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HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | 16 DECEMBER 2020

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PUNJAB
DRAKSHINANA
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WEATHER

 **Max:** 29.2°C
Min: 16.4°C
RH: 47%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy.
Mist or haze likely.
Max/Min temp. 30/17 °C

COVID-19 COUNT




| CASES | DEATHS |
|-----------|----------|
| (+25,901) | (+365) |
| 99,32,364 | 1,44,110 |

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

| | |
|--------------|-------|
| (+491) | (+3) |
| TS: 2,78,215 | 1,499 |
| (+500) | (+5) |
| AP: 8,76,336 | 7,064 |

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

| |
|---|
|  7,35,16,121 |
|  DEATHS 16,34,749 |
|  COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 218 |

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Margasira Shuddha Vidiya till 4.59 pm
Star: Purvashada till 8.08 pm
Varjyam: Shesha Varjyam till 8.05 am; 3.51 am to 5.24 am (Thursday)
Durmuhurtam: 11.49 am to 12.33 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

HUIJI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Akhir 30, 1442 AH

PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.34 am
Zohar: 12.22 pm
Asar: 4.09 pm
Maghrib: 5.50 pm
Isha: 7.05 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.39 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.44 PM
MOONSET TODAY 7.30 PM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 6.10 AM

COUNTER POINT



We are lucky to be blessed with unadulterated grass!

BRIEF

Covid tally rises in IIT-Madras

Chennai: Seventy nine more people have tested positive for coronavirus on the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras campus here, taking the tally in the institution to 183, a senior health official said on Tuesday. Out of the 978 samples lifted from the IIT-M since December 1, a total of 183 people have tested positive till date and results for 25 specimens alone were yet to be received.

North India in grip of cold wave

New Delhi: Cold conditions intensified in parts of north India on Tuesday and dense fog engulfed many states as Delhi registered its lowest minimum temperature of the season so far while night temperatures in Kashmir dipped below the freezing point.

Covid shots in TS from Jan. 18?

Bharat Biotech's Covaxin likely to be administered in state

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC 15.

The wait for a vaccine for Covid-19 in India may be coming to an end. There are indications that two, if not more variants of vaccine candidates under development and being tested in the country, are very likely to be approved sooner than later.

Expectations are that the vaccine could be available for administration sometime by January 18.

While the Centre had already asked states to make priority lists of people to receive the vaccine, the Telangana State government too has got cracking on this subject with a two-day brainstorming and training for officials on transportation, storage and administration of the



PREPARING FOR VACCINE

Telangana did a two-day brainstorming and training for officials on vaccine administration.

Two or more variants of the Covid-19 vaccines are likely to be approved sooner than later

vaccines in Telangana.

Sources indicated that they are hopeful of vaccines for Covid-19 being available for administration by the middle of January.

It is likely that this could get going in the state on the first Monday after Sankranti, the harvest festival celebrated across the country with different names.

And it could well be Covaxin, the vaccine developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech

India Limited, that could make its way for vaccinations in the state and rest of the country.

It may be recalled that BBIL, along with Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) collaborating with Oxford University-Astra Zeneca for its vaccine candidate Covishield, as well as Pfizer-BioNTech, had approached the Drug Controller General of India (DGCI) for emergency use authorisation of their vaccines in India

earlier this month.

Russian developed Sputnik V vaccine that city-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories is testing is expected to join the race for approval once it goes through its phases.

However, with the DGCI seeking more safety and efficacy data from Phase two and three trials and other data from SII, BBIL, and Pfizer, the emergency use authorisation requests have been put on hold.

It is now expected that the DGCI, after examining additional data being submitted by the pharma companies, may give its approval that could well enable the government to announce a New Year gift to the country in the form of either one, or two, or may be three anti-Covid-19 vaccines.

Free for all in Karnataka Council



BJP and Congress leaders clash over the chairman post during the Karnataka Legislative Council in Bengaluru on Tuesday. Congress MLCs heckled and pushed deputy chairman of the Legislative Council, S.L. Dharmre Gowda, from his seat. — DC

High Court may get first woman Chief Justice

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

The Supreme Court Collegium has decided to transfer chief justices, including those heading the Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha High Courts, sources said.

According to officials of the apex court, Justice Hima Kohli, who is currently serving as senior

judge in the Delhi High Court, is likely to be appointed as Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court. Sikkim High Court Chief Justice Arup Kumar Goswami is likely to be the Chief Justice of the AP High Court while Justice S. Muralidhar of the Punjab and Haryana High Court will possibly take over as the Chief Justice of the Odisha High Court.

The Supreme Court



Justice Hima Kohli

Collegium, headed by Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde and including



Justice Arup Kumar Goswami

Justice N.V. Ramana, is expected to meet on Thursday for finalising

the transfers of chief justices. The Collegium's recommendations will then be sent to President Ram Nath Kovind for his consent. Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan has been serving as CJ of Telangana High Court since June 23, 2019. He has one more year of service before retirement.

■ **Page 2: Justice Chauhan may go to Uttarakhand**

Farmers' leaders to block Delhi-Noida border

PM sees conspiracy behind farmers' stir

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 15



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses a ceremony in Kutch while inaugurating projects on Tuesday. — PTI

Winter Session of Parl scrapped

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 15

The Winter Session of Parliament that usually begins in the last week of November won't take place this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the government will convene the Budget Session in January 2021, parliamentary affairs minister Prahlad Joshi said in a letter to Congress' Lok Sabha leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

"The winter months are very crucial for managing the pandemic because of a recent spurt in cases dur-

ing this period, particularly in Delhi. We are in the middle of December and a Covid vaccine is expected very soon," Mr Joshi said. Attacking the government over the issue, the Congress said Tuesday the "decimation of parliamentary democracy is complete" and asked why, if election campaigning can be done amid the pandemic, the session could not be held. Senior party leader and Rajya Sabha chief whip Jairam Ramesh also said Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad wasn't consulted.

said: "The BJP is the real 'tukde tukde gang' in the country. It has smashed national unity to pieces, shamelessly inciting Hindus against Muslims and now desperately setting peace-loving Punjabi Hindus against their Sikh brethren, especially farmers. They are pushing the new farm laws, Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal said his former ally BJP was the real "tukde tukde gang" which was trying to push patriotic Punjab into communal flames. He

While the farmers — who have been protesting for 20 days now — want the three new laws to be scrapped, the government has said it is willing to

continue talks but won't take back the laws.

Union minister Kailash Choudhary said the Centre will soon call the farmers' leaders for the next round of talks to end the deadlock over the farm laws. The protests against the new laws is likely to intensify further as more farmers are expected to join the agitation at Delhi's borders. Over 2,000 women from the families of those protesting at the Singhu border are likely to join the demonstration in the coming days.

BORIS TO BE CHIEF GUEST ON REPUBLIC DAY

London, Dec. 15: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has accepted his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi's invitation to be the chief guest at the Republic Day parade on January 26, Downing Street said here on Tuesday, marking his first major bilateral visit since taking office last year and the first since Britain's exit from the European Union. "I am absolutely delighted to be visiting India next year at the start of an exciting year for Global Britain, and look forward to delivering the quantum leap in our bilateral relationship," said Johnson. — PTI

RAJA CHARI TO LEAD SPACEX TEAM TO ISS

Washington, Dec. 15: NASA and European Space Agency (ESA) have selected three astronauts, including Indian-American Raja Chari, as crew members for SpaceX mission to the International Space Station, which is expected to launch in the autumn of 2021. — Agencies

■ **Report on Page 9**

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

About a decade ago, when about a 100 bulletproof jackets mysteriously "vanished" from the stores at the Andhra Pradesh police headquarters (then united AP) in Lakdikapul, the incident sent shockwaves across the police department.

As the matter reached the top brass, an inquiry was ordered. Just as the investigation into the matter was about to begin, the missing bulletproof vests resurfaced at the stores — as mysteriously as it had disappeared.

It now turns out that the bulletproof jacket found with slain gangster Muhammed Nayeemuddin — shot dead by the police in August 2016 — was one among those that were smuggled out from the AP State police headquarters in the year 2010.

Informed sources told *Deccan Chronicle* that it was in September 2010 that nearly 100 vests went missing from the stores in the DGP's office. The issue was brought to the notice of the higher ups by an employee at the stores.

As the news of the vests going missing from the state police headquarters

● **IT WAS** no secret that Nayeem was on the payrolls of the AP police as he helped them eliminate many naxals and he faced multiple threats to his life.

spread like wildfire, the then director-general of police K. Aravinda Rao ordered an inquiry into the matter and entrusted the investigation to IPS officer T. Yoganand, then posted as assistant IG.

While the incident took the AP police by storm, some police officers are said to have been aware as to why the vests were

smuggled and for whom.

Strangely, as Yoganand was about to commence investigation, the vests mysteriously resurfaced at the stores. While the top brass once again ordered a departmental inquiry into how it resurfaced, the police had then claimed that the vests had been moved to a private property from the stores, the reasons for which remain unexplained. Later, two policemen working in the headquarters had been transferred.

"The suspicion was that some policemen wanted to sell the vests in the open market and one of them

ended up with Nayeemuddin. Right from the disappearance of vests to its resurfacing, every aspect of it is shrouded in mystery," senior officials, who were aware of the goings-on back then, told this newspaper.

While it was no secret that Nayeem was on the payrolls of the AP police as he helped them eliminate many naxals and their sympathisers, he faced multiple threats to his life. However, the discovery of a bulletproof jacket in Nayeemuddin's arsenal did come as a surprise for many police officials as it is rare for gangsters and

hardened criminals to lay their hands on one besides highlighting the strong nexus between the slain gangster and police officials.

In response to an RTI query filed by the secretary of Forum for Good Governance M Padmanabha Reddy, it was revealed that Nayeem had three AK-47s, nine pistols, three revolvers, seven country made guns, one SBBL 12-bore gun, 616 live rounds besides a bulletproof jacket, 10 gelatin sticks, two hand grenades, 30 electric and non electric detonators among other material.

SHORT TAKES

TRIBAL STUDENT GETS SEAT IN NIT, SEEKS AID

DC CORRESPONDENT
RAMPUR-B (ADILABAD), DEC. 15

Adivasi student Sidam Mahesh of Rampur village in interior Sirikonda mandal has got admission into the National Institute of Technology, Agartala. Though he has managed to pay the admission fee, he still has to pay his first semester and hostel fees.

Mahesh, who completed his Intermediate at Tribal Welfare Residential College, Adilabad, got 5,843 rank in the JEE mains under ST category. Though his family has borrowed money from relatives for gaining admission, Mahesh will require total ₹6 lakh by the time he completes his course in Production Engineering.

Recently, his mother Sidam Laxmi Bai, who works as an agricultural labour, bought him a cell phone for online classes by taking a loan from a local farmer with an agreement that she will pick cotton in the latter's field till she clears the loan amount through her wages.

Apart from Mahesh, six other Adivasi students, including a girl, have got admission into the NIT institutions and central universities this year. But all of them are struggling to pay their fee.

Families of these students have appealed to the state government to come to the rescue of Adivasi students, so that they can successfully complete their courses from the prestigious institutions and bring laurels to Telangana state.

Mahesh's father Sidam Prabhu said they had met Bhavesh Mishra, project officer of ITDA, Utnoor, seeking financial help. But Prabhu said the officer told them that ITDA had no funds.

Both father and son are in pensive mood after meeting the project officer. They are now looking for a helping hand from civil society, philanthropists and state government.

Philanthropists may contact them on phone 8688638684 or deposit their contribution in account number 6244417621, SBI, Utnoor (IFC code No: SBHY0020133).

● **FAMILIES** of these students have appealed to the state government to come to the rescue of Adivasi students, so that they can successfully complete their courses.

HMA LIFETIME AWARD FOR SHYAM MOHAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

Union minister of state for home affairs G. Kishan Reddy has conferred the Hyderabad Management Association's Lifetime Achievement Award on entrepreneur Anantula Shyam Mohan, MD, Corporate Communication Systems India, for the year 2019.

At the 47th HMA Annual Awards function held in the city, Shyam Mohan, who has served as a past president of HMA, was given the honour for his contributions as a pioneering entrepreneur for over five decades. Hyderabad Management Association, a 56-year-old organisation with presence in Telangana and AP, provides a platform for professionals, academia and management students to stay abreast of contemporary management practices.

JUSTICE CHAUHAN MAY GO TO U'KHAND

From Page 1

Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan of Telangana High Court is expected to be transferred as Chief Justice of Uttarakhand or another High Court. If Justice Hima Kohli comes in as CJ of Telangana High Court, she will be the first woman Chief Justice. Justice Hima Kohli belongs to Delhi and practiced as an advocate in Delhi High Court.

On May 29, 2006, she was appointed as Additional Judge of the Delhi High Court and took oath as permanent Judge on August 29, 2007. She is the senior-most Judge of the Delhi High Court.

Justice Arup Kumar Goswami, who is likely to take over as the Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, was appointed as the Judge of the Gauhati High Court on January 24, 2011. He took over as the Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court on October 15, 2019.

This colony awaits GHMC's attention



Civic authorities have not cleared the inundation at Umamaheshwari Colony, Kompally, even after months causing serious health hazards and inconvenience to the residents living in the area. The stench emanating from the stagnant water has also become unbearable.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

Who will be vaccinated first and how, mull docs

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

The Covid-19 vaccine preparatory inputs from the State and Central health ministries have created a buzz and also confusion across the healthcare industry.

With emergency service personnel like municipal workers, police and healthcare officials among the first to be administered the vaccine, questions are being raised about their emergency use.

What about those who have recovered after testing positive? Should they wait or opt for the vaccine? What about an asymptomatic carrier? What about informed consent? Consent is a very important part of vaccination trials and as the vaccine will be approved for emergency use will consent be taken? What must a person do in terms of adverse side effects? What if the person is vaccinated and still gets infected?



1. Vaccine is voluntary and not compulsory.
2. Those who do not want to be vaccinated cannot be pulled up for not taking it.
3. Government is presently training its health officials and gearing up machinery to meet the requirements.
4. Emergency service personnel are also adopting a wait and watch policy.
5. Human trial results will decide which vaccine is to be used.

Dr Vijay Yewale from Indian Academy of Pediatrics says "Those who have recovered from Covid-19 will be the last in the vaccination list as they already have antibodies. The first to be administered will be the most vulnerable and immune compromised."

The vaccine is not compulsory but the government will spread awareness about the vaccine being a protective cover. Healthcare workers are

being trained about the scientific questions that will crop up and need answers while emergency "volunteers" are seeking safety, efficacy and about symptoms of side effects.

A senior government doctor on condition of anonymity, points out "It is a government programme, which we have to support. Yet we are not going to jump for the vaccination programme. It will be a wait and watch policy. First and foremost

the data analysis of phase III human trials of both Covaxin and Covishield will be assessed."

Experts state that the preparedness on the lines of pulse polio vaccine is being wrongly interpreted that the programme will start immediately. The preparedness is to assure that once the government approves a vaccine, implementation would be smooth, although there will be a time gap between the two. According to sources, it was found during human trials that pain and mild fever were the reactions after the first dose of the vaccine.

Experts are firm that a person who is vaccinated cannot roam around freely? Once vaccinated the protocols of safety have to be followed as it is not known for how the effectiveness would last. Hence masks, social distancing and hand washing will have to be strictly followed even if a person is vaccinated, caution experts.

NO CHANGE IN MEDICAL, DENTAL TUITION FEE

Hyderabad, Dec. 15: In view of the Covid-19 pandemic, government has agreed to preserve the current fee structure for UG medical and dental courses in all private non-minority medical and dental colleges for the academic year 2020-21. The orders were issued on Monday to uphold the current fee structure at private medical and dental colleges. For the entire course, students would pay the same tuition fee as they did during the admission period.

— INN

ACTION | MODE

Projects planned to counter newly-elected BJP corporators

GHMC to start SNDP immediately

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

The current Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) council has decided to kick start new projects during its ongoing tenure itself, as they might not have any opportunity once the newly elected council takes over.

To counter BJP corporators in the newly elected council, the current council, with TRS corporators in majority, has decided to start the vital Strategic Nala Development Plan (SNDP) immediately, which might otherwise be halted by opposition BJP. Since up-gradation of sanitation wing has already begun, the corporation has already upgraded seven garbage transfer

stations out of total 17. They have decided to add another 650 garbage stations with enhanced capacity, apart from 150 Swachh auto tipplers.

According to ruling party sources, the GHMC council will meet in January to introduce the civic body's budget. Prior to the council meeting, the standing committee will keep meeting every Thursday to pass resolutions pertaining to all pending developmental works unanimously, since they have absolute majority. If opposition BJP members halt the works, TRS can blame the saffron party. Under the new council in future, unanimous decisions will not be possible since many divisions have been lost by the ruling party.



Against this backdrop, TRS has decided to forthwith embark on the SNDP project. A six-kilometre stretch of nala in Rampally will be widened before dissolution of the current GHMC council. TRS corporators, along with GHMC officials, have convinced about 300 families who have encroached upon nalas to rehabilitate them in the 6,240 double bedroom houses constructed in Rampally.

Nala widening works will be taken up later in all other flood-affected areas including Charminar and L. B. Nagar.

The corporation has already upgraded transfer stations located at Kaithalapur, Sanjeevaiah Park, Mallapur, Amberpet, Katadan and Patancheru.

Some others are still under up-gradation. Garbage vehicles with enhanced capacity will be

Dr Sujeeth treated 500 Covid-19 cases for free

All patients under his treatment recovered

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
| DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

Year 2020 has been the worst, as Coronavirus pandemic has taken colossal human lives. Its treatment made thousands make payments in lakhs. But there have also been doctors like Dr Sujeeth Kumar, who decided to go out of the way and treat people for free during the pandemic time. He has treated nearly 500 Covid patients. Interestingly, his treatment is over phone, prescribing medicines and asking them to quarantine themselves. All his patients became healthy and Dr Sujeeth came to be known as the best Covid specialist in Hyderabad.

"This pandemic has been unexpected. Initially, a Covid patient called me. I told him I will not charge any fee but treat him with medicines while he remains under home quarantine. He fully recovered and passed on information to others," the doctor recalls as to how it all started.

Born and brought up in Nizamabad, Dr Sujeeth completed his schooling in that city, Intermediate in Hyderabad and MBBS from MRM College at Gulbarga in Karnataka. Later, he specialised in laparoscopic surgeries in Kerala, Coimbatore, Delhi and Gurgaon.

He is a patient-friendly doctor and has never given importance to money. "If the patient recovers fully and



Dr Sujeeth Kumar.

● **INTERESTINGLY, HIS treatment is over phone, prescribing medicines and asking them to quarantine themselves. All his patients became healthy and Dr Sujeeth came to be known as the best Covid specialist in Hyderabad.**

becomes healthy, that's the best fee", he says. Some retired bureaucrats, IPS officers and former IAS officers are Dr Sujeeth's patients.

In the initial days, after seeing his work, one of his patients decided to help the doctor in a bigger way and suggested starting of Sujeeth Foundation. "It happened two-and-a-half years ago. A friend of a friend told me he wanted to help. The next day he came up with a logo with letters SF and a name below saying Sujeeth Foundation. I would not have thought of this on my own," he says. Many patients and their friends helped the doctor

in shaping up the foundation.

The foundation has an advisory board with Dr Vasanth, M.V. Bhaskar Rao, former DGP of AP, Justice V. Bhaskar Rao, retired Justice of AP High Court, P.V. Rao, retired Income Tax Chief Commissioner, K.R. Venugopal, former secretary in Prime Minister's Office.

"They are all my well-wishers and have seen my work. When I approached them, they readily agreed to be on the board says Dr Sujeeth.

Legendary singer S.P. Balasubramanyam did a special concert for the foundation. "One of the associates of Balu garu is known to me and I treated him. He requested him to do a concert. The singer is down-to-earth and the concert helped us buy two equipments for the foundation," he stated.

Every day, Dr Sujeeth comes to the clinic in the evening and gives free service. "My ultimate goal is to build a hospital with patients being charged a lesser amount like ₹5,000 for anything like bypass or a prolapse surgery. I have this vision in my mind."

The doctor says he is now treating Covid patients who are in the second wave. But it is not severe. If one adheres to a healthy regimen, they can survive any virus attack.

He also does free surgical consultations every Thursday at a clinic run by a religious trust.

TS reports 491 new Covid cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

Telangana has recorded 491 new Coronavirus cases, apart from three deaths. With this, the total number of active cases is 7,272. Of these, 5,169 are in institutional care.

The total number of cases in the state has reached 2,78,599 and total deaths 1,499.

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits have the largest number of 102 cases. The corporation has been consistently reporting the highest number of cases since the beginning of the pandemic.

With movement and activity among people increasing, implementing the use of face masks, hand washing and social distancing has become a challenge.

Health officials state that these lapses are serious and can lead to spread of Covid-19 again.

People have been advised to be cautious and follow safety protocols.

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SHORT TAKES

GHIAL BAGS GREEN POWER AWARD

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

GMR-led Hyderabad International Airport Limited (GHIAL) has won the CII-Green Power Performance Excellence Awards 2020 in the Ground Mounted Solar category.

The award was virtually presented during an event organised by the Renewable Energy (RE) Council of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)-Godrej Green Business Centre (GBC) held between December 1 and 4. The award was in recognition of the initiatives taken by GHIAL in generating solar energy in its 5 MW solar plant.

COPS SEIZE TOBACCO ITEMS WORTH ₹18 LAKH

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

The Special Operations Teams of Malkajgiri Zone conducted raids at two places on Tuesday and seized ₹18 lakh worth banned tobacco products from three men.

In the first case, a godown at Indiranagar Colony in Ramanthapur, which was illegally supplying banned gutka and tobacco products, was raided and the officials apprehended Velshetty Sai. Items worth approximately ₹12 lakh were seized from him and the man was handed over to Uppal police for further investigation.

In the second case, ₹6 lakh worth banned tobacco products were seized from a godown at Hanuman Nagar in RTC Colony. Police nabbed Md Mushtaq, 34, and Md Baba, 24, who were caught with the contraband on the premises.

The two accused were then handed over to Malkajgiri police for further investigation.

● **IN THE second case, ₹6 lakh worth banned tobacco products were seized from a godown at Hanuman Nagar in RTC Colony.**

YOUTH KILLED, ONE INJURED IN BIKE MISHAP

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

A 20-year-old was killed and his pillion rider sustained injuries in an accident after their bike crashed into a parked lorry in Narsingi area on Tuesday.

According to the police, the deceased was identified as Ramesh, and the injured was identified as Mahender, 18, both working as daily wage labourers at a construction site.

“On Tuesday morning, as they were heading out to purchase construction work products from a nearby shop, Ramesh crashed the bike into a parked tipper lorry. As they were not wearing helmets, Ramesh sustained head injuries and died on the spot while Mahender escaped with bruises,” said the police, adding that the reason for them to crash into a parked vehicle is being ascertained.

Ramesh's body was shifted for a post-mortem at Osmania General Hospital and a case was booked by the Narsingi police.

● **ACCORDING TO the police, the deceased was identified as Ramesh, and the injured was identified as Mahender, 18, both working as daily wage labourers at a construction site.**

Budget schools: Worst hit since lockdown

In absence of any other sources of income, budget school teachers have opted to sell vegetables

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

As debate is on in both government and educational circles as well as between parents and schools about reopening of schools even as Covid pandemic is still around, *Deccan Chronicle* explores the readiness of schools in different segments. In Part 2 of this three-part series, we look at budget schools.

Surprisingly, the worst hit amongst all categories of schools are private budget schools in the state. At least 2,000 such schools have got shut and another 4,000 of total 11,000 budget schools are on the verge of closing down. The remaining, though running, are fighting with their backs against the wall to merely

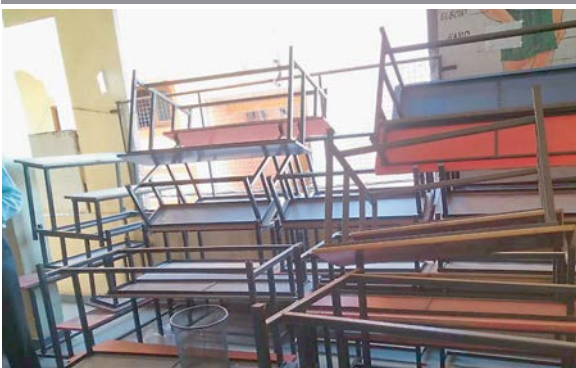
keep functioning.

Financials of each of these school correspondents are such that they are unable to pay back loans, or pay rent for accommodations housing the schools. *Deccan Chronicle* spoke to five school correspondents of budget schools in Amerpet, Yousufguda and Malkajgiri, apart from visiting their premises for a better understanding of ground reality.

These school buildings are nothing less than ghost quarters, with piles of dust on tables and chairs, buildings in a dilapidated condition, for which correspondents are still paying rent of no less than ₹1 lakh each month.

Other bills that they are supposed to pay are being

BACK TO SCHOOL - PART 2



Damaged furniture stacked up in a budget school in Hyderabad.

charged as commercial bills, even without any commercial activity having been undertaken in the last 10 months.

Minimum electricity bill incurred by these private schools is ₹4,000 per month.

“We go through the same

● **TO DO their bit to help teachers in need, some of these correspondents have lent space in their school buildings for them to stay.**

entire process to establish our institution. We pay as much as elite private schools to get recognition, without being anywhere close to what they earn each month. We are struggling to even collect last month's basic tuition fee from our students. The expenditure during the lockdown has been more than our revenue. If this goes on, we will not be able to survive beyond the end of the year,” said M. Augustine, principal, Wisdom High School in Sreeram Nagar.

Out of 200 to 500 students each in such schools, hardly even one per cent has paid fees. Even if the schools reopen, the situation is such that these schools would be left with no teachers due to lack of funds for paying salaries, said A. Shrikanth Raju, principal, Sumedha High School in Yousufguda.

In absence of any other sources of income, budget school teachers have opted to sell vegetables or open up small shops to eke out their livelihood and support their families.

Sheikh Sayeed Ahmed, general secretary, Telangana Recognised Schools Management Association, Hyderabad district, and correspondent, New Lily Model School, said he has taken loans to the tune of

₹20 lakh just to pay salaries to teachers. He said less than four per cent of parents at his school have paid fees since last year. The accumulated dues in fee are ₹22 lakh.

To do their bit to help teachers in need, some of these correspondents have lent space in their school buildings for them to stay.

Pandu Rangaiah Gupta, a teacher for nine years, 85 years of age, has been living in the premises of Wisdom High School due to lack of funds to even pay rent since February.

Among several of their demands, budget schools want the government to categorise all private schools on basis of revenue and change their commercial power bills to domestic ones.

Electricity official arrested for bribery

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

An official from the Jeedimetla electricity office was nabbed by the Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) officials for demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹8,000 on Tuesday.

According to the officials, artisan Tukaram, an official from the electricity office, was caught red handed by ACB while accepting a cash amount of ₹8,000 at Jeedimetla electricity office for doing an official favour.

“He had demanded the money to move the file of the complainant for approval. The man then lodged a complaint at the ACB office and the officials laid a trap and caught the officer red-handed. A chemical test was conducted on his hands to prove his role in the bribe,” said



Tukaram

● **ACCORDING TO the officials, artisan Tukaram, an official from the electricity office, was caught red handed by ACB while accepting a cash amount of ₹8,000.**

the officials. He was arrested and will be produced before the Special Judge for ACB cases.

OGH doctor booked for harassing Nims medico

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

The Panjagutta police on Tuesday booked a criminal case against a resident doctor of Osmania General Hospital for allegedly stalking and harassing a female medico of Nims college.

According to the police, Dr Siddharth, a resident medical professional at Osmania General Hospital, had added the victim, a second year medico of Nims, on Facebook two years ago.

“I accepted the friend request as he was a doctor and we had many mutual friends,” said the victim in her complaint. “Later when he proposed for marriage, I rejected politely and we continued to be friends. However, my prospec-

● **A FEW days ago, Dr Sidharth allegedly barged into her room late at night and confined her inside. Later during midnight, he created a nuisance outside the hostel in a drunken condition.**

tive groom started receiving inappropriate messages from unknown numbers when my marriage was getting fixed. Though Sidharth initially denied his role in it, but later agreed that he and his friends were behind the harassment. Since then, he has been continuously stalking and harassing me through calls and messages. He even made his sister call me and convince me to marry him,”

she said in the complaint.

A few days ago, Dr Sidharth allegedly barged into her room late at night and confined her inside. Later during midnight, he created a nuisance outside the hostel in a drunken condition. Worried with this constant harassment, and feeling threatened to continue her duties, the victim approached the police.

The Panjagutta police booked cases against the doctor under sections 354 (D) (following a woman and contacts, or attempting to contact such woman to foster personal interaction repeatedly despite a clear indication of disinterest by the woman) and 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation) of the IPC and started an investigation.

Two tortured NRI women back home

ATHER MOIN | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

Thanks to the efforts of the Indian Embassy in Dubai and a group of NRIs, two women, who were cheated by a local recruitment agent and handed over to Arab families as domestic help, returned to Hyderabad. The other women, who were also conned, will reach soon as their visa validity has expired.

Sufiya Begum and Yasmeen Begum were sent back after authorities and social workers rescued 12 Indian women who were duped by recruitment agents in Ajman.

Neeraj Agrawal, Consul for Press, Information and Culture said initially Indian Mission was informed about five women who were trapped after being brought to work in UAE. “On enquiry, we found actually 12 women were cheated in the name of remunerative employment. We have provided them temporary accommodation and they are being taken care of.”

Sufiya Begum from Errakunta, Shaheen

Nagar told DC that she was sent to UAE by local agent Parwez three months back with a promise of a monthly salary of ₹10,000 but she was given only 300 Dirham while one of the employers sent ₹8,040 to her family for her entire stay in Dubai.

She said in Dubai Zubeda, wife of Parwez and two other women Salma and Nargis were handling the affairs of placements of persons sent by Parwez. Another man, called ‘Bhaiya’, manages the syndicate. They used to send her from one house to another as a housemaid. Son of her employer punched her face near the eyes. When she requested the handlers to send her back to Hyderabad, Nargis asked her to fulfill the sexual desires of someone there or sell her children, Sufiya said.

Yasmeen Begum said she was not paid a single rupee during her stay. She was being tortured not only by the employers but also by handlers. She was verbally abused by Shafi the agent in Hyderabad.

SPEEDING VEHICLE KILLS ELDERLY WOMAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

A 61-year-old woman was killed in a road mishap when a speeding goods vehicle knocked her down while she was crossing the road near JNTU on Monday evening.

The deceased, identified as Subba Ratnamma, was residing with her husband at his brother's place at KPHB area, said the police.

On Monday evening, Ratnamma left her house on foot to buy household articles and was crossing the main road near JNTU signal when she met with an accident.

“While she was crossing the road, a speeding Tata Ace, bearing the number TS 08 UA 5152, which was heading towards Miyapur, dashed into her, causing her grave injuries on her head and limbs. She was then rushed to a private hospital by locals for treatment where the duty doctors declared her brought dead,” said the police.

Based on a complaint from her son-in-law, C. Anjan Kumar, a software professional, a case was booked against Md Khalil, the driver of the Tata Ace.

2021 | DAMPENER

Due to Covid, 33-yr unbroken streak goes for a toss

Hyd National Book Fair suspended

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

Book lovers from the city are set to miss their eagerly awaited date dashing all their hopes of a fine start to 2021.

The 33-year unbroken streak of the hugely popular Hyderabad National Book Fair will be throttled as the organisers have decided to do away with the ensuing event because of Covid-19 fears.

Considered as South India's biggest book fair, the ten-day event is a treasure trove and one would be spoilt for choice considering that there would be 350

stalls with no leading publisher wishing to miss out on the rare opportunity to make a killing.

Many small and emerging publishers state that suspension of the coming edition will jolt small time publishers, printers, translators and writers.

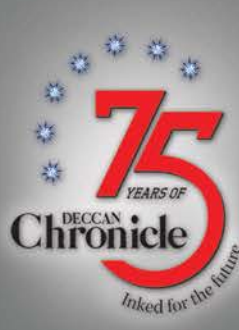
Koya Chandra Mohan, Secretary, Hyderabad Book Fair, said “The Fair stands cancelled due to the prevalence of Coronavirus. The decision was taken keeping in mind the safety of people. Lakhs of book lovers attend the fest each year. In fact, even during demonetization, we had good sales.” He said “More than 350

stalls are put up in the event that starts in the last week of December and continues into the first three days of January. It is a almost like a festival for literature freaks. Their spirits, like that of the publishers, are dampened this year.”

Kiran Tirupatard, Katha Prapancham, Publishers. Tirupati, said “Covid-19 has adversely impacted sales of books and hopes of budding publishers have been crushed. We were hoping to recover during the Hyderabad Book Fair. Alas, even those hopes are destroyed.”

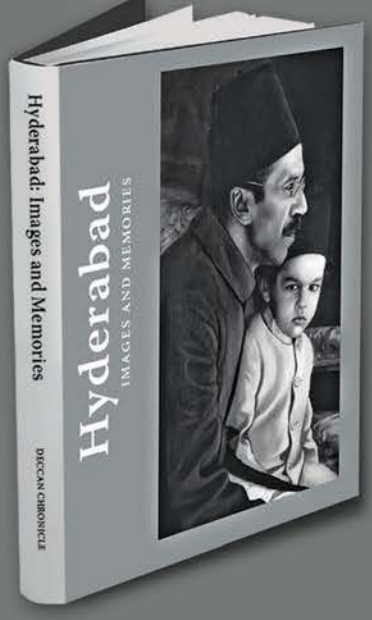

He added, “There has been no book launch in the

past nine months, which in itself is a great loss. Book launches are good opportunities for people to interact with the author and publishers. They can discuss new books and is also an occasion for promoting the works. In the initial phase of lockdown, there were some orders but due to the fear of further spread of the virus, they canceled the orders. Small time publishers were forced to either close down their business or mortgage their jewellery to pay rents and other expenses. I am sure the future generations will talk about this as a dark age for Indian literature.”



Hyderabad

IMAGES AND MEMORIES

We wrapped up our celebrations to mark the 75th anniversary of Deccan Chronicle on May 15, by bringing a special compilation of seventy-five stories filled with intrigue and delight from the final days of the Nizamshahi, titled *Hyderabad: Images & Memories*

From the palace mysteries and murder plots to the Nizam's 3,000 wives and how the ruler faced allegations of kidnapping his bride, all under the watchful eyes of the British, it is all there.

We scoured the archives and collected anecdotal evidence from several actors of that era to discover delightful asides like how the motichur laddus got their name, how an aide saved the Nizam's legendary treasures for the royal family and how Indira Gandhi floored the Nizam.

There are more than 75 pictures, a few of them rare and perhaps being published for the first time.

NOW AVAILABLE

HYDERABAD: IMAGES AND MEMORIES

The hard-bound : ₹2,000, Soft cover : ₹1,500.

at all Deccan Chronicle & The Asian Age offices across the cities

SHORT TAKE

UNESCO CHAIR AT UoH TAPS COMMUNITY RADIOS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD DEC. 15

The UNESCO Chair on Community Media, University of Hyderabad (UoH), conducted a series of online 11 Global Dialogues on Community Media in the post-pandemic world.

Community radio (CR) advocates, practitioners, researchers and academics from across the world participated in the discussion, live-streamed simultaneously on Facebook and YouTube, with an estimated global audience of around 50,000 people.

The UoH conducted the dialogue series between June and November with the participation of representatives of community media from South and Southeast Asia, the Pacific and Australia, South and Latin America, Africa, United Kingdom and Continental Europe.

Besides the Global Dialogues, a five-day online master training classes on social media broadcasting for community radios in Bangladesh was also conducted on Tuesday. The capacity building workshop, led by Prof. Vasuki Belavadi, a faculty fellow at the Chair, aimed at building capacities of community radio stations in using social media to increase community engagement and supplement their daily broadcasts.

The workshop trained community radio stations on using mobile and online tools and implementing effective techniques for creating engaging social media content. It also focused on the best practices of other CR stations and ethical practices on using social media.

"As part of its outreach mandate, the Chair conducted the online dialogues involving representatives from across the world and deliberated on the ground-work that is being done by community radios in those countries and also to understand how they are coping with the current situation," said Chair holder Prof. Vinod Pavarala.

The Chair plans to transcribe all the dialogues and publish the text as an important resource for the sector with the support of UNESCO.

26.5 PER CENT WOMEN IN TS USE INTERNET

New Delhi, Dec. 15: Over 60 per cent women in 12 states and union territories have never used the internet, the latest National Family Health Survey has revealed.

The survey covered 22 states and UTs in the country.

The states and UTs where less than 40 per cent women have used the internet are Andhra Pradesh (21 per cent), Assam (28.2 per cent), Bihar (20.6 per cent), Gujarat (30.8 per cent), Karnataka (35 per cent), Maharashtra (38 per cent), Meghalaya (34.7 per cent), Telangana (26.5 per cent), Tripura (22.9 per cent), West Bengal (25.5 per cent), Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (36.7 per cent) and Andaman & Nicobar Islands (34.8 per cent), the survey revealed. In comparison, more percentage of men have used the internet.

About 50 per cent men have used the internet in seven states — AP (48.8 per cent), Assam (42.3 per cent), Bihar (43.6 per cent), Meghalaya (42.1 per cent), Tripura (45.7 per cent), West Bengal (46.7 per cent), Andaman & Nicobar Islands (46.5 per cent), according to the data. According to the survey, AP (68.6 per cent), Bihar (57.8 per cent) and Telangana (66.6 per cent) accounted for the lowest literacy rates among women. — PTI

NEW FINDINGS

Associate Prof. of UoH leads team of researchers

Chemical in soaps affects genes

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

In its latest study, a team led by Dr. Anamika Bhargava, associate professor at Department of Biotechnology, IIT Hyderabad, has determined the neurotoxic nature of triclosan, an antimicrobial chemical used in soaps and dental care products.

The team's research findings have figured in *Chemosphere*, a leading high-impact scientific journal published in the United

Kingdom. The study revealed that triclosan in minute amounts not only affects genes and enzymes in human body, but can also damage neurons.

It said triclosan, even at amounts 500 times lower than the permissible limit, can cause potent neurotoxic effects.

Triclosan is frequently added to consumer products available in India and worldwide, such as soap, toothpaste and deodorants, to increase their shelf life and check growth of

unwanted microorganisms. It is now being used even in kitchenware and clothes. Triclosan may be tolerated by humans but its use in products of daily use poses a big risk to humans in the long term, the IIT-H report said.

Recently, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reviewed evidence against triclosan and imposed a partial ban on its use. However, India lacks any such regulation so far. Talking about the study, Dr. Anamika Bhargava

said, "Our team of researchers investigated the effects of triclosan on the nervous system in developing zebra fish embryos. Zebra fish is an animal equivalent of humans."

"Its results can well be extrapolated to humans. Overall, triclosan can affect the motor function of an organism."

The study suggests exercise of caution in use of triclosan-based products or even an altogether ban on it in India.

₹4.57L cr tax collected, much below target

Mumbai tax collection stands at close to ₹1.40L cr

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD DEC. 15

Even as businesses across the country are struggling to come out of massive losses due to Covid-19, the overall tax collections for the financial year 2020-21 so far stands at around ₹4.57 lakh crore as against ₹5.83 lakh crore during the same period last financial year.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had set a target of ₹13.19 lakh crore for the IT department for the financial year 2020-21. But the collections so far indicates that the taxmen may be far from achieving the desired target by March

31, 2021.

According to the latest figures accessed by *Deccan Chronicle* (from April 1 to December 10), the net collection from India's financial capital Mumbai stands at close to ₹1.40 lakh crore while the figure during the same period in the last financial year was over ₹1.76 lakh crore. The growth dipped to -20.7 per cent. Of the total collection, the corporate tax collected was ₹71,120.8 crore, the IT was ₹57,063.4 crore.

In the Delhi IT region, the net collection stands at ₹60,436.2 crore while the figures last financial year was ₹87,142.8 crore. The growth went down

to -30.6 per cent.

Coming down south, the Bengaluru IT region fared well as the net collections stood at ₹65,281.6 crore as against ₹64,631.1 crore recording a growth of 1.0 per cent. The corporate tax collected was ₹28,116.7 crore and the IT was ₹36,609.1 crore.

In fact, Karnataka was among the states which had eased lock down a bit early when compared to other states.

In the Hyderabad IT region, which comprises both Telangana state and Andhra Pradesh, the net collection was ₹27,561.3 crore as against ₹32,967.6 crore. The growth rate dipped to -16.4 per cent. The corporate tax was

₹10,240.7 crore while the IT was ₹16,970.6 crore. The target set for the Hyderabad region alone for 2020-21 is a whopping ₹73,809 crore.

"Given the conditions since April this year, tax collections are good enough. We hope the collections will increase within the next couple of months as businesses are getting back on track," sources said.

As for the Chennai IT region, the net collection was ₹29,080.9 crore as against ₹41,760.7 crores the previous year. The growth rate took a hit at -30.4 per cent. The corporate tax collected was ₹12,878.2 crores and the IT was ₹16,207.3 crores.

NCRB adopting new tech: Kishan

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

Union minister of state for home affairs G. Kishan Reddy said the integrated database concepts such as Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) have become indispensable to realise the dream of New India.

Reddy was addressing the inaugural session of the second two-day conference on 'Good Practices in Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) through video-conferencing on Tuesday.

"Under the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the government has used co-operative federalism as a guiding mantra. States work together, learn together, and propel each other forward. In this regard, I will like to commend NCRB for putting together best practices in the form of a



compendium. It will prove to be a treasure of ideas for the law enforcement officers and ensure that states can learn from each other. The policing concept was extensively used in ancient India and it's not new to us. A Harappan seal showing the figure of a man holding a stick portrayed as 'Dandadhara' is perhaps the first pictorial representation of a 'Policeman,'" he said.

Reddy said the ICJS takes data sharing to a higher level and ensures a single source of truth

between the law enforcement and judicial systems.

"The operational efficiency of the criminal justice system, without doubt, ICJS is a force multiplier in this data driven world. It is a reality that crime does not follow jurisdictional boundaries. Hence, our response to crime should also not be restricted by boundaries. Immediate recording of crime and the access of the information to all stakeholders is undoubtedly a key aspect of any effective

law enforcement operation. This has led to the genesis of the project of CCTNS," he added.

"This about ₹2000-crore mission-mode project has revolutionised investigation and policing with its massive reach and connectivity. It has managed to connect the police stations and other offices, even in the most far-flung areas," he pointed out.

The CCTNS that linked all police stations in the country was started in 2009. Out of the total 16,098 police stations in the country, the CCTNS software was being used in over 95 per cent of them, connectivity was available at 97 per cent police stations and 93 per cent were entering 100 percent FIRs through the CCTNS.

"I hope that NCRB will keep on doing its good work and help Police Organizations in States/UTs and at the Centre in effective implementation of these important e-governance projects of Government of India," Mr Reddy concluded.

POLICE WORKED FOR TRS IN GHMC POLLS: CONGRESS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

Telangana Congress party has accused police officers of working for ruling TRS in the recently concluded Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections.

Party's election committee convenor Niranjan complained to State Election Commission on Tuesday against police department for harassing Congress cadre with false cases. Speaking to media, he pointed out that TRS leaders from Siricilla had come to campaign in Jubilee Hills and Rahmatnagar divisions. Congress party corporator candidate Bhavani Shankar and his followers caught these TRS leaders while they were distributing money and liquor.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR BROTHER



V.J. BOBBY MADISON
Brother: ROOP VICTOR MADISON
Sisters: PADMAJA, VANDANA AND PRISCILLA

1st Death Anniversary

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Timothy 4:7



Smt. Samala Hemalatha Devi
(W/o Late Mittakanti Ram Reddy)
inserted by: *We miss you every moment in our life, your presence continues to surround us, in our hearts, you are always there.*
Son: Mittakanti R.G. Vinod Reddy and Family, General Secretary Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee

3rd DEATH ANNIVERSARY

The memory of the righteous is blessed, Prov. 10:7



Mrs. DOROTHY GEORGE CHINNAPPA
W/o Late George Chinnappa
31-07-1924 - 16-12-2017
Inserted by: Children, Grand Children, and Great Grand Children
Ph: 9848057610

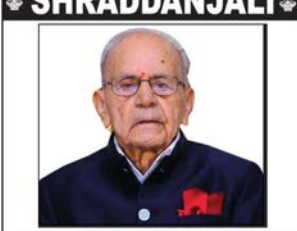
OBITUARY

I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever Psalms 23:6



Ms. Malchi Janet Sunithi
(D/o Late M. P. D. Manoharan)
Sleep in the Lord on 14-12-2020
Cortege will leave residence on 16-12-2020 for funeral service at 10:30am at CSI Wesley Church, Ramkote, Hyd. Thereafter for committal service at Narayanaguda Cemetery, Hyderabad
Inserted by: Family Members,
Ph: 9866189106, 8712195192.

SHRADDANJALI



Late. RAVI RAM REDDY
Retd. Executive Engineer
DOB 22.12.1919 DOD 15.12.2020
Son: R. NARSIMHA REDDY (Pavani Estates)
Dr. R. PREMALATHA, HEMALATHA and Dr. RAGHUPATHI REDDY, MANJULATHA and Dr. MAHENDER REDDY
FUNERAL: Dt. 16-12-2020, 10.30am at Mahaprasthanam, Jubilee Hills

2nd ANNIVERSARY



AMRUTHA-ERUKALA
13.08.1961 - 16.12.2018
Life has never been the same since you left us. From sunrise to sunset, every moment would have been more wonderful if you were with us today. You have always inspired us with your positive thoughts and attitude. Your memories will remain with us forever. Fondly remembered by
ERUKALA RAMULU
Daughters, Sons in Law and Grand Children

1st Death Anniversary

SHRI MADANLAL JI GULATI
Expired On : 16th December 2019

Your ethics & values are our strength guiding us at all times.
Your vision will always motivate us to be on the righteous path.

Loving tribute from :
GULATI FAMILY

SHRADHANJALI

We are deeply grieved to inform you of the unfortunate demise of our beloved mother Mudigonda Shiromani, who was an epitome of love, generosity and selflessness.

THE 10th DAY POOJA CEREMONY will be held at 5-1-102, Saroj Nivas, Ramalayam Street, Kukatpally, Hyderabad today, **16th DECEMBER 2020**.
Lunch begins at 1.30 p.m.

Inserted by Family members:
Mudigonda Praveen Kumar and Family;
Dr. Nukala Pavan Kumar and Family;
Grandchildren and Great-grandchildren.
Ph: 9849367633, 9849947266, 7995995486.

Mudigonda Shiromani
DOD: 8th December 2020

1st DEATH ANNIVERSARY

"His greatness is beyond understanding, what you have done will be praised from generation to the next." Psalm 145:3, 4



Late G.T. SURYAKANTHA RAO
DOB: 18-11-1946 DOD: 16-12-2019
Your life was a blessing, your memory a treasure, you are loved beyond words and missed beyond measure.

Memorial Service at 11.30 am on 16-12-2020 at CSI Wesley Church, Clock Tower.

Inserted by: Mary Dayashela (Wife), Richard and Jayashna (Gunukula), Beulah and Prashanth (Ravula), Prathiba and Rajesh (Nagpal) and Grand Children

Kindly treat this as a personal invitation (S/2021/D00948)

3rd DEATH ANNIVERSARY

The memory of the righteous is blessed, Prov. 10:7



Mrs. ESTHER PAKIADAS
W/o Late Darling Pakiadass
09-01-1934 - 16-12-2017
Inserted by: Children, Grand Children and Great Grand Children

SHRADHANJALI



OUR BELOVED
Dr. M. VERENDER KUMAR
General Physician and Diabetologist
DOD: 6th Dec. 2020
You will always remain in our hearts forever.
MANDA SURYA PRAKASH, MANDA VIJAY MOHAN
Son: VINOD, Daughter: VIJAYANTI
Daughter-in-law: STEPHANIE,
Grand Children: Rohan, Mitul & Aneesh and Associates in Reiki, Eckankar and Art of Living

IN LOVING MEMORY



Dr. J. SAKUNTALA SHARMA
DOB: 15-07-1940 DOD: 16-12-2017
"It has been three years since you left us and attained eternal bliss leaving behind fond and everlasting happy memories of our journey with you. We continue to feel your presence around us every moment and cherish your love and affection in our hearts. With fond memories: Husband - J.V. SHARMA
Son: VINOD, Daughter: VIJAYANTI
Daughter-in-law: STEPHANIE,
Grand Children: Rohan, Mitul & Aneesh and Associates in Reiki, Eckankar and Art of Living

26th DEATH ANNIVERSARY



Late Sri SOLETI YESHWANT RAO
You are the guiding light of our lives. Always in our heart, every time in our thoughts.
Inserted by:
Smt. Suvarnalatha Yeshwant Rao & FAMILY MEMBERS
(S/2021/D00950)

IN LOVING MEMORY



M.B. BALRAJ (IAS) DOD: 16.12.2012



M.B. SAROJINI DOD: 15.12.2007
Your Memories still fresh in our hearts
Inserted by: Suresh Raj, Sunil Raj (Sons), Daughters, Daughters-in-law, Sons-in-law & Grand Children. Ph: 9440277603

Thanksgiving Memorial Service

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7



M. Kalyan Kumar (Praveen)
(Retd. SDE, BSNL)
Memorial Service on Wednesday, 16/12/2020, at Wesley Church Secunderabad, opposite clock tower at 6PM.
Inserted by: Wife G. Vimala,
Son: M. David Dheeraj,
Daughter-in-law: M. Ruth Rajini and Grandsons: M. Moses Pranay Raj and M. Noel Praneet Raj.
Ph: 9908076454, 9989181217

1st DEATH ANNIVERSARY



Sri BALIRAM SARODE
DOB: 10-08-1939 DOD: 15-12-2019
WE MISS U A LOT DADA
1st Death Anniversary will be held on 16th Dec. 2020 at H.No. 10-48/1, P.V.N. Colony, Mirjalgauda, Malkajgiri, Hyd.
Inserted by: WIFE & SARODE FAMILY MEMBERS
(S/2021/D00938)

IN LOVING MEMORY

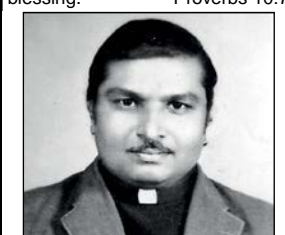
4th DEATH ANNIVERSARY
I am the resurrection & the life - Jesus said - John 11:25



T. VIJAYA PAUL
DOB: 13.09.1952 - DOD: 16.12.2016
We remember you each moment with utmost love in our hearts.
Wife, Sons & Family Members.

15th ANNIVERSARY

The memory of the righteous is a blessing. Proverbs 10:7



Rev. G.S. CHRISTOPHER
DOB: 10.1.1950 DOD: 16.12.2005
Missed and fondly remembered by:
Wife, Daughters,
Son, Daughter-in-Law,
Grand Children & Dear Ones
(S/2021/D00956)

SHORT BRIEF

LORRY MOWS
DOWN FIVE
ON NH 40DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, DEC. 15

In a tragic incident, five people, including four children, were killed and eleven others sustained injuries when a mini lorry mowed them down on National Highway-40 at Yerraguntla village near Sirivelu in Nandyal division.

Around 20 to 30 persons were going to attend a candle service at a church at 5 am on Tuesday.

Police said the deceased were U. Jhansi, 15, Dasari Sushmita, 14, Saigalla Vamsi, 12, Dasari Harsha Vardhan, 8 and Thota Suvarna, 42.

The injured were rushed to the government hospitals in Nandyal and Kurnool. While three people died on the spot, two others succumbed in the hospital, said Sirivella sub Inspector Chandrababu. A case of death due to negligence has been registered.

Allagadda DSP Rajendra said that an Eicher vehicle was coming from Hyderabad to Mydukuru. The vehicle's headlights were not working and the driver was in a sleepy condition, he said. The vehicle rammed through the people who were waiting on the left side of the road.

GOVT URGES JUDGE
TO RECUSE FROM
'MISSION BUILD AP'DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

The state government on Tuesday urged High Court Judge Justice Rakesh Kumar to recuse himself from hearing a batch of petitions filed challenging its move to sell government assets under 'Mission Build AP' stating that it may not get justice.

The state government filed an affidavit in the High Court expressing concern that if Justice Kumar continues in the division bench hearing the petitions on Mission AP Build programme, there was a chance that the Judge might behave in a partial manner resulting in deprivation of justice.

Referring to the adverse remarks made by the Judge, the state government said that the Judge was coming up with a predetermined decision even before completion of the hearing in the case and added that it was the responsibility of the court to decide whether the state government was having the authority to sell away its assets which were not in use and also encroached through auction.

The government further said that once the High Court could take up hearing in the case and pronounce its verdict on it, those who were having objection to such verdict could approach a constitutional forum.

Referring to the Justice Kumar's remarks about breakdown of Constitution in the state, the state government stated that such remarks were unwarranted and opined that the Judge crossed the 'Lakshman Rekha'.

The state government in its affidavit mentioned that several institutions working within the ambit of the Constitution, were to maintain self-control and cautioned that if they intended to tread into the jurisdiction of others, it could lead to a constitutional crisis.

AP Mission Build programme director Praveen Kumar filed the affidavit on behalf of the state government in the High Court.

AP CJ likely to be
shifted to Sikkim

Judiciary, executive were on a collision path

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

Andhra Pradesh Chief Justice J.K. Maheshwari is likely to be shifted to Sikkim High Court.

The new Chief Justice will be appointed by the President in a few days. According to sources, Sikkim High Court Chief Justice Arup Kumar Goswami was actively considered for the AP High Court while Madhya Pradesh High Court acting Chief Justice Sanjay Yadav's name also cropped up.

The transfer of Justice Maheshwari came a month after Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy complained to the Centre against the former and a few other judges besides writing a letter to Supreme Court Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and releasing the same to media.

Sources said the Supreme Court Collegium which met on Monday decided to transfer the incumbent and the top

● **THE TRANSFER** of Justice Maheshwari came a month after CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy complained to the Centre against the former and a few other judges besides writing a letter to Supreme Court Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and releasing the same to media.

● **THE HIGH COURT** had also set aside the appointment of new State Election Commissioner in place of N. Ramesh Kumar and reinstated the latter.

leadership at the Centre informed the Chief Minister of the developments following which he rushed to New Delhi to meet Union home minister Amit Shah.

The judiciary and executive in the state were on a collision path in the last one year. It all started with a few judgments given by the Chief Justice and other judges including the removal of YSR

Congress flag colours on village secretariat buildings and scrapping of state order making English medium mandatory in government schools.

The High Court had also set aside the appointment of new State Election Commissioner in place of N. Ramesh Kumar and reinstated the latter. The government took exception to the Chief Justice making certain comments on shifting of capital and stalling the process besides ordering CBI probe in a case involving Dr Sudhakar, who created a ruckus in Visakhapatnam in an inebriated condition after he was suspended from service.

The tussle reached a flashpoint with Justice Maheshwari suspending probe into Amaravati land scam and issuing gag order on media to not report case details involving former Advocate-General Dammalapati Srinivas.

NETA'S NATTER

Why KCR prefers Delhi visits

Surprising as it may sound, S'Telangana state CM K. Chandrashekar Rao is inadvertently denting Hyderabad's image as the healthcare capital of the country. At a time when people from across the globe are landing in the state capital for treatment in top-grade hospitals and the same is highlighted by the city's brand ambassador and minister K.T. Rama Rao, his father went to New Delhi for dental treatment.

Sometime ago, he went to Delhi to avail treatment for his eye. His critics, however, dismiss the health reasons cited by the CM camp and are busy spreading rumours that the objective of the trip is to restore cordial ties with the top leadership of the BJP after picking up a bitter fight with it for GHMC polls. Some even say his trips are related to the affairs of the departments he handled as a minister in the UPA-1 Cabinet.



AP has overcrowded finance dept

The jumbo-sized AP finance department has yet another addition in the form of senior bureaucrat N. Gulzar. It already has three IAS officers — principal secretary S.S. Rawat, secretaries K. Sunitha and Satyanarayana and director Karthikeya Mishra — besides a host of advisers, including Subash Garg, who turned a bitter critic of the Modi administration after he took voluntary retirement from IAS. It is known that AP is one of the states caught in an acute economic situation wherein a majority of funds goes for the Chief Minister's welfare initiatives leaving no money for any other purposes. It is becoming increasingly difficult to arrange funds even for welfare schemes forcing the finance managers to borrow left, right and centre. But before Gulzar breaks his head on finding resources and their judicious spending, he may have to first find office space in the overcrowded department building.

More officers
for AP Bhavan

There is another list — special officers for AP Bhavan in New Delhi — that is getting longer by the day. Anil Kumar Singhal, who finished his stint with the TTD and joined the health department, has been made special commissioner at AP Bhavan. Already in existence are principal resident commissioner Abhay Tripathi, resident commissioner Bhavana Saxena, special commissioner N.V. Ramana Reddy and special commissioner Gopala Krishna Dwivedi, who also holds post of principal secretary of panchayat raj. The rationale offered by the government for Singhal and Dwivedi's postings is that they would be pursuing state matters in the national capital but in reality, the tag is to facilitate their trips to Delhi to spend some time with their family and retain official accommodation there.

RESOLVING DISPUTES BY INSTILLING TRUST
ONE TIME SETTLEMENT OF YOUR INCOME TAX DISPUTES

ELIGIBILITY

- Appeals/writs filed on or before 31.01.2020 and pending.
- Orders for which time for filing appeal has not expired on 31.01.2020.
- Cases pending before Dispute Resolution Panel (DRP) on 31.01.2020.
- Cases where DRP issued direction on or before 31.01.2020 but no order has been passed.
- Cases where assessee filed revision (Section 264) on or before 31.01.2020.
 - Search cases if the disputed tax is less than Rs. 5 Crore in a year.
 - The appeals/writs filed either by taxpayers or the Department.
- Disputes where the payment has already been made shall also be eligible.
 - Cases in Arbitration in India or abroad.

DISPUTES COVERED

- All disputes, subject to some exclusion, in relation to the:
 - i. Disputed tax
 - ii. Disputed penalty
 - iii. Disputed interest
 - iv. Disputed Fee
 - v. Disputed Tax deducted at source (TDS) or Tax collected at source (TCS)

SALIENT FEATURES.....PAYMENT TERMS

| Payment made on or before | Appeal relates to disputed tax | Appeal relates only to disputed penalty or interest or fee |
|---|---|--|
| 31st March 2021 | 100% of the disputed tax (125% in search cases) | 25% of the disputed penalty or interest or fee |
| Payment made on or after | Appeal relates to disputed tax | Appeal relates only to disputed penalty or interest or fee |
| 1st April, 2021 but on or before the last date to be notified | 110% of the disputed tax (135% in search cases) such that it does not increase total demand | 30% of the disputed penalty or interest or fee |

If an issue in taxpayer's pending appeal is already decided in taxpayer's favour by an appellate forum or if Department has filed appeal on an issue, amount payable is 50% of aforesaid amount.

**NOW FILE YOUR DECLARATION BY 31st DECEMBER, 2020
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AP CM seeks Central
notice for HC relocationDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday met Union home minister Amit Shah and will be meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other ministers on Wednesday.

The AP CM is in Delhi to pursue various matters pertaining to the state with different Union ministers and the Prime Minister.

The Chief Minister broached the Polavaram issue and submitted a memorandum to Amit Shah. He requested for approval of ₹55,656 crore for Polavaram project as per Second Revised Cost Estimate and sought directions to central water and finance ministries in this regard. He

further wanted reimbursement of land acquisition costs and rehabilitation works as per the 2013 Land Acquisition Act for Polavaram project. He stated that the centre is yet to reimburse ₹1,779 crore spent by the AP government in construction of Polavaram.

Jagan Mohan Reddy stated that bills from December 2018 are pending and any delay in construction of the project will further increase the project cost. He sought appropriate assistance in completing Polavaram expeditiously.

CM Jagan said, "We have planned to decentralise the capital as part of integrated development of AP state. We have enacted legislation in August making Visakhapatnam the execu-

tive capital, Amaravati the legislative capital and Kurnool the judicial capital."

The CM thus wanted the centre to start the process of relocating the High Court to Kurnool and issue of notification for the same. CM Jagan also sought adequate flood relief for families affected by the Cyclone Nivar.

Explaining the manner in which poor people are being assisted through various schemes during the most critical period of Covid-19, CM Jagan underlined that the state government is ready in all respects for distributing Corona vaccine in order of priority as soon as it became available. The state is ready for setting up and maintaining the most crucial cold chains in supply of the vaccine.

DECCAN Chronicle

16 DECEMBER 2020

Biden affirmation is a win for US democracy

The Electoral College's formal affirmation of Joe Biden's victory was only a ritual. If it assumes the contours of a milestone in US election history, the blame should go to the outgoing President Donald Trump's attempts to subvert the democratic process. "It is the rule of law, the Constitution and the will of the people" that prevails, as the victor, Mr Biden, put it in a gracious speech in which he said realistically, "Now it is time to turn the page."

The proof of the durability of the US political system, which is an important template for democracies, represents a significant moment for all of the free world. In the six weeks since November 3 in which Mr Trump and his supporters tried every bizarre trick in their subversive playbook to overturn a clear popular verdict in which Mr Biden not only got 306 of 538 Electoral College votes but also trounced Mr Trump — one of five Presidents to win the White House without a popular mandate — by over seven million votes.

The members of the Electoral College were only upholding the brief given to them in a democratic process but what the Supreme Court did in throwing out every challenge to the election is truly heroic. As many as 86 judges, many of them either nominees of Mr Trump or the Republican Party, displayed scorn or contempt for lawsuits that were part of legal manoeuvres backed by as many as 17 attorneys-general of states and 126 members of Congress.

The court made legal history in its unanimity after having seen through the subterfuge of trying to throw out 20 million legitimately cast ballots. This is a grand lesson in how the integrity of a justice system can be preserved only by the honesty of judges who resist the temptation to reflect any gratitude they may feel towards those who nominated them, or their own ideological leanings. Their firm rulings helped sustain the reputation of a great institution.

The catastrophic Trump presidency may not have fulfilled the worst scenarios of a crazed authoritarian let loose in the White House but the visible damage it has caused to a precious democratic process like free and fair elections will take a long time to mend. What Mr Trump did in repeatedly questioning the legitimacy of the presidential polls, considered the fairest in many quadrennials, is to corrode social trust in a vibrant democracy. In exploiting political divisions, Mr Trump had split a nation with his web of lies whose reach became phenomenal in the age of social media that can be so easily manipulated.

The strength of institutions was sorely tested in four years but so many of them came through with flying colours. Mr Trump's animus against migrants as reflected in his stopping the DACA programme was stayed by the courts, so too his manipulation of visas and green cards. The media exposed his cruel separation of children from their parents. His own administration pooh-poohed his disinformation campaign on the coronavirus which, ironically, did not spare him either. The top court ridiculed his skewed election petitions and, finally, the people rejected his presidency. His legacy, apart from damage to public trust in government, is bits and pieces of a Mexican Wall. A divided nation must pick up the pieces now.

'Reckless' Kamal Haasan

In the electoral marketplace, do good intentions alone sell? This is a mind boggling question that crops up when actor Kamal Haasan, launching his campaign for the Tamil Nadu state Assembly elections of 2021, reels out a list of public inconveniences that governments hardly bother to address. He also raises serious questions. Like, what's the need for a new Parliament building?

But he also seems to get carried away by the crowds that turn up for his meetings. 'Gangs come together for money but it's a revolution when people congregate for an ideal,' he exulted on Twitter presuming that the throngs at Madurai and Usilampatti were there to join him in his mission to eliminate corruption. Of course, it is not just from Central rulers that he demands answers but also from those holding the reins in the state. Aptly underlining the hypocrisy of a ruling party top honcho's suggestion for alternating power between a man and a woman in a single term, he pointed out that the party does not have even a single woman as a district secretary. He even pledges to make ministers out of at least 20 women when the mantle falls on him. Things that sound really nice. Haasan even boasts of growing up on the lap of M.G. Ramachandran, the former chief minister popularly known as MGR who remained invincible in politics during his time. But does that privilege make him the inheritor of MGR's political legacy or do people see in him a modern MGR? Whatever people see in him, when Mr Haasan cocks a snook at popular sentiments, he diminishes his prospects.

By promising to hand over TASMACH shops to private retailers or plumping for the commonly contentious NEEET or openly supporting the vice-chancellor of Anna University, who is seen as most parties in the state as an intruder imposed on them, one cannot garner votes in Tamil Nadu, even if as MGR himself.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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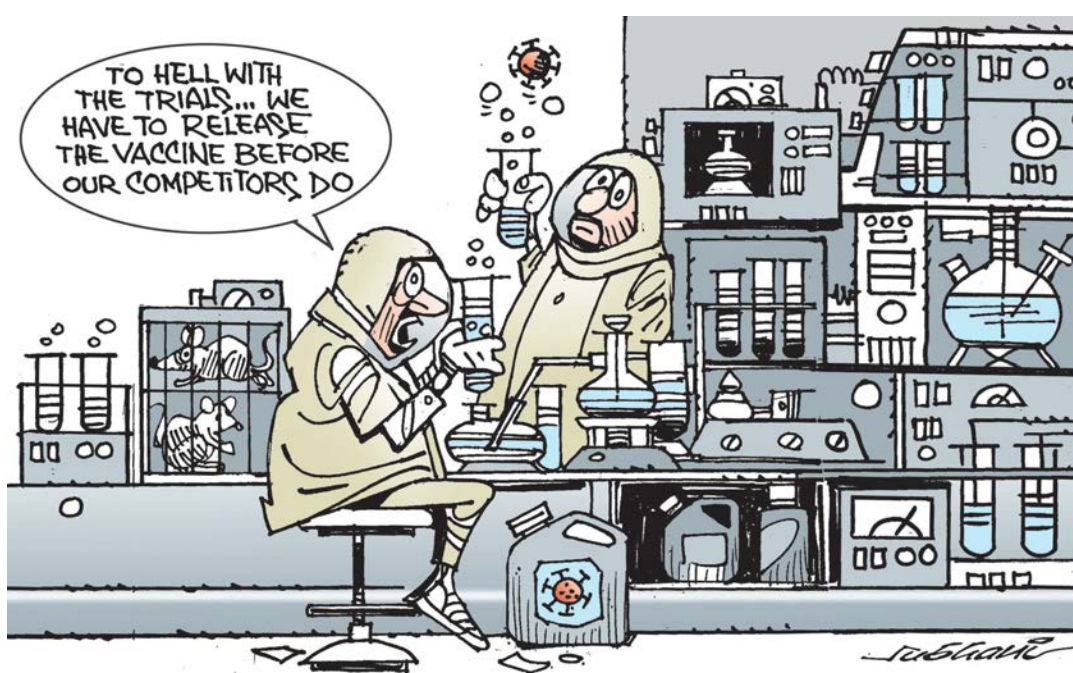
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Subhani



Language row led to a new nation 49 yrs ago



Abhijit Bhattacharyya

The world knows that Bangladesh is South Asia's youngest nation state, but few people — and particularly those born well after the cataclysmic events surrounding its birth, who are now in their 20s, 30s and 40s — are fully aware of the torturous processes over a long period of time that led to the creation of arguably one of the few linguistic nation states through blood, sweat, toil and tears? The experience of living through the tumultuous 24 years (1947-1971), between when India attained freedom from British rule and the December day 49 years ago when Dhaka (then Dacca) became "the free capital of a free country" — in Indira Gandhi's ringing phrase in the Lok Sabha — are hard to fathom for those who didn't personally experience those momentous times. East Bengal, of course, had known the agony and humiliation of separation even before 1947 when undivided Bengal was partitioned into two halves, but nothing quite prepared it for the experience of those 24 years as the eastern enclave of the nation called Pakistan — and being treated as a vassal province.

The beauty and reality of history is that it is usually written, rewritten or unwritten by the victors, or deliberately distorted for the sake of the polity. When British India was split into two with the independence of two nations in 1947, it also created a geopolitical impossibility: two wings of the new nation of Pakistan separated by the mother state with a 1,000-mile crater. It was an unbridgeable disconnect making a mockery of a unified Pakistan, ostensibly founded on a common religious identity. Its two wings were a political reality, but remained a geographical and cultural disconnect

since birth.

Just ask any 74-year-old (or older) Bangladeshi (born in 1946 or earlier) about his or her life journey. One is likely to hear the agonising experience he/she underwent, changing his/her nationality. Ceasing to be Indian in August 1947. Being a Pakistani for 24 years, being treated as an inferior and a second-class citizen, discriminated against, till December 1971, and then attaining his/her present identity as a free, independent Bengali-speaking Bangladeshi.

The worst humiliation for the Bengali-speaking citizens of what became East Pakistan was the insensitive linguistic policy forcibly imposed by an insolent, dictatorial governor-general, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the country's founding father, who contemptuously treated them as inferior creatures in contrast to the full-fledged citizens of West Pakistan.

Jinnah's toxic temper, mixed with arrogance, sowed the seeds of irreversible Bengali nationalism in the world's most fertile soil, and ploughing their mind with confrontational ideas. Bengalis sullenly, but silently, bore this up to a point. Till Jinnah left Dhaka, on his sole (and last) visit to East Pakistan, which helped to create a "distinct Bengali nation within an indistinct and intolerant Pakistani state".

On March 21, 1948, Jinnah met a delegation of the Scheduled Castes; and on March 22 received another delegation of upper-caste Hindu members of the East Bengal Legislative Assembly. However, what happened on March 21 at a public gathering, addressed by Jinnah, was a bombshell. "Let me make it clear to you that the state language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language," he declared. "Anyone who tries to mis-

lead you is really the enemy of Pakistan... Every Mussalman should come under the banner of the Muslim League, which is the true custodian of Pakistan". It was a warning-cum-threat to the Bengali language of "united" Pakistan. Jinnah misread the mood on the ground — and the fact that Bengali-speaking people across the world usually define themselves by their language, despite the significant role that religion may play in their lives.

Thus, while already nurturing a genuine feeling of deprivation, discrimination and humiliation, it didn't take long for East Bengalis to fall back upon their linguistic pride. Rabindranath Tagore and Nazrul Islam were always dearer to the Bengali head and heart than the divisive, hate-filled politics of violence and murder of the rest of South Asia. Little wonder Rabindranath Tagore's eternal rhythmic words and sonorous lyrics were wholeheartedly embraced and adopted as Bangladesh's national anthem in 1971. It spontaneously took to the 1905 composed lines of arguably the greatest philosopher poet to have blossomed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries east of Suez.

"Amar shonar Bangla, ami tomay bhalobashi; Chirodin tomar akash, tomar batash, amar prane bajay bashi" (My golden Bengal, I love you. Forever thy skies, thy air set my heart in tune as if it were a flute).

Jinnah was to face some of his worst moments in Dhaka before he returned to Karachi, which was then Pakistan's capital. His

What, however, remains an abiding mystery is how Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in Washington and Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai in Beijing so misread the signs on the ground and tried their best — unsuccessfully — to abort the birth of an independent Bangladesh

speech at Dacca University's convocation March 24, 1948 had a kinetic effect. "There can be only one state language... and that language in my opinion can only be Urdu". Dhaka was instantly rocked by student agitations: the pent-up feelings and suppressed grievances of Bengalis didn't take long to crystallise and burst. People fell back on the facts to disprove Jinnah's views as absurd and unacceptable to Bengali-speaking East Pakistanis, who were a majority of the population.

Jinnah had ignored the fact that Urdu was the mother tongue of only four per cent of Pakistanis, while 55 per cent considered Bengali their mother tongue. Only the Muslims of northern and northwestern India, from where most of the Muslim League's leadership came from, would benefit from Urdu as the state language, along with some Punjabis and Pashtuns working for the state. The choice of Urdu as state language also meant a total absence of Bengali-speaking Pakistanis from state affairs.

What happened later, in 1971, is of course part of the folklore of the proud new nation. History will surely judge Prime Minister Indira Gandhi as an outstanding leader of geopolitical vision who, ably supported by the Indian armed forces under General (later Field-Marshal) Sam Manekshaw, managed the shatter the myth of invincibility around Jinnah's creation — and ensured the surrender of Pakistan's entire military in the eastern sector to the Indian Army at Dhaka's Ramna Maidan on December 16, 1971. What, however, remains an abiding mystery is how Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in Washington and Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai in Beijing so misread the signs on the ground and tried their best — unsuccessfully — to abort the birth of an independent Bangladesh.

The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College. The views expressed are personal.

LETTERS

NO NUMAISH

It will be a disappointing year in Hyderabad (Sorry folks! No numaish this year, DC, Dec. 15). When the government has allowed shopping malls, parks and cinema halls to open, then why not this? In lockdown, lower middle class people are suffering due to extreme financial stress. This exhibition provided work to people in the surrounding areas. I urge the Exhibition Society to review its decision.

Ehsan Raza
Hyderabad

COVID APATHY

I wonder why people in Hyderabad are not worried about the risk of second Covid wave (*Less tests will see fewer cases, make state lazy: Experts, DC, Dec. 15*). A majority of them are not wearing masks or not following social distancing. Unfortunately, our government also is not serious. It is not taking any measures to educate citizens or enforcing laws to prevent a second wave. We cannot have another lockdown. It will mean no jobs, money and only misery. Industries will close forever.

K.S. Chakradhar Reddy
Hyderabad

EMERGENCY CASE

When so many cases are pending in the apex court for years, there is no justification to take up a 45-year-old incident (*SC to study if Emergency, in '75 is unconstitutional, DC, Dec. 15*). In future, courts may be asked to look into demonetisation, Godhra, etc. It is better to concentrate on current issues.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Signals flashed to earth

MOSCOW, Dec. 15. The Soviet Union's unmanned Venus-7 space vehicle reached Venus today after a flight of 120 days, the Soviet news agency Tass reported. The spacecraft started sending messages back for 35 minutes from the planet's atmosphere, it added. Nothing about any landing on the blazing hot surface of the planet was said. When the spacecraft entered the atmosphere of Venus, the descent craft was separated, and parachute opened.

Douglas Murray



The world has to make China pay for what it did in 2020

It's time we started to talk about reparations. The Chinese need to pay the world's citizens for what it did to us all this year.

In Britain, the economy is due to contract by more than 11 per cent this year. In the best-case scenario, the UK will not go back to pre-Covid economic output until the fourth quarter of next year. Anyone tempted to say that this is only because of the actions of the British government should look almost anywhere else. In America, the country's GDP has suffered its worst ever fall-off while government debt has soared to over \$27 trillion. In Australia, the state of Queensland alone is expected to rack up debt of more than \$130 billion in the next couple of years. Everywhere, the world's economies are experiencing an unprecedented slump in GDP and a rocketing of government borrowing.

Happily, there is one major economy where this is not the case. Guess which one it is? China is expected to see growth of 1.8 per cent this year. The only country where that is the case. As as one

financial journal put it earlier this week: "China driving global recovery".

I suppose you could put it that way. Personally, I feel (and perhaps this is just the spirit of Christmas arriving early) a certain amount of vengeance when I read such stories. A vengeance which is always in too short a supply at this time of the year. But speaking personally, I resent the prospect of China walking away from 2020 spinning headlines about the positive economic message its economic boom sends to the rest of the world.

First, it is worth getting the historical record right. We still do not know whether the Wuhan lab was the source of the virus or whether the bat-eating story is true. Both are plausible. And both leave the question of whether the Communist Party of China allowed the virus to come out deliberately or accidentally.

If this sounds vague, then it is by CPC design. Because the CPC spent much of 2019-20 ensuring that we do not, and cannot, know. When Australia called for an independent international inquiry into the

sources of the virus earlier this year, the CPC responded by threatening sanctions against Australia. This week Chinese government accounts posted doctored photos of an Australian soldier "murdering" an Afghan child. Funnily enough, the Communists don't seem to play by the same rules as everyone else.

What is clear is that the CPC will do anything in order to ensure we do not linger on the WMD it released this year. It wants the rest of the world not to know and has done everything it can to keep us ignorant or distracted. It has disappeared the experts and scientists who might have informed us of what happened, and the chances of getting to the bottom of these facts while the CPC remains in power are remote. What we do know is that the Chinese knew about the virus and the dangers of it while keeping the rest of the world in the dark. They allowed people to continue to leave China and fly abroad long after the authorities locked down flights within their own country. Perhaps the CPC did just let off a global pandemic for the third time in a decade. Or perhaps

the CPC knew how lethal and infectious the virus was but allowed it to go out and spread across the globe anyway.

Is it a conspiracy theory to believe this could have been deliberate? I wouldn't have said so, and nor do many people in the intelligence world. In 2020 China achieved one of the greatest coups in financial history. The effects of the Trump administration's trade wars against China were beginning to be felt, and by accident or design the CPC found itself in the lucky position of their main competitor's economy (like the rest of the world) having to shut down completely. As a bonus, President Donald Trump, who appeared to be the only person in the world willing to take on the CPC, was taken out in the election which followed. Now, as the American public survey a political and financial mess of gigantic proportions, China is happily sailing into 2021 with increased growth.

The kick is that China now finds itself in a buyer's market. The rest of the globe is going to have to find a way out of this financial slump and possible depression. From

Africa, to central Europe, to Brexit Britain there is one obvious way out: Chinese investment. So long as China is the country "driving global recovery", the temptation will be there. Long ago the CPC bought up our universities very cheaply indeed. Not to mention a nuclear power station and more. Currently they are able to act like a property developer who has destroyed the area all around your house and now offers to buy your undesirable property at a dirt-cheap price. With certain strings attached. Even if one country resists the temptation to use Chinese investment to get out of this problem, it is unlikely that everyone will show the same restraint.

So I have a different suggestion. Countries of the world, unite. The CPC destroyed the world's economies in 2020. And we would like reparations. I am open to suggestions on how we do this — sanctions, gunboats — nothing should be off the table. China gave us 2020. We need to make them pay for it.

By arrangement with the Spectator

SHORT TAKES

UK FOREIGN SECY
HOLDS TALKS
WITH JAISHANKARSRIDHAR
KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 15

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab held discussions with his Indian counterpart External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on five broad themes — connecting people, trade, defence and security, climate and health including the cooperation on the Covid-19 vaccines while both nations “agreed on key elements of a 10 year India-UK roadmap”.

Raab mentioned Britain’s “Indo-Pacific tilt” while Jaishankar said, “It is a matter of satisfaction that there is a growing recognition and acceptance of the idea of an Indo-Pacific. We welcome greater interest and attention which the UK is devoting to the Indo-Pacific.” Both countries also focused on taking ties to a new level. Observers look at Britain’s focus on the Indo-Pacific region as significant, given the growing differences between Britain and China on the Hong Kong issue. Apart from this, the situation in Afghanistan was also discussed between the two foreign ministers. In a veiled reference to Pakistan without naming it, EAM Jaishankar said both ministers felt the challenges posed by terrorism and radicalism are a “shared concern”.

Raab spoke about the need to “deepen the economic relationship” and said Britain is “committed to build a stronger defence and security partnership with our Indian friends” including on shared issues like combating terrorism and maritime security including the menace of piracy.

ACTRESS CHITRA’S
HUSBAND HELD FOR
ABETTING SUICIDE

Chennai, Dec. 15: The husband of television actress Chitra has been arrested and remanded to judicial custody for ‘abetting’ her suicide, police said on Tuesday.

Investigation by a police team revealed that 32-year-old Hemnath ‘abetted’ her suicide and hence he was arrested on Monday night, they said.

An enquiry was also held by the Revenue Divisional Officer. An argument ensued between Chitra and Hemnath and it was followed by her suicide in the early hours of December 9, police said in an official release.

Hemnath was produced before a court here, which remanded him to judicial custody.

While police had days ago said Hemnath was her ‘fiance’, they clarified that ‘they registered their marriage’ two months ago and the duo had plans for a traditional wedding ceremony in January 2021.

The 29-year-old actress, well known among television audience in Tamil Nadu was found dead in a suburban hotel room and it was confirmed later that she died by suicide.

VARAVARA RAO FIT
TO GO BACK TO
JAIL: NIA TO HC

Mumbai, Dec. 15: Poet-activist Varavara Rao, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoists links case, is fit enough to be sent back to Talaja jail in Navi Mumbai from a private hospital in Mumbai where he is currently admitted, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) told the Bombay High Court on Tuesday.

Rao, however, will continue to stay in Nanavati Hospital at least till Monday, the next date of hearing on his bail plea on the medical grounds and the plea filed by his wife Hemlatha alleging breach of Rao’s fundamental rights due to “continued incarceration without adequate healthcare”.

The submission was made by Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Anil Singh, who appeared for the NIA, before a bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and M.S. Karnik.

During the day’s hearing, senior counsels Indira Jaising and Anand Grover urged the high court to grant bail to Rao. Grover said the 81-year-old poet was suffering from inherent medical issues since the time of his arrest in 2018.

He said authorities at Talaja prison in Navi Mumbai, where Rao was lodged as an undertrial, did not have the expertise or medical infrastructure to treat him. Grover further said it would be most suitable for Rao’s health if he was granted bail and permitted to go back to his home in Hyderabad. Rao would not flee if granted bail, Grover added.

HC restrains nurses from continuing strike



Members of AIIMS Nurses Union raise slogans in New Delhi on Tuesday during their indefinite strike over their long-pending demands, including those concerning the Sixth Central Pay Commission and against contractual appointments. The Delhi High Court on Tuesday restrained the nurses union from continuing with their indefinite strike. Justice Navin Chawla passed the order on a plea moved by AIIMS against the strike by the nurses who went on the agitation from December 14.

— PTI

Mamata dares Centre
to impose Prez’s rule

Alleges Centre interfering in her govt by summoning officials

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, DEC. 15

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday dared the Narendra Modi government to impose President’s Rule in the poll-bound state after accusing the Centre of interfering in her government by summoning its bureaucrats over her party workers’ alleged violent attack on BJP president J.P. Nadda’s convoy in South 24 Parganas.

Banerjee also claimed her party had “no intention” to target Nadda, while warning the BJP that she would “retaliate heavily” if she was “hit”. Speaking at a TMC rally in Jalpaiguri, North Bengal, she said: “They think they can bring the Central forces here and transfer the state government’s officers to scare them. The state police is under the state government. Still, they were summoned. None of us had any intention to hit him (Nadda). When a VIP travels, he has his own convoy according to protocol.”

She wondered: “But why did 50 cars trail his convoy? Why did 50 goons trail those cars? Why did a convict, out of jail, be among them? Why were those who vandalised Ishwar Chandra Vidyasag-

BJP urges ECI to impose
MCC, deploy Central forcesDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 15

Days after BJP president J.P. Nadda and other senior leaders’ convoy in West Bengal came under attack allegedly by ruling TMC cadre, the BJP on Tuesday urged the Election Commission for early deployment of central forces and imposition of Model Code of Conduct for the coming crucial Assembly polls in the state.

Union home minister Amit Shah is also scheduled to visit the state later this week. Citing deteriorating law and order situation, political bias of the state government employees and discrepancies in the draft voters list, the party said unless the election body deploys central forces and imposes MCC early, campaigning in the state will be “very difficult, resulting in widespread violence.”

A BJP delegation met the EC officials and submitted a letter in this regard and said they were assured that their complaint will be looked into and that free and fair elections take place.

you hit me, I will retaliate so heavily that you will not be able to tackle my retaliation even after bringing crores of goons.”

On BJP MP Subramanian Swamy’s call for a change in the national anthem, the TMC chief alleged: “Their object is to change *Jana Gana Mana* penned by Rabindranath Tagore. We also know very well how to revert a change later.”

To get back the Gorkha vote bank from the BJP in North Bengal, she said:

“After getting Bimal Gurung (GJM top gun) on its side six years ago, they promised a ‘Gorkhaland’. Whenever an election is there, they talk about it. How many Gorkhaland(s) have happened so far? They won in the 2014 polls and another later with the same promise each time. I did not win because I did not talk about it. But it does not matter to me. I thank my brothers and sisters of Darjeeling for realising the BJP’s drama and nailing its lies.”

Attacking the TMC, Adhikari told a rally “The mass movement of Nandigram belonged to neither any individual nor any party. It was a people’s movement.”

ADHIKARI TO
DEFECT TO BJP
THIS WEEKDC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, DEC. 15

Giving a call on his birthday for the restoration of democracy in West Bengal, rebel Trinamul Congress MLA of Nandigram Shubendu Adhikari is all set to defect to the BJP later this week as the Centre has decided to provide it’s Z-plus category security cover by the central reserve police force jawans including commandos and a bullet proof car to him due to a threat on his life.

The former state minister will fly to New Delhi on December 17 and is likely to meet Union home minister Amit Shah before changing his colour from green to saffron officially. On December 19 when Shah will arrive in the state on a two-day visit, Adhikari is expected to be with him. On Tuesday BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya called up the TMC MLA and spoke to him for four minutes.

Asked of any political discussion with Adhikari, Vijayvargiya said, “There was no political talk between us. I only greeted him on his birthday and conveyed my best wishes to him for his good health and prosperity.”

Attacking the TMC, Adhikari told a rally “The mass movement of Nandigram belonged to neither any individual nor any party. It was a people’s movement.”

High drama
ensues during
K’taka Council

Bengaluru, Dec. 15: The Karnataka Legislative Council witnessed high drama on Tuesday with BJP-JD(S) and Congress members hurling abuses and pushing each other and the deputy chairman being pulled down from the Chairman’s seat, over a row pertaining to the no-confidence motion.

Amid the pandemonium and chaos which many senior members termed as a “black mark” and “unprecedented” in the Council’s over a century old history, it was adjourned sine die within minutes after it met for the day. The ball now seems to be in the Governor Vajubhai Vala’s court with both BJP and JD(S) jointly petitioning him and seeking his intervention to enable taking up of the no-confidence motion.

After it was adjourned sine die on December 10, the House was convened for a day on Tuesday by the government which had even petitioned the Governor accusing the Chairman K. Pratapachandra Shetty of “abruptly” adjourning the session, without taking up the no-confidence motion against him. The motion moved by BJP members did not find mention in the Council’s agenda for Tuesday, as Shetty had rejected it citing procedural lapses and pointing out that no specific charges were made against him.

However, the ruling party members had been insisting that it be taken up. The BJP with the support of JD(S) had planned to remove Shetty as the chairman through the no-confidence motion. The ugly scenes began to unfold as deputy chairman Dharmu Gowda (JDS) occupied the Chairman’s seat, even before the Chairman arrived, and the quorum bell was still ringing. This angered the Congress MLAs who rushed to the chair demanding that Dharmu Gowda vacate the seat as he would have allowed the motion against Shetty.

Following this, BJP and JD(S) members too rushed towards the Chair in his defence. This resulted in heated exchange, and pushing and pulling between members from both sides. Even as this was happening, a few Congress members including Naseer Ahmed were seen trying to forcefully open the door through which the Chairman enters the house, accusing the ruling side of shutting it with an intention not to allow Chairman Shetty inside. Congress members accused the government of trying to start the proceedings with the help of the deputy chairman, even before the Chairman could arrive, with an intention to take up the motion against Shetty, which had been rejected by him.

— PTI

Counting of votes
in Kerala todayDC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
DEC. 15

All is set for counting of votes in local body polls in Kerala on Wednesday which in many ways would chart the future course of politics in the state in the run up to Assembly elections in 2021.

State election commissioner V. Bhaskaran said counting of votes will take place in 244 centers complying strictly with Covid-19 safety guidelines. The postal ballots will be counted right in the beginning followed by EVMs.

He said the results of all local bodies are expected to be declared by noon. The people would be able to obtain information on counting through “Trends” website. Bhaskaran said the

swearing in of the newly elected office bearers of local bodies will take place on December 21.

The results of local body polls are crucial as the people’s verdict would give a hint about what is in store for the mainstream parties — ruling CPM, opposition Congress and BJP. The leaders of the three fronts are keeping their fingers crossed on the outcome of the polls in view of the high voter turnout witnessed in all the three phases.

While Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan claimed that the ruling LDF was poised for a historic win, opposition leader and Congress veteran Ramesh Chennithala said the massive turnout of voters indicated a clear mandate against gold smuggling involving a senior official of the CM’s office.

Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination delayed Hindutva
supremacy by two generations, says Vinay SitapatiSRIRAM KARRI | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

It took the Hindutva ideology nearly a century to create the election-winning argument personified by Narendra Modi, argues political scientist and author Vinay Sitapati in this exclusive interview with *Deccan Chronicle*.

Analysing historical insights, debating counterfactuals, refuting possible misinterpretations, young political scientist and professor with chubby cheeks and curly hair, round spectacles and an impish smile, is bustling with energy as he discusses his work, which promises to become a watermark in understanding Hindutva. It is a biography of a relationship, chronicling and analysing the entangled lives of BJP’s founding duo, the *jugalbandi* of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani.

There is no definitive book on Hinduism, but hopefully this is the definitive work on Hindutva, he says teasingly. It might well be. A worthy successor to his bestselling debut, a biography on former prime minister P.V.



Vinay Sitapati

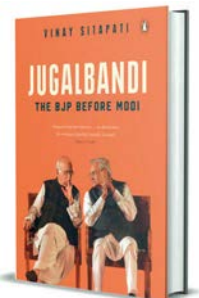
Narasimha Rao, *Half Lion*, this book too has his trademark traits, all boxes checked. It consolidates his image as a new superstar in India’s non-fiction genre combining recent and contemporary history and politics — diligent and exonerating research, intrepid in making a set of speculative counterfactuals, combining a vast narrative argument befitting his academic vocation and inclination. Sitapati teaches at Ashoka University, has a PhD from Princeton University and other degrees from Harvard University and National

Law School, Bengaluru. He combines this with racy writing and a nearly salacious storytelling, sometimes bordering on sharing off-the-record gossip and anecdotes to match his former journalistic career.

The book though is neither a tale of a historical plot to create Modi nor a century-old history of the *Sangh Parivar*. Though both are ingredients on this structured canvas, it is focussed on something more ambitious — telling the story of two fascinating men, whose relationship shaped Hindutva, the BJP and India.

Excerpts and part 1 of a three-part story.

Q Before discussing the *jugalbandi* between Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L.K. Advani, I wish to have you throw light on another *jugalbandi* before them, between two atheists — M.A. Jinnah and Veer Damodar Savarkar. In a way, have they perhaps influenced the political outcome and future of the Indian sub-continent more successfully, with greater

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
PART - 1

Title: Jugalbandi: The BJP Before Modi
Author: Vinay Sitapati
Category: Non-fiction narrative, Indian politics
Publisher: Penguin
Viking
Pages: Hardback / 424
Price: ₹799

influence and a higher impact than Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar? In 2047, would we end up being closer, after a century after Independence, to Jinnah and Savarkar’s ideas of nationhood?

I must strongly push back on this suggestion; there was no *jugalbandi* between them. The Hindu nationalist project of

Savarkar, which is now a century old, is at its heart democratic in the sense of being founded on the acceptance of universal adult franchise and ‘one person, one vote’. As the British rule in India was making way for elections in the early 20th century, Savarkar and other Hindu nationalists welcomed elections, because their Hindu community was a social majority in India... Equal voting suited them because they were a majority.

On the other hand, the Muslim leadership, represented then by the landlords in the United Province, were sensing a loss of power and privilege. They realised that elections would doom them to a perpetual ‘minority’. So, their entire politics was against one-person-one-vote. By the time Jinnah joins the Muslim League, he is firmly anti-democratic, in the sense he is anti one-person-one-vote. And he also opportunistically uses Islamic metaphors of a caliphate when pushing for Pakistan.

Savarkar’s Hindu rashtra, unlike Jinnah’s Pakistan, was not a theo-

racy because it was not based on religion at all. It was not about Hindu religion for him. The extremely logical Savarkar argued, in a radical breakaway from conventional political thought, that Indian nationhood was built on race, not culture or religion. This is a deeply modern idea. Savarkar was never a liberal; he was a majoritarian. But unlike Jinnah, he was always a democrat.

He was even broadly in agreement on most issues with the Congress, except for his pet grouse that Gandhi was appealing the Muslim League.

Both Savarkar and Jinnah were, however, similar in the sense that both advocated and modelled their politics based on the sole interest of their own community.

Q Why did the project of creating Narendra Modi take nearly a century to fructify? Why not earlier?

The RSS had lost two generations of a chance at power because they were operating under the shadow of suspicion for being responsible for the assassi-

nation of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi was India’s greatest Hindu leader. Even though the RSS as an institution did not play any role in Gandhi’s murder, the taint has proved very costly to them.

Q Are you saying a Hindu rashtra is politically, intellectually, and even arithmetically, inevitable in future?

The mistake in this line of thinking is to somehow think that a Hindu rashtra lies ahead of us. It is actually already here. The India we live in is in many ways already the Hindu rashtra Savarkar or Golwalkar dreamt of. This is because a Hindu rashtra is not a Hindu ‘state’. It is a Hindu national community or Hindu ‘vote-bank’ that is able to control the state through one-person-one-vote. The Hindu rashtra is not a theocracy or a dictatorship, but a unified Hindu society flexing its majority muscle within a democratic structure.

Tomorrow: Part 2
Ambedkar was opposed to both Islamic and Hindu bigotry

SHORT TAKES

CENTRE SEEKS
DRAFT OF C'GARH
AGRI SCHEMERABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOVAL, DEC. 15

Amid intensifying protests by farmers on the three central farm laws, the Union government has sought a draft of Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana, the flagship programme of Bhupesh Baghel government aimed at ensuring minimum income availability to the farmers in Chhattisgarh through direct bank transfer.

This was revealed by Chhattisgarh agriculture minister Ravindra Choubey in Raipur on Tuesday.

The minister was highlighting the schemes launched and work done in the past two years in the state at a press conference ahead of completion of two years of the Congress-led government in Chhattisgarh on December 17.

"Amid protests by farmers over Centre's three new farm laws, the Union government has sought a draft of the Nyay scheme from Chhattisgarh government. It is up to the Centre to decide if it would like to implement the scheme", Choubey said.

The Nyay scheme, launched in Chhattisgarh in May this year, has benefitted farmers during Covid-19 crisis, he said.

Under the scheme, the state government has disbursed ₹4,500 crore to farmers in three installments as input support in the previous Kharif season and the last installment of ₹1,250 crore would be released to them in March, 2021, the minister said.

The scheme has benefitted nearly 20 lakh farmers in Chhattisgarh.

He said another welfare scheme for the farmers launched by the Bhupesh Baghel government has also not only benefitted the farmers but has also given a boost to the rural economy in Chhattisgarh.

I-T FINDS ₹700 CR
TAX EVASION BY
CHETTINAD GROUP

New Delhi, Dec. 15: The Income Tax Department has detected tax evasion of more than ₹700 crore after it recently raided multiple locations of Chennai-based Chettinad Group, the CBDT and official sources said on Tuesday.

"The highlight of the search includes seizure of unaccounted cash of ₹23 crore from various locations," the CBDT said in a statement.

"As of now, the department has succeeded in detecting evasion of income of over ₹700 crore," it said. The statement claimed that tax sleuths also detected documents related to possession of "foreign assets to the extent of ₹110 crore in the form of fixed deposits, which were not disclosed in the return (income tax return) and will attract action under the Black Money Act".

The taxman had raided 60 premises of the Tamil Nadu-based group in Chennai, Trichy (Tiruchirappalli), various locations in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Mumbai on December 9. While the CBDT said its action and further detections were made against a "leading business group operating from Chennai, based on intelligence input about tax evasion", the official sources identified it as the about 100-years-old Chettinad Group.

The group is involved in business activities like cement manufacturing, logistics, construction, among others, the CBDT said.

"Inflation of expenditure to take out cash and also to reduce profits, receipts not accounted fully, bogus claim of depreciation amounting to ₹435 crore were also identified.

Fun amidst chaos



Farmers play volleyball at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Tuesday during their protest against Centres agrilaws. Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday launched a campaign to make farmers aware that the laws passed by Centre would pave way for their prosperity.

— PTI

India still susceptible
to Coronavirus: Govt

Situation can escalate unexpectedly, Minister cautions public

New Delhi, Dec. 15: Covid-19 cases and deaths are declining in India which is very reassuring, the Centre said on Tuesday but cautioned against any laxity saying an overwhelming proportion of the country's population is still "very vulnerable" to the virus and the situation may escalate unexpectedly.

While there is a continuous increasing trend in Covid-19 cases and deaths globally, particularly in America and Europe and the situation in the world is becoming worrisome, in contrast the scene in India is satisfying as the cases and deaths are declining, Dr V.K. Paul, member (health) at NITI Aayog, told a press conference here.

"Mortality is declining and it is well below 400 per day. Cases have come down to almost 22,000. This is the kind of number we all experienced in July. So that is very reassuring. As a nation, we seem to be now doing very well. We are saving lives. But remember, this cannot be taken for granted. An overwhelming proportion of our population is still very vulnerable to the virus. And the situation can escalate unexpectedly," Paul said while cautioning against any laxity.

He further said the reassuring thing is that people are saying the R0 has come below one which means the pandemic is shrinking.

India's recovery rate
crosses 95 per centDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 15

Country's recovery rate crosses 95 per cent, which is among the highest in the world for countries with high caseloads. The daily new cases recorded on Tuesday — 22,065 — were also the lowest in over five months. Active Covid-19 caseload has fallen below 3.4 lakh, a mere 3.43 per cent of the total infections.

Union health ministry pointed out that the number of recoveries have crossed 94 lakhs (94,22,636), pushing the national recovery rate to over 95 per cent, which is one of the highest in the world for countries with the high caseload.

"So we should be happy about that but cautiously happy," he said. Noting Delhi has made progress, he said, "We congratulate the government of Delhi as also all the other governments who have done so well in contributing towards such a significant control (in cases) in recent times."

Paul, however, expressed concern over the Covid-19 situation in

"With a high number of patients recovering every day and the sustained fall in the mortality rate, the country's steady trend of decline in active cases continues," said the Union health ministry. There are 3,39,820 active cases of Covid-19 as on Tuesday. The slide in the active cases is supplemented by an exponential rise in the recoveries.

"The gap between active cases and recovered cases is continuously increasing and stands at 90,82,816. The national recovery rate has further escalated to 95.12 per cent," the ministry added.

A total 34,477 patients have recovered in a span of 24 hours, of whom

74.24 per cent are concentrated in 10 states and UTs. Maharashtra has reported the maximum number of single-day recoveries at 4,610, followed by 4,481 in Kerala and 2,980 in West Bengal.

The ministry said that 73.52 per cent of the new infections are from 10 states and UTs. Maharashtra has reported the highest daily new cases at 2,949, followed by Kerala with 2,707 new cases. A total 354 case fatalities have been reported in a span of 24 hours. Ten states and UTs account for 79.66 per cent of these. Maharashtra and Delhi reported maximum casualties with 60 new deaths each, followed by West Bengal at 43.

rate has come down to 6.37 while the average daily positivity rate during last week was 3.00 per cent.

Speaking about the preparation for the Covid-19 vaccination drive, Bhushan said guidelines for estimation of electrical and non-electrical cold chain equipment and their strengthening have been issued to states.

— PTI

SC suggests break
for health workers

New Delhi, Dec. 15: The Supreme Court asked the Centre on Tuesday to consider granting a break to doctors engaged in Covid-19 duty for the last seven-eight months.

The top court said that continuous work might be affecting mental health of doctors.

A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, R.S. Reddy and M.R. Shah, which is hearing a suo motu case on proper treatment of Covid-19 patients and dignified handling of dead bodies in hospitals, asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to consider the suggestions of giving the doctors some break.

"For the last seven-eight months doctors have not been given any break and are continuously working. You take instruction and think over giving them some break. It must be very painful and might be affecting their mental health," the bench told Mehta.

The solicitor general assured the bench that the government would consider the suggestion of the bench to grant some break to health workers engaged in Covid-19 duty.

The top court also expressed shock that the Gujarat government has levied around ₹90 crore fine for not wearing face masks, but has not been able to enforce the guidelines on Covid-19 appropriate behaviour.

PRANAB'S SON,
DAUGHTER SPAR
OVER HIS MEMOIRDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 15

The imminent publication of the final volume of late President Pranab Mukherjee's memoirs has led to a massive controversy with his children publicly fighting with each other over its release. First, son Abhijit Mukherjee tweeted that he wanted to vet the memoirs and asked the publishers to stop publication of the book till he gave his written consent. Then daughter Sharmistha Mukherjee told off her brother for seeking "cheap publicity" and asked him not to create "unnecessary hurdles" in the release of their father's book. Excerpts of the book are already out and have created quite a flutter in political circles. Insiders claim Pranab Mukherjee was critical of the Congress' leadership which had led to the debacle in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. This yet to be released book is the late president's final memoir and is being claimed to be a tell-all book.

PARADIP PORT TRUST
e-TENDER CALL NOTICE
Name of the Work : "Construction, Supply, Installation & Commissioning of M.S. Buoys with Solar Powered Lanterns at Mahanadi River" and "Maintenance of said M. S. Buoys with Solar Powered Lanterns for a period of 3 years". Estimated Cost : Rs. 2,79,24,000/- Plus GST. Last date & time of submission of tender through on-line bidding is **1500 hrs on Dt. 05.01.2021**. For further details, please log on to the Website : <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>.
By, Conservator
PPT/PR/343/20-21 Date : 14.12.2020

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
(PROJECT ORGANISATION)
Item No.1: E-Tender Notice No. : SG/PROJ/MS/IAS-3 IBS/2020/EOT (04) Dated: 12.12.2020
Name of the work and its location : Reliability improvement with dual detection using Multi section Digital Axle counters (MSDAC) for 3 IBS in MAS Division.
Item No.2: E-Tender Notice No. : SG/PROJ/MS/ITP/MDU 3IBS/2020/EOT (05) Dated: 12.12.2020
Name of work and its location : Reliability improvement with dual detection using Multi section Digital Axle counters (MSDAC) for 3 IBS in TPJ Division-1 & MDU Division-2.
Tender Notice MSDAC
Estimated cost of the work - Item No.1 : Rs. 5,04,45,806.02/-, Item No.2 : Rs. 5,00,46,782.77/-
Earnest Money - Item No.1 : Rs. 4,02,200/-
Item No.2 : Rs. 4,00,200/-
Completion period - Item No.1 & Item No.2 : 12 Months
Last date and Time of online submission (closing) of tender document - Item No.1 & Item No.2 : 14:00 hrs of 11.01.2021
Date and Time for opening of Tender - Item No.1 & Item No.2 : After 14:00 hrs of 11.01.2021.
The detailed terms and conditions, other details and tender document will be available on Indian Railway Website i.e., www.reps.gov.in from 12.12.2020.
The online bids for tenders floated through the above portal are required to be digitally signed.
By, Chief Signal and Telecomm. Engineer, Project, Southern Railway, Chennai - 31.
Follow us on : twitter.com/GMSRailway

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
O/o Superintending Engineer, P.R. Region, Medak
NIT No. HD/Tender/126-14/2020-21 e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE Date: 11.12.2020
Out of the total (16) works: Temple development under TTD funds; (3) GP buildings under RGSA and (2) sakhi centres and other civil works under 2 BHK grant, MRR, RRBAN, SDF and GADA grants in undersigned With total estimate cost of Rs. 7.31 crores. Tender schedules can be had from e-procurement market from 15.12.2020 till 23.12.2020 for each tender with minimum 7 working days to participate from date of upload. Other details can be had from e-procurement market place <https://tender.telangana.gov.in>, email ID: se_pr.mdk@gmail.com, se_pr.mdk@telangana.gov.in, Office Land Line Number: 08452-295457
Sd/- Superintending Engineer
R.O. No.: 804-DPCL-AGENCY/ADVT/1260-21 Dated 15-12-2020 P.R. Region, Medak

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation
SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, CHANNARA ZONE
TENDER NOTICE
Sl. No. NIT No. Name of the work Estimated Amount (Rs. in Lakhs) Download Start Date / Last Date & Time for Receipts of Bids Name & Address Officer Cell No.
1. 35/SE-CPZ/2020-21, Date: 14-12-2020 08 Works 1285.00 15-12-2020 @ 03.00 P.M. to 22-12-2020 @ 3.15 P.M. Sd/- S. Narsing Rao, Superintending Engineer, Channara Zone, G.H.M.C., Sandar Mahal, Channara, Ph-9704409314
Total: 08 Works 1285.00
Further details can be seen at e-procurement @ <https://tender.eprocurement.gov.in> Sd/- SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (M) CHANNARA ZONE, GHMC
RO No. 7572-PPCL/Advt/126020-21

INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY BOARD OF INDIA
(A Statutory Body of Government of India)
NOTICE
Applications are invited for filling up 01 (one) post of **Executive Director (ED)** on deputation basis. The detailed vacancy may be seen at www.ibbi.gov.in.
davp 07121/11/0008/2021

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001
GURU HARGOBIND THERMAL PLANT, LEHRA MOHABBAT DISTT. BATHINDA (PUNJAB) - 151 111
e-tendering website- <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>.
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through E-tendering)
Tender Enquiry No.: 64/CHP/Op.-304/GHTP/2020-21 Dated 14/12/2020
SHORT DESCRIPTION: Manual picking of stones coming along with coal from running conveyors and their further disposal in scrap yard at 2x210 MW + 2x250 MW, CHP, GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat Distt. Bathinda.
EMD : Minimum Rs. 190000/- (One Lac Ninety Thousand)
Last Date & Time for bid submission : 19/01/2021 upto 11:30 hrs.
Date & Time of opening of Fee stage bid : 22/01/2021 upto 12:00 hrs.
Detailed NIT and tender specification can be downloaded from PSPCL website <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from dated 15-12-2020 onwards.
Note:
1. The prospective bidders can obtain clarification regarding tender specifications from this office. For registration of digital signatures and uploading of tender information may be sought from <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>.
2. It is informed that in case tender process is not completed due to any reason, no corrigendum will be published in newspapers. Detail regarding corrigendum may be seen on PSPCL official website i.e. <http://pspcl.in>.
Superintending Engineer, Mechanical Mtc. Circle-II, O&M, GHTP, PSPCL, Lehra Mohabbat, Distt. Bathinda (Pb.)-151111.
GHTP-59/2020 RO : I/117794

RAIL COACH FACTORY KAPURTHALA
On-line bids are invited by PCMM, RCF on behalf of President of India for following items:-
S. Tender No. No. & Due Date Description Quantity (Nos./Sets) Earnest Money (Rs.)
1 14201194/07.01.2021 Pre-Laminated Shaded Compreg 12x1220x2440MM 473 Nos. NIL
2 01201169A/08.01.2021 Set of Swinging Link Pin and Swinging Nut 1266 Set 145220/-
3 01201200A/08.01.2021 Set of Metal Stop LH & RH 608 Set NIL
4 07201369/07.01.2021 Set of Cap and Serrated Lock Washer for Pin Welding Machine PL.No. 33555096 677900 Set NIL
5 02201289/08.01.2021 Set of Electrical items for LHB EOG LVPHX Coaches 200 Set 724000
6 02201245A/08.01.2021 EFT Board 4359 Nos. NIL
(1) For details and making On-line bids, visit Website <http://ireps.gov.in> Drawings / Specifications, wherever required can be downloaded from RCF Website : <http://www.rcf.indianrailways.gov.in> Class IIB digital signature certificate required for on-line bidding, can be obtained from licensed certifying agencies listed at <http://www.cce.gov.in> (2) Tenders will close at 14:25 Hrs. on due date and tender will be opened at 14:30 Hrs. **Tenders Sr. No. 1** will be opened at RCF, Kapurthala and **Tender Sr. No. 2 to 6** will be opened at Tilak Bridge, New Delhi.
(3) For queries, contact IREPS Helpdesk at 011-24102855, 011-24105180 or RCF helpdesk at 011-23378658. **PCMM**
Notice No: G-122-01 / Store / 098 / 2020-21 Dated : 15.12.2020

FINAL WISH Rajaram Singh once told a journalist that he wished to see accused hanged

Main witness of Behmai massacre dies

Kanpur (UP), Dec. 15: Rajaram Singh, the main witness of the 1981 Behmai massacre by Phoolan Devi's gang, has died at his native village, his last wish to see the accused hanged unfulfilled.

The 85-year-old, who was suffering from a prolonged illness, died at his native village in Kanpur Dehat district on Sunday.

Twenty men were gunned down on February 14, 1981 allegedly by dacoit Phoolan Devi and her gang seeking revenge for her rape by upper caste men in Behmai

village, less than 100 km from Kanpur.

Seventeen of the dead were Thakurs, the dominant caste in the village. Rajaram Singh's younger brothers Banwari Singh and Himmat Singh, cousin Naresh Singh and nephews Dev Singh, Hukum Singh and Dashrath Singh were among those allegedly killed by the Phoolan Devi gang.

Singh once told a journalist that he wished to see the accused hanged for their crime. "But God only knows whether I will be able to

● **TWENTY MEN** were gunned down on February 14, 1981 allegedly by dacoit Phoolan Devi and her gang seeking revenge for her rape by upper caste men in Behmai village, less than 100 km from Kanpur.

witness it as I am suffering from chronic liver ailment. I will get peace only when the killers are punished in my lifetime," he was quoted as saying.

A Kanpur court framed charges in the case in

August 2012, three decades after the massacre.

Out of the 23 accused, 16, including Phoolan Devi, are already dead. Charges were then framed against the four surviving accused, and the court issued non-bailable warrants against the three absconders among them — Maan Singh, Ramkesh and Vishwanath alias Ashok.

A special court (dacoity) had initially fixed a date in January 2020 for pronouncing the verdict. But it was adjourned several times as the original case diary was

reported missing from court records, and a probe was ordered.

The court has to give its verdict on the role of the four surviving accused — Poshha (75), Shyamababu (70), Bhikha (65), and Vishwanath (54).

While Poshha is still in jail, the rest are out on bail. In the years following the massacre, Phoolan Devi went on to surrender and later become an MP. She was gunned down outside her official residence in New Delhi on July 25, 2001.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

FIRE AT RUSSIAN RETIREMENT HOME KILLS 11

Moscow, Dec. 15: A fire in a retirement home in Russia's southern Urals killed 11 people while three more were hospitalised with injuries, local officials said on Tuesday.

The fire broke out in the early hours in a wooden, one-story building of a private retirement home in a village in the Bashkiria region.

A total of 16 people were in the building. It wasn't immediately clear what caused the fire. Emergency officials said seven men and four women were killed in the incident. According to Russian media reports, they were bed-ridden residents of the retirement home. A criminal probe into the incident has been launched and the head of the facility has been detained.

'TWITTER KILLER' SENTENCED TO DEATH IN JAPAN

Tokyo, Dec. 15: A Japanese court on Tuesday sentenced a man to death for killing and dismembering nine people, most of whom had posted suicidal thoughts on social media, in a case that shocked the country.

The Tachikawa branch of the Tokyo District Court found Takahiro Shiraishi, known as the "Twitter killer," guilty of killing, dismembering and storing the bodies of the victims in his apartment in Zama, near Tokyo.

Shiraishi, 30, pleaded guilty and said he would not appeal his death sentence. Police arrested Shiraishi in 2017 after finding the bodies of eight females and one male in cold-storage cases in his apartment.

Investigators said Shiraishi approached the victims via Twitter, offering to assist them with their suicidal wishes. He killed the women, including teenagers, after raping them, and also killed a boyfriend of one of the women to silence him, investigators said.

OFFICIALS: BOMBS, SHOOTING ATTACK KILLS 4 IN KABUL

Kabul, Dec. 15: A bombing and a shooting attack in Kabul killed at least three people, including a deputy provincial governor, while a deputy provincial council chief was killed in western Afghanistan on Tuesday, officials said.

The attacks are the latest in relentless violence in Afghanistan even as the Taliban and Afghan government negotiators hold talks in Qatar, trying to hammer out a peace deal that could put an end to decades of war. According to Tariq Arian, an Afghan interior ministry spokesman, a sticky bomb attached to the armored vehicle belonging to Kabul's deputy provincial governor killed two people, and wounded two others.

The deputy provincial governor and the apparent target of the attack, Mahbobullah Mohibi, was killed alongside his secretary while two of his bodyguards were wounded, Arian said.

NIGERIA: BOKO HARAM CLAIMS MASS ABDUCTION

Lagos (Nigeria), Dec. 15: Nigeria's Boko Haram jihadist rebels have claimed responsibility for the abduction of hundreds of students in an attack on a boys school in northern Katsina State, a Nigerian online newspaper says.

More than 330 students are missing from the Government Science Secondary School in Kankara after gunmen with assault rifles attacked their school on Friday night. The Daily Nigerian said it received an audio message from Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau saying that his group abducted the schoolboys because Western education is against the tenets of Islam.

"What happened in Katsina was done to promote Islam and discourage un-Islamic practices as Western education is not the type of education permitted by Allah and his Holy Prophet," the paper quoted Shekau as saying.

There has been no independent verification of the audio message but Shekau has in the past released video and audio messages on Boko Haram's behalf. Nigerian presidential spokesman Garba Shehu said in a statement on Monday that "the kidnappers had made contact and discussions were already on, pertaining to the safety and return" of the children to their homes.

Time to turn the page, says Biden after EC confirms win

Joe lashes out at Trump saying he refused to respect the will of people

Washington, Dec. 15: US President-elect Joe Biden has told election-weary Americans that it is time to "turn the page", after the Electoral College affirmed his triumph over President Donald Trump, who has refused to concede and filed a litany of legal challenges to overturn the poll results.

The 538-member Electoral College on Monday pushed Biden past the 270-vote threshold to win the bitterly-contested race for the White House. It was one of the crucial steps required for the 78-year-old Democrat to take office on January 20 as the 46th US President.

Under the US system, voters actually cast their ballots for electors, who in turn, formally vote for candidates weeks after the presidential election. Biden won the November 3 election with 306 electoral college votes to incumbent Republican President Trump's 232.

The Electoral College votes will now be sent to Congress to be counted formally next month. Though some House Republicans have indicated they will object to the results in key states, they can do little more than delay the process during a joint session of Congress on January 6.

In a speech from his hometown of Wilmington, Delaware after the announcement of his victory in the election, Biden said the US democracy had been "pushed, tested and threatened" and "proved to be resilient, true and strong".

He criticised President Trump's attempts to overturn the result and said the "will of the people prevailed". "The rule of law, our Constitution and the will of the people prevailed" over Trump's efforts to undo the results of the election, the former US vice president said.

"The flame of democracy was lit in this nation a long time ago. And we now know nothing, not even a pandemic or an abuse of power, can extinguish that flame," Biden said.

"In this battle for the soul of America, democracy prevailed. We the people voted. Faith in our institutions held. The integrity of our elections remains intact. And so, now it is time to turn the page. To unite. To heal," he said.

Biden said the election outcome should be celebrated, not attacked, that more than 81 million votes were cast for him and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. This too is a record



Former President Bill Clinton and other members of New York state's Electoral College help Electoral member George K. Gresham who fell while voting for President and Vice President in the Assembly Chamber at the state Capitol in Albany, New York. — AFP

GOP leader McConnell wishes Biden

Washington, Dec. 15: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell congratulated Democrat Joe Biden as president-elect on Tuesday, saying the Electoral College "has spoken."

The Republican leader's statement, delivered in a speech on the Senate floor, ends weeks of silence over President Donald Trump's defeat. It came a day after electors met and officially affirmed Biden's election win. "I want to congratulate President-elect Joe Biden," McConnell said.

"Many of us had hoped the presidential election would yield a different

result," he said. "But our system of government has the processes to determine who will be sworn in on January 20. The Electoral College has spoken."

McConnell called Biden someone "who has devoted himself to public service for many years." He also congratulated Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, saying "all Americans can take pride that our nation has a female vice president-elect for the very first time." McConnell prefaced his remarks with sweeping praise for what he characterised as Trump's "end-

less" accomplishments during four years in office. He said Trump and Vice President Mike Pence "deserve our thanks."

For the first time, a groundswell of leading Republicans have said that Democrat Joe Biden is the winner of the presidential election, essentially abandoning President Donald Trump's assault on the outcome as the Electoral College certified the vote.

With states affirming the results, the Republicans faced a pivotal choice to declare Biden the president-elect, as the tally showed, or keep standing

silently by as Trump wages a potentially damaging campaign to overturn the election.

Number of senators said the time has come to move on. "At some point you have to face the music," said Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, the second-ranking GOP leader. "Once the Electoral College settles the issue today, it's time for everybody to move on." Sen. Roy Blunt of Missouri, the chairman of the inaugural committee, said the panel will now "deal with Vice President Biden as the president-elect." — AP

● **RUSSIAN PRESIDENT** Vladimir Putin on Tuesday congratulated Joe Biden on winning the US presidential election after weeks of holding out. The Kremlin had said earlier that the Russian president would hold off on congratulating Biden until the winner was officially confirmed.

number. More votes than any ticket has received in the history of America. It represented a winning margin of more than 7 million votes over the number of votes cast for President Trump and Vice President Mike Pence, he said. — PTI

US attorney general Barr resigns

Washington, Dec. 15: US Attorney General William Barr, who of late had publicly differed with President Donald Trump on allegations of voter fraud in the November 3 presidential elections, has resigned.

Trump has appointed his deputy Jeff Rosen as the Acting Attorney General. "Just had a very nice meeting with Attorney General Bill Barr at the White House. Our relationship has been a very good one, he has done an outstanding job! As per letter, Bill will be leaving

just before Christmas to spend the holidays with his family..." Trump announced on twitter Monday night.

"Deputy Attorney General Jeff Rosen, an outstanding person, will become Acting Attorney General. Highly respected Richard Donoghue will be taking over the duties of Deputy Attorney General. Thank you to all!" Trump said as he tweeted the two-page resignation letter of Barr. Barr, in his letter, said, "As discussed, I will spend the next week wrapping up a few remaining

matters important to the administration, and depart on December 23."

"I am greatly honored that you called on me to serve your administration and the American people once again as Attorney General. I am proud to have played a role in the many successes and unprecedented achievements you have delivered for the American people. Your record is all the more historic because you accomplished it in the face of relentless implacable resistance," he added. — PTI

PDM leaders booked as they ask PM Khan to quit

Lahore, Dec. 15: Pakistan Democratic Movement's top leaders, including PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz, were booked on Tuesday for causing irreparable damage to a national asset after its Minar-e-Pakistan rally here, as the 11-party opposition alliance set January 31 deadline for Prime Minister Imran Khan to step down or face long march on Islamabad. The opposition alliance

held its final anti-government rally in Lahore on Sunday despite a ban on the gathering of more than 300 people owing to an increase in Covid-19 cases across the country.

The PDM has been holding massive rallies since its inception in September to seek Khan's ouster and press the powerful military to stop interfering in politics. Lahore police booked Pakistan Muslim League-

Nawaz (PML-N) vice president Maryam Nawaz, former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, former National Assembly speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, former railways minister Saad Rafique and 125 others under different sections of the Pakistan Penal Code for breaking the locks of Minar-e-Pakistan gates, damaging the official property and violating the Covid-19 guidelines. — PTI

US federal agency homing in on social media firms' data collection

Washington, Dec. 15: Federal regulators are ordering Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, TikTok's parent and five other social media companies to provide detailed information on how they collect and use consumers' personal data and how their practices affect children and teens.

The Federal Trade Commission's action announced on Monday goes to the heart of the tech industry's lucrative busi-

ness model: harvesting data from platform users and making it available to advertisers so they can pinpoint specific consumers to target. The agency plans to use the information, due in 45 days, for a comprehensive study.

The other five companies are Reddit, Snap, Discord, WhatsApp, which is owned by Facebook, and Google's YouTube. Regulators and lawmakers are increasingly weaving into their inves-

tigations of market dominance by Big Tech companies concerns over data power and privacy.

The FTC wants to know how social media and video streaming services collect, use and track consumers' personal and demographic information, how they decide which ads and other content are shown to consumers, whether they apply algorithms or data analytics to personal information, how

they measure and promote user engagement and how their practices affect children and teens. "Never before has there been an industry capable of surveilling and monetising so much of our personal lives," three of the five FTC commissioners said. They said the planned study "will lift the hood on the social media and video streaming firms to carefully study their engines." — AP

Raja Chari to lead SpaceX mission to ISS

Washington, Dec. 15: The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and European Space Agency (ESA) have selected three astronauts to serve as crew members for Nasa's SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the International Space Station, which is expected to launch in the fall of 2021.

According to the Nasa, the trio will consist astronauts Raja Chari, an Indian-American US Air Force colonel, and Tom Marshburn, who will serve as commander and pilot, respectively, and ESA astronaut Matthias Maurer, who will serve as a mission specialist. A fourth crew member will be added at a later date, following a review by NASA and its international partners.

This will be the first spaceflight for Chari, who became a NASA astronaut in 2017. He was born in Milwaukee, but considers Cedar Falls, Iowa, his hometown. He is a colonel in the US Air Force and joins the mission with extensive experience as a

test pilot. He has accumulated more than 2,500 hours of flight time in his career. Chari was selected earlier this month as a member of the Artemis Team and is now eligible for assignment to a future lunar mission.

Marshburn is a Statesville, North Carolina, native who became an astronaut in 2004. Prior to serving in the astronaut corps, the medical doctor served as flight surgeon at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston and later became medical operations lead for the International Space Station.

"The Crew-3 mission will be his third visit to the space station and his second long-duration mission. Marshburn previously served as a crew member of STS-127 in 2009 and Expedition 34/35, which concluded in 2013," the NASA said.

Maurer comes from Sankt Wendel, in the German state of Saarland. Like Chari, Maurer will be making his first trip to space with the Crew-3 mission. — Agencies

Vaccinate Joe, Harris, Trump, Pence: Fauci

Washington, Dec. 15: Top US infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci says President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris should be vaccinated for Covid-19 as soon as possible.

Speaking to ABC's "Good Morning America" on Tuesday, Fauci said, "For security reasons, I really feel strongly that we should get them vaccinated as soon as we possibly can." He adds he'd like to see Biden "fully protected as he enters into

the presidency in January." Fauci says that while President Donald Trump probably still has antibodies to the virus that will protect him for at least several months, he should get the vaccine as well to be "doubly sure."

Trump was hospitalised with Covid-19 in early October. Fauci says Vice President Mike Pence should get vaccinated, too. He says, "You still want to protect people who are very important to our country right now." — AP

LONDON ON HIGHEST ALERT AFTER NEW COVID-19 VARIANT IDENTIFIED

Geneva, Dec. 15: The World Health Organisation is aware of reports that a new variant of Covid-19 has been identified in the United Kingdom, although there is no evidence to suggest that the mutation will impact the effectiveness of vaccines against the disease, WHO Health Emergencies Programme executive director Mike Ryan said on Monday.

UK health secretary Matt Hancock earlier in the day announced that a new variant of Covid-19 had been identified in the south of England, and

was responsible for roughly 1,000 cases.

"We are aware of this genetic variant I think reported in about 1,000 individuals in England, and the authorities in the UK under Matt Hancock's leadership are obviously looking at the significance of this," Ryan said at a WHO virtual press briefing.

According to the WHO official, there was no evidence to suggest that the new variant of the disease would transmit more easily or undermine vaccines against Covid-19 that are being rolled out. — Agencies

LEGAL ORDER

\$100mn case was filed on September 19, 2019, challenging the Indian Parliament's decision on J&K

US Court terminates lawsuit against Modi, Shah

Washington, Dec. 15: A US court has dismissed a \$100-million lawsuit filed against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah after the litigants - a separatist Kashmiri Khalistan outfit and two associates - failed to appear before it at two scheduled hearings.

The suit was filed on September 19, 2019, days before Modi's historic "Howdy, Modi!" event in Houston, Texas. It challenged the Indian Parliament's decision on Jammu and Kashmir that

abrogated the special privileges of the state and carved out two union territories and sought a compensation of \$100 million from Modi, Shah and Lt. Gen. Kanwal Jeet Singh Dhillon.

Dhillon is currently serving as the Director-General Defence Intelligence Agency and Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff under the Chief of Defence Staff.

"Other than that attempted service," Kashmiri Khalistan Referendum Front "have



Narendra Modi

done nothing to prosecute this case", and have now failed to appear at two duly set Scheduling



Amit Shah

Conferences, US District Court Southern District of Texas Judge Frances H. Stacy said in his order

dated October 6 and recommended that the case be dismissed.

The case was terminated by Judge Andrew S Hanen of the US District Court in Texas on October 22. Apart from the Kashmiri Khalistan Referendum Front, the other two complainants have not been identified, other than the acronyms "TFK" and "SMS".

The suing party was represented by separatist lawyer Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. The Indian Parliament passed legisla-

tion last year changing the status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, modifying provisions that have been an obstacle to economic development and promoted a sense of separatism.

Prime Minister Modi, accompanied by US President Donald Trump, had addressed a crowd of over 50,000 Indian-Americans at the "Howdy, Modi!" event in Houston on September 22, 2019.

As per court records, Kashmiri Khalistan Referendum Front was

able to serve the summons to Modi, Shah and Dhillon at the Indian Consulate in Houston on February 18, 2020.

A conference was set by the court for August 2. A second conference was scheduled on October 6. Judge Stacy said that representatives of the Kashmiri Khalistan Referendum Front failed to appear for the conference as such he recommended that the lawsuit be dismissed. Two weeks later, Judge Hanen terminated the case. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

CHINESE FISHING VESSEL DETAINED IN PALAU

Koror, Palau, Dec.15: An illegal Chinese fishing vessel and its 28 crew have been detained in Palau, authorities said, creating a delicate diplomatic situation for the tiny Pacific nation, which is allied with Beijing’s rival Taiwan.

The boat was intercepted by a patrol boat at Helen Reef, in Palau’s territorial waters, and escorted to the main island of Koror, the Division of Marine Law and Enforcement (DMLE) said.

“They did have sea cucumber on there... it’s estimated about 500 pounds (225 kilograms),” DMLE director Victor Remengesau told reporters on Monday.

He said the Chinese fishermen and 19 crew from the patrol boat that caught them were undergoing 14 days quarantine in Palau, which is one of the few places in the world that remains free of Covid-19.

Remengesau, the brother of Palau President Tommy Remengesau, said it had not yet been decided whether to charge the fishermen, who are believed to be from southern China’s Hainan province.

“That’s one of the things that we’re discussing,” he said.

“We’ve been told we don’t want them to be here any longer than they have to be.” Palau, long regarded as a pioneer in marine conservation, has banned foreign commercial fishing vessels from its waters.

SCIENTISTS WARN OF OIL SPILL IN RED SEA

New York, Dec. 15: Scientists have called for action to remove the oil from an abandoned taker in the Red Sea that holds approximately one million barrels of oil — four times the amount contained in the Exxon Valdez tanker which had a disastrous environmental oil spill in 1989.

According to the analysis, published in the journal *Frontiers in Marine Science*, the tanker named *Safer* is a floating storage and offloading unit (FSO) abandoned for years in the Red Sea. “The time is now to prevent a potential devastation to the region’s waters and the livelihoods and health of millions of people living in half a dozen countries along the Red Sea’s coast,” said co-author Karine Kleinhaus, Associate Professor of the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences (SoMAS) at Stony Brook University in the US.

“If a spill from the *Safer* is allowed to occur, the oil would spread via ocean currents to devastate a global ocean resource, as the coral reefs of the northern Red Sea and Gulf of Aqaba are projected to be among the last reef ecosystems in the world to survive the coming decades,” Kleinhaus said.

She said the coral reefs of the northern Red Sea are unique since they survive in much warmer waters than today’s ocean temperatures, which are becoming too high for most coral to tolerate.

INDIAN PLEADS GUILTY OF \$36.1M GAS OIL HEIST

Singapore, Dec. 15: A 40-year-old Indian man on Tuesday pleaded guilty to his involvement in misappropriation of SGD 49 million (\$36.1 million) worth of gas oil at a multinational refinery in Singapore. Sadagopan Premnath committed the crime in 2017-18 while working at the Royal-Dutch Shell Eastern Petroleum located on Pulau Bukom island. Premnath will return to court for mitigation and sentencing in February.

The case also involves several other employees at the refinery. He pleaded guilty to four charges of abetting criminal breach of trust as a servant, while another five charges will be considered in his sentence, according to a report by the Channel News Asia. Premnath is the first Shell employee involved in the heist to admit to the charges. He began working with the company around 2012 as a fieldman.

The heist occurred at the manufacturing site on Shell Pulau Bukom, the company’s largest wholly-owned refinery in the world in terms of crude oil distillation capacity and its largest petrochemical production and export centre in the Asia Pacific. The conspiracy to misappropriate gas oil began in 2007 with co-accused Juandi Pungot and Abdul Latif Ibrahim, both Shell employees, and grew to involve more people over 11 years.



Tourists walk amongst beach foam in the wake of cyclonic conditions at Currumbin Beach on Tuesday after wild weather lashed Australia’s Northern New South Wales and South East Queensland with heavy rain, strong winds and king tides.

Heavy rains force officials to order evacuation in Australia

Storm also whipped up thick sea foams, a rare event, along the beaches

Sydney, Dec. 15: Australia’s northeast coast was smashed by heavy rains, wild winds and huge seas for the fifth straight day on Tuesday, forcing widespread evacuations.

As water levels continued to rise due to the heavy overnight rains shutting low-lying roads, New South Wales (NSW) state emergency services directed hundreds of residents of several regional towns to move to safer places.

The cyclonic conditions, generated by an intense low-pressure system off the Queensland coast, have swallowed beaches and submerged large swathes of the heavily populated regions between NSW and Queensland state borders.

Quiet seaside suburbs were battered by the storm with high seas destroying some of the most famous beaches along the coast, including the main beach at popular tourist spot Byron Bay in northern NSW.

The storm also whipped up thick sea foams, a rare event, along the beaches in Gold Coast that lured families and children to play in the bubbles, footage on social media showed.

Australia’s Bureau of Meteorology said the heavy rains are expected to weaken by late Tuesday

• **QUIET SEASIDE** suburbs were battered by the storm with high seas destroying some of the most famous beaches along the coast, including the main beach at popular tourist spot Byron Bay in northern NSW.

or early Wednesday but warned isolated thunderstorms may still generate localised heavy falls triggering flash floods.

Australia is passing through a summer expected to be dominated by the La Nina phenomenon, typically associated with greater rainfall and more tropical cyclones - a sharp contrast to the massive bushfires that razed the country last summer.

“We’ve been warned by the weather experts that La Nina will have an impact over summer in the eastern coast of Australia so we need to expect the unexpected,” NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian told Australian Broadcasting Corp television.

“I’m hoping what we’ve seen in the last few days won’t be repeated frequently over summer, but it could. Our weather experts tell us they are expecting conditions worse than what we’ve seen in quite a number of years.” — *Reuters*



General view of massive beach erosion in the wake of cyclonic conditions at Byron Bay Main Beach on Tuesday.

Australia’s Byron Bay beach shrinks as sand disappears

Byron, Bay, Dec. 15: Australia’s Byron Bay usually conjures images of bathers lounging on sunkissed shores, or blissed-out longboarders cruising along cyan-blue waves — but coastal erosion and lashing storms have reduced its seashore to a debris-strewn slither.

The tourist hotspot’s main beach has been reduced to a thin strip by a sand-shifting phenomenon known as “headland bypassing”. Recent wild storms have then eroded it further.

For more than six months, residents have watched helplessly as the beach has slowly disappeared because of what scientists say is the natural process of headland sand bypassing.

This occurs when sand moves from one beach to another around a rocky headland or cape, largely due to energy from waves, before eventually shifting back.

In recent days major storms brought strong winds and large waves, which have combined with high tides to worsen the sand losses — leaving the beach reduced to a fraction of its former self. — *AFP*

Macron to add climate clause to Constitution

Paris, Dec. 15: French President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday he plans to call a referendum on changing the constitution to include a commitment to fight against climate change and for the protection of the environment.

Speaking to members of a Citizen’s Convention on Climate, Macron said that the referendum would propose adding a clause to the first article of the constitution which lays out the foundational principles of the republic.

“Constitutionally it (the referendum proposal) must first go to the National Assembly and then the Senate and be voted in identical terms,” Macron said.

The Citizen’s Convention is composed of 150 randomly picked members of the public who were tasked by Macron’s centrist government with proposing ways in which France could cut its emissions.

They made a series of practical proposals from reducing speed limits to improving home insulation, but changing the constitution to include the climate commitment and making destroying nature a crime — so-called “ecocide” — topped their list of ideas in June.

Macron formed the council in response to demands for greater “direct democracy” in the wake of the “yellow vest” anti-government protests that rocked the country in 2018 and 2019.

The unexpectedly fierce rebellion was sparked by a planned fuel tax hike aimed at funding the climate-change fight, which critics said unfairly targeted people who have no choice but to rely on their cars. The last referendum in France was in 2005 when voters were asked to back the creation of a European constitution.

They rejected the proposal in a humiliating defeat for then-president Jacques Chirac.

Although the referendum proposal should easily clear the lower-house National Assembly, where Macron’s Republic on the Move party commands a majority, it may face opposition or delay in the Senate.

Presidential elections are scheduled for the first half of 2022.

Macron, a 42-year-old centrist, has sought to sustain momentum internationally to cut carbon emissions as laid out in the landmark 2015 Paris climate accord, which was hit by the US withdrawal under President Donald Trump. — *AFP*

China’s coal ban will breach WTO rules, warns Oz

Canberra (Australia), Dec. 15: Australia’s prime minister said on Tuesday that China would be in breach of World Trade Organisation rules as well as a bilateral free trade agreement if it banned Australian coal.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison was responding to a report in the Chinese state-owned *Global Times* newspaper that the Chinese National Development and Reform Commission had given power plants approval to import coal without restrictions except for Australian coal.

Morrison said he was treating the report as “media speculation” because the Chinese government had yet to clarify its position. “If that were the case, then that would obviously be in breach of WTO rules,” Morrison told reporters. “It would be obviously in breach of our on free trade agreement and so we would hope that’s certainly not the case.”

Coal and iron ore are Australia’s most lucrative exports. But Australian exports appear to have suffered due to deteriorating bilateral relations since Australia called for an independent inquiry into the coronavirus pandemic.

Trade Minister Simon Birmingham said Australia was close to finalizing a complaint to the World Trade Organisation over Chinese tariffs imposed on barley. “We see these reports and obviously are deeply troubled by them,”

Warsaw, Dec. 15: Poland’s first state-backed electric car plant is expected to begin production by 2024 in a region of the EU country that now relies heavily on coal mining for jobs, the ElectroMobility Poland (EMP) carmaker said on Thursday.

Lagging behind its smaller EU neighbours the Czech Republic and Slovakia in making electric vehicles, Poland presented its own SUV and hatchback prototypes earlier this year under the Izero brand name.

Meeting with local officials there, EMP’s president Piotr Zaremba said the plant would be built in Jaworzno, a mining town in the southern Silesian coal basin.

With production to begin in three years, with a full target of 2,00,000 vehicles per year, the plant is expected to employ some 3,000 people while an additional 12,000 jobs will be created by suppliers and subcontractors. — *AFP*

Birmingham told Australian Broadcasting Corp. referring to the reported coal import ban.

“They, if true, would indicate discriminatory trade practices being deployed by Chinese authorities and we would urge them to rule that out swiftly,” he added. — *AP*

WORLD NATURE CONGRESS SET FOR SEPT. 2021

Paris, Dec. 15: A twice-delayed summit aimed at forging an international plan to reverse catastrophic species loss will take place in September 2021, its organisers said on Tuesday.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature annual congress was not held as planned in June this year and was postponed indefinitely in September as the second wave of Covid-19 mounted.

“The IUCN Congress will be a key milestone for nature conservation and the development of a new global framework for biodiversity,” it said in a statement. The summit will now be held September 3-11, 2021, in Marseille, France.

The IUCN congress is one of the biggest biodiversity summits on the global calendar, with conservationists urging nations to use the opportunity to commit to preserving vast wild spaces in order to halt species decline.

Campaigners are seeking a binding international agreement governing the preservation of nature, similar to what the Paris accord mandates for climate action. — *AFP*

Smugglers thrash Rohingya on boat

Cox’s Bazar, Dec. 15: Smugglers mercilessly beat rake-thin refugees crowded onto a fishing boat, in a video obtained by *AFP* that shows rarely seen images from the frontlines of the Rohingya trafficking network.

He then uses what appears to be a whip with his other hand to repeatedly lash a group of shirtless men who scramble to avoid the beating.

“They started beating us because we complained about the food,” Mohammad Osman, a 16-year-old passenger, said in an

interview at a Bangladesh refugee camp conducted as part of a months-long *AFP* investigation into the people-smuggling network.

“They randomly beat us just because we were asking for more rice and water,” Osman’s neighbour, Enamul Hasan, 19, who was also on the ship, said he grabbed the phone after one of the traffickers left it behind when fleeing onto another vessel during what amounted to

a mutiny.

The footage was shot several days before the group’s Malaysia-bound boat returned to Bangladesh in mid-April, he said. It had departed in February.

Earlier beatings, which were not captured on video, saw some Rohingya die at the hands of the smugglers, Hasan told *AFP* at the refugee camp.

“They beat us mercilessly — hitting our heads, tearing at our ears, breaking hands.” — *AFP*

SCIENTIFIC MILESTONE Hayabusa2 spacecraft brought back from a distant asteroid this month

Japan finds ample soil, gas from asteroid

Tokyo, Dec. 15: Officials from Japan’s space agency said on Tuesday they have found more than the anticipated amount of soil and gases inside a small capsule the country’s Hayabusa2 spacecraft brought back from a distant asteroid this month, a mission they praised as a milestone for planetary research.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency said its staff initially spotted some black particles sitting on the bottom of the capsule’s sample-catcher when they pulled out the

container on Monday.

By Tuesday, scientists found more of the soil and gas samples in a compartment that stored those from the first of Hayabusa’s two touch-downs on the asteroid last year. “We have confirmed a good amount of sand apparently collected from the asteroid Ryugu, along with gases,” JAXA Hayabusa2 project manager Yuichi Tsuda said in a video message during an online news conference.

“The samples from outside of our planet, which we have long dreamed of,

are now in our hands.” Tsuda called the successful return of asteroid soil and gas samples “a major scientific milestone.”

The pan-shaped capsule, 40 centimeters (15 inches) in diameter, was dropped by Hayabusa2 from space to a predetermined spot in a sparsely populated Australian desert on Dec. 6 at the end of its six-year round trip to Ryugu, more than 300 million kilometers (190 million miles) from Earth.

The capsule arrived in Japan last Tuesday for research that will scien-

tists hope will provide insight into the origins of the solar system and life on Earth. Hiroataka Sawada, a JAXA scientist, was the first to look inside the capsule’s sample-catcher.

Sawada said he was “almost speechless” with surprise and joy when he found that the samples inside included were just the expected dust size but also size of grain and pebbles. Soil samples in photos shown in Tuesday’s presentation looked like dark coffee grounds or black sesame seeds. — *AP*



This photo provided by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), shows soil samples, seen inside a container of the re-entry capsule on Tuesday.

quick BITES

| INDICATORS | | % |
|------------------------|------------|--------|
| Sensex | 46,263.17 | 0.02 |
| Nifty 50 | 13,567.85 | 0.07 |
| S&P 500* | 3,673.03 | 0.70 |
| Dollar (₹) | 73.64 | -0.09 |
| Pound Sterling (₹) | 98.08 | 0.57 |
| Euro (₹) | 89.53 | -0.13 |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹) | 48,847*514 | 1.05 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)* | 50.69 | 0.40 |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield | 5.941 | -0.005 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 0.906 | 0.015 |

Exports dip 8.7%, imports 13% in November

Exports contracted for the second consecutive month in November after recording positive growth for a month in September, as the second wave of the pandemic hit consumer demand in some of the largest markets. Exports fell 8.7 per cent while imports contracted 13.3 per cent, resulting in a trade deficit of \$9.9 billion. Exports of petroleum products were down 59.7 per cent while pharma were up 11.1 per cent.

DakPay app for India Post, payments bank



Customers of the Department of Post (India Post) and the India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) can now operate their banking service through an app DakPay, which was unveiled by communications and IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. DakPay will facilitate services such as sending money, scanning QR code and making payment for services and merchants digitally. It will also provide interoperable banking services.

MSN gets USFDA nod for asenapine sublingual tablets

MSN Group said its marketing partner, Breckenridge Pharmaceutical, has received final approval for its ANDA for asenapine sublingual tablets, in 2.5 mg and 10 mg strengths, a generic for Saphris, with the US FDA. Additionally, the 5mg strength received tentative approval. This product, for schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, was developed with Breckenridge Pharmaceutical for the US market.

EeVe India rolls out Atreo, Ahava e-scooters

EeVe India, the Odisha-based electric two-wheeler startup, introduced two new electric scooters called Ahava and Atreo priced at Rs 55,900 and Rs 64,900 at Delhi showroom, respectively. With this, the brand now sells six models in India. The Ahava electric scooter is claimed to have a range of 60-70km while the Atreo claims 90-100km. The two electric scooters have a running cost of 15 paise per km.

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Delinquencies spike post-moratorium Loan disbursals by MFIs up in Q2

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 15

Though micro-loan disbursals have witnessed a five-fold growth in the September quarter over the previous quarter, delinquencies have spiked after the moratorium on loan repayments ended on August 31.

Micro-loan disbursals have, after a steep fall in the June quarter, made considerable recovery in the September quarter. In the September quarter loan disbursals by micro-lenders went up to Rs 31,261 crore against Rs 6,186 crore in the June quarter—a steep five-times increase in a quarter.

However, on the flip side, the disbursals have not even recovered to half of the March quarter levels. In the March quarter, the lenders had disbursed Rs 71,090 crore. In fact, in the lockdown-hit June quarter, disbursals had fallen 91 per cent.

The number of loans disbursed had fallen from 192 lakh in the March quarter to 21 lakh in the June quarter but has recovered to 88 lakh in the September quarter. A four-fold quarterly growth in the number of loan accounts in the September quarter has only helped a 45 per cent recovery to the March quarter levels.

However, the average loan size has made a smarter recovery. It has returned to Rs 35,652 in the September quarter from Rs 29,480 and Rs



36,940 in the previous two quarters.

However, delinquencies have soared post-moratorium. Portfolio at Risk (PAR) for 30 days or the outstanding balance of loans in arrears—has shown a sharp increase once the moratorium ended. PAR-30 stood around 1.5 per cent till the June quarter but has sharply moved up to 4.39 per cent in the September quarter, as per the data from MFPI India, a micro-financiers association.

Banks have seen the highest increase in delinquencies; from a sub-1 per cent level in the June quarter, PAR-30 went up to 5.97 per cent. NBFC-MFIs saw it moving up from 1 per cent to 4.17 per cent and small finance banks witnessed a rise from near 1 per cent levels to 2.75 per cent. However, NBFCs saw the PAR-30 days' delin-

quency coming down.

According to Manoj Nambiar, chairperson of MFPI India, the livelihood of all the borrowers has not come back to normal. Some are making part payments and some full payments. "Collection efficiencies are improving month-on-month. Earlier, we had thought that efficiencies would return to pre-Covid levels by December. But, it would probably take one or two months more," he said.

The total loan outstanding of all the micro lenders recovered to Rs 2,31,778 crore—closer to the March quarter gross loan portfolio (GLP) of Rs 2,31,788 crore—after coming down to Rs 2,27,727 crore in the June quarter. However, the September quarter saw 14.89 per cent growth in GLP against the same quarter in the previous year.

Personal loan-book growth flat this year

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 15

The pandemic has halted the growth of the personal loan-book and the delinquencies are growing. After growing 26 per cent in FY20 and 40 per cent in the previous two years, personal loan-book remained flat between April and August this year. However, delinquencies have risen in the five-month period.

As of August 2020, the personal loan-book stood at Rs 5,07,684 crore, having grown by only 0.57 per cent over Rs 5,04,792 crore in March 2020 due to Covid-19 disruptions. In the year-ended March 2020, the loan-book had grown by 26.4 per cent, but was lower than the 40 per cent rate of growth in the previous two years, as per data from CRIF High Mark, a Mumbai-based credit bureau.

As of March 2020 active loans had grown by



around 60 per cent, much faster compared to previous years. However, Covid-19 has impacted the originations in the five months of this fiscal year, with a minor de-growth of 1.5 per cent in the active loans.

The personal loan-book in metro cities felt a greater impact of the pandemic, owing to stricter lockdown rules

and near nil economic activity through most of the five-month period in FY21. Originations in metros have witnessed a 42 per cent de-growth compared to the same period in the previous year, as against 27 per cent in tier III and beyond cities.

The average ticket size has been reducing continuously over the last two years. In March 2020, it had shrunk by 18 per cent to 2,22,000. However, the average ticket size increased by 5 per cent to Rs 230,000 by August over March.

The amount of delinquencies for 31-180 days past due and 91-180 days past due have increased by 44 basis points and 26 bps, respectively. Loan delinquencies for 91-180 dpd had increased by 2X in the last two years from 0.91 per cent in March 2018 to 2.59 per cent March 2020. It further moved up to 2.64 per cent in August.

NPS, Atal Pension assets grow 35%

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC.15

Asset under management (AUM) of the National Pension System and Atal Pension Yojana grew over 35 per cent year-on-year at the end of November to more than Rs 5.32 lakh crore.

The total number of subscribers grew 21.35 per cent year-on-year to over 3.88 lakh crore, said a release issued by

Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority.

As on November 30, 2020, total pension assets under management stood at Rs 5,32,378 crore showing a year-on-year growth of 35.76 per cent from Rs 3,92,467 crore in November 2019.

The number of subscribers in various schemes under the National Pension System (NPS) rose to over 3.88

crore by end-November 2020 from over 3.20 crore in November 2019, showing a year-on-year increase of 21.35 per cent.

Growing awareness about the tax saving benefits of the NPS led to maximum subscriber growth in all citizen sector by 33.38 per cent and assets under management for this category of subscribers also grew by maximum 51.11 per cent.

High inflows threaten RBI's tight grip on rupee

SUBHADIP SIRCAR & ANIRBAN NAG DEC. 15

A relentless torrent of funds rushing into India's markets may tip the central bank's delicate balancing act in 2021.

For most of this year, the Reserve Bank of India has capped currency gains as global investors poured around \$50 billion into stocks and stakes in companies. This has boosted rupee liquidity in a banking system that's already flush with cash from the RBI's stimulus measures.

There's growing consensus among traders and fund managers that the mounting pressures—particularly the liquidity glut distorting money markets—may spur the central bank to consider a range of changes, from relaxing its grip on Asia's worst-performing currency to curtailing bond purchases.

A modest gain in the rupee over the past month could mean that policy makers are already dialling intervention down a touch, or that inflows are starting to get the better of them.

"We believe that the RBI is facing a tough task of

liquidity management while juggling FX inflows, secondary bond market purchases to keep long-term borrowing costs low and ensuring money-market rates are aligned to the policy rate," said Kanika Pasricha, an economist at Standard Chartered Plc in Mumbai. Steps must be taken to realign money-market rates with policy rates, she said.

While most currencies in Asia have benefited from a weaker dollar, the rupee is down 3 per cent this year.

Traders point to how the RBI has bought \$58 billion of dollars in the first nine months of the year as signs of its intervention.

Governor Shaktikanta Das has only commented very broadly on the matter, writing in the most recent policy statement that the central bank acts to damp forex volatility and keep the rupee in sync with underlying domestic fundamentals.

Inflows into India's equity markets have grown to more than \$19 billion this

FPIs invest nearly ₹42K crore this month

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC.15

It's another fortnight of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pumping money in the Indian equity market, encouraged by favourable macro economic data, sharp fall in fresh daily Covid cases and weaker dollar. Till December 15, in the first half of the month, Rs 41,898 crore have been invested in equities by the FPIs after over Rs 60,000 crore net

inflows in November, according to national depository NSDL's data.

So far in the calendar year 2020 FPIs investment in equities stands at Rs 1,50,144 crore, of which close to Rs 1 lakh crore has come after the US Presidential elections.

On Tuesday, too, FPIs were net investors in Indian equities by Rs 2,484.09 crore, as per the provisional exchange data.

"Value erosion in dollar

and excessive liquidity is driving foreign portfolio investors to load up on emerging markets equities, specially Indian equities in a big way, pushing them to a record high. We are also witnessing a strong recovery in demand in the economy, which is leading to strength in the rupee as the year draws to a close," Sugandha Sachdeva, VP-metals, energy & currency research at Religare Broking, said.

year, on course for the most on an annual basis since 2013. Foreign investors have also completed about \$30 billion of acquisitions in cash, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Declines in the dollar, which is forecast to keep falling in 2021, are fuelling fund flows into emerging markets globally. In India, capital inflows may reach \$82 billion by the end of the fiscal year, then continue at much the same pace for the follow-

ing 12 months, according to estimates from Deutsche Bank AG. "Given the multiple challenges from excess liquidity due to capital flows and inflation, the RBI may be forced to reduce the intervention and allow appreciation," said Arvind Chari, head of fixed income and alternatives at Quantum Advisors.

The median of estimates compiled by Bloomberg is for the rupee to appreciate to 72 per dollar by the end of 2021. Analysts at Goldman Sachs forecast the currency as strong as 70 by March 2022. It ended trading at 73.63 on Tuesday.

To be sure, some including B. Prasanna, ICICI Bank's head of global markets, sales, trading and research, argue that when you look at the rupee relative to a basket of its trading partners, the currency is overvalued and the RBI will have little tolerance for it to strengthen sharply. With excess cash in the banking system estimated at Rs 7 lakh crore (\$95 bn), key overnight rates have plunged below the reverse repo rate that marks the lower bound of the central bank's policy corridor.

—Bloomberg

Automotive industry lost ₹2,300 cr per day during lockdown: House panel

New Delhi, Dec. 15: In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns, the automotive industry suffered a loss of Rs 2,300 crore per day and the estimated job loss in the sector was about 3.45 lakh, according to a parliamentary panel report submitted to Rajya Sabha chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu on Tuesday.

The parliamentary standing committee on commerce, chaired by Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) MP Keshav Rao, has suggested a slew of measures for attracting investment in the automotive sector, including overhauling of prevalent land and labour laws.

"The committee was informed by the auto industry associations that all the major original equipment manufacturers (OEM) have cut down their production by 18-20 per cent due to low demand and decline in sales of vehicles. As a result, the employment scenario in the automobile sector has been affect-

ed and the an estimated job loss in the auto sector at 3.45 lakh," the panel said in its report.

Hiring of manpower has been stopped in the auto industry sector. Besides that, 286 auto dealers have been closed. Further, production cuts in the automobile sector have a percolating negative impact on the component industry adversely affecting the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in the automobile spare parts manufacturing, the report said.

"As informed by the automobile industry associations, the production stoppage at the automotive OEM and component supplier due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns led to a loss of approximately Rs 2,300 crore per day to the automotive sector," it said.

The standing committee further said the actual magnitude of the impact depends on the duration of lockdown period, the intensity and extent of spread of the Covid-19 outbreak.

—PTI

SAVING | MOTHER EARTH | Rice cultivation uses 30-40% of the world's freshwater

Drip irrigation to make rice eco-friendly

ARI RABINOVITCH JERUSALEM, DEC. 15

An Israeli company has developed a drip irrigation system for growing rice to replace the flooded paddies that have supplied the world with rice for generations but cause a surprising level of damage to the environment.

Rice is the staple food for more than half the global population, but its cultivation uses 30-40 per cent of the world's freshwater and is responsible for 10 per cent of man-made emissions of greenhouse gas methane, according to the UN-backed Sustainable Rice Platform.

Netafim, a company that pioneered drip irri-



gation decades ago to grow produce like potatoes and melons across Israel's challenging arid landscape, has just finished a pilot scheme using its technology on 1,000 hectares (2,470 acres) of rice fields in locations from Europe to southern Asia.

At one such location, at La Fagiana farm in north-east Italy, two fields, side-

by-side, grow a high quality rice for risotto. One is flooded, covered entirely by up to 15 cm of water to maintain temperatures and keep away weeds.

The other is crisscrossed with perforated pipes delivering to the roots precise amounts of water amounting to less than half the quantity used on the flooded field.

"We want to increase

the production without increasing water use or lowering quality," said Michele Conte, whose family has managed La Fagiana for decades and who has adopted the Netafim system on some of his land.

For three years the drip irrigation has yielded rice on par and at times even better quality than the flooded paddies, he said. It also allows them to rotate crops throughout the year.

Netafim said it had to learn from scratch how to achieve the same yield as flooding and it took a decade to create a new protocol for watering, fertilizing and planting rice with drip irrigation.

The growing conditions

switch to aerobic from anaerobic, which means methane emission "goes to zero," said CEO Gaby Miodownik.

Conte said the schedule for treating the rice still needs some fine tuning but that it has become a selling point for environmentally concerned customers.

The initial investment in pipes, pumps and filters could be expensive for farmers whose profit margins are, for the most part, already thin.

But the shift away from flooding is expected to gain traction and companies like India's Jain Irrigation are developing drip irrigation packages for rice as well.

—Reuters

SHORT TAKES

Yuvraj named in Punjab probables

New Delhi: World Cup winning former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh is set to come out of retirement and play domestic cricket again after being named in Punjab's 30-strong list of probables for next month's Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament. Yuvraj had announced his retirement last June but he decided to resume playing for his home state after being approached by Punjab Cricket Association secretary. The 39-year-old left-handed batsman, who has played 304 ODIs, 40 Tests and 58 T20Is for India, has been training at the PCA stadium in Mohali and also posted a video of his preparations on social media.

RAINA ALL SET FOR UP

Former India batsman Suresh Raina is all set to represent his home state of Uttar Pradesh. Raina announced his retirement from international cricket in August this year, but will continue to play domestic cricket for his native state and in the Indian Premier League.

SREESANTH IN KERALA LIST

Former India fast bowler S. Sreesanth on Tuesday moved closer to a return to competitive cricket after being named in a 26-strong probables list. The 37-year-old was banned by the BCCI over his alleged involvement in spot-fixing in the IPL. — *Agencies*

Hyderabad ride on Santana brace

Vasco: Aridane Santana struck twice in less than a minute to script Hyderabad FC's thrilling 3-2 win over SC East Bengal in an Indian Super League match here on Tuesday.

Santana's twin burst came in the 56th minute after SC East Bengal scored their first ever ISL goal through Jacques Maghoma in the 26th minute. There was no looking back for Hyderabad after that as they struck a third goal in the 68th minute with Liston Colaco making a terrific run to set it up for Halicharan Narzary to find the back of the net. But there was more drama in store as Maghoma too completed a brace from Anthony Pilkington's freekick to reduce the margin in the 81st minute. East Bengal thus suffered their fourth defeat from five matches to remain at the bottom of the table with one point. Hyderabad FC, on the other hand, remained unbeaten from five matches (nine points) to be placed at fifth place in the 11-team standings. — *PTI*

Grealish banned from driving

London: Aston Villa captain Jack Grealish was given a nine-month driving ban on Tuesday after crashing his Range Rover during the coronavirus lockdown in March. Grealish was sentenced at Birmingham Magistrates' Court after previously pleading guilty to two charges. The 25-year-old's vehicle hit two parked vehicles in Dickens Heath, Solihull, West Midlands. As well as the driving ban, England midfielder Grealish was also fined £82,499 (\$110,271). A judge was told that a witness said Grealish smelled of "intoxicating liquor" and was slurring his words immediately after the crash on March 29. Grealish was involved in the incident less than 24 hours after issuing a Twitter video message urging people to stay at home to save lives and protect the NHS. — *AFP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

Big Bash League: Perth Scorchers vs Melbourne Stars from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

Lanka Premier League: Final from 7.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Mohun Bagan vs FC Goa from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

English Premier League: Arsenal vs Southampton from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1; Leicester vs Everton from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 2; Leeds United vs Newcastle from 11.30 pm; Fulham vs Brighton from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Star Sports 3; Liverpool vs Tottenham Hotspur from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Star Sports Select 1; West Ham vs Crystal Palace from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Star Sports Select 2

Italian League: Juventus vs Atalanta from 11 pm on Sony Ten 2; Genoa vs AC Milan from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1; Inter Milan vs Napoli from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2

WWE

NXT: Bout: from 6.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

BATTLE READY

Australia have plans in place for Kohli & Co.

Adelaide, Dec. 15: Australia coach Justin Langer on Tuesday asserted that his team will "have plans in place" for Indian talisman Virat Kohli as cricket's heavyweights renew one of the sport's greatest rivalries with the opening day-night Test here from Thursday.

The four-match series opener at Adelaide Oval will be the only time India captain Kohli will play Test cricket Down Under this summer as he will return home after the game to attend the birth of his first child.

Langer, however, is determined to stop Kohli from setting the tone for the series.

"He is a great player and an equally great leader. I have got so much respect for him but we are going to be really well planned for him because we know how important he is for



India as a leader and as a batsman. So, we will have our plans in place.

"The next trick is to execute them, hopefully, keep him out of the game with his runs. At the end of the day, that's where he is going to have the biggest impact. We've seen a lot of him now, and he has seen a lot of us too," Langer said during a virtual media interaction.

Langer also made it clear that his team will focus more on the skill part and look for ways to get Kohli out instead of needlessly engaging with him. "What we talk about is how to get Virat out. He is such a great player, we don't talk about whether we taunt him or not. That's rubbish... We play on the skill, not on emotions," he said.

Australia may have played more day-night Tests compared to India's one but according to Langer, his team would have no advantage heading into the opening pink ball match. "The best players and best teams adapt regardless of the big game or the colour of the ball," he said. — *PTI*



India captain Virat Kohli at a training session in Adelaide on Tuesday, ahead of the first Test against Australia. — *AFP*

Gavaskar bats for Pant, Gill

New Delhi, Dec. 15: The legendary Sunil Gavaskar feels the Indian team management should prefer an aggressive Rishabh Pant over a technically sound Wriddhiman Saha for the wicket-keeper's role in the four-match Test series against Australia, starting Thursday.

Gavaskar, the fastest to reach 10,000 Test runs, said that with a blistering 73-ball 103-run knock in the second warm-up game under his belt, Pant will give India more flexibility in the first Test, the only day-night game, to be played in Adelaide.

"It is going to be a tough one for the four selection committee because Rishabh played in all the 4 Test matches four years ago. He also got a hundred and seemed he got under the skin of the Australian players with his chirping behind the stumps.

RAHANE KEEPS CARDS CLOSE TO HIS CHEST

Adelaide, Dec. 15: India vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane on Tuesday conceded that pacer Ishant Sharma's absence is a "big miss" but side-stepped queries on his team's possible first XI combination for the opening Day/Night Test against Australia starting on Thursday.

Rahane, who is expected to lead in the last three Tests after regular skipper Virat Kohli goes on paternity leave, also spoke about how pink ball's increased pace off the pitch during the 40-

50 minutes of the twilight session, will be the biggest challenge for any batsman. "I think, we do really have a strong attack but yes we will definitely miss Ishant, being the senior fast bowler," he said.

Ishant is recovering from a rib injury sustained during the IPL. Rahane, however, is confident that despite Ishant's absence, the pace attack comprising Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami will step it up for the Australians. — *PTI*

choice of the management I think," Gavaskar said.

Gavaskar said he pre-

ferred Pant over a more-accomplished keeper in Saha, as Australian pitches are not so demanding when it comes to keeping wickets.

Both Gavaskar and Border batted for Shubman Gill over Prithvi Shaw to open along side Mayank Agarwal in the series.

"...India is a little bit shaky at the top of the order. They don't know who they are going to go with. Mayank Agarwal is of course a certainty. But who's the other opener — Shubman Gill or Prithvi Shaw?" said Gavaskar.

"So with uncertainty at the top, they would like to strengthen their batting and so Pant will play. I am hoping he (Rishabh) plays at 6 because then that will allow you to pick 5 bowlers to try and get 20 Australian wickets." — *PTI*

Virat second best in Test rankings

Dubai, Dec. 15: India captain Virat Kohli on Tuesday jumped one place to second in the ICC Test ranking for batsmen, which also features Chesteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane at the seventh and 10th positions respectively.

Kohli is the leading Indian batsman in the chart with 886 rating points behind Australia's Steve Smith (911 points).

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson dropped a rung to the third spot. He is followed by young Australian batting sensation Marnus Labuschagne, Pakistan's Babar Azam and injured David Warner.

Pujara is seventh in the chart with 766 points, followed by Ben Stokes (760), Joe Root (738) and India Test vice-captain Rahane (726) to complete the top-10 list.

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah (779) and veteran off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (756) are the two Indians to find a place in the ICC Test rankings for bowlers at eighth and 10th spots respectively.

The list is being headed by Australia's Pat Cummins (904), followed by England's Stuart Broad and New Zealand's Neil Wagner.

Two other Indians — Ravindra Jadeja and Ashwin — also feature in the top-10 list for ICC Test rankings for all-rounders, which is being topped by Stokes.

While Jadeja is placed third in the chart with 397

● **Kohli is the leading Indian batsman in the chart with 886 rating points behind Australia's Steve Smith (911 points). Chesteshwar Pujara is seventh on the list with 766 points, followed by Ben Stokes (760), Joe Root (738) and India Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane (726) to complete the top-10 list.**

rating points behind West Indies' Jason Holder, Ashwin is at sixth with 281 points.

In the ICC Test rankings for teams, India are currently placed third after New Zealand jumped to the second spot following their recent 2-0 series win over the West Indies.

India have 114 rating points, two points behind New Zealand and table-toppers Australia, who both have 116 points but the Aussies are ahead on decimal points.

England are placed fourth ahead of Sri Lanka, South Africa, Pakistan, West Indies, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.

But India have a chance to move up the ranking ladder as they take on Australia in the four-match Test series, starting Thursday in Adelaide. — *PTI*



Members of the Valluvar Nagar Football Club pose with the trophy after defeating CFA in the final.

VN Nagar grab football trophy

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

Valluvar Nagar Football Club defeated Champions Football Academy (CFA, Yousufguda) to win the Inaugural Cup hosted by Hyderabad Football Association and coordinated by Sports Village, at the Eagles Arena in Tarnaka, Hyderabad.

Samuel scored the all-important goal for the winners in the championship match. He got able support from teammates Pavan, Samson, Mahaveer, Issac,

Yogesh, Aaron and Venu, much to the delight of coaches Emmanuel and Shiva Kumar.

Earlier in the semifinals, VN Nagar defeated Hyderabad Clusters 1-0 with Justin scoring the lone goal.

In the group stages, VN Nagar beat Abbas Union 1-0 via Yogesh's strike before blasting past Bewin FC 3-0 as Akash, Yogesh and Venu got on to the scoresheet.

Justin and Akash were adjudged Best Defenders, Likith grabbed the prize for the Best Goalkeeper.

Pranitha, Snehit are TT champions

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

G. Pranitha and SFR Snehit won the girls and boys championships respectively in the Youth category of the 7th Telangana State District & State Table Tennis Championship held at Anandnagar Welfare and sports Association in Khairatabad, Hyderabad.

Both Pranitha and Snehit came up with dominating performances to beat all their opponents and keep their slates clean in the Superleague to capture the trophies.

Pranitha, who is doing her B Tech final year from Keshav Memorial College, was all guns blazing. She first defeated Varuni Jaiswal of GSM 4-11, 18-16, 11-9, 11-8; then blocked Bhavitha (GSM) 11-9, 9-11, 11-2, 8-11, 11-7; rallied past Ragha Nivedita (MLR) 4-11, 11-7, 11-5, 11-7; hemmed in Hanifa Khatoon (VPG) 11-6, 11-8, 11-6 and silenced V. Saasya (AWA) 11-8, 11-7, 8-11, 11-6 to emerge champion.

Snehit, a final year student of St Joseph's Degree and PG College, Koti, was equally good on the table. He first beat B. Vatsin 11-8, 11-8, 11-2; made light work of Mohd Ali 11-9, 9-11, 11-6, 11-2; walloped B. Vrishin 11-8, 11-5, 11-6;



G. Pranitha (above) won the Youth Girls Superleague. SFR Snehit (right) poses with his trophy and certificate at the TSTTA championship at AWA in Hyderabad.



THE RESULTS

Youth Girls Superleague

■ G. Pranitha (HVS) bt Varuni Jaiswal (GSM) 4-11, 18-16, 11-9, 11-8; bt Bhavitha (GSM) 11-9, 9-11, 11-2, 8-11, 11-7; rallied past Ragha Nivedita (MLR) 4-11, 11-6, 11-8, 11-9; bt V. Saasya (AWA) 11-5, 11-8, 8-11, 11-9; vanquished Vinichitra Yadav (MLR) 4-11, 11-6, 11-7; and was victorious against B. Varun Shanker (MLR) 11-6, 11-3, 12-10 for the title.

Varuni Jaiswal (GSM), V. Laasya (AWA) and N. Bhavitha (GSM) finished second, third and fourth among girls while Mohammed Ali (LBS), B. Varun Shanker (MLR) and Sainath Reddy (MLR) took the second, third and fourth spots in the boys section.

Other results

■ G. Pranitha (HVS) bt Varuni Jaiswal (GSM) 6-11, 18-16, 11-9, 11-8; bt V. Saasya (AWA) 11-7, 11-3, 7-11, 11-5; bt Vinichitra Yadav (MLR) 11-9, 11-9, 5-11, 11-4; bt R. Niveditha (MLR) 6-11, 11-9, 11-8,

11-8; bt Hanifa Khatoon (VPG) 11-6, 11-7, 11-9; bt V. Laasya (AWA) 11-7, 11-6, 8-11, 11-7. ■ Varuni Jaiswal (GSM) bt V. Laasya (AWA) 7-11, 11-4, 11-4, 11-8, 3-1; bt V. Saasya (AWA) 9-11, 11-5, 11-6, 11-9; bt Hanifa Khatoon (VPG) 11-4, 7-11, 11-6, 13-11; bt N. Bhavitha (GSM) 11-5, 11-6; bt Vinichitra Yadav (MLR) 11-4, 9-11, 11-8, 14-16, 11-6. ■ V. Laasya (AWA) bt Hanifa Khatoon (VPG) 11-3, 11-3, 11-9; V. Laasya (AWA) bt N. Bhavitha (GSM) 8-11, 11-9, 11-5, 11-7; bt V. Saasya (AWA) 11-6, 11-8, 11-9; bt Vinichitra Yadav (MLR) 12-10, 11-3, 11-6; bt R. Niveditha (MLR) 7-11, 11-4, 11-9, 11-7.

■ N. Bhavitha (GSM) bt Vinichitra Yadav (MLR) 11-8, 11-8, 11-7; bt R. Niveditha (MLR) 5-11, 11-8, 11-9, 11-9; bt N. Bhavitha

(GSM) 7-11, 11-5, 11-9, 16-14. ■ R. Niveditha (MLR) bt Varuni Jaiswal (GSM) 8-11, 11-7, 11-6, 11-8; bt Hanifa Khatoon (VPG) 12-10, 11-2, 11-7; bt Vinichitra Yadav (MLR) 11-13, 13-14, 11-8; bt V. Saasya (AWA) 11-8, 7-11, 12-10, 11-9. ■ V. Saasya (AWA) bt Vinichitra (MLR) 12-10, 6-11, 11-7, 10-12, 11-7; bt Hanifa Khatoon (VPG) 11-9, 11-4, 11-4. ■ Vinichitra (MLR) bt Hanifa Khatoon (VPG) 8-11, 11-3, 11-6, 12-10.

Youth Boys Superleague

■ SFR Snehit (MLR) bt B. Vatsin 11-8, 11-8, 11-2; bt Mohammed Ali 11-9, 9-11, 11-6, 11-2; bt B. Vrishin 11-8, 11-5, 11-6; bt Saroj Siril (AWA) 11-4, 11-7, 11-8; bt Sainath Reddy (MLR) 11-9, 11-8, 11-8; bt Kesavan Kannan (MLR) 11-4, 11-6, 11-7; bt B. Varun Shanker (MLR) 11-6, 11-3, 12-10. ■ Mohammed Ali (LBS) bt B. Vrishin 11-5, 11-8, 12-10; bt Sainath Reddy (MLR) 11-7, 11-4, 12-10; bt B. Varun Shanker (MLR) 11-6, 4-11, 15-13, 11-8; bt B. Vatsin 11-2, 11-6, 11-6; bt Saroj Siril (AWA) 11-10, 6-11, 11-7; bt Kesavan Kannan (MLR) 11-1, 11-9, 4-11, 11-5.

■ B. Varun Shanker (MLR) bt Saroj Siril (AWA) 11-5, 11-7, 13-11; bt Kesavan Kannan (MLR) 11-9, 11-4, 7-11, 12-10; bt B.Vrishin 11-3, 9-11, 11-7, 11-7; bt Sainath Reddy (MLR) 11-5, 11-9, 11-5; bt B. Vatsin 11-8, 11-3, 11-8.

■ Sainath Reddy (MLR) bt Kesavan Kannan (MLR) 11-8, 11-7, 11-9; bt B.Vrishin 5-11, 14-12, 11-9, 11-8; bt B. Vatsin 11-4, 9-11, 11-9, 7-11, 11-6; bt Saroj Siril (AWA) 9-11, 13-11, 11-7, 4-11, 11-7. ■ Saroj Siril (AWA) bt B. Vatsin 11-5, 11-1, 11-9, 11-8; bt Kesavan Kannan (MLR) 12-10, 11-4, 11-7; bt B.Vrishin 11-4, 11-5, 11-4.

■ Kesavan Kannan (MLR) bt B. Vatsin 6-11, 7-11, 11-7, 11-6, 11-8; B.Vrishin 11-9, 11-9, 11-9. ■ B. Vatsin bt B. Vrishin 11-7, 11-9, 9-11, 11-5.

Vrashank, Kartavya emerge chess kings

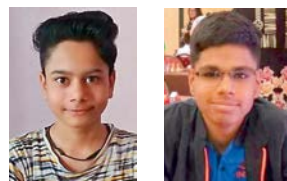
DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

Vrashank Chouhan and Kartavya Anadkat bagged the top honours at the 175th Brilliant Trophy chess tournament that was conducted online due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Vrashank of Vidya Bhavan Public School in Udaipur, Rajasthan, won the Juniors category by scoring 11.5 points out of 12 rounds. Nihal Swarna secured the second place with 10.5 points while Neev Dange was third aggregating 9.5 points.

In the Open category, Kartavya of Ahmedabad, Gujarat, won the event by scoring 10.5 points leaving Ayush Jain (10 points) in second place. Shreyas Sheshadri finished third with 9.5 points to his credit.



Vrashank

Kartavya

THE STANDINGS

■ **Open category:** 1. Kartavya Anadkat, 2. Ayush Jain, 3. Shreyas Seshadri Nalluri, 4. Mathiyazhagan, 5. Shaik Sumer Arsh, 6. VSN Murthy, 7. Ritobroto Sen, 8. D. Lakshmana Rao, 9. V. U. Diwakar, 10. Pavan Karthikeya Varma. ■ **U-15 boys:** 1. Pradyumn Avadhani, 2. Indraneel Reddy, 3. Swaralakshmi S. Nair, 2. Naannya. ■ **U-13 boys:** 1. Neev Dange, 2. Hemant. ■ **Girls:** 1. Hyma Kumari, 2. Shybi Binoj. ■ **U-11 boys:** 1. Nihal Swarna, 2. Y. V. Avinash Reddy, 3. Harshitha Agarwal, 4. Shriya Mahesh. ■ **U-9 boys:** 1. Shreyan Bag, 2. Vihaan Sai Krishna, 3. Girls: 1. L. Laasya, 2. Tummapudi Lasya. ■ **U-7 boys:** 1. Balanandran Ayyappan, 2. Havish Kovind, 3. Aadittri Abhishek, 2. M. Pranavi.

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