifiably slow down like a bullock cart during a pandemic! But should it come to a standstill in a pit stop for almost 9 months? While the Supreme Court and High Courts in the country have been regularly hearing cases, mainly through video conferencing and limited physical hearing, why are consumer fora in many States on a long term auto pilot adjournment mode?

Unlike other courts, Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions have a statutory prescription of three to five months for the disposal of a com-

plaint under Section 38(7) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. While the National Commission in the capital has been partially functioning through video conferencing, it surpasses my comprehension as to why State and District Commissions are just routinely adjourning cases without taking the video conferencing route.

The official figure (not sure if it is updated on the website of the national commission) of pending consumer cases in India stands at close to five lakh cases, of which more than 95% are in the State and District Commissions. And these are the two tiers that are almost dormant. On paper, the option of video conferencing seems to have been extended only if both the sides in a case express their consent. This comes across as naive as the opposite parties will seldom want movement in a matter, as penden-

JUSTICE
FOR ALL

cy will suit, or at least not hurt them. The Registries, I'm told are functioning and complaints can be filed. But what about hearing of cases and passing of orders?

Having lost two High Court judges in the country to Covid19 and with several others testing positive, I do not for a moment, bat for resumption of physical hearing of cases. As the Presiding Officers in Consumer Commissions are invariably senior citizens

with possible comorbidities, I completely understand the fear they may be engulfed in and the caution that they need to exercise. But putting in place video conferencing of limited cases 5 days a week does not involve rocket science. School children are attending online classes. Surely, adults adapt in these trying circumstances.

Truth be told, the ongoing pandemic and the resultant job losses would have inevitably led to a spate of consumer disputes. For instance, there is probably a significant black market for surgical masks, gloves and sanitizers. Section 2(43) of the Consumer Protection Act deals with 'spurious goods' defined as those that are "falsely claimed to be genuine".

There is also an exponential surge in online transactions today. Explanation (b) of Section 2(7) includes online transactions for goods and services. There are also concepts like 'direct

selling', 'e-commerce' and 'product liability' under Section 2(13)(16) and (34) of the new statute. So in this Covid phase, consumer disputes would be booming. With the new pecuniary jurisdiction of upto 1 crore rupees in District Commissions, isn't it a pity that these avenues are practically shut for consumers?

And whatever happened to the online filing of consumer complaints under the 2019 enactment? It would have come in handy for video conferencing during this period. I do concede that there may be glitches and genuine difficulties for lawyers, parties-in-person and presiding officers with virtual hearing. Adaptation is Hobson's Choice. Inaction is not an option. Consumer rights cannot be put on a ventilator.

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

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VELLORE

SHORT TAKES

TN heading to second green revolution: minister

Coimbatore, Dec 13: Tamil Nadu is heading towards a second green revolution due to various pro-farmer initiatives taken by the AIADMK government in the state, Municipal Administration Minister S P Velumani said on Sunday.

The state allocated Rs 11,894 crore for agriculture in the 2020-21 budget and took steps including increasing cultivated area, introduction of new technologies, timely supply of seeds and fertilisers, Velumani said. He was speaking at a meeting held to review the expansion and rejuvenation of Noyyal river here.

The Palaniswami government also allocated Rs 230 crore for rejuvenation of Noyyal river, a tributary of Cauvery, of which Rs 174 crore is being spent in Coimbatore district covering 72 kms, he added.

Noting that about one lakh acres of arid land in Thondamuthur, Sular, Singanallur and Kinathukadavu have become arable, Velumani said that of the 23 check dams in the river, renovation works of 18 are underway and five have already completed with the help of NABARD. The District Collector K Rajamani and a number of farmers attended the meeting. —PTI

TN records 1,195 new Covid-19 cases; 12 fatalities

Chennai, Dec 13: Tamil Nadu posted 1,195 fresh COVID-19 cases aggregating to 7.98 lakh infections in the state, while 12 more people succumbed to the virus pushing the toll to 11,895, the health department said on Sunday.

As many as 1,276 people have got cured from the contagion totalling to 7.76 lakh so far, a bulletin said.

Active cases on Sunday, in Tamil Nadu stood at 10,115.

Two districts, including the State capital and Coimbatore logged new cases in triple digits with Chennai adding 340, Coimbatore 115 while the remaining were spread across other districts. Chennai continued to top the list of cases with 2.19 lakh infections out of more than 7.98 lakh in the state.

A total of 69,568 samples were tested on Sunday taking the cumulative to 1.29 crore specimens examined so far. Of the 12 deaths reported, seven died in private hospitals while five in government.

Two have succumbed to the virus without 'any chronic illness'. Four of those who tested positive were returnees from other States, the bulletin said. —PTI

49 fresh COVID-19 cases in Pondy, no deaths

Puducherry, Dec 13: Puducherry reported 49 fresh Covid-19 cases on Sunday, taking the tally to 37,492 while the toll remained at 619 as there were no fatalities. The day also saw 57 people getting discharged from various hospitals after recovery.

Puducherry region topped the list of fresh infections (25), followed by Karaikal 12, Mahe 10 and Yanam 2, the Director of the Health and family welfare Department S Mohan Kumar said in a release.

Cumulatively 37,492 cases have been confirmed, out of which 36,536 were treated and discharged. Active cases stood at 337. The fatality and recovery rates in the Union Territory were 1.65 per cent and 97.45 per cent, he added. —PTI

More communities seek reservation like PMK

ARULOLI M | DC TIRUNELVELI, DEC 13

The Pattali Makkal Katchi's (PMK) statewide protest seeking 20 per cent reservation exclusive for the Vanniyar community has opened a Pandora's box of demands from few other bigger communities for separate reservation.

Claiming to be one among the three major communities in the state, the Nadar association has placed a demand for 15 per cent reservation for them within the BC category. The president of Dakshina Mara Nadar Sangam, RK Kalithasan, said, despite

being a major community with around 1.30 crore people in the state, the community has not got adequate representation either in the state assembly or in the cabinet.

The Madurai Nadar Mahajana Sangam, general secretary, G Karikolraj, also echoed the sentiment of Kalithasan, adding that both the Dravidian parties that continuously ruled the state till now, equally have been responsible for ignoring the biggest trading community, whose contribution to the government exchequer is huge through trade and commerce activities.

Both the sangams, the two major associations of the Nadar community, in a joint statement issued on Saturday said that they are to organise all the smaller community associations and the Nadar political outfits, to enhance their bargaining power without which no political party would consider their demands.

A similar demand for separate reservation has also been voiced by the Devendrakula Vellalar community. The Tamilaga Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (TMMK) which welcomed the recent move of the chief minister inte-

grating the seven sub-castes as Devendrakula Vellalar, also demanded delisting the Devendrakula Vellalars from the scheduled caste list, and issue a separate reservation of a minimum of 10 per cent.

On its part, the Thevar community has put up a similar demand for separate reservation. A social activist, pleading anonymity, said that this kind of demand for separate reservation for individual castes, will defeat the very spirit and objective of the reservation scheme, and only help sharpen casteism.

Pondicherry government cancels distillery licence

DC CORRESPONDENT PUDUCHERRY, DEC. 13

The Puducherry Government has cancelled the licence of Ms Ravikumar Distilleries Ltd. (RKDL) Katterikuppam, Puducherry, for violating various norms in production and storage of IMFL in the Union Territory.

RKDL obtained a distillery manufacturing licence, licence for bottling of liquor and licence for authorised storage in bond of Indian or Foreign liquor spirit in 2000. The licences were renewed for the year 2019-2020 and the company also submitted application for renewal for 2020-2021.

During inspection at retail wine shops, Deputy Commissioner, Puducherry in June 2020 found that the IMFL bottles supplied by the company were sold without holograms. In subsequent inspections at the warehouse, the officials found that liquor bottles contained no holograms, which was done to evade excise duty. Later, a show

There was recurrent pattern of missing holograms seen in the combination with failure to maintain records with intention to evade payment of excise duty. The company consciously avoided affixing holograms on liquor bottles and the Commissioner recently cancelled all the three licences of RKDL.—ABHIJIT VIJAY CHAUDHARI, Excise Department Commissioner

cause notice was issued to the company alleging discrepancies in production and storage of liquor bottles besides affixing holograms on the bottles. However, the company denied the allegations.

The Deputy Commissioner (Excise) had issued a circular in 2006 directing all the distilleries and dealers to affix holograms on liquor bottles manufactured within UT and imported from outside the State. There was a mismatch of holograms affixed on the liquor bottles.

A very large number of holograms in the hologram register, which were shown against bottles pro-

duced, were actually missing and remain unaccounted. The company has stocked more than what is permissible as per direction of the department.

In the order the Excise Department Commissioner, Abhijit Vijay Chaudhari said there was systematic regular and recurrent pattern of missing holograms seen in the combination with failure to maintain accurate records with intention to evade payment of excise duty. The company consciously avoided affixing holograms on liquor bottles and the Commissioner recently cancelled all the three licences of RKDL.

Panchami lands, still a distant dream for Dalits

A ARUL PALANI | DC CHENNAI, DEC 13

"No one should forget that Tamil Nadu is a land of great reformers like Thanthai Periyar and Kamarajar. Though Tamil Nadu has been a role model for other states in achieving social justice, and for removing inequalities, no law has been enacted relating to allotment of 'Panchami lands' to the depressed and weaker sections of the society. If a person is on unauthorised occupation of the land belonging to the government or local body, and such encroachers are sought to be removed, there should not be any discrimination or injustice to a member of the weaker sections of the society, in whose lands, others are now in possession and enjoyment.

Observing this, Justice S Manikumar of the Madras High Court on July 2012 passed the landmark order relating to Panchami land. The Supreme Court had also dismissed an appeal against the order.

Following this, the state government in October 2015 constituted a state-level committee headed by

the commissioner, land administration, to study and submit a report suggesting modalities for retrieving Panchami lands and restoring its ownership to Dalits.

Even eight years after the verdict, the government had not taken any action on the matter, unlike Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh who have legislations to protect the denotified lands.

"Due to lack of political will, the government has not taken any effort to protect the panchami land and remove encroachment despite several orders of the Madras High Court, Apex Court, and protests over decades," said K Samuel Raj, state general secretary, TN Untouchability Eradication Front (TNUeF).

In 1994, the Panchami Land Reclaim Movement was started in Chengalpattu district. Two youths, John Thomas and Elumalai, were killed in police firing in a related agitation in Karanai village.

"Dalits are now waging a never ending legal battle and the government had not framed any effective legislation to retrieve panchami lands from

encroachers, says S Karuppiiah, state secretary, Dalit Liberation Movement (DLM).

J Nicholas of Dalit Mannurimai (land rights for Dalits), a NGO involved in the recovering the Panchami land for the past three decades, said, "During our field work, we found that Dalit emancipation in the rural terrain could be achieved only with the help of ownership over the land."

"When RTI introduced, our agitation picked up momentum. We noted that the panchami land which was given for the amelioration of Dalits, had been taken away by successive governments in a systematic manner," he added.

Samuel Raj said, "The land has been occupied by local bigwigs and people from dominant castes. Land disappears at every UDR survey. If the government has a will, it would issue the land to the Dalits within a month."

The Dalit Liberation Movement has proposed to stage statewide agitation next month. The issue will occupy an important place in the manifesto of various parties, added S Karuppiiah.



EXAM TIME

The State Government on Sunday conducted written examinations for various ranks for police, firemen and prison wanders in different locations in the city. Picture shows exam underway at GKM College at Nedunkundram near Tambaram. —DC

Kamal's Jallikattu will be in May elections

From Pg 1

Kamal spoke up about corruption and the need to eradicate it and that his party, if voted to power, would concentrate on creating entrepreneurs who would in turn create jobs for youth.

Touching a sentiment that would be popular down south, Kamal brought in the popular bull sport saying "In January the bulls will engage in Jallikattu. In May, we will engage in a fight with unworthy people. I am ready." He promised to be the tool of political change that would bring development to the doorsteps of the people.

Kamal Haasan takes dig at PM Narendra Modi

From Pg1

The construction of the new building cannot begin since the Supreme Court is



Actor turned Kamal Haasan speaking to media at the Madurai airport on Sunday. —DC

hearing petitions challenging the project.

The top court had even accused the government of "pushing forward aggres-

sively" with the project ahead of its decision and the Prime Minister conducted a bhumi puja last week.

Stray bear menace again in Nilgiris

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, DEC. 13

While a stray bear was trapped in Nedugula village limits in Kotagiri near here, foresters set cages to trap two more bears which have been troubling villagers for the past three months.

The man-bear conflict has been on the rise in the Kotagiri rural limits since last summer. On quite a few occasions, foresters successfully thwarted the stray bear problem in the village limits of Kotagiri. But, for the past couple of months, the menace in the Nedugula, Kaikatty village limits in Kotagiri slopes, has escalated.

The bears targeted a bakery in Kaikatty village a couple of weeks back. The frequent visits of these bears to a temple located in Nedugula village limits scared the villagers there. On a couple

of occasions, these animals even entered the temple premises and damaged some of the articles there.

In recent weeks, bear movement in the village



View of the stray bears in a tea garden in Kotagiri village limits. —DC

periphery and in farmlands added to the scare of villagers. Following this, the foresters placed cages in a couple of places to trap them.

On Saturday night, a bear

was trapped as it walked into the cage to feed on the fruits kept there. The foresters relocated the animal to a forest near Ooty suburb on Sunday. But, the problem seems to be unend-

ing, as two more were spotted in the Nedugula-Kaikatty village limits.

Foresters have set up cages in a couple of places to trap them and are monitoring their movement.

Few idols rumoured to be missing

From pg1

Amid the development, there are rumours that a few idols of deities were missing from the temple.

Kanchipuram RDO Vidya Ur, held talks with the temple administrators and the public persuading them to hand over the temple treasure to the government treasury. The temple administration and the public wanted the authorities to hand over the jewels to the temple during its consecration, to which the officials did not yield.

Hence, additional police force was called to the scene and the talks extended up to evening. Later, the treasure was handed over to RDO



Treasure unearthed from the temple

Vidya. The people and the temple administration have formally appealed to the chief minister and the

ministry of charities to ensure that the jewels were returned to the temple.

CITY

CLIPS

Ambattur showroom for Tanishq

Chennai: Tanishq continues its retail expansion with the launch of its tenth store in Ambattur, which was inaugurated by Mr. Vijesh Rajan, Head - Retail, Tanishq and Mr. Narasimhan, Regional Business Manager - South,

Tanishq. The new store caters to wide range of 2000+ designs across gold, diamonds and solitaires. The store pro,oses a safe shopping experience with Gold Standard of safety and remote selling options too.

Over 4K sanitation workers get PPE kits

Chennai: Ericsson, in collaboration with the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS), flagged off an initiative aimed at supporting the distribution of Personal Protective Equipment kits to over 4,000 sanitation workers across 13 urban local bodies in Tamil Nadu.

This initiative will also

create digital-blended training as well as communication material to enable effective use of the PPE kits together with awareness around general health and social welfare topics amongst the sanitation workers and their families.

The initiative will indirectly benefit 1 million people who are served by

the 4,000+ sanitation workers and is expected to be completed by Jan. 14, 2021.

The components of the PPE kit, such as face masks, nitrile gloves, headbands, wristbands, and disinfectant soap are uniquely designed for sanitation workers to safely practice their occupations.

LIBA and city hospital bridge gap between medical and management sector

Chennai: To bridge the gap between the medical and management sectors, LIBA, Loyola College's Institute of Business Administration and MGM Healthcare signed a MoU, 2020, at LIBA.

The MoU was signed by Rev Fr C Joe Arun SJ, Director of LIBA, and Harish Manian, CEO, MGM Healthcare Pvt Ltd. It signifies an academic collaboration in the areas of teach-

ing, training, curriculum development, research, internship and placements in the field of healthcare management.

MGM Healthcare also signed a MoU with Maitreya

Medicare to provide specialised assistance and necessary medical services to its hospital arm, Maitreya Multi Speciality Hospital in Surat. The MoU will provide Maitreya

Medicare with specific and specialised Cardiology/Cardiothoracic and Heart-Lung Transplant services to help its patients with serious cardiac ailments.

IN BRIEF

2 ULTRAS KILLED, THIRD HELD IN POONCH GUNFIGHTDC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, DEC. 13

Two militants were killed and their associate was arrested during a gunfight that took place in Dugran area along the Mughal Road in Jammu and Kashmir's frontier Poonch district on Sunday.

"Two (militants) killed. One associate arrested at Poshana area in Poonch in a joint operation by JKP and Army," the police said in a tweet.

Giving the details of the encounter, the officials said that the J&K police's counter-insurgency Special Operations Group (SOG) and the Army's 16 Rashtriya Rifles jointly launched a cordon-and-search-operation in the area in the Pir Panjal range early Sunday, soon after a resident of neighbouring Dogrian Buffiaz village Ghulam Hussein filed a report with the local police that his son Talib Hussain went missing on December 9.

The J&K police late on Sunday said that the militant duo killed in Poonch encounter has been identified as Pakistani nationals Sajid and Bilal — both affiliated with Lashkar-e-Tayyaba. IGP Jammu Mukesh Singh said that two AK 47 rifles, one UBGL and one Thuraya Satphone were found on the slain men.

DG police Dilbag Singh said that these militants are known to have sneaked into J&K from PoK recently.

BENGAL'S FAMED 'POUSH MELA' CALLED OFF

Kolkata, Dec. 13: The annual 'Poush Mela', a heritage cultural event attracting lakhs of travellers to West Bengal's Santiniketan, will not be held this year due to Covid-19 restrictions, an official said.

The over-a-century-old handicraft, handloom, art and music festival, is usually held in December-end. "We are not sure about getting the nod from the local administration in view of the Covid-19 situation. Most students, an integral part of Poush Mela, are not coming to the campus. Keeping all these factors in mind, we had to take this unpleasant decision for public health safety," a member of Visva-Bharati's executive council said.

The decision was taken at a high-level meeting of the executive council. Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore's father Maharshi Debendranath Tagore had first organised the fair in 1894 and Visva-Bharati, the university founded by the bard, started organising it from 1951.

The 'Poush Utsav', including prayers and singing of devotional songs in the varsity campus, will, however, take place (on December 23 this year), he said. The fate of the Poush Mela has been a subject of conjecture in the last few months, with an official of the council claiming in July that Visva-Bharati authorities had decided to scrap the event.

NORMALCY BACK AT REMOTE ARUNACHAL TOWN

Itanagar, Dec. 13: Normalcy returned to the remote Arunachal Pradesh town of Vijoynagar, which saw violent protests with several government offices burnt over the voting rights of former Assam Rifles personnel in the pan-chayat polls, a senior official said on Sunday.

Security has been tightened in the sensitive town, which is surrounded by Myanmar on three sides, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Kime Kaming said after returning from the area.

Paramilitary forces along with the police have been deployed in Vijoynagar to ensure peace, he said, adding that vandalism will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Vijoynagar, in the state's Changlang district, saw widespread arson on Friday as a mob of around 400 people led by the Yobin Students' Union set fire to the offices of the Extra Assistant Commissioner, Special Branch of the state police and the post office, besides ransacking the local police station.

The civil helipad was also partially damaged by the mob. Ex-employees of the Assam Rifles have been living in the town since the early 60s. They originally hailed from outside the state but form the majority of the local population now, official sources said.

In cold water

BJP leaders being rescued after a shikara carrying them capsized in the Dal Lake in Srinagar on Sunday. — PTI

Send Central forces to Bengal, says BJP leaderRAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, DEC. 13

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

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

Banerjee wants to spread violence because she knows she has lost her ground. So she wants to come to power again in the state, riding the power of violence. I feel violence or any fear about it should have no place in Bengal's culture. We appeal to the Election Commission to deploy the central force now to end the era of politics of violence here and ensure that people can cast their votes without any fear," the BJP national general secretary said at Santiniketan in Bolpur of Birbhum after meeting Visva Bharati vice chancellor Bidyut Chakrabarty to discuss Prime Minister Narendra Modi's virtual address at the central university's foundation day on December 24.

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

On Saturday evening a BJP booth president: Saikat Bhawal was beaten to death while six more were injured in an attack by TMC workers on the party's door-to-door outreach programme: Aar Noy Onnyay (No More Injustice) at Halishahar in North 24 Parganas. Three persons with TMC link were arrested by the police.

Covid positive min Vij shifted to Rohtak hosp

67-yr-old BJP leader complained of discomfort at civil hosp

Ambala, Dec. 13: Haryana health minister Anil Vij, who had tested positive for Coronavirus recently, has been shifted to the PGIMS hospital at Rohtak from the civil hospital here after he complained of discomfort, doctors here said on Sunday.

Doctors said the minister was shifted on Saturday night. Ambala's Civil Surgeon Dr Kuldeep Singh said a team of doctors at the Rohtak hospital was monitoring his condition.

Vij, who had last month got one shot of the two-dose trial of the Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin after he offered to be a volunteer, had on December 5 tested positive for the Coronavirus. The 67-year-old BJP leader had offered to be the first volunteer in the phase three trials for Covaxin, an indigenous potential vaccine being developed by Bharat Biotech against Covid-19. He was administered the dose on November 20 at the Civil Hospital in Ambala Cantonment, about 50 km from Chandigarh.

Bharat Biotech had said that clinical trials of the vaccine are based on a two-dose schedule, given 28 days apart. The vaccine

India may deliver vaccines through election officialsSANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

India's Coronavirus tally is nearing the 9.9 million mark with 30,254 fresh cases and 391 more deaths reported in the last 24 hours.

Amid a downward trend in active cases and a surge in the number of people recovering from the disease, the country is reportedly planning to deploy its vast election machinery to deliver 600 million doses of the Covid-19 vaccines to the most vulnerable people in the next six to eight months through conventional cold chain systems.

The Centre has lined up cold storage facilities with temperatures ranging

between 2 to 8 degrees Celsius (36-48°F), said V.K. Paul, who heads the group of experts on vaccine administration which advises Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

With the first priority given to frontline health workers and those highly vulnerable to the infection, states and Union Territories are also ensuring that vaccines for all others are administered swiftly.

As many as eight Covid vaccine candidates, including three indigenous ones, that are under different stages of clinical trials, could be ready for authorisation in the near future.

India is actively considering Pfizer's Covid-19

vaccine after the American pharma giant sought emergency use authorisation in India.

The country is also considering two more vaccine candidates, one being developed by the Serum Institute of India in partnership with AstraZeneca and Oxford University and the other one by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech.

Both SII and Bharat Biotech are now conducting Phase 3 trials of their respective vaccine candidates in the country. The applications of Pfizer, SII, and Bharat Biotech are being reviewed by the subject expert committee (SEC) on Covid-19 at the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation.

efficacy will be determined two weeks after the second dose, it said.

Covaxin has been designed to be protective 2 weeks after volunteers receive the 2nd dose. The Union health ministry had also stepped in to say

that Covaxin is a two-dose anti-Coronavirus vaccine and that Vij was given only the first dose a fortnight before he tested positive.

"The antibodies against the infection build up in a human being only after a

specific number of days pass after the second dose of the vaccine is taken. This is a two-dose vaccine. The minister in question has taken only one dose of the vaccine," the ministry had said in a statement. — PTI

WOMAN JUDGE DIES DURING COVID TREATMENT

Indore, Dec. 13: Justice Vandana Kasarekar of the Indore bench of Madhya Pradesh High Court died on Sunday while undergoing treatment for Coronavirus at a private hospital here, a medical officer said.

Kasarekar, 60, had also been suffering from a kidney ailment since a long time, he said. "Justice Vandana Kasarekar of the high court's Indore bench died while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in the city. She had been in a critical condition at the hospital since the last few days," district nodal officer for Covid-19 prevention Amit Malakar said.

"Justice Kasarekar had tested positive for Covid-19 a few days back. Besides, she had been suffering from a kidney disease since a long time," he said. State Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan expressed grief over her death in a tweet. Before being appointed as a judge, Justice Kasarekar was the lawyer of civil and constitutional matters in the Indore bench of the high court.

She was the only woman judge of the Indore bench at present. She had been appointed the high court judge in October 2014 and her term was to end in July 2022. — PTI

● **JUSTICE VANDANA KASAREKAR, 60, who had been suffering from a kidney ailment was tested Covid-19 positive a few days back.**



Vice-president M.Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, defence minister Rajnath Singh, home minister Amit Shah and others pay homage to martyrs who lost their lives in 2001 Parliament attack to mark its 19th anniversary, at Parliament House in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

PM, aides honour martyrs in LS attack

New Delhi, Dec. 13: Vice president and Rajya Sabha chairperson M. Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Speaker Om Birla, Union ministers and Opposition leaders on Sunday paid tributes at the Parliament complex to those who lost their lives in the 2001 Parliament attack.

Rajya Sabha deputy chairperson Harivansh, defence minister Rajnath Singh, home minister Amit Shah, leader of

Opposition in the Upper House Ghulam Nabi Azad, Ram Gopal Yadav of the Samajwadi Party and Rajiv Shukla of the Congress were among those who paid tributes at a brief ceremony held outside the Parliament building.

Those present observed a moment of silence as a mark of respect for the martyrs. Nineteen years ago on December 13, terrorists of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)

and the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) attacked the Parliament complex and opened fire.

Five Delhi Police personnel, a woman Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) trooper and two Parliament Watch and Ward Staff died taking on the terrorists. A gardener and a photojournalist also died.

All five terrorists were shot dead by security forces in retaliatory action.

Earlier, President Ram Nath Kovind said the nation gratefully remembers the brave martyrs who laid down their lives defending Parliament on this day in 2001.

"The nation gratefully remembers the brave martyrs who laid down their lives defending the Parliament on this day in 2001. While commemorating the great sacrifice of those defenders of the temple of our democracy, we strengthen our resolve

to defeat the forces of terror," the President tweeted.

Taking to Twitter, PM Modi said India will never forget the cowardly attack on its Parliament.

"We will never forget the cowardly attack on our Parliament on this day in 2001. We recall the valour and sacrifice of those who lost their lives protecting our Parliament. India will always be thankful to them," the Prime Minister said. — PTI

HEALTH | REPORT

Experts say unhealthy food choices, lack of physical activities are major causes**Survey finds drastic rise in obesity among kids**

New Delhi, Dec. 13: The latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS) has found a drastic rise in obesity among children under five years of age in 20 of the 22 states where the study was conducted, with experts attributing it to lack of physical activity and unhealthy food habits.

According to the NFHS-5, several Union Territories, and states, including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Mizoram, Tripura, Lakshadweep, Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, have registered several folds increase in the percentage of obesity among children below five years of age in comparison to NFHS-4 conducted

between 2015 and 2016. Only Goa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu registered a drop in the number of overweight children under five years of age, the data showed.

About 13.4 per cent children under the age of five were found to be obese in Ladakh which was highest among the 22 states and Union Territories surveyed, followed by Lakshadweep at 10.5 per cent, Mizoram 10 per cent, Jammu and Kashmir, and Sikkim 9.6 per cent each. Not just children, rise in obesity has even been recorded in adults in the latest survey in comparison to NFHS-4.

According to the survey data, 16 states and Union Territories registered a rise in obesity among women while 19 states and UTs recorded an increase in obesity among men. Kerala and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands recorded the highest percentage of obesity among women at 38 per cent.

Also, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep recorded the highest percentage of obesity among women at over 40 per cent. Men and women were counted as obese whose body mass index was found to be over or equal to 25.0 kg/m2 while children's obesity was counted in terms of

weight-for-height. Healthcare experts have attributed the rise in obesity to unhealthy food choices and lack of physical activities among children and even adults.

Sheila Vir, a public health nutrition expert and founder director of Public Health Nutrition and Development Centre, said there is also lack of awareness on what are good food habits. Also, high-fat and high-sugar foods are easily available and so there is higher consumption of it, she said.

"We have a double burden of undernutrition, malnutrition and overnutrition occurring together. So, I think what to feed a

child is what we are going wrong in," Vir said.

In view of the Covid-19 pandemic, she also raised concern over the rise in obesity. "There might be an increase in obesity among children in view of Covid-19 pandemic as after closure of schools, there was lack of physical activity among children and even in adults in some cases," she said.

Dr. Khan Amir Maroof, Professor at Department of Community Medicine, University College of Medical Sciences and GTB Hospital termed the rise in obesity a "very disturbing sign".

"Obesity is a manifestation of what is rapidly

changing in our environment. Of late, we see trends which increase the risk of developing obesity. Environmental factors, such as availability and consumption of junk foods, poor complementary feeding, lack of outdoor activity, and increased screen time on may be the reason for this trend," he said.

"For children, we need to flag screen time as it has multi-dimensional effects on children, obesity, being one of them. The focus has been on breastfeeding, but now it's time that complementary feeding is also focused upon," Dr Maroof suggested. — PTI

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DECCAN Chronicle

14 DECEMBER 2020

Russian ‘concerns’ drew a fitting Indian response

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lessons from Delhi border

It’s all in the ‘mindset’. The farmers’ barricade at the capital’s borders that has entered its 16th day and is stubbornly refusing to go away, to the chagrin of the Narendra Modi government, is now beginning to expose the hypocrisies of the ruling party and its constituents. And in so doing, embarrass them.

On December 10, Human Rights Day, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Joginder Singh Ugrahan’s colleagues had held posters of jailed human rights activists arrested in the Bhima Koregaon case. It drew a reaction from the usual suspects — this time in the shape of Union minister Piyush Goyal — who tossed out at them his party’s overused salvo — that of being “hard Left” and “antinational”. However, the former soldier was nonchalant.

Mr Ugrahan, whose organisation recently moved Supreme Court to have the three contentious farm laws repealed, has a question for the government. Is the government afraid to engage with him on the points that he is making regarding the laws?

For whatever they are worth, Mr Ugrahan can’t very well be expected to be punished for his beliefs, or the positions he has taken on these other matters, empowered as he is to have done so by dint of Articles 19, freedom of expression, and 25, freedom of conscience and religion, of our esteemed Constitution.

On the flipside, Mr Goyal can’t properly be said to have indulged in whataboutery either, because it is socialists who have historically upheld the humanitarian cause. Be on the Left to fight for the right.

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

There is hope yet. A way to avoid more embarrassment is to learn from one’s mistakes.

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Subhani



Justice hurried can be justice buried



V. Vijayasai Reddy

Benjamin Franklin’s maxim that “it is better 100 guilty persons should escape than that one innocent person should suffer” has been staple legal thinking for centuries.

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

Earlier this month, senior advocate Vijay Hansaria, acting as an amicus curiae, informed the Supreme Court that as per the latest data available after collating inputs from various high courts, the number of cases against public representatives stood at 4,859. The report submitted by him also recommended that the high courts be directed to prepare a blueprint for expeditious disposal of cases with the conclusion of trials by no later than one year. The chief justices of each high court may be personally requested to look into the matter and submit an action plan. Now, a lot is being discussed as to this recommendation and whether it would create more logistical and legal problems than it would solve.

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

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

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

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

because he has a deadline to catch? How can we ensure that all efforts have been made and sufficient time devoted to elicit the truth? What is the logic behind fixing a timeframe? Is it that the judiciary is again pushing against the boundaries of the doctrine of separation of powers and thereby sacrificing our constitutional right to equality?

This speedy disposal paradigm also conflicts with the present condition of fast track courts in the country. The fast track courts were meant to dispose of criminal cases. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data from January this year, the trials in fast track courts, set up in several states to allow quick trials in cases of serious crimes such as rape, take longer than those in regular courts. The data also showed that of the more than 28,000 trials completed in India’s fast track courts in 2018, only 22 per cent took less than a year to complete and about 42 per cent of the cases took more than three years to complete. While the Supreme Court has lamented about the pending cases against public representatives, it has overlooked the delay in the trial of much more heinous crimes such as crimes against women and children.

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

judges in the trial courts, themselves. To squander the limited infrastructure of the judiciary, in terms of lack of judges, limited judicial time and physical resources in one type of mostly political cases would be unjust to victims of much more heinous crimes who would see further delay getting justice. The judiciary and the justice delivery system has limited infrastructure and it is important to efficiently use them for the greater good of the people. Rather than making an un-implementable law, the focus should be on distributing resources with focus on matters, which are of higher judicial importance, such as cases of rape, murder and even habeas corpus. The amicus curiae’s report if implemented would see the judiciary jump to the end result without providing for a path to enable the same.

Lastly, the pressure on the trial courts to dispose a case within one year and limited resources may lead to disastrous results. One wrong conviction with over two years’ jail term would lead to immediate disqualification of an incumbent MP or MLA and tarnish the reputation which he or she built over decades. Rather than actually cleaning politics, it shall clean up all the politicians, good and bad.

Of late, we have been witnessing several bills being passed by the legislatures, which stipulate a timeframe within which the judiciary is expected to adjudicate. How feasible is it and are we jumping upon the result rather than creating an enabling environment for it? That is a question that only the passage of time will answer.

The writer is YSR Congress Parliamentary Party leader and general secretary. He can be reached at venumbaka.vr@sansad.nic.in.

LETTERS

TEMPLE ENTRY

The Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate of Varanasi has dismissed a petition seeking to bar AICC chief Priyanka Gandhi Vadra (belonging to a Christian family) from entering the Kashi Vishwanath temple. The Court has ruled that the deity belongs to everyone irrespective of caste, creed or religion. If that is the case, what’s the justification in the authorities banning the entry of non-Hindus in the Sri Krishna temple in Guruvayur? Does the administration feel that some deities are more equal than others? Only a court intervention can remove man-made barriers.

P.G. Menon, Chennai

WASTE OF MONEY

At a time when Delhi has become the most polluted city in the world, the BJP government must take steps to clean the city’s toxic air rather than spending crores of rupees on the construction of a new Parliament building. It must also be emphasised that the country’s economy is in doldrums due to the Covid-19 pandemic when many have lost their jobs and the lives and livelihoods of the migrant workers are at stake. In such a prevailing grim scenario, the Central Vista Project hardly makes any sense, as it will suck away crores of the country’s precious funds. The project has already attracted severe criticism from architects, urban planners, social activists and environment conservationists, who feel that the construction of a new Parliament building will be a wasteful expenditure.

R. Sivakumar, Chennai

ELECTION TANTRUMS

The Election Commission of India has asked the national and state political parties about their views on the limit of election expenditure for candidates contesting Lok Sabha and Assembly polls. One feels it’s a wasteful exercise because they distribute lots of money to people on the sly during election time. These may not find a place in their accounts, if at all they maintain them. Election is an occasion which throws open the possibility of converting black money into white by some dominant parties.

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

A.G. Noorani



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

It was a unique, unmatched feat of organisation. They travelled on their tractors, on and under which they slept, covered with blankets, under open skies in bitter cold. The traditional Sikh langar is another story. There were giant tawas to cook food for the huge crowds that had assembled — all united by clear, precise demands that the Modi government could have easily anticipated when it inflicted the three laws on a host of sites pertaining to the farmer, from farm to mandi.

The demonstrations, covered by

the Indian and international press, have evoked strong reactions among the Punjabi, particularly Sikh, diaspora. It has united a fragmented opposition. There have been some rounds of talks with government representatives, all to no avail.

The episode holds a lesson in democratic governance. A government ‘majority’ in parliament cannot, must not, govern without consulting not only the opposition but also the affected parties.

The government refused to even refer the three offending agriculture bills to a joint committee of parliament. It would have studied them far more closely than either house of parliament possibly could. It would have asked the farmers’ representatives to appear before it with facts and figures, expound their case and answer questions thoroughly, and satisfy themselves that they had been heard fully. Experts would have studied the committee’s report. An informed public opinion would have been evolved. In the time thus taken, the heat would have subsided.

This process is an integral part of participative government. In Deep Citizenship, P.B. Clarke wrote, “Democracy is unfinished business. It has yet to widen and institutionalise the crucial dimension of public participation.” To that I would add, old as it is, democracy has not passed the age of childbearing. The last half-century has sprouted the ombudsman; call him the mohtasib or lok pal.

Both in formulating policy and introducing it as a bill, the government may embark on a process of consultation with outside interests, and sometimes issue consultation documents to invite public comment. This can help to improve and legitimise a bill, and win the support of those whose cooperation is needed if the legislation is to be effective.

The UK’s Hansard Society Commission on the Legislative Process made a number of recommendations for more timely, open, and sufficient consultation so that bills could be got into “a form fit for enactment, without major alteration, before they are presented to

parliament”. A few years later in 1997, the Select Committee on Modernisation of the House of Commons found there was little or no consultation within parliament or with other bodies before bills were introduced. Subsequently, the government issued a code of practice that urges departments to consult widely throughout the process of policy development and sets out criteria for effective consultation.

Pre-legislative scrutiny by parliament as well as outside bodies is facilitated if bills are published in draft well before their formal introduction. It has been said authoritatively that proper consultation is a crucial part of the process of determining the most effective way of achieving a policy objective, and where legislation is deemed to be necessary. It is important therefore that, when a law comes before parliament, it should have been exposed to those who will be affected by its provisions and its suitability reviewed in the light of their reactions.

Some enabling acts oblige the minister concerned to consult

organised interests or other bodies before making regulations. The particular organisations to be consulted may be specified by the act, or left to the judgement of the minister in accordance with some general formula.

In the UK, legislation is sometimes virtually the product of negotiation with affected groups. Some policies are not so much influenced by pressure as produced in a joint effort by a government department and one or more groups with which it shares a common interest. For example, a continuous dialogue takes place between the department for environment, food and rural affairs and the farmers’ union on questions of agricultural policy. In his masterpiece, *Parliament*, Sir Ivor Jennings refers to the practice of consultation between the government and Opposition, if arrangements are arrived at “behind the speaker’s chair”. Narendra Modi has no use for that.

By arrangement with Dawn

SHORT TAKES

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

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

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

**AZERBAIJAN
DECLARE BREACH
IN PEACE DEAL**

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

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

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

**US SET FOR
COVID VACCINE
ROLLOUT**

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

to reach states a day later. Shipments of the Pfizer vaccine will set in motion the biggest vaccination effort in American history at a critical juncture of the pandemic that has killed 1.6 million and sickened 71 million worldwide.

Initially, about 3 million doses were expected to be sent out, and the priority is health care workers and nursing home residents as infections, hospitalizations and deaths soar in the US. With numbers likely to get worse over the holidays. — *AP*

**Brexit deadline
goes 'extra mile'****Johnson feels Brexit failure still 'most likely'**

London, Dec. 13: UK businesses clamoured for compromise on Sunday as Prime Minister Boris Johnson said failure remains the "most likely" outcome to marathon post-Brexit trade talks with the European Union. "I'm afraid we're still very far apart on some key things, but where there's life there's hope," Johnson told reporters, after agreeing with EU commission chief Ursula von der Leyen to push on with negotiations.

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

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

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

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

"There is a clarity and a

**Ursula von der Leyen**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Even with a trade deal, Britain will still be out of the EU's common market and businesses will face new customs regulations and paperwork. They warn the government has failed to get vital IT systems ready in time, leading to fears of transport gridlock on roads and at ports.

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

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

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

Clashes erupt after pro-Trump rallies

Washington, Dec. 13: Four people were stabbed and one shot as rallies backing President Donald Trump's baseless claims of election fraud led to clashes in major US cities on Saturday.

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

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

In the US capital, DC Fire and EMS Department communications chief Doug Buchanan said that four people had been stabbed and were now hospitalised "with serious injuries." The *New York Times* reported that 23 had been arrested throughout the day.

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

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

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

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

Demonstrators at the DC rally — noticeably smaller than a similar protest last month — said they were steadfast in their support for the embattled president. "We're not gonna give up," said Luke Wilson, a sixty-something protester who had come all the way from the western state of Idaho.

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

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

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

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

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

Washington, Dec. 13: Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna has hoped for a peaceful and fair solution to the farmers' issues in India, saying he is encouraged by the ongoing dialogue between the protesting farmers and the government.

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

Farmworkers are the backbone of both our nations and must have their voices heard. "I hope there's a peaceful and fair solution so they can provide for their families," Khanna said in a tweet on Saturday. "I am encouraged by the ongoing dialogue," he said. — *PTI*

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

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

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

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

Islamabad, Dec. 13: Slain Afghan Taliban chief Mullah Akhtar Mansour purchased a life insurance policy using a fake identity in Pakistan and paid ₹3 lakh in premium before being killed in a US drone attack, according to a media report on Sunday.

Mansour, who was killed in a US drone strike along the Pakistan-Iran border on May 21, 2016, assumed the leadership of the Taliban in July 2015, replacing its founder and the one-eyed reclusive long-time spiritual head Mullah Mohammad Omar who died in 2013. The details about the insurance policy were revealed during the hearing of a terror funding case against him and his

absconding accomplices on Saturday.

The insurance company provided this information to an Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Karachi during the hearing of the case registered against Mansour and his accomplices by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) last year. Dawn news reported. It emerged during the investigation that the Taliban leader and his accomplices were involved in generating funds for terrorist activities through the purchase of properties on the basis of "forged identities".

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

**FINANCIAL
Chronicle**

MONDAY | 14 DECEMBER 2020 | CHENNAI

**quick
BITES**

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

* As of Friday/Saturday

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

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

**■ Person days rise but fewer households get 100 days job
Job guarantee scheme
utilises 90% of funds****SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, DEC. 13**

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

The scheme has used up over 90 per cent of the allocation for the fiscal so far. With the government increasing the allocation of MGNREGA this year due to the pandemic, the number of person days have already touched 276.51 crore against 265.43 crore in last fiscal.

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



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

Average days of employment per household too are lower at 41.76 days against 48.4 days last year. But a larger number of households, 6.62 crore, participated in the job guarantee scheme this year against 5.48 crore households last year. The total number of individuals too has been higher at 9.6 crore against 7.89 crore last year.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tax Network said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"This shall enable the businesses to raise a red flag to their suppliers/recipients in relation to various discrepancies at their end, as well as receive their comments. This development by the GSTN should facilitate better reconciliation of GST credits," Jain said. — *PTI*

**FPIs stock up on equities,
inflows hit record ₹1.4 L cr****SHILPI PANDEY
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13**

Excess liquidity, attractive valuations and weakness in the US dollar propelled foreign investors to flock to the Indian stock market in a big way, with the highest-ever net inflow of Rs 1.4 lakh crore in 2020, but they also dumped debt securities worth a little over Rs 1 lakh crore.

The market men expect a similar trend to continue for a few months unless there is a major change in the overall investment scenario.

"With some major developments on the Covid-19 vaccine front, India stands to benefit. Also, growth in the economy will improve investor sentiments and their outlook towards India. From the risk-reward profile perspective, these aspects make India a good investment destination," said Himanshu Srivastava, associate director manager research, Morningstar India.

However, if the economy remains weak for a longer period of time, that could be a big deterrent. Also, if there is another wave of the coronavirus pandemic resulting in re-implementation of lockdown measures, that could dampen sentiments and turn foreign investors risk-averse, he added.

As the year 2020 draws to a close, the FPIs have so far made a net inflow of Rs 1.42 lakh crore—the highest in a calendar year since 2002.

This is the fifth time in history when net investment by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) in equities has crossed the Rs 1-lakh crore mark in a year.



Prior to this, the feat was achieved in 2019, 2013, 2012 and 2010, when overseas investors infused a net sum of Rs 1.01 lakh crore, Rs 1.13 lakh crore, Rs 1.28 lakh crore and Rs 1.33 lakh crore, respectively.

On the other hand, debt markets have seen FPIs turn net sellers in 2020 as they withdrew a massive Rs 1.07 lakh crore from debt, however, they invested a net amount of Rs 23,350 crore in debt-VRR. The voluntary Retention Route (VRR) channel was introduced by the Reserve Bank of India in March 2019 to attract long-term and stable FPI investments into debt markets.

Broadly, investments through this route are free of macro-prudential and other regulatory norms applicable to FPI investments in debt markets, provided FPIs voluntarily commit to retaining a required minimum percentage of their investments in India for a certain period.

The year 2020 marked the biggest outflow by foreign investors from debt markets since 2002, when bifurcation of net investments data became available. The previous record

outflow was in 2013, when FPIs pulled out a net sum of Rs 50,849 crore from debt markets. Also, an exodus to the tune of Rs 47,795 crore was seen from such instruments in 2018.

Taking all asset classes together, FPIs have made a net investment of Rs 68,200 crore (\$9.3 billion) in the Indian capital markets (equity, debt, debt-VRR and hybrid) so far in 2020, while a few days of trading remains.

While FPIs have made gross purchases worth Rs 20.7 lakh crore so far this year, they have sold securities worth Rs 20 lakh crore across all instruments.

In comparison, the net inflow into Indian capital markets was at Rs 1.36 lakh crore in 2019.

This comprised a net investment of Rs 1.01 lakh crore in equities, Rs 25,880 crore in debt and around Rs 9,000 crore in hybrid securities.

Experts said availability of excess liquidity in the global financial market, attractive valuation compared to developed markets, and weakness in the US dollar have supported buying in Indian equities. — *PTI*

SHORT TAKES

Manchester derby ends in stalemate

London: Manchester United and Manchester City did their Premier League title ambitions little favours in a drab 0-0 draw at Old Trafford as Chelsea's challenge also suffered a setback in a 1-0 defeat at Everton on Saturday.

The pressure on United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was ramped up after his side crashed out of the Champions League with a midweek defeat at RB Leipzig.

The beleaguered boss desperately needed an uplifting result in the derby to win back some support, but there was little for either side of the Manchester divide to get excited about as both teams failed to fire.

A penalty was the difference between the sides at Goodison Park as Everton fed off the atmosphere created by 2,000 fans for the first time since March to arrest their slide.

— AFP

Verstappen wins Abu Dhabi GP

Yas Marina, UAE: Max Verstappen claimed his second win of the season and the 10th of his career on Sunday when he drove to a clinical victory for Red Bull in a pedestrian season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. The 23-year-old Dutchman dominated from start to finish as he turned his third pole position into a demonstration of speed, talent and flawless strategy to leave both Mercedes men well beaten behind him.

— AFP

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HANUMAN ON FIRE

Vihari confident of contributing to team's cause

Sydney, Dec. 13: The reticent Hanuma Vihari has slowly but surely cemented his place in the Indian Test team and is confident of contributing to the team's cause, saying he is well-equipped to execute plans in the traditional format.

Vihari scored a hundred and also got a wicket with his part-time off-breaks against Australia A in the pink ball warm-up game. He looks set to bat at number six in the first Day/Night Test at Adelaide.

"In 2018, it was my second overseas tour (after England) and it was a good challenge for me back then. Although I contributed a little (back then), I feel I am more well equipped with my game and pretty sure with my gameplan as well and looking forward to the Test series," Vihari said after the end of the warm-up tie.

While he will be batting at number six in the Test match, during the warm-up game, he did get a chance to bat at number 4 and 5 along with seasoned pros like Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane. "At number four, I always feel you have more time than you think. In domestic cricket, I have always batted number three, so I am a bit familiar batting up the order," he said.

"Obviously, batting with Pooji (Pujara's nickname) is completely different. We always have a good communication and he tells me what the bowler is trying to do," he observed.

His assessment of Rahane is that the Mumbaier is more flamboyant and has a good grip on game situations. "He has also got a good sense of game situation"

— PTI



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

BEN & JACK STAR IN DRAWN WARM-UP GAME

Sydney, Dec. 13: The Indian cricket team will head into the first day-night Test against Australia with a lot of optimism and happy selection dilemmas, having managed to tick most of the boxes before drawing the three-day pink-ball dress rehearsal against Australia A here on Sunday.

Australia A gave a better account of themselves on an eased out third day track, despite being reduced to 25/3, ending on 305/4 riding on Ben McDermott and Jack Wildermuth's centuries. Both the batsmen survived a barrage of bouncers under lights from Indian pacers.

The talented McDermott (107 off 167 balls), younger son of Craig McDermott who was India's tormentor during the forgettable 91-92 series, along with his skipper Alex Carey (58, 111 balls) added 117 runs in a counter-attacking fourth wicket partnership to partially save the game.

The four-Test series gets underway from December 17 in Adelaide.

Rookie Wildermuth (111 off 119 balls) also got his ton and added 165 runs with McDermott but Virat Kohli and Ravi Shastri will be happy with multiple options that emerged from the game.

— PTI

Brief scores: Indians 194 & 386/4 d/w Australia A 108 & 307/4 (Wildermuth 111*, McDermott 107*, Carey 57).

Indian Super League

NorthEast Utd stay unbeaten

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

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

BFC CLIP KERALA WINGS

Bengaluru FC walked

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

The teams were tied 1-1 at the break with Rahul K.P. (17') giving Kerala a surprise lead which was canceled out by Cleiton Silva (29'). The second half saw four goals being scored in the span of 14 minutes. Erik Paartalu (51') and Dimas Delgado (53') scored in quick succession to give BFC breathing space but Jordan Murray (61') gave some hope to the away team. Sunil Chhetri (65') put the game to rest with a fine header.

— Agencies

ANISH SCORES A HAT-TRICK IN NAT'L RACING CHAMPIONSHIP

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 13

Bengaluru's Damodar Shetty (Race Concepts) swept to a hat-trick of wins in the premier Pro-Stock 301-400cc class in the first round of the MRF MMS National Motorcycle Racing Championship 2020 which concluded at the MMRT, here on Sunday. Shetty topped both the races, adding to his Saturday win.

Earlier, multiple National champion Jagan Kumar (TVS Racing) and Mathana Kumar (Eneos Honda Erula Racing) chalked up thrilling victories in the two Pro-Stock 165cc class races run today. The category saw four different winners in as many races this weekend, with Rajiv Sethu (Eneos Honda Erula

Racing) and KY Ahamed (TVS Racing) winning a race apiece yesterday.

Meanwhile, Bengaluru's 22-year old Ullas Santrupt completed a double in the Novice (Stock 165cc) category, having won the first and fourth races.

Shetty was unstoppable on the day. In the morning, he carried too much pace for the 26-rider grid and won untroubled. Later in the day, Shetty gave a repeat performance to win from Hyderabad's Karthik Mateti (Gusto Racing) in a race that saw two seasoned campaigners, Jagan Kumar and veteran Rajini Krishnan (RACR Cast Power Racing) starting from P26 and P24 to finish third and fourth, respectively.

In the Pro-Stock 165cc category, Jagan rescued an otherwise disappointing weekend.

COFFEE-BREAK

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



Aries: You may adopt a personal yardstick to motivate subordinates. Enjoy work to remain interested. You may fail to emotionally support your partner.



Taurus: Carelessness at home brings criticism. State-of-the-art technology may help achieve desired work results. Don't stress if you don't know what to do today.



Gemini: Your creative talents bring a smile to the family. You may not enjoy the purest feelings of first love. Somebody might lure you into something devious.



Cancer: Ensure modern living and erratic habits don't affect your health. Your indecisiveness keeps you relentlessly pushing toward your goals.



Leo: Your spouse's health will cause concern but children bring happiness. Somebody important is watching you from much closer than you know.



Virgo: At work, your actions may be criticised. Today set out a budget and pay off your bills and debts. Despite it being productive, romantic inclinations might make you overstep your boundaries.

You share your b'day with

Rana Daggubati is an Indian film actor. He starred in the films like Leader, Dum Maaro Dum, Baby, Baahubali, Baahubali 2 and Ghazi.



Libra: Someone at work is unhappy with your performance, which frustrates you. Avoid depending on subordinates. You may be involved in some creative work.



Scorpio: Your development programme might fail to provide you a professional skill range. Enjoy good-humoured company. Believe in your professional undertakings.



Sagittarius: You try to clear misunderstandings with your spouse. Conserve, channel valuable energy. Your partner's enjoyable company makes up for the long separation.



Capricorn: Your wit and repartee help you develop healthy relationships. Let other family members guide you at work. Avoid alcohol. Explore food and stay alert. Explore your potential at work.

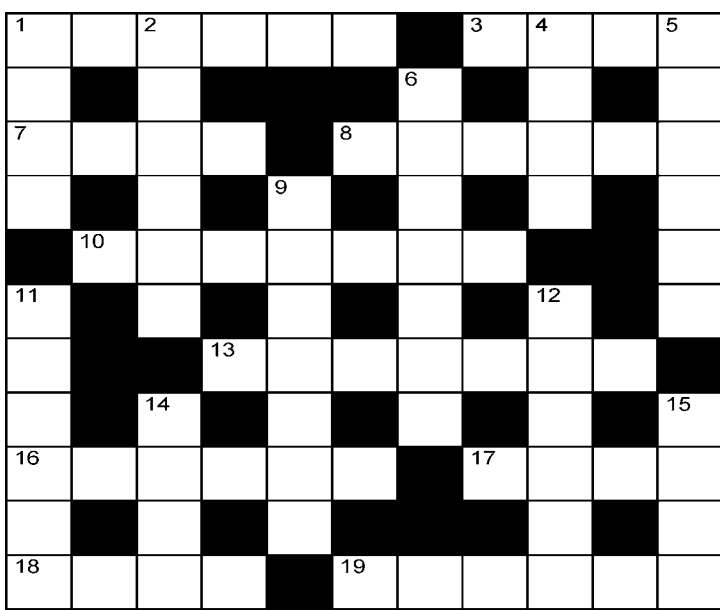


Aquarius: Act swiftly and decisively to turn around familial situations favourably. Help from workplace seniors will encourage you. Understand the power of healing for health.



Pisces: Love blossoms with both partners' consent. Children may demand your time. At work, you may undertake new plans and implement them perfectly. Good day to take on stressful activities.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- Mislead (6)
- Threatening (4)
- Curved structure (4)
- Leg bone (6)
- Stuffy (7)
- Promenade (7)
- Strain (6)
- Pulse (4)
- Ram down (4)
- Giggle (6)

Down

- Haul (4)
- Milk acid (6)
- Morose (4)
- Every twelve months (6)
- Think differently (7)
- Exonerated (7)
- Financial gain (6)
- Fraud (6)
- Marine mollusc (4)
- Mix (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Indolence, 6. Silly, 7. Reins, 9. Hang, 10. Studio, 12. Latent, 14. Weft, 17. Range, 18. Urged, 19. Dartboard.

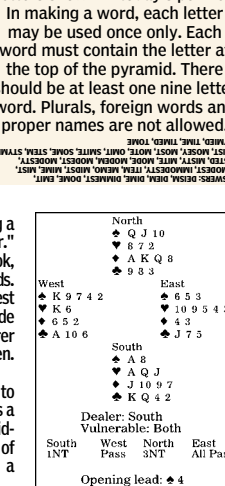
Down: 2. Nylon, 3. Onyx, 4. Egrets, 5. Child, 6. Scholar, 8. Spotted, 11. Infant, 13. Tinea, 15. Eager, 16. Ouzo.

Word Mine

M
O
I
T
D
S
Y
E
M

TODAY'S RATINGS: 27 AVERAGE: 29
GOOD: 33 OUTSTANDING

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



jumble

RETWH
ALGEE
LAHNE
VINDIE

Yesterday's Jumbles: METAL ALIAS THIRST JUNIOR

Answer: Even when the twins misbehaved, she loved them — JUST THE SAME



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

CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



bridge

PHILLIP ALDER

A WORLD CHAMPION HAS FIRESIDE CHATS

Mike Lawrence, who is a three-time Bermuda Bowl world team champion, has written several excellent books. The title of his latest, "Insights on Bridge: Bidding, Play and Defense, Book 2" (Baron Barclay Bridge Supply) is self-explanatory. In each of 96 short chapters, Lawrence discusses one hand (a bidding problem) or two hands (declarer-play or defense). He says that these books "won't make you an expert. But (they) will

start you on the path to being a good player and good partner."

In this deal from the book, cover the East and South hands. Against three no-trump, West leads his fourth-highest spade four: 10, three, eight. Declarer then plays a heart to his queen. How should West defend?

A good rule for authors is to keep the auction simple if it is a card-play deal — unless the bidding supplies a key piece of information for declarer or a defender.

West should start by checking the high-card points. He has 10, dummy holds 12, and declarer indicated 15-17. That leaves 1-3 for East. He probably has one club honor: the jack, queen or king.

Next, usually third hand plays high, but when he cannot do that, he gives count. Here, East's lowest spade, the three, showed an odd number of spades: one or three. If he started with a singleton, the contract is surely cast-iron. But if he

began with three spades, declarer is down to a singleton ace. West should win the second trick with his heart king and lead the spade two. When South's ace does come fluttering down, West waits to get in with his club ace to cash three spade winners.

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