

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
KARIMNAGAR | MONDAY | 14 DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER

Max: 29.4°C
Min: 17.0°C
RH: 48%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Partly cloudy.
Mist or haze likely.
Max/Min temp. 30/16 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+28,144)	(+376)
98,54,175	1,42,994
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+635)	(+4)
TS: 2,77,151	1,489
(+510)	(+3)
AP: 8,75,025	7,052

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

7,17,80,957
DEATHS
16,07,304
COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES
218

worldometers.info/
coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Bahula Amavasya till 9.48 pm
Star: Jyeshtha till 11.27 pm
Varjyam: 6.45 am to 8.12 am
Durmuhurtam: 12.32 pm to 1.16 pm; 2.44 pm to 3.27 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
HUIRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Akhir 28, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.33 am
Zohar: 12.21 pm
Asar: 4.08 pm
Maghrib: 5.50 pm
Isha: 7.05 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.38 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.43 PM
MOONSET TODAY 5.28 PM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 6.01 AM

COUNTER POINT



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

IN BRIEF

RTGS fund transfer is 24x7 service

Mumbai: The Real Time Gross Settlement System (RTGS) for high-value transactions will become available round-the-clock from 00:30 hours on Monday onwards, making India one of the few countries in the world to operate the system 24x7. In October, the RBI had announced RTGS will be available round-the-clock on all days of the year.

Traffic jam due to rush in Srisaillam

Kurnool: The penultimate day of Kartika Somavaram in Srisaillam witnessed heavy rush of pilgrims on Sunday. As a result, vehicles were stranded for hours on the roads leading to the temple, giving a nightmarish time to police personnel posted along the stretch. Atmakur DSP Y. Sruthi said police cleared the traffic soon after coming to know of a jam near Sakshi Ganapati temple. She said besides pilgrims, VIPs also came for darshan, including a minister and a Deputy Speaker. Energy minister Balineni Srinivas Reddy is visiting Srisaillam on Monday, the DSP added. A temple official said at least 70,000 people came for darshan. Covid-19 protocol was given a go-by as the temple staff was insufficient and unable to control the surging crowds.

NATION | 5

Covid positive minister Vij shifted to hospital



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WORLD | 7

UK, EU agree 'extra mile' Brexit deadline

SPORTS | 8

Ankita wins ITF doubles title in Dubai



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KCR tells CS to fill 50k vacancies

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

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

On his return from a three-day Delhi tour on Sunday, Rao held a review with Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar and other senior officers to take stock of the vacancies in various departments. Rao instructed Somesh Kumar to notify department-wise vacancy position and issue notification for recruitment at the earliest.

Speaking later, the Chief Minister said "the primary information suggests that there are about 50,000 vacancies in the state in several departments. We have to fill them up. Teachers and police have to be recruited in thousands."

He told the officers to collect details about vacant posts in teachers, police and other departments.

According to sources, the Chief Minister suggested assessment of the



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

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

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

JP NADDA COVID POSITIVE, IN HOME ISOLATION

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

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

BJP SHINES IN BODOLAND LOCAL ELECTIONS

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, DEC. 13

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

5 techies in car jump signal, die

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

Jumping a red traffic light proved fatal for five IT employees as a speeding tipper lorry crashed into their car at Wipro circle, killing all of them at around 2.45 am on Sunday.

Gachibowli police officials said that the victims, hailing from Andhra Pradesh, were residing in a hostel at Madhapur. They were suspected to be driving under the influence of alcohol and travelling from IIIT-H road to Gowildoddi.

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

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

SANJAY KAW and
RAJNISH SHARMA | DC
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.

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 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



Barricades placed to stop farmers during their protest against the new farm laws, at Singhu border in New Delhi on Sunday.

— PTI

again resume its dialogue 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. It is learnt Mr Shah discussed in detail with Mr Tomar what additional concessions could be given to the farmers.

While information and broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar said the government's door was

always open for farmers and it was ready to discuss all issues, farmers' leader Gurnam Singh Chaduni said at the Singhu border they were going ahead with the nationwide agitation. "The heads of all farmer unions will observe a hungerstrike from 8 am to 5 pm on Monday," he said.

The I&B minister was speaking to the media at his residence ahead of the farmers' hungerstrike announcement at the

Singhu border -- one of the key agitation spots on the Delhi-Chandigarh route where thousands of farmers are sitting under the open skies, braving chilly winter nights.

He said: "The government's door is always open to have a conversation with farmers on their issues. The procedure is continuously moving forward. The government is keeping proper monitoring of the current situation and ongoing develop-

Military honour



Army Chief General M.M. Naravane with Saudi Arabia's Chief of General Staff General Fayyad bin Hamid Ruwaili during his two-day visit to the Gulf country to lay ground for deeper military ties.

— PTI

Orphans, juvenile criminals in Warangal accommodation

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, DEC. 13

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

This is happening despite the Juvenile Justice Act making a clear distinction between CNCP (Child in Need of Care and Protection) and CCL (Children in Conflict with Law).

The two homes are run by the Juvenile Welfare and Correctional Services Department.

● **THIS IS** happening despite the Juvenile Justice Act making a clear distinction between CNCP (Child in Need of Care and Protection) and CCL (Children in Conflict with Law).

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● **THE GOVT** observation home building is meant for CCL children in a dilapidated condition.

Home five years ago, saying it was only a temporary measure. However, since then, both the children have been sharing the building. Supervisor of the children's home K. Ravi Kumar fears mingling together of CCL and CNCP children may push the latter into acquiring bad habits. "These children come

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

Within a span of three weeks, one CNCP child and two CCL children have escaped from the building. While one CCL inmate escaped on November 24, a CCL and another CNCP kid escaped on Friday.

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

NO BHARATNET LINK TO MOST PANCHAYATS

ANIMESH SINGH | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 13

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

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

On the other hand, Wi-Fi hotspots have been made functional in only 15,500 gram panchayats till date, according to information available with this newspaper. Therefore, in other words, a programme, which was originally envisioned by the erstwhile UPA regime nine years back in 2011, has not been able to achieve the objective in even one-fourth of the gram panchayats till date. Known as the National Optic Fibre Network or NOFN Project during the UPA regime, it was renamed BharatNet by the BJP-NDA government, which had come to power in May 2014. While NOFN was envisaged to provide infrastructure for middle mile connectivity and the service provider was to utilise the network, the NDA government decided to include last mile connectivity also in the scope of BharatNet.

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


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OTHER STORIES INTER-DISTRICT VEHICLE LIFTING GANG NABBED

PULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC
KARIMNAGAR, DEC. 13

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

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

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

Commissioner of Police, V.B. Kamalasan Reddy informed that the gang used advanced technology to carry out their crimes. Habituated to a luxurious lifestyle, Kanugula Raju, resident of Armoor in Nizamabad district, formed the gang. He has been lifting vehicles for the past six months from Karimnagar, Jagtial, Rajanna Sircilla, Nirmal, Kamareddy and Nizamabad districts.

He said, "The gang of 10 members did not have any previous criminal history, it became difficult and challenging for the police to crack the case. By observing CCTV footage at the spots where the theft was committed, the police were able to crack the case."

After receiving several complaints from various police stations, the Karimnagar rural and Kothapalli police formed special teams of eight police officials, eight members from the task force police and six members from the Cyber and forensic lab and cracked the case. Mr Kamalasan Reddy said, "We have registered a case, and initiated a hunt, to apprehend the absconding four members." He appreciated the team of police officials for cracking the case.

MATSYAVEERA KCR STATE-LEVEL BOAT RACE HELD

DC CORRESPONDENT
PEDDAPALLI, DEC. 13

Welfare Minister Koppula Eshwar on Sunday inaugurated the 'Matsyaveera KCR State-level Boat race competitions' organised on the Godavari River at Godavarikhani in Peddapalli district.

The 'Matsyaveera KCR State-level Boat race competitions', is the second boat racing competition held on the Godavari River after the formation of Telangana state.

The minister said, "With the initiation taken by the Ramagundam MLA, Korakanti Chander Patel, we have conducted boat race competitions in the Telangana state, like those seen in Kerala and other states."

Earlier, the Godavari river was dry, with the efforts of Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao, it is now flowing to full capacity 365 days covering 250 km. The CM changed the flow of the river from East to West, making Telangana a fertile state by taking up the prestigious project Kaleshwaram and completing it within record time.



Welfare minister Koppula Eshwar pedals a new invention created by the fishing community on the river Godavari on Sunday.

Will try to remove middlemen from lifting subabul wood, says minister

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM, DEC. 13

Minister for agriculture and marketing S. Niranjan Reddy on Sunday said that the government would try to remove the middlemen and brokers while lifting subabul wood by ITC-Bhadrachalam.

Reddy said that the subabul farmers explained they are

not being offered a good price for their wood, due to the agencies engaged by the company. He assured the farmers that the government would study the matter and will try to remove the middlemen.

The minister also visited the IT Hub in Khammam on Sunday. He said that the Khammam IT Hub drew the attention of people in

Hyderabad. Local engineering student's bagged 500 jobs in 19 IT companies is a good sign of how things will be ahead. Many district collectors are coming forward to set up such hubs in their district headquarter towns. Training centres, to impart training to Class X and Intermediate students, in the software technology, will be established.

TRS, BJP sailing in the same boat: Sridhar

Congress accuses TRS of indirectly supporting farm laws

DC CORRESPONDENT
PEDDAPALLI, DEC. 13

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

Speaking to media in Manthani of Peddapalli district on Sunday, he said even after ruling for seven years, TRS government has not fulfilled its poll promises and has deceived the people of Telangana.

After attaining power the second time, the ruling party promised farmers that it would waive farms loans up to ₹1 lakh, but has betrayed farmers in this case too. Distribution of double bedroom houses, sanctioning of unemployment dole of ₹3,000, along with other promises, have also remained a mirage, he pointed out, saying there was no mention of Kazipet coach factory, tribal university and 4,000 MW thermal power plant.

The senior Congress leader accused TRS of indirectly supporting farm bills when they were introduced in parliament. Now, ruling party leaders are pretending as though they are opposing the bills.

"Both the TRS and BJP are sailing in the same boat but trying to divert attention of people by making allegations

KCR bowing to Modi to save self, family: Soyam

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, DEC. 13

Adilabad BJP MP Soyam Bapurao addressed a meeting at Karanji (T) village in Bheempuram Sunday. He asked the party leaders and cadre to blacken the murals of the local MLAs drawn on the Rythu Vedika's funded by the Centre and did not have the murals of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Central government is giving ₹12 lakh funds to each Rythu Vedika.

He spoke about Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao's meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, immediately after the BJP won the Dubbaka seat and faring well in the recently concluded Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation elections.

He said, "The CM met with the Prime Minister to save himself and his family members, as they are involved in a number of scams related to the implementation of wel-

fare and development schemes in the state in the last six years," adding, the CM fears that he and his family, will be sent to jail on charges of indulging in irregularities and corruption.

Speaking on appointment of a new chief for Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee, Sridhar Babu hoped the party lead-

ership will appoint a new person who will have all capabilities, keeps in view the best interests of the party and strengthens Congress in the state. He expressed confidence of winning the polls from Nagarjunasagar constituency with a bumper majority in the next elec-

tions. Jayashankar Bhupalpally DCC president Aitha Prakash Reddy, Kisan Congress state coordinator Shashibushan Kache, block Congress president Thotla Thirupathi Yadav and mandal Congress president Seggam Rajesh were among those present.

Students of the 1967 batch who studied in Government Welfare Hostels felicitate their teachers Marsakola Padmalatha and Sadula Ramulu at a function organised at Keshapur in Indravelli mandal in Adilabad district on Sunday.

Students of the 1967 batch who studied in Government Welfare Hostels, on Sunday felicitated a teacher and hostel welfare officer who helped them continue their education at a function arranged at Keshapur in Indravelli mandal.

Former MLA and late Marsakola Kashiram's wife, Padmalatha, who retired as Hostel Welfare Officer (HWO), and Sadula Ramulu, who retired as headmaster, were felicitated.

It is surprising to note that many of the students of this batch are government employees and are serving or have served at various levels.

The batch of 1967 students recollected the yeoman services rendered by their teachers.

Padmalatha and Ramulu thanked the students for recognising their services and said it was the happiest moment in their lives.

Keshapur sarpanch Mesram Renuka and senior Adivasi leader Sidam Bheemrao, Vijayalaxmi and Mesram Manohar and village elder Venkatrao along with others were present.



Adilabad MP Soyam Bapurao speaks at Karanji (T) village in Bheempuram mandal in Adilabad district on Sunday.

He said that the government has sanctioned ₹59 crore, and the repairs of roads and nalas, must be quickened immediately. He instructed the officials to focus on all the internal roads in the 58 Divisions of the Corporation, including street lights, drainage and sanitation works.

"Make use of the funds released under the Pattana Pragathi provided by the State Government every month," the minister said.

Emphasising the need for providing drinking water under Mission Bhagiratha to all the households in the city, the minister told the officials to resolve the issues with the help of the administration.

When the civic officials told him that they have only 45 per cent of staff against the sanctioned posts, the minister said that necessary steps would be taken to fill the vacant posts.

Referring to the double bedroom houses, the minister said that efforts were on to inau-

rate them in February. The beneficiaries will be selected through a draw of lots, so as to not give any room for controversy, he said.

"R1, R2, R3 and R4 package works under Smart roads should be completed by January end. Officials also need to focus on the proposed four welcome arches on roads leading to Warangal city," the minister said.

In all, the city should be spruced up before February, he added.

Government Chief Whip D. Vinay Bhaskar, Mayor Gunda Prakash Rao, legislators Nannapuneni Narendar, Aroori Ramesh, Challa Dharmaraj, Reddy, Basavaraj Saraiah, Warangal Urban District Collector Rajeev Gandhi Hanumanthuni, Municipal Commissioner Pamela Satpathy and Superintendent Engineer Vidyasagar were present along with others.

The joint action committee of the Upadhyaya Sanghala Porata Committee, comprising of the unions of the School Teachers' Federation, United Teachers Federation, Telangana Progressive Teachers Federation and State Teachers Union has demanded that the State government commence the process of promotions and transfers of teachers apart from the pay revision committee.

The JAC state executive member Devarakonda Saidulu said that the government had not been implementing the promotion process for long, and the teaching community is losing a lot.

He warned that the teachers would stage a massive hunger strike if their demands are not met. Led by the JAC we will take out a rally from Pavilion Grounds to the collectorate demanding the government fulfil their demands.

But, it is suspected now that the tiger might have returned to its original habitat in Maharashtra or in the forests of the Kagaznagar division.

The forest officials are well aware that several tigers have migrated to Telangana state during the lockdown and were tracking their movements. But, the officials never revealed their numbers. Forest officials were jubilant as the number of tigers migrating into Telangana state increased.

But, following the incidents of the big cats killing people, the forest officials are now facing opposition from the villagers when it comes to the increase in the movement of the tigers near human settlements and farm lands.

There is confirmation that the tigers are moving from one place to another, in search of prey, for permanent habitat and mating. According to sources in the forest department, it is a territorial fight by two male tigers, who might be searching for a permanent habitat, and a tigress for mating.

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Spruce up Warangal by Feb: Errabelli

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, DEC. 13

The development works taken up under various projects in Warangal must be completed on a war footing, Errabelli Dayakar Rao, minister for panchayat taj told Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) officials during a review meeting held on Sunday.

He said that the government has sanctioned ₹59 crore, and the repairs of roads and nalas, must be quickened immediately. He instructed the officials to focus on all the internal roads in the 58 Divisions of the Corporation, including street lights, drainage and sanitation works.

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JAC WANTS STATE TO PROMOTE TEACHERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, DEC. 13

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Raghunathapally sub-inspector K. Ashok Kumar.

SI BOOKED FOR FAVOURING LAND-GRABBERS

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, DEC. 13

A Sub-Inspector (SI) of Raghunathapally police station in Jangaon district, was booked in a case in the same police station he is posted currently.

The Jangaon court on Sunday ordered the police to book Sub-Inspector, K. Ashok Kumar after Rapolu Ram Murthy of Kanchanapally approached the court claiming that the SI is favouring land grabbers who want his agricultural land.

Ram Murthy earlier had complained in the Raghunathapally police station alleging that a group of persons have trespassed into his agricultural land on survey number 801/B and 801/C and assaulted him after he refused to sell his land.

However, SI Ashok Kumar, instead of acting on the complaint, favoured the land grabbers and booked a false case against Ram Murthy.

As a result, the farmer went to court.

After a due enquiry into the complaint, the court directed the police to register a case against the Ashok Kumar. Jangaon Rural Inspector P. Balaji Vara Prasad said that a case has been registered against the Sub-Inspector K. Ashok Kumar and investigation has been initiated as per the orders from the court.

RAM MURTHY earlier had complained in the Raghunathapally police station alleging that a group of persons have trespassed into his agricultural land on survey number 801/B and 801/C and assaulted him after he refused to sell his land.

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3-7-41, SRIRAMNAGAR, PEDDAPALLI
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SHORT TAKES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Following is the list of
applications pending in
respective erstwhile
districts

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

AP RECORDS
506 FRESH COVID
CASES, 5 DEATHSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 13

The decreasing trend in Covid-19 cases continued in AP state with the 506 new Covid-19 positive cases in the past 24 hours on Sunday.

Only five deaths, one each reported in Chittoor, Guntur, Krishna, Vizianagaram and West Godavari districts and the total deaths climbed to 7,057 while the death rate remains at 0.81 per cent.

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

For the fifth consecutive day more than 60,000 samples were tested. The positivity rate of the 63,873 Covid tests conducted during the past 24 hours was 0.79 per cent and the overall positivity rate of the 1.08 crore samples tested was 8.08 per cent.

The Chittoor reported the highest single-day tally of infections among districts with 104 new infections.

It was followed by Guntur with 69 new positive cases, West Godavari registered 66, Krishna registered 59, East Godavari witnessed 41, Nellore registered 29, 28 cases in Kurnool, 25 in Srikakulam, 23 in Visakhapatnam, 20 in Prakasam, 17 in Anantapur, 13 in Vizianagaram and Kadapa registered 12 new Corona positive cases on Sunday.

● **ONLY FIVE** deaths, one each reported in Chittoor, Guntur, Krishna, Vizianagaram and West Godavari districts and the total deaths climbed to 7,057 while the death rate remains at 0.81 %.

● **FOR THE** fifth consecutive day more than 60,000 samples were tested. The positivity rate of the 63,873 Covid tests conducted during the past 24 hours was 0.79 per cent.

CM told to stop works on 7 dams

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

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, DEC. 13

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MAN KILLS
PARAMOUR'S
BOYFRIENDDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

The Alwal police arrested a jilted lover for murdering his paramour's alleged boyfriend on Sunday evening. According to the police, Kanaka Raju was having an affair with a woman, who allegedly eloped with Srikanth Reddy, an auto driver by profession.

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

TS reports 573
new Covid casesDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

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

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

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) areas accounted for most of the fresh cases with 127 people testing positive, followed by Medchal

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

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

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

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

KCR joining hands
with Modi: JeevanDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

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

Addressing a press conference on Sunday at Congress Legislative Party office, he asked why the CM did not demand an airport at Warangal during his early Delhi tours. He observed that this was only a political stunt to gain advantage for TRS before ensuing elections to the Warangal and Khammam municipal corporations.

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

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

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

The senior Congressman charged that the neighbouring state Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had looted one lakh cuses of water from Krishna basin, which actually belongs to Telangana. He accused the Chief Minister of remaining silent while the AP CM is going ahead with the Pothreddypadu project.

"Why is KCR not taking steps to counter the moves of Jagan Mohan Reddy," he asked.

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

Govt schools reopening will be disastrous

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

The debate raging in Telangana and across the country for over a month now on decision to reopen schools exposes the schism between those with and without privilege, universal right to primary education notwithstanding.

Given the large spectrum and range of schools, authorities lose track. The pandemic, lockdown and digitisation have only widened the gap.

While authorities are deliberating on guidelines for schools to reopen physically, most parents seem reluctant to send their wards to school, even

while complaining against effectiveness of online classes.

Given the high likelihood of schools restarting physical classes in the weeks ahead, *Deccan Chronicle* collates series of reports starting from Sunday to narrow down on understanding of challenges ahead for schools to operate, even as the pandemic is ongoing.

Visiting schools in private, budget and government categories makes one understand what different futures await children, parents and teachers of these three vastly different universes.

We start the three-part series with a review of government schools.

BACK TO SCHOOL - PART 1

Are government schools prepared?

No one quite violates or ignores government regulations as government itself. Proving this is the gulf in priority of opening government schools. While officials of Education Department remain non-committal, teachers have been urging them to restart physical classes. However, situation on the ground does not seem ideal in most of these schools, devoid of rudimentary amenities to prevent spread of Covid.

In a single-room community hall, filled with dust and miscellaneous things

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

A teacher confessed that the community hall was being used to conduct classes for students of grades one (1) to five (5),

with a total strength of 117 students. Due to lack of space, some classes are even conducted outside in the corridor near the hall's entrance.

"Construction of a new building has been going on for a long time now. Meanwhile, we have been managing within this limited space. Government says the construction is nearly eighty percent complete. But it is the government saying it, so we don't know," she said.

Teachers said they have been facing trouble due to non-cooperation by local people, who are protesting claiming the community hall is public property and cannot be used as a school. There has been no support

from the local body either.

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

At a government school in Kanakamamidi, sanitation and deep cleaning has so far taken took place only once, management claimed, when schools opened for teachers. But with over half the staff having contracted Covid, ever since teachers started visiting houses of students for assessments, cases of virus have increased in the village.

CASTLE | ART

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

Sumanth Marda's hyper-realistic art a big hit

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 13

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

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

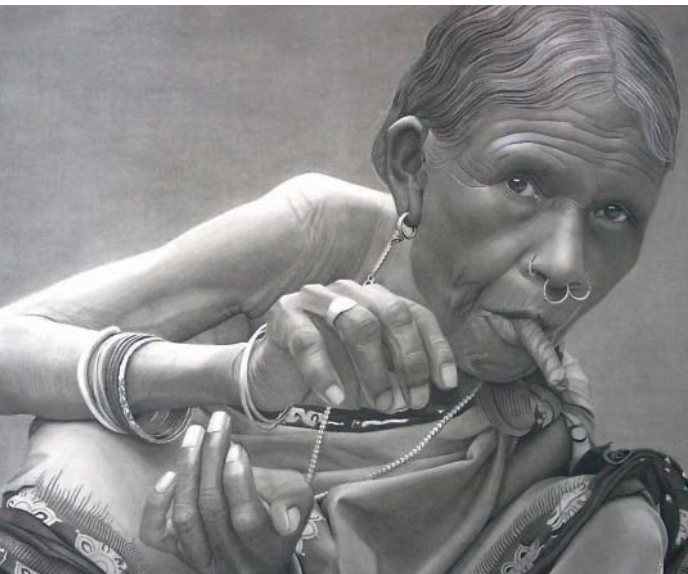
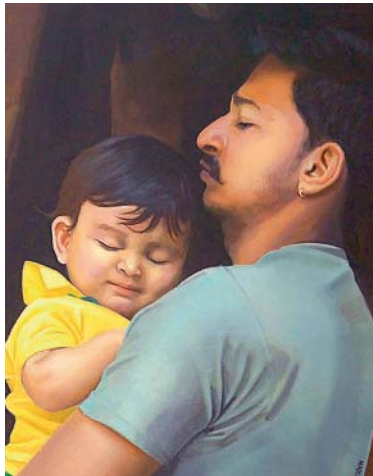
Marda, a contemporary fine artist, who works with charcoal and acrylic mediums, is exhibiting his works which are hyper-close to reality, with nearly photographic finish, yet fusing a rich range of innovation and deep observation of life's surreal moments.

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

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



Artist Sumanth Marda, (right) his works



IN BRIEF

**2 ULTRAS KILLED,
THIRD HELD IN
POONCH GUNFIGHT**DC 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 had 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 Vijonagar, which saw violent protests with several government offices burnt over the voting rights of former Assam Rifles personnel in the panchayat 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 Vijonagar to ensure peace, he said, adding that vandalism will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Vijonagar, 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.



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

**Shikara, part of BJP poll
rally, capsizes in Dal Lake**DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, DEC. 13

A group of BJP activists and a couple of TV reporters escaped narrowly when a shikara (water gondola) they were riding capsized in Srinagar's Dal Lake on Sunday.

The boat was part of a 'shikara rally' organised by the BJP ahead of the seventh phase of Jammu and Kashmir's first-ever District Development Council (DDC) elections scheduled to take place early next week.

The rally was being led by Union minister of state for finance Anurag Thakur who is in-charge of the BJP's election campaign in J&K and it's national general secretary

● **BJP DENIES** any of its activists were riding the boat which met with the mishap and alleged that a section of media was 'spreading negative propaganda against the party'.

Tarun Chugh. The others who attended the rally included Syed Shahnawaz Hussain, BJP's national spokesperson, and the party's local leaders including Sofi Yousuf and Altaf Thakur.

Witnessed said that one of the shikaras carrying a few BJP activists and a couple of TV reporters and camerapersons capsized near Ghat No.17 of the lake.

However, all of them

were rescued immediately by local boatmen. The videos of the incident went viral on social media platforms with some netizens mocking the BJP.

However, the BJP denied any of its activists were riding the boat which met with the mishap and alleged that a section of media was 'spreading negative propaganda against the party'.

"It was a boat carrying three TV journalists that capsized. None of the BJP leaders or workers was onboard," claimed party's media in-charge Manzoor Bhat.

The police said that those who fell in chilly waters of the lake were given medical attention "as a safety measure."

**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

SANJAY 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

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

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 Organisation.

**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

**ASSAM OKAYS
SHUTDOWN OF
MADRASAS,
SANSKRIT TOLS**

Guwahati, Dec. 13: The Assam cabinet on Sunday approved a proposal to close down all government-run madrasas and Sanskrit tols (schools), and a bill in this regard will be tabled during the upcoming winter session of the state Assembly, parliamentary affairs minister Chandra Mohan Patowary said.

"Existing laws related to madrasas and Sanskrit tols will be repealed. A bill will be introduced in the next session of the Assembly," Patowary, who is also the spokesperson of the Assam government, said.

The winter session of the Assam Legislative Assembly will begin from December 28. The decision to shut down all the state-run madrasas and Sanskrit tols was taken during the cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, he said.

Education minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had, in October, said there were 610 state-run madrasas across Assam and the government had been spending ₹260 crore annually for these institutes.

He had also said the State Madrasa Education Board, Assam would be dissolved. The minister had also mentioned that all the government-run madrasas would be converted to high schools and new admissions would be held for existing students as regular ones.

According to Sarma, the Sanskrit tols would be handed over to Kumar Bhaskar Varma Sanskrit and Ancient Studies University.

The infrastructure of Sanskrit tols would be used to convert them to centres of learning and research where Indian culture, civilisation and nationalism would be studied, he had said.

Senior BJP leader and Deputy Speaker of the Assembly Aminul Haque Laskar had said madrasas run by private parties would not be shut down.

"These (private) madrasas will not be shut down as these have kept Muslims alive," Laskar had said while laying the foundation stone for a madrasa in Cachar district in November.

— PTI

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 multipolarity and US moves to go back to a unipolar world, of its “independent” foreign policy. Even if some questions have risen about it, as a middle-level power India would do well to remind itself of the need for such independence, which permits it the latitude to negotiate with contending parties.

Lessons from Delhi border

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

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

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

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

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 unimplementable 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

KUDOS TO 3 JUDGES

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

John Samuel
Secunderabad

EMPTY RHETORIC

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

Prasad
Madhapur

RELIEF, DUES, KCR

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

S. Laxmirajam
Hyderabad

6 Air Force pilots to
man IA’s planes

BOMBAY, Dec. 13.

Six Indian Air Force pilots arrived in Bombay today to man, in two teams, the Bombay-based AVRO HS-748 aircraft of the Indian Airlines from tomorrow as the threat of Corporation employees to go on a one-day token strike midnight tonight still loomed large.

Loaders, traffic assistants and cabin crew at Bombay stopped work hours before the scheduled start of the strike in pursuance of a directive from the Air Corporation Employees’ Union this morning. Traffic officers and outside loaders worked on the Boeing chartered from Air India and few Delhi-based Caravelles by which the Airlines again maintained a skeleton service. Meanwhile deputy minister of civil aviation, Dr Sarojini Mahishi was meeting unions.

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 alter-

ation, 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.

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

IRAN SUMMONS EU ENVOYS FOR PROTESTING

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

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

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

MANY HELD AT PARIS STIR OVER SECURITY BILL

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

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

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

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

Brexit deadline goes 'extra mile'

Johnson feels Brexit failure still 'most likely'

London, Dec. 13: UK businesses 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

US set for Covid vaccine rollout

Non-essential shops, schools to close in Germany, says Merkel

Berlin, Dec. 13: Shops selling non-essential goods, hair-salons and schools in Germany will close from Wednesday, Chancellor Angela Merkel said, to halt an "exponential growth" new in Coronavirus infections in Europe's biggest economy.

The partial lockdown will apply until January 10, with companies also urged to allow employees to work from home or offer extended company holidays, under the new measures agreed by Merkel with regional leaders of Germany's 16 states on Sunday.

Alcohol sales would be banned in public places, essentially outlawing the business of mulled wine stands, which have proved popular in the days running up to Christmas.

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

Germany in November closed leisure and cultural facilities and banned indoor dining in restaurants. The measures had helped to halt rapid growth of infections after the autumn school holidays, but numbers had plateaued at a high rate.

Germany in November closed leisure and cultural facilities and banned indoor dining in restaurants. The measures had helped to halt rapid growth of infections after the autumn school holidays, but numbers had plateaued at a high rate.

FARMERS | SUPPORT

Car rally to Indian embassy hijacked by separatist Sikhs who were carrying Khalistani flags

Khalistan supporters vandalise Gandhi's statue in US

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

Hundreds of Sikhs from in and around Greater Washington DC area, Maryland and Virginia, along with many from

other states like New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Ohio and North Carolina, on Saturday undertook a car rally to the Indian embassy in downtown Washington DC, where they gathered to express solidarity with the protesting Indian farmers.

However, the peaceful protest was soon hijacked by the separatist Sikhs who were carrying Khalistani flags with anti-India posters and banners. During the protest, many



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

Clashes erupt after pro-Trump rallies

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

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

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

In the US capital, DC Fire and EMS Department communications chief Doug Buchanan said that four people had been stabbed and were now 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

Pakistan Oppn set to stage final showdown in Lahore

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.

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

So far, police in Lahore have booked more than 3,000 workers of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) for violating Covid-19 SOPs during this week's meetings held here by its vice-president Maryam, he said. PDM's Minar-i-Pakistan public meeting will be the last one in its first phase of rallies that had begun

Slain Taliban chief took life insurance

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.

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

— PTI

over two months ago. The PDM will announce the 'decisive phase' of its struggle against Prime Minister Khan's government in this public meeting.

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

The long march towards Islamabad is also on the cards for the PDM. Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar has asked the PDM to delay its Minar-e-Pakistan rally in light of 'terror threat alerts' and the Coronavirus situation. "I ask the Opposition to resolve issues through talks. Discuss their issues through dialogue and not by playing with people's lives," Buzdar said. — PTI

Congressman Ro Khanna seeks fair, peaceful solution to farmers

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

Khanna, 44, was recently elected for a third consecu-

tive 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 pro-

vide for their families," Khanna said in a tweet on Saturday. "I am encouraged by the ongoing dialogue," he said, joining other American lawmakers who have expressed their views on the ongoing farmers' protest in India, several of whom have expressed their concerns. — PTI

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 mid-week defeat at RB Leipzig. He 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. He 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. Verstappen eased home 15.976 seconds clear of Valtteri Bottas, who at least recovered some pride by taking second after his forlorn showing at the Sakshir GP, and 18.415 ahead of seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton. On his return to action after recovering from a bout of Covid-19, Hamilton struggled to make any impact as he battled through ahead of Alex Albon, who finished fourth in the second Red Bull. — AFP

Honda Erula finish with 7 podiums

Chennai: The curtain went down on Sunday at the Madras Motor Race Track with final day of 2020 Indian National Motorcycle Racing Championship & IDEMITSU Honda India Talent Cup Round 1. Marking their dominance, ENEOS Honda Erula Racing team now lead the ProStock 165cc class of the total 7 podiums including 2 wins. Sunday's races saw Mathana Kumar stamping his first victory and a total of 4 podium finish while Rajiv Sethu bagged another podium finish for Honda in PS165cc category. Alongside the national championship, the IDEMITSU Honda India Talent Cup saw the energetic young guns Sarthak Chavan, Kavin Quintal & Varoon S leading at top 3 in the NSF 250R open class whereas Shyam Babu leads the CBR150R Novice class.

Datta signs off with a double

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

Live on TV

CRICKET

Big Bash League: Sydney Thunder vs Brisbane Heat from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

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

WWE

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

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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 Mumbaikar is more flamboyant and has a good grip on game situations.

"Batting with Ajinkya, he is more flamboyant and he has also got a good sense of game situation

"...but coming to bat at number six is a total different game situation. You have to bat with the keeper or an all-rounder or the bowlers. I enjoy batting at both position and it's about what the team needs," he said.

Having been in Australia for a month along with two first-class matches under their belt, Vihari said the players are now well-prepared to tackle the pace and bounce of Australian tracks.

—PTI



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

Ben & Jack shine in drawn 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

● **Australia 'A' gave a better account of themselves on an eased out third day track to end on 305/4 after picking themselves up from 25/3, thanks to Ben McDermott and Jack Wildermuth's tons.**

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, watching the proceedings from the dug-out, will be happy with multiple options that emerged from the game.

—PTI
Brief scores: Indians 194 & 386/4 drew with Australia 'A' 108 & 307/4 (Wildermuth 111*, McDermott 107*, Carey 57).

NEW ZEALAND CLOSE IN ON VICTORY IN SECOND TEST

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

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

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

New Zealand's push to victory.

The umpires offered the batsmen the light around 5.30pm local time as dark clouds gathered over the Basin Reserve and with no improvement in conditions, players were unable to return.

Earlier, opener John Campbell reached his highest Test score of 68, his second half century, in an 89-run third-wicket partnership which provided a further obstacle to New Zealand's push for victory.

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

NorthEast remain unbeaten

Vasco, Dec. 13: NorthEast United extended their unbeaten run in the Indian Super League after a goal-less 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 sur-



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

prise 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

■ Raina bags doubles crown

Ankita ends year on high

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

The unseeded Indo-Georgian pair won 6-4 3-6 10-6 against Aliona Bolsova Zadoinov from Spain and Slovakian Kaja Juvan in the final of the \$100,000 hard court event on Saturday.

Ankita said success on the singles circuit is unparalleled but a deep run in doubles draw is not without significance.

"The doubles has always helped me in singles. Playing well in doubles has always been followed by good run in singles in my career. You get to practice with good players, get to play and can work out a few things in matches," Ankita said.

It was the fourth doubles final of the season for Ankita but the biggest trophy of the calendar since her earlier two titles were at the \$25,000 level.

In February this year, Ankita had made three finals, winning back-to-back titles in Nonthaburi

(Thailand) with Bibiane Schoofs and ending runners-up in Jodhpur with compatriot Snehal Mane.

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

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

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

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

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

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

—PTI



Ankita Raina

Mushtaq Ali T20 from January 10

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

It is learnt that BCCI secretary Jay Shah has e-mailed all the state units that Mushtaq Ali will kick-start the domestic itinerary although there is no clarity as to when the Ranji Trophy will start. The schedule has been thrown haywire owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"After having gone through your responses and in accordance with the feedback received, I am pleased to inform you that BCCI is planning to start the domestic season 2020-21 with the scheduling of the T20 tournament for the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy,"

Shah wrote to state units.

"By Saturday, January 2, 2021, teams will have to assemble in their respective hub. From Sunday, January 10, 2021, tournament will start and the final will be played on January 31, 2021."

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

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

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

—PTI

Vihari has made a strong case for his inclusion



Hemant Kenkre

Silly Point

Former Indian opener, Wasim Jaffer neatly summed up the situation that is currently being faced by the think tanks of both the Australian and the Indian teams as they prepare for the first, pink ball, day/night Test match at Adelaide. Jaffer gave a fitting reply to ex-Australian spinner Brad Hogg who had questioned the technique of the Indian top order batsmen while playing the Australia 'A' team in a practice match at the Sydney Cricket Ground. In a social media interac-

tion, Hogg had suggested that the "Indian top order need to know where their off stump is, learn to leave the ball off a good length, and not chase the ball moving away outside off stump." Jaffer, known for his mild manner during his playing days, took to humour telling Hogg: "Australia need to know who their top order is."

At this point in time, both teams are struggling to finalise their playing elevens for different reasons. The Aussies will miss their regular opener David Warner who is out

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

Joe Burns, the third opener is in miserable form nothing just 5 runs in 4 innings against the visitors. Marcus Harris who was drafted into the Aussie Test squad as a replacement for Pucovski will probably open the innings with Burns, unless the hosts decide to take a punt with Marnus Labuschagne who has had a tremendous run in Test cricket over the last season. The ominous form showed by the Indian pacers, particularly

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

For India, the two practice matches in Sydney gave their batsmen an opportunity to test their form in the middle — which was grabbed by those who intend to make the cut for the Adelaide Test. Currently, three batsmen (in the top/middle order) are certain to be on the list to be exchanged at the toss: Cheteshwar Pujara, skipper Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane. The dilemma that the Indian team management faces centres around the openers, the number six position, the wicket keeper and the bowling attack.

For the opening slots, the

choice will be between the experienced Mayank Agarwal, Prithvi Shaw and the uncapped Shubham Gill. Of these three, Agarwal looks to be more certain to walk out to bat at Adelaide considering his past record playing Test cricket in Australia coupled with the 61 runs that he scored against Australia A in the second innings at the SCG. Gill, who had a fruitful outings in the two practice matches and has impressed many with his technique in trying conditions, will be a strong contender as the second opener.

The point is will the Indians open with Gill, a debutant, in a crucial game or go in with Shaw who has four Tests under his belt. Or, will they take a chance with KL Rahul who has the maximum Test

match experience of the lot. For the sixth batting position, Hanuma Vihari has made a strong case for inclusion with an unbeaten century in his last innings at the SCG. The wicket keeper's position seemed to be fixed with Wriddhiman Saha sure to play until his deputy, Rishab Pant, threw a spanner in the works with a beligerent, unconquered 103 runs in the practice match.

The biggest issue facing the Indians will be to go into the Test with the most balanced side. For starters, the game will be played with a pink ball and partly under lights — a tough scenario. The fluorescent ball tends to swing a lot more than its red and white cousins; a big factor when Kohli sits down to finalise his playing eleven. With all-rounder Ravindra

Jadeja out of the equation, the Indian team will have to go in with four (instead of five) regular bowlers to bolster their batting line up.

Team India will look at three parameters while picking the side: 1) form, 2) technique and 3) experience. If one was to don the selectors cap, one would reverse the order considering the pink ball and the match being a day-nighter. Technique and experience would matter more than mere form, which has proven (comparatively) to be a fickle criterion. My openers will be Agarwal and Gill with Vihari at six followed by Saha, the best gloveman. The experienced Ravichandran Ashwin and Umesh Yadav would be my choices to support Shami and Bumrah.