

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | THURSDAY | 10 DECEMBER 2020



NATION | 5
Popular Tamil television actress Chitra found dead



WORLD | 7
UK body issues allergy warning for Pfizer jab

SPORTS | 8
Ronaldo beats Messi in battle of big two



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WEATHER

Max: 30.1°C
Min: 13.8°C
RH: 39%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy.
Mist or haze likely.
Max/Min temp. 30/14 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES (+26,348)
DEATHS (+338)

97,62,250 1,41,735

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+721) (+3)

TS: 2,75,261 1,480

(+618) (+3)

AP: 8,73,457 7,045

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

6,89,23,274

DEATHS 15,69,873

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana

Tithi: Kartika Bahula Dasami till 12.48 pm

Star: Hasta till 10.48 am

Variyam: 6:07 pm to 7:35 pm

Durmuhurtam: 10:19 am to 11:03 am; 2:42 pm to 3:26 pm

Rahukalam: 1:30 pm to 3 pm

HUIJI CALENDAR

Rabbi-ul Akhir 24, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5:31 am

Zohar: 12:19 pm

Asar: 4:06 pm

Maghrib: 5:48 pm

Isha: 7:02 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6:36 AM

SUNSET TODAY 5:42 PM

MOONSET TODAY 2:12 PM

MOONRISE TOMORROW 1:53 AM

COUNTER POINT



Too much of rajneeti!

IN BRIEF

China, Pakistan start joint exercise

Islamabad: The air forces of Pakistan and China on Wednesday commenced a joint exercise designed to deepen practical cooperation and improve the actual-combat training level of the two sides. The joint air force exercise "Shaheen (Eagle)-IX" started on Wednesday at an operational air base of the Pakistan Air Force in Sindh.

Prize winning teacher positive

Mumbai: Ranjitsinh Disale, a school teacher from Maharashtra who won a global award having \$1 million prize money, on Wednesday tested positive for COVID-19, said a family member.

I-T raids Chettinad group, finds ₹7cr

New Delhi: The Income-Tax Department on Wednesday conducted raids at multiple locations of Chennai-based Chettinad group in connection with a tax evasion probe, officials said. The department on its official Twitter handle said the action was being undertaken against a "prominent business group of Chennai having varied business activities." "About 60 premises are being covered in TN, Karnataka, AP and Maharashtra," an official said.



Traffic comes to a halt and vehicles are stranded for long distances on the road leading to Maharashtra and Mancherial as a large number of adivasis staged a sit-in protest on the road at Asifabad on Wednesday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

Remove lambadas from ST: Adivasis

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, DEC. 9

Thousands of Adivasis took to the roads in erstwhile Adilabad district on Wednesday, following the bandh call given by the Adivasi Hakkula Porata Samithi, better known as the Tudum Debba on December 9, an important day for the Adivasis in the long fight for their rights. Because of Covid-19, the Adivasis confined their agitation this time to the Agency areas in the state. Adivasis demanded that the state and the Central

government, remove Lambadas from the ST list, restore GO 3 which gives 100 per cent job reservation to Tribal people in the Agency areas in the two Telugu states, and sought the rollback of the Layout Regularisation Scheme (LRS) in the agency areas. They also want the government to issue pattas to the podu lands cultivated by them for decades. Due to the sit-in protests staged by the Adivasis on the main roads in erstwhile Adilabad district, many vehicles on the Uttnoor,

Asifabad road, were stranded. Leaders and members of the Tudum Debba staged a sit-in protest at the entrance of the Adilabad RTC bus depot, because of which, RTC buses could not ply the roads till the afternoon. Shops and business establishments also downed their shutters till 11 am. Adivasis, in large numbers, participated in the Vanta Varpu programme held on the road at Gudihatnoor, leading to Uttnoor. There were protests at Indravelli,

Uttnoor, Asifabad, Jainoor, Asifabad, Nirmal, Mancherial and Komaram Bheem Asifabad districts. From Talamadugu and Tamsi mandals, Adivasis gathered at Sunkidi and staged a sit-in protest in Adilabad district. The first massive public meeting held by the Adivasis, was at the Saroornagar Stadium on December 9, in 2017. Later, in 2019, the Adivasis conducted a public meeting at the Ramleela Maidan in Delhi on the same day.

CJI'S MOTHER DUPED OF ₹2.5CR, ACCUSED HELD

Nagpur, Dec. 9: Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sharad Arvind Bobde's mother was allegedly duped to the tune of ₹2.5 crore by the caretaker of a family property here, the police said on Wednesday.

The accused, Tapas Ghosh (49), was arrested on Tuesday night. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) is looking into the matter under the supervision of DCP Vinita Sahu, said Nagpur commissioner of police (CP) Amitesh Kumar.

Mukta Bobde, CJI Bobde's mother, is the owner of Seadon Lawn near Akashwani Square which is rented out for marriages and other functions, he said. The Bobde family had appointed Ghosh as caretaker of the property in 2007.

He was paid salary and also a commission on bookings. Taking advantage of Mukta Bobde's advanced age and frail health, Ghosh and his wife allegedly kept her in the dark about transactions, and did not deposit the entire rent amount which they collected, the CP said.

— PTI

DCGI denies EUA to Biotech, Serum vaccine

KANIZA GARARI with agency inputs
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

In a setback to two major pharma companies in the race for the vaccine for Coronavirus, the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) has not granted the Emergency Use Authorisation permission (EUA) to city-based Bharat Biotech and the Serum Institute of India (SII) for their respective vaccines, Covaxin and Covisheild.

The data submitted by both companies was found to be "insufficient" by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) of the DCGI in terms of data on the trials of Indian patients, according to

● **THE DATA** submitted by both companies was found to be "insufficient" by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)

sources. The panel sought additional data on the safety and efficacy of their proposed shots.

Due to lack of data on Indian patients, the CDSCO subject expert committee, which met on Wednesday, found that the "data submitted of phase I and phase 2 trials was not sufficient".

The DCGI said that Covid-19 vaccine candidates should have "at least 50 per cent efficacy in phase III clinical trials" for it to be widely

deployed. The DCGI rules of 2019 state that there must be at least 3,000 patients on whom the vaccine has to be tested before approval.

Dr Kiran M, senior anaesthesiologist, Government Hospital, Nizamabad, said, "Phase III trials are still not complete. They are currently ongoing. Without data of these trials, the EUA cannot be given. There is no concept of EUA in India. This is for the first time vaccines are being taken up under this given the emergency of the pandemic. For this reason, scientists and drug controllers are very cautious."

■ **Page 4: Data submitted by firms found inadequate**

Self-employment scheme gets Cabinet nod

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved an employment generation scheme Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana at an expenditure of ₹1,584 crores for the current

financial year and ₹22,810 crores for the entire scheme period i.e. 2020-2023. The Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana scheme, which aims to create more formal jobs, to benefit around 58.5 lakh employees, said Union minister Santosh Kumar

Gangwar while briefing media after Cabinet meeting. The registration for the scheme will be effective from October 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, the labour minister said, adding that the ministry will soon notify rules for the scheme. Though the gov-

TRS MLA abuses Dalit journalist

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

The Patancheru police of Sangareddy district on Wednesday booked a case against the ruling TRS legislator G. Mahipal Reddy for allegedly threatening and abusing a journalist.

Patancheru police said that MLA Reddy was booked under section 504 (intentional insult, with intent to provoke, breach of peace) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the IPC.

■ **Page 3: MLA threatens to will cut journo into pieces**

KCR greets Modi on Central Vista

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

It is too premature a signal to view as a thaw in the mood of uncompromising political confrontation between the BJP and the TRS, but merely a welcome break, Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on

Wednesday conveyed his greetings to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the eve of the occasion of his laying the foundation for the Central Vista project in the national capital.

■ **Page 3: Central Vista was long overdue, says KCR**

RUSSIA: INDIA IN ANTI-CHINA GAME PLAYED BY WEST

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

The West, led by the United States, is trying to engage India in "anti-China games" through its Indo-Pacific strategies and is also trying to undermine Russia's close and privileged ties with India, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov has said, in unprecedented remarks that have highlighted both Moscow's proximity with Beijing and a growing unease over the India-US strategic partnership.

Addressing the Russian International Affairs Council, Mr Lavrov said: "It (the West) is trying to restore the unipolar model of world order. 'Poles' like Russia and China are unlikely to be subordinate to it. However, India is currently an object of the Western countries' persistent, aggressive and devious policy as they are trying to engage it in anti-China games by promoting Indo-Pacific strategies, the so-called 'Quad'."

■ **Page 7: Russia unhappy with close Indo-US ties**



LAND | LOCATION

First of its kind survey in 100 years in AP to be accurate with a minimum error rate of 2 cm

AP, Survey of India join forces for unique land survey

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 9

The State government on Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Survey of India for the implementation of 'YSR Jaganna Sawsatha Bhoomi Hakku-Bhoomi Rakshana', scheduled for launch on December 21.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said that they would be conducting a

comprehensive survey which will be written in golden letters as a survey of such a magnitude is being conducted after almost 100 years. He said that the two partners are putting together 70 base stations to take up this survey, which will be added to their network in future. The Chief Minister said that all the measurements will be accurate with a minimum error rate of 2 cm. State-of-the-art facilities are being used with the

latest CARS technology, drones and rovers.

He instructed officials to take up awareness campaigns about the initiative and directed district collectors to be responsible for the survey project. He said "As many as 14,000 surveyors have been appointed by the State government and 9,400 surveyors are being given training by Survey of India. Training for the remaining lot will be completed by January 26."

"The three-phase survey

will be conducted in 1.26 lakh sq km across villages, hamlets, towns, and cities except for forest lands. Around 5,000 villages will be covered in the first phase, 6,500 villages in the second and 5,500 villages in the third phase. The government will set up mobile tribunals to solve land disputes on the spot."

Jagan Mohan Reddy stated "The survey is overdue. Sub-divisions and distributions were not registered at the field level in the last 100

years. A land titling card consisting of a unique identification number, measurements of the property, name of the owner along with photo, and the total area would be given after the survey. Digitized cadastral maps would also be prepared and they will feature details of the lands in the village. Survey stones would be installed once the marking of land is completed. Digitized property register and title register and a register for com-

plaints would be made available at Village Secretariats."

The Chief Minister explained "be it a house site or agricultural land or any real estate layout, after giving a title on it, it will be put for display in the same village Secretariat under observation for two years to see if there were any objections.

A permanent land title will be provided after two years upon finalisation. In case of objections, the gov-

ernment will take responsibility and compensate accordingly."

Lieutenant General Girish Kumar, Surveyor General of India, said that he was honored to be part of this initiative, which stands as a role model for other states. He said that records of the surveyed lands will be ready within five minutes. He stated that a comprehensive survey is a visionary programme that uses the latest technology in the world.



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SHORT TAKES

CENTRAL VISTA WAS LONG OVERDUE: KCR

From Page 1

In a letter to Prime Minister Modi, which was shared on social media and to the media, Chandrashekar Rao said, "I join you with a sense of pride on the occasion of laying the foundation stone for the grand project of Central Vista."

Stating that the Central Vista project is "long overdue", Chief Minister Rao said "the existing government infrastructure in the national capital is inadequate and associated with our colonial past." The Ministry of External Affairs facilitated this discussion as Bharat Biotech has applied for emergency use in India. The delegates discussed with the team of scientists and researchers from the pharma giant about the safety trials of phase 1 and phase 2.

Dr Krishna Ella, chairman and managing director of Bharat Biotech, presented the update on the vaccine with its evaluation on approximately 1,000 subjects. The phase III human clinical trials, which began last month, were conducted on 26,000 volunteers from across the country.

It is a randomized trial where one group of volunteers will be given the vaccine and others are on placebo trial. The volunteers and their treating doctors are not aware of the exact status and it is known only to the independent investigator of the company.

According to sources in the pharmaceutical industry the vaccine evaluation by other countries is to look at ways and means in which they too can procure doses for their country. The Union Government is looking at the vaccination in Telangana and Rajasthan first.

Suchitra Ella, joint managing director of Bharat Biotech, says, "Covaxin has garnered interest from several countries for supplies and introduction. Countries looking for an Indian vaccine to fight the pandemic is a morale-booster for us."

● **THE PHASE III human clinical trials, which began last month, were conducted on 26,000 volunteers from across the country.**

MLA THREATENS TO CUT JOURNO INTO PIECES

From Page 1

Cops booked the ruling TRS legislator G. Mahipal Reddy under the provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act also.

The Dalit journalist working in a local newspaper filed a complaint with the Sangareddy police, accusing MLA Mahipal Reddy of abusing and threatening him over phone on Tuesday, following a news report filed by him, in which exposed how the legislator's followers were involved in grabbing land in Ameenpur area.

In the purported audio file going viral on social media but is unverified, the MLA is heard saying, "what happened Santosh? Who do you think you are? Come to my house now. If I come to your house, I will cut your hands and legs. Record this call, are you even a man? I will mince you to pieces. Call and report to the cops, even the commissioner or DGP I am not afraid of anyone. Come here or I will come there. **** (abusing his mother). How dare you mention my name in your report? Do you even know my level? You press guys will write anything."

"Anna, will you threaten me if I write facts against the land grab of your followers and TRS partymen," the Dalit journalist is heard pleading.

Based on the complaint, the cases were registered. The case is under investigation, a senior police official said. None of the TRS senior leaders have condemned their party leader and MLA for threatening a journalist or a Dalit.

INTER DROPOUT POSES AS DOCTOR ARRESTED

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

A 35-year-old intermediate dropout who was running a clinic posing as a doctor since 2013 was nabbed by the Rachakonda police on Wednesday.

Police said that he used his experience of working at hospitals as an advantage to prescribe drugs and started a clinic near the Meerpet Crossroads. The accused, Polkampally Sai Kumar, was caught following a raid conducted at Sai Clinic by the police on Wednesday evening. "He is using fake MBBS and MD degrees and colluded with one SK Ahmed to run the clinic," police said. "By charging ₹150 per person as a consultancy fee, he has successfully run the place since 2013."

He had previously worked as an operation theatre assistant from 2006 to 2012 and used that knowledge to diagnose basic ailments. We seized a stethoscope, one blood pressure checking machine, nine prescription books, a rubber stamp and some medicines from his possession," said the police.

Envoys study ways to get vaccine for their countries

Bharat Biotech presents vaccine update even as Centre denies authorisation

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

The safety and efficacy of Covid-19 vaccine, Covaxin, that has been developed by Bharat Biotech was evaluated by a delegation of 70 Ambassadors and High Commissioners at Genome Valley on Wednesday.

The Ministry of External Affairs facilitated this discussion as Bharat Biotech has applied for emergency use in India. The delegates discussed with the team of scientists and researchers from the pharma giant about the safety trials of phase 1 and phase 2.

Dr Krishna Ella, chairman and managing director of Bharat Biotech, presented the update on the vaccine with its evaluation on approximately 1,000 subjects. The phase III human clinical trials, which began last month, were conducted on 26,000 volunteers from across the country.

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● **THE PHASE III human clinical trials, which began last month, were conducted on 26,000 volunteers from across the country.**

Experts worried as people ignore Covid-19 protocol

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

The city is back to normal or so it seems if one were to go by the way people are moving around giving a damn to Covid-19 protocol. The people are assuming that coronavirus no longer exists. This has become more pronounced in the last two months.

Celebrations of festivals, GHMC election campaign, wedding ceremonies and Tuesday's Bharat Bandh bear testimony to the manner people are making a mockery of corona guidelines. A majority of people are without face masks and social distancing has been thrown out of the window. Medical practitioners insist that wearing masks and social distancing

are paramount. This is even as experts from ICMR and IMA are warning of a second wave if people ignore preventive measures. Psychologists opine that people are vexed with staying indoors and news of the vaccine has boosted their confidence levels.

Sajida Khatoun, an assistant lecturer, said, "At the weddings that I attended, people were without masks. Guests moved around in close proximity. This is prevalent even in family and festival gatherings. The government can only direct us. Everything else depends on how responsible we are. Norms were also neglected during the recent political rallies and dharnas."

Dr Daljeet Kaur, consultant psychiatrist at

Virinchi Hospitals, said "People are frustrated staying indoors. They have started believing that the threat is almost over as there is a remarkable improvement in the recovery rate. But precautions cannot be neglected, particularly in gatherings and when on the streets."

IMA State Secretary, Dr B Narender Reddy told *Deccan Chronicle* "contrary to perceptions, positive cases are growing but the actual number of cases remains unknown as many patients are going to private labs, while some are preferring self-medication at home taking the prescription from recovered patients. People should note that the vaccine is still not in our reach and its always better to avoid infections."

Staying indoors may spread Covid-19, caution experts

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

As the days get colder in the city with the minimum temperatures reaching 13-15 degrees Celsius, the fear of contracting coronavirus is rife. However, this can be managed with due precautions, say scientists from the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB). The sensation of feeling cold happens because the air has cooled down, which they say is ideal for the virus to travel.

"Whenever the temperature is cold, the air gets heavier and the droplets which contain the virus hang in the air, for a longer duration," Rakesh Mishra, director, CCMB,

told *Deccan Chronicle*.

However, he adds, that this is just a scientific explanation of the virus' characteristics. "Practically speaking, when people are outdoors, the temperature might not matter much. It is not because of the temperature in the winter season, rather what people tend to do during the cold climate," he said.

One thing that people do in winters is to stay indoors. So, when there is indoor crowding, the chances of infection are higher, he said.

"If there is cross-ventilation or the windows are kept open then the chances of catching the virus is difficult. But because of the cold winds, the windows are kept

shut, meaning there is no cross-ventilation and all the people inside are breathing the same air. In such situations, there will be a good chance of catching an infection. The only way to avoid it is to wear a mask indoors," said Mishra.

As of Wednesday morning, the coldest places in the city were BHEL, Rajendranagar and Macha Bolaram. The minimum temperatures recorded in these places were 11.8, 12.8, and 12.9 degrees Celsius, respectively. In the state, the coldest places were Ginnedari, Arli, Sirpur, and Bela. They recorded minimum temperatures of 7.1, 8.9, 9, and 9.1 degrees Celsius, respectively.

COVID-19 CASES GRADUALLY RISING IN HYD

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

Corona positive cases are rising in Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) limits because people are crowding public places and at social gatherings.

GHMC limits recorded 123 new cases on Tuesday, 119 cases on Monday, 102 each on December 5 and 6, 109 (Dec 4), 114 (Dec 3). Medical experts said that one should not take these fluctuating figures lightly, particularly because nights are increasingly colder. With the mask protocol not being followed properly, there is fear that the spread will be faster, they warned.

Senior consultant Dr Prabhu C. states "People think that they can be isolated and the virus is mild. But post-Covid 19 symptoms are also leading to lots of fatigue and health complications. Even young patients are suffering lung problems. Hence people must not give up the protocol and care has to be taken."

Movement of people within the city, state and country has seen a rise and there is a fear that this will further spread the infection.

Telangana recorded 721 new cases taking the overall total to 2,75,261 and three deaths increasing the toll to 1,480.

Meanwhile, active cases are down to 7,661 as the recovery rate and discharges have been high. With 753 recoveries on Tuesday, the total number of recovered patients is at 2,75,261 cases. Warangal Urban recorded 47 new cases, Karimnagar 37 and Khammam.

● **MOVEMENT of people within the city, state and country has seen a rise in Coronavirus and there is a fear that this will further spread the infection.**

MAN'S BODY FOUND WITH STAB INJURIES

Hyderabad: The body of an unidentified man with stab injuries was found in a secluded place at Kishannagar in Shadnagar on the city outskirts on Wednesday afternoon.

According to the police, the person, aged around 40 years, s suspected to have been killed during a brawl.

WOMAN RAMS CAR INTO SHOP, INJURES FIVE

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

A car crashed into a sweet shop causing burn injuries to five workers when hot oil with which they were preparing sweets, spilled on them, near Shamsabad late on Tuesday night.

According to the police, Anjum Zia Uddin, 35, a teacher at a private school, rammed her car into the sweet shop in Shamsabad. "She panicked and accelerated the car instead of applying brakes, leading to the mishap and injuring five men."

One of them sustained 60 per cent bodyburns and others had minor burn injuries," said the police inspector of RGIA, P. Vijay Kumar, adding that they were rushed to a nearby hospital for medical attention.

A case was booked against the woman under section 337 (negligent driving) of the IPC and started a probe.



A funeral procession taken out in Hanamkonda on Wednesday.

Funeral procession for 'corruption' held

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC WARANGAL, DEC. 9

On the occasion of the International Day against Corruption, a programme was organised, in Warangal on Wednesday.

A funeral procession for 'corruption' was taken out by the non-governmental organisation Jwala and Lok Satta Udyama Samstha. The group shouted slogans such as, 'corruption must be eradicated and youth must fight against corruption.'

The procession began at the 1000 Pillars Temple with drum beats and went through Hanamkonda Chowrasta, Congress Bhavan, Ashoka Junction and Ambedkar junction. NCC cadets, students of various colleges and the local youth enthusiastically participated in the march and chanted slogans against corruption.

State advisor of the Lok Satta Udyama samstha, Professor Parcha Kodandarama Rao said it is the responsibility of the youth to oppose corruption which has become cancer to the society.

He called on the youth to cultivate a questioning

ethos and fight graft. He demanded the permanent dismissal of employees who sought bribes despite receiving salaries, retirement pensions and other benefits with public taxes.

Former Vice-Chancellor of the Kakatiya University Professor Lingamurthy said, "It is only through a vibrant society that corruption can be eradicated."

Sunkari Prashanth, founding president of NGO Jwala, said that they are offering over ₹20,000 cash prizes to those who help identify and bring to the attention of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) officials those who are corrupt.

He demanded that the salary details of the government officials be displayed in front of the government offices. Mr Prashanth said that the NGO is running several programmes to create awareness among the people against corruption.

Jwala representatives Keeta Rajkumar, Vanke Narsingh Rao, Burra Krishnamurthy, Chandramouli Goud, Prakash, Surrender, LB college NCC cadets and students were present among others.

Cops bust gang of robbers, 4 held

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, DEC. 9

The Hanamkonda police on Wednesday arrested four robbers, including two juveniles, and recovered gold jewellery worth ₹1.50 lakh, a smartphone and an autorickshaw.

The accused have been identified as Shaganti alias Chaganti Vamshi of Shambhunipet and Sheikh Asif alias Ajju of Kareembad in Warangal.

The other gang member who is at large is Kampeyali Mani of Shambhunipet.

Disclosing details of the arrest, Central Zone in-charge DCP Pushpa said that the gang had robbed Gunda Odelu of Kukatpally in Hyderabad when the latter had hired the autorickshaw from the

Warangal bus station to Pochamma Maidan.

They took Odelu to a secluded location near Narsampet road where they robbed him of a gold chain, cell phone after beating him up. Following a complaint from Odelu, the police arrested the two minors who were involved in the crime on December 3.

Based on the information given by the minor boys, the police arrested Shaganti and Sheikh Asif at Hanamkonda Chowrasta. However, Kampeyali Mani, on seeing the police escaped.

DCP Pushpa appreciated Hanamkonda ACP Jithender Reddy, inspector Chandrasekhar and sub-inspectors Ravinder and Raghupathi for apprehending the accused.

Plight of pensioners



Pensioners are made to wait outside and forced to break Covid-19 rules at the Bank of India, Malkajgiri on Wednesday for their monthly pension. "This is how we are made to suffer," said G. Malathi — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

HC ADJOURNS PLEA AGAINST LRS TO 5 WEEKS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

The Telangana High Court on Wednesday adjourned the batch of petitions challenging the Layout Regulation Scheme (LRS) introduced by the Telangana state government to five weeks.

Advocate-General B.S. Prasad sought more time to file the counters on behalf of the government which the court considered it and adjourned the cases. In all, five PILs were filed against the LRS. In the earlier hearings, the court had directed government to file its explanation on the issues raised in the pleas. The government has not filed the counters in some pleas and on Wednesday sought more time.

BRIGHT | FUTURE 222 offers from 63 companies

IIT-H students get record placements

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad (IIT-H), witnessed an increase in pre-placement offers it has received for academic year 2020-21 compared to last year.

IIT-H got 48 offers this year compared 37 during the last year.

In all, the institute received total 222 offers from 63 companies, including 30 from eight international organisations based in Japan and Taiwan during Phase I of campus placements held

● **ABOUT 500 students of various departments and 116 companies have registered with IIT-H for placements this year.**

between December 1 and 6. The job interviews with IIT-H students had been held online.

About 500 students of various departments and 116 companies have registered with IIT-H for placements this year: 206 students have already received offers at the end of Phase I placements, amounting to more than 75 percent offers for circuit branches. Most of them are from IT/ITES sector, with few from

core sectors as well.

Phase II placements will begin in January 2021, when more international offers are expected, institute authorities stated.

Speaking about Phase I campus placements, Dr Pradeep Yemula, faculty in-charge (Placements), IIT Hyderabad, disclosed, "We had anticipated a slowdown in placements due to the pandemic. Accordingly, we had asked our student teams to strengthen themselves and adapt to the changing scenario. However, we are glad to see that the placement season at IIT-H has started on a positive note."

SITUATION VACANT

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SHORT TAKES

Today last day to apply for Haj online

Hyderabad: Thursday is the last day to access the Haj Online Application, said Mohammed Masiullah Khan, chairman, Telangana State Haj Committee. He asked those who have not yet applied to file their applications through Haj Committee of India website www.haj-committee.gov.in. Masiullah Khan also requested intending Haj pilgrims to bring necessary documents, such as passports, bank proof, address proof, and passport-size photos with white background, apart from debit or credit card to pay the online processing fee. Pilgrims must have a machine-readable passport with expiry date of maximum January 10, 2022 to apply online for Haj - 2021.

30-yr-old techie dies by suicide

Hyderabad: A software engineer ended his life by suicide by consuming poisonous substances at his house in SR Nagar on Tuesday night. Police said K. Poornachandra Reddy, 30, was employed with a software company and was residing at Yellaredyguda. "On Tuesday evening, he allegedly consumed some poisonous substance and on coming to know about it, his relatives shifted him to a private hospital at Somajiguda where he died in the night. Reddy's family members told us he was having some personal problems and slipped into depression. He might have ended his life over it," said the police.

FORMER SARPANCH HELD FOR FRAUD

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

The former sarpanch of Pedda Shapur area was arrested by the Shamshabad police on charges of cheating and forgery on Wednesday. According to the police, S. Isra Naik has allegedly used official rubber stamps on permission letters and issued building permissions on the names of his family members and others.

He also cheated the poor and homeless in the gram panchayat by selling them such land, police said. "The suspect, S. Isra Naik, a resident of Pedda Shapur thanda and village had ended his term as a sarpanch in 2011, but he allegedly cheated people claiming he was still in the post. He along with his associates, identified as J. Raji Reddy and others had grabbed land in the village.

MEDICOVER HELPS RISKY NF PATIENT RECOVER

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

Doctors at Medicovert Hospitals have succeeded in helping a patient recover from Necrotising Fasciitis (NF), a rare disease that occurs only in 0.8 of 1 lakh patients in India. The disease is an outcome of bacteria entering the body of uncontrolled diabetes patients, which destroys the skin and subcutaneous tissues, threatening the life of such persons.

The 54-year-old male patient was brought in by his family with blisters and wounds on legs, which rendered him unable to walk. Medicovert doctors said the patient required strong antibiotic treatment and plastic surgery for the damaged skin. The patient is recovering and out of danger. But the person will require regular follow-up, as he is immune compromised.

Birthday gift



Congress MP N. Uttam Kumar Reddy along with Ponnala Lakshmaiah and Hanumanth Rao distributes saris on Sonia Gandhi's birthday in Gandhi Bhavan on Wednesday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Congress: Sack Malla Reddy from Cabinet

Party also demand action against MLA Mahipal

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

AICC Spokesperson Dr Sravan Dasoju on Wednesday demanded the dismissal of Labour minister C. Malla Reddy for being involved in alleged land grabbing activities in Hyderabad.

He said that the minister, along with his son, allegedly threatened a person whose land was willfully grabbed and fenced by force.

Sravan said, "It is reported in the media about the Minister's alleged land grabbing issue and an FIR has been filed against him. So, we demand the Chief Minister to immediately dismiss Malla Reddy from the Council of Ministers".

He said that based on a complaint by the victim that the Minister had grabbed 20 guntas of land, out of 2.5 acres, at his colleges located in Suraram, police registered a case against the minister and his son.

He said "on the basis of a complaint registered against the Minister in a police station, he must immediately be thrown out of the Cabinet and punished rigorously".

He further demanded stringent action against all land grabbers who are in the Cabinet and also against MLAs who have been threatening innocent citizens

in the state.

Sravan said "Patanchervu TRS MLA Manipal Reddy also allegedly abused and threatened a journalist for writing an article on his land grabbing activities. So, he must be punished under the court of law." He suggested that to prevent illegal land grabbing by public representatives, they should be brought under the purview of Lok-Ayukta.

KCR TO ADDRESS PUBLIC MEETING IN SIDDIPET TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao will be going on a day tour of Siddipet on Friday.

Rao will reach Siddipet town at 11 am from Begumpet Airport and will participate in various development programmes including the inauguration of one of the largest double bedroom colonies in the state, which consists of around 2,460 units.

The Chief Minister will lay the foundation stone for IT park in Duddeda village of the district and inaugurate the Government Medical College, Rythu Vedika and Telangana Bhavan (party office) apart from lunaching other schemes.

Rao will end his tour with a public meeting at 3 pm in at the Government Degree College grounds in Siddipet.

● **THE CHIEF MINISTER** will lay the foundation stone for IT park in Duddeda village of the district and inaugurate the Government Medical College, Rythu Vedika and Telangana Bhavan (party office) apart from lunaching other schemes.

AICC begins exercise to select state party chief

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

AICC in-charge for Telangana Congress affairs Manickam Tagore on Wednesday said that the new Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president will be selected after eliciting opinions of senior leaders, MLAs, MPs and former TPCC presidents.

Addressing the TPCC core committee meeting, he said that he will take opinions of around 100 to 150 leaders and submit a report to the party high com-

mand and then the AICC will appoint the new chief. He said that N Uttam Kumar Reddy will continue as the TPCC chief till his successor is appointed.

Stating that Uttam Kumar Reddy has effectively carried out his functions, he pointed out that Reddy has never lost his temper during his tenure and thanked him on behalf of AICC. Comparing the Congress with the Indian cricket team, he said though the Indian team loses one or two matches initially, it always wins in the

finals. Core Committee members including Uttam Kumar Reddy, A. Revanth Reddy, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, T. Jeevan Reddy, Damodar Raja Narasimha, Vamshichand Reddy, Madhu Yashki, Sampath Kumar, Ponnala Lakshmaiah and V. Hanumanth Rao participated in the meeting. After the core committee meeting, Tagore held one-on-one meetings with some leaders to ascertain their views on the new chief.

Fight for stipend



BJP Yuva Morcha activists protest in front of the Directorate of Medical Education, Koti, in Hyderabad on Wednesday, demanding stipend for PG medical students. — S. SURENDER REDDY

FRAUD | ALERT Mutawallis of graveyards told not to collect money for burial

Wakf Board warns dargah on xenia

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

Telangana State Wakf Board on Wednesday warned all dargah contractors against compelling devotees to offer a minimum fixed *xenia* (fund for rituals).

The warning was issued by Wakf Board chairman Mohammed Saleem at a press conference after the organisation received complaints pertaining to several dargahs where contractors are forcing devotees to donate more funds into *xenia hundis*

than what they can afford. Those who cannot devote the contractor-stipulated funds are not being allowed to perform the customary rituals.

The board chairman maintained that none can force a devotee to offer *xenia*. It is up to devotees whether they want to offer anything. A devotee can also make an offering in accordance with his or her financial position. Mohammed Saleem said the board is holding a meeting with contractors of various dargahs in this regard. He warned that if

● **THE BOARD** chief asked mutawallis and managing committees of graveyards to also not collect amounts for burial. They must also not insist on specific jurisdiction.

any such complaints are received in future, *xenia* contracts of those dargahs will be cancelled after a due inquiry. The board chief asked mutawallis and managing committees of graveyards to also not collect amounts for burial. They must also

not insist on specific jurisdiction. The body of a Muslim must be allowed to be buried at any graveyard without insisting on knowing the residential area of the deceased.

Mohammed Saleem said the board has held a meeting wherein it decided to construct lavatories and bathrooms in different dargahs. The meeting dealt with 77 items on the agenda of which 23 pertained to formation of committees and six to appointments of mutawallis. Board has accorded

permission for construction and development of masjids and graveyards.

The board chairman announced that director of Minorities Welfare has approved the wakf board's proposal to renovate the Shahi Masjid at an estimated cost of ₹77 lakh. He clarified that though a masjid comes under direct management of Minorities Welfare Department, the board has decided to improve facilities at various masjids. He hoped all such works will be completed before Ramzan.

Local body representatives decry non-payment of salaries

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

Members of Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituencies (ZPTC), Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies (MPTC) Mandal Praja Parishad presidents (MPP) and sarpanches of Gram Panchayats (GPs) are waiting in vain for their monthly honorarium for the past six months. There are 534 ZPTCs, 5816 MPTCs and 534 MPPs and 12, 771 village sarpanches in the state.

The state government fixed ₹10,000 for ZPTCs and MPPs and ₹5,000 for MPTCs and sarpanches as monthly hono-

● **THEY ALLEGED** that though the TRS government has fixed a good amount, the payment has been tardy.

riary. The elected representatives of local bodies alleged that though the TRS government has fixed a good amount, the payment has been tardy.

They said that MPTCs, ZPTCs and MPPs do not have any income-generating sources to take up development activities in their respective jurisdictions. The GPs get 85 per cent share in the funds from the 15th Finance Commission and ZPTCs and MPPs get 10 per

cent while it is only five per cent for MPTCs.

The aggrieved representatives said that the funds should be invested on development activities and they invariably depend on the state government for their expenses to tour their respective jurisdictions.

They pointed out that though the state government has included their honorarium in the state Budget they never got them on a regular basis. They said the government had assured to allocate funds to them from the state financial corporation but it has not made any allocation till date.

MIM MLA holds meeting with corporators, officials

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

Nampally MLA Jafar Hussain Meraj has held a meeting with officials of departments dealing with public utilities and newly elected corporators for getting updates of ongoing works in his constituency.

During the meeting, corporators asked officials of GHMC, Transco and HMWS&SB to complete all pending works without waiting for formation of the new council. The MLA told officials that public should not suffer from lack of services

provided by departments due to delay in constitution of the new council.

Jafar Hussain advised officials to visit various areas in the constituency along with present and incoming corporators and resolve the issues confronting general public.

Those present in the meeting included former mayor and corporator Majid Hussain, representatives of female MIM corporators, GHMC deputy commissioner Khaja Inkshaf Ali, assistant Medical and Health officer Aijaz Qasmi, Transco engineer K. Srinivas and others.

HC TO TS: FIX ₹13K AS MINIMUM PAY SCALE FOR SWEEPERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

Justice Abhinand Kumar Shavili of Telangana High Court on Wednesday ordered the state government to pay the minimum time pay-scale wages i.e. ₹13,000 to sweepers working in government schools under panchayat raj wing.

Most of the sweepers have been working for years and their services were not regularised. They were being paid around ₹4,000 only. About 40 such sweepers had moved the High Court for seeking regularisation of their services.

Data submitted by firms inadequate

From Page 1

According to sources aware of the proceedings, "the data submitted by a company to CDSCO in order to get a EUA pertained to data of overseas patients by a company for phase III human clinical trials". In case of another company, recruitment of all 26,000 volunteers is still not complete, sources said. Given these lapses it will take time for the EUA to be given to these companies.

Experts argue that vaccine development takes time and evaluation of data requires time.

Dr Sanjay Reddy, senior pharmacist, said, "The data generation will be based on the dosage regime, time after doses and adverse effects, if any. These phases have to be completed. Till it is completed, it will not be known where this vaccine can be administered to people safely."

Experts believe that the waiting period for EUA will take at least another month, if not ore. There are three committees which have to

evaluate the request from these two companies, including the vaccine subject expert committee, the technical panel and the apex committee. The first committee, SEC, has asked for more data from the companies, which means that the wait for the vaccine from these two firms reaching people has gotten much longer.

The application by the Indian arm of US pharmaceutical firm Pfizer was not taken up for deliberation on Wednesday as the company sought more time for making a presentation before the committee, they said.

The recommendations by the SEC have been approved by the DCGI," an official source was quoted by PTI to have said.

Bharat Biotech applied to DCGI for EUA on December 7 for Covaxin, developed indigenously by the firm in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research, while Pune-based Serum Institute sought a nod for its Oxford vaccine, on December 6.

AI's non-stop Hyd-Chicago flight from Jan. 15

Hyderabad, Dec. 9: National carrier Air India would fly non-stop from here to Chicago, USA, starting from January 15, the Hyderabad International Airport announced on Wednesday.

Prior to the suspension of international operations in late March due to the coronavirus pandemic, the disinvestment-bound AI was operating to Chicago from the city airport via Delhi.

Air India would be starting the flight between Hyderabad and Chicago effective January 15, 2021, GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd said in a press release.

The airline would deploy its 238-seater Boeing 777-200 aircraft with eight seats in first class, 35 in business and the remaining 195 in the economy class, the release

said.

The Telugu diaspora from the TS and AP regions is one of the fastest growing community in the US and a direct connectivity to the US from Hyderabad was long due, it said.

"The launch of this route brings two destinations closer for all our passengers who have been waiting eagerly for a direct flight from Hyderabad to the USA. We are constantly working on linking more cities domestic and international with focus on high standards of safety to serve our passengers," said CEO, GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd., Pradeep Panicker.

Hyderabad is second home to many US-based firms and as much as 70 per cent of the total IT exports to the United States is from Hyderabad, said the release. — PTI

TWO BURGLAR HELD, ORNAMENTS, CASH RECOVERED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

The Mangalhat police nabbed two men for house burglary and seized stolen property worth ₹3.35 lakh from their possession on Wednesday.

The accused were identified

as Manohar Kumavath, 23 and Vijaya Kumar, 23, said the police, adding that four tolas of gold ornaments, a gold ring weighing 2.5 grams and net cash of ₹1.20 lakh was recovered from the men.

The arrests were made following a complaint from

Suresh Bhati, a businessman, on December 5, wherein he stated that he came home on the night of December 4 to find his house ransacked and broken locks with valuables missing from the locker. The police teams analysed the CC cameras in the area.

SHORT TAKES

TAMIL TELEVISION ACTRESS CHITRA COMMITS SUICIDE

Chennai, Dec. 9: Popular Tamil television actress Chitra was found dead at a hotel room here early on Wednesday and she is suspected to have died by suicide, police said.

The 29-year old actress, well known among television audience in Tamil Nadu was seen hanging from a fan at the hotel room — using her saree like a rope — in suburban Nazarethpet when they reached the spot, police said.

When examined, she was already dead, an official said adding her fiancé, who was with her before her death was being questioned.

After a shoot at a nearby location, K. Chitra arrived at the hotel on the Bengaluru bypass and had told the man that she would be back after a bath and requested him to wait outside, police said quoting him. “He says he knocked on the door since she did not come out for long. He says, he then informed the hotel personnel and police was informed at 3.30 am. He is being questioned. A probe is on,” the official said.

The 32-year old man was recently engaged to her and he was staying with her in the hotel room. Chitra became more popular among lovers of soap opera after she donned the role of ‘Mullai,’ in the ongoing television serial ‘*Pandian Stores*.’

The body has been sent to Kilpauk Government Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

THREE AL-BADR MILITANTS KILLED IN ENCOUNTER

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, DEC. 9

A gunfight that broke out in a remote village of Jammu and Kashmir’s southern Pulwama district overnight ended around noon on Wednesday after the security forces gunned down all the three militants who had been holed up in a private house. The house owner was injured in the clash, the officials said.

The Army and J&K police said that the slain men — all locals — belonged to Al-Badr, a pro-Pakistan militant outfit.

Inspector General of Police (Kashmir range), Vijay Kumar, said that the civilian who was caught in crossfire was immediately shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment and is said to be stable. Kumar said that the operation to flush out militants from Pulwama’s Tiken village had been launched jointly by J&K police’s counterinsurgency Special Operations Group, the Army’s 55 Rashtriya Rifles and Central Reserve Police Force’s 182 and 183 battalions.

The police claimed that the militants holed up in the area were given opportunity to surrender. “However, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which was retaliated leading to an encounter. Zamir Sadiq Lone in whose house the terrorists were hiding also received gunshot injuries.”

DRDO LABS ‘TALK’ IN SUCCESSFUL QUANTUM DEMO

New Delhi, Dec. 9: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Wednesday successfully demonstrated communication between its two labs using Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) technology, which is a “robust” way to share encryption keys, said an official statement.

In the QKD technology, encryption keys are sent as qubits in a fibre optic cable. Quantum computing uses qubits as basic resources, similar to how bits are used as basic resources in classical computing. The QKD is designed in a way that if an illegitimate entity tries to read the transmission, it will disturb the qubits — which are encoded on photons and this will generate transmission errors, leading to legitimate end users being immediately informed.

“Secure communications are vital for defence and strategic agencies world over and distribution of encryption keys from time to time is an important requirement in this context... Quantum based communication offers a robust solution to sharing the keys securely,” said an official statement. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the DRDO for successful demonstration of QKD-based communication between its two labs in Hyderabad, said the statement.



Police keep vigil as Karnataka farmers participate in a protest rally in Bengaluru on Wednesday to press for repeal of the Centres agri-laws. — PTI

Save India’s annadatas, Opposition urges Prez

Anti-democratic farm laws threaten food security, says Oppn

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

Opposition parties, led by the Congress and NCP, met President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday and sought repeal of the three farm laws against which thousands of farmers have been protesting on various borders of the national capital.

The five-member delegation included former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPI’s D. Raja and DMK leader T.K.S. Elangovan.

The Opposition’s memorandum to the President said, “We urge upon you, as the custodian of the Indian Constitution, to persuade your government not to be obdurate and accept the demands raised by India’s *annadatas*.”

“The new agri-laws, passed in Parliament in an anti-democratic manner preventing a structured discussion and voting, threaten India’s food security, destroy Indian agriculture and our farmers, lay the basis for the abolishment of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and mortgage Indian agriculture and our markets to the caprices of multinational agri-business corporates and domestic corporates,” it said.

“We met the President and informed him of our view regarding the three farm laws. We have asked for their repeal. We informed the President that it is critical that they are taken back,” Gandhi told the media after the meeting.

He said the way the farm laws were passed in Parliament, “we feel it was an insult to farmers and that is why they are protesting in the cold weather against them”. He claimed that using the new laws, the government wants to hand over the farming sector to the “friends of the Prime Minister,” but the farmers are fearless and will not back off, and will continue with their peaceful agitation.

Kejriwal still under house arrest: AAP

New Delhi, Dec. 9: The AAP on Wednesday alleged that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal’s movement is still “restricted” and the main gate of his residence remains closed by the Delhi Police, which denied the charge.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which had on Tuesday alleged that the Delhi Police put Kejriwal under house arrest after he met farmers protesting against the Centre’s agriculture reform laws at the city’s Singhu border, again claimed that it was being done at the behest of Union minister Amit Shah.

The Delhi Police had rejected AAP’s charge against it as “totally baseless”. Addressing a press conference on Wednesday, AAP spokesperson Raghav Chadha said there is an atmosphere of “undeclared emergency” around the Chief Minister’s residence.

“I am telling you with full responsibility that the movement of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is still restricted at the behest of the (Union) home minister. The main gate of the Chief Minister’s residence is still closed,” Chadha alleged.

— PTI

Elders determined to keep up the fight

New Delhi, Dec. 9: “Come home only after we win this fight”. His son’s words to him as he left his village in Punjab for Delhi ring in Gurdev Singh’s ears and give the 71-year-old the strength to carry on with the protest against the new farm laws — so what if he is still recovering from a knee replacement surgery.

The doughty sardar from Narpur village in Punjab’s Jalandhar district is just one of the several elderly people camping at the Singur border for the last 13 days, determined to keep up the fight for a repeal of the Centre’s three new farm laws.

It is getting colder by the day and they are hundreds of miles from home but the band of old men, among the many thousands of protesting farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, are not giving up any time soon.

“As far as I can remember, all generations in my family have depended on agriculture for their livelihood. My sons, too, are farmers. I came to fight for the honour of our forefathers and the rights of my children,” Gurdev Singh said, pumping his fists in the air.

He had both his knees replaced just four months ago and can’t walk without support but isn’t complaining. “This trouble is nothing compared to the issue we are protesting about.

My elder son told me, ‘Come home only after we win this fight’, and that is what I plan to do,” the farmer said as two men help him climb down from a trolley.

Gurdev Singh’s two friends from Narpur, Sajjan Singh and Pritam Singh, both in their late 60s, echo his bravura spirit.

— PTI

BUSY FIGHTING FOR OUR RIGHTS, SAY FARMERS

New Delhi, Dec. 9: Caught between the Covid-19 pandemic and the agitation for their rights, farmers protesting against the Centre’s new farm laws said the fear of contracting the disease is “not enough” to detract them from their fight.

Thousands of farmers camping at the Tikri borders are largely seen without the basic preventive measure against Covid-19 — protective masks.

“The government has already tied a noose around our necks with these laws... we cannot afford to be afraid of Coronavirus,” Gagandeep Singh, a farmer from Bhatinda in Punjab, said.

He has been protesting at the Delhi-Haryana border for the last 10 days. Demonstrating for 12 straight days, the farmers have been demanding that the three laws be revoked. Sporting a long white beard, Gurvasan Singh said he was not afraid of the disease that has already killed over 1.4 lakh people in the country.

“We are losing our rights. We do not have time to worry about Coronavirus,” he said. According to Sachin Kumar from Delhi’s Uttam Nagar, the government’s refusal to hear the farmers’ demands proved that it was creating the fear of the virus to shut-down the protest.

Kumar, whose family has land in Uttar Pradesh, mocked, “It seems that the virus will infect us exclusively. What is shown on camera and the reality on ground is different.”

Meanwhile, traffic was disrupted at border points with farmers agitating on the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders of Delhi.

— PTI

Rajasthan PR poll results mandate on farm bills: BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 9

Hailing the Rajasthan local body polls results as “phenomenal,” the BJP on Thursday claimed that the results are farmers’ mandate for Modi government’s farm reforms and also people’s support for the party across the country.

In Congress ruled Rajasthan, the BJP won 353 of 636 zila parishads, 21 zila panchayatats and 1,990 of 4,371 panchayat samitis, primarily in rural areas.

The party also cited its performance in the recently held local bodies polls in Hyderabad, Arunachal Pradesh and the Bihar Assembly polls to assert that the party and the Narendra Modi led central government has support in every region of the country.

BJP president J.P. Nadda

● **THE BJP won 353 of 636 zila parishads, 21 zila panchayatats and 1,990 of 4,371 panchayat samitis, primarily in rural areas.**

said the saffron party’s win in Rajasthan symbolises the trust the poor, farmers and labourers have in Modi’s leadership, while senior party leader and Union minister Prakash Javadekar stressed that people, especially farmers, have given it a “decisive” victory.

He said all these polls were held after Parliament enacted three farm sector reform laws, which have drawn protest from a section of farmers, especially from Punjab.

Noting that the polls in Rajasthan were held primarily in rural areas, Javadekar said by opting for the BJP, voters reversed the trend of the state’s ruling party win-

ning most seats in the local polls in Rajasthan.

“This is a huge victory... This is farmers’ mandate for farm reforms,” said the Union minister.

When asked about Congress leader Rahul Gandhi’s dig at the Union government alleging that “reform equals theft” for it, Javadekar took a jibe saying he does not want to respond to a “non-performing politician.”

He said the Central government is holding talks with the protesting farmer union leaders with an open mind and expressed confidence that a resolution will be reached.

The minister pointed out that these wins have come for the BJP amid the Covid-19 pandemic, economic troubles caused by it and “misinformation” campaign by the opposition against the BJP over the farm reforms.

Nadda attacks TMC as he begins poll campaign

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 9

BJP president J.P. Nadda on Wednesday attacked the ruling Trinamul Congress in West Bengal as a family-run party after embarking on a two-day visit to the state to set “dynasty politics” on the agenda in next year’s Assembly elections.

He also led a rally of *Aar Noy Onnyay* (no more injustice) campaign, a door-to-door outreach initiative of the BJP, on Girish Mukherjee Road in Bhowanipore, the home turf and Assembly constituency of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, to make the saffron party’s presence felt there.

On Thursday, the BJP chief is likely to visit Diamond Harbour, the base and Lok Sabha constituency of the CM’s nephew, Abhishek Banerjee, in South 24 Parganas.

Inaugurating the state BJP election office in Hastings and nine district party offices, Nadda, in an oblique reference to Banerjee’s residence at Harish Chatterjee Street in Kalighat, which is also the heart of the TMC, said, “*Karyalay* is the centre of culture and tradition. Interestingly, BJP is run from the *Karyalay*. But for other parties, home is their *Karyalay* from where they are run.”

He said, “To other parties, party means one particular *parivar* (family) and is restricted only within the *parivar*, which is spread like a net from top to bottom. And the TMC is no exception to it. It has also become a party of *parivar*. But the BJP is a party which itself is a *parivar*. We are part of a big *parivar*. This is evident for us because *Karyalay* is not run from any leader’s home.”

Contrasting the Trinamul Congress supremo with Asahishnuta, Nadda argued: “On December 7, 1935, Jan Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee said in



BJP national president J.P. Nadda flashes the victory sign as the party begins campaigning for West Bengal Assembly elections. — PTI

Didi says refugees will not need CAA

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 9

Desperate to get back the votebank of the Matuas, a community of Hindu migrants in West Bengal, from the BJP, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday asserted that the refugees would not need the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) to stay as legal citizens here.

Accusing the BJP of cheating the refugees in the name of the CAA in the poll-bound state, the Trinamul Congress supremo once again ruled out of allowing the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and National Population Register (NPR) also here.

Her announcement came in wake of the BJP national general secretary Kaishav Vijayvargiya’s announcement that the CAA implementation for the migrants would get underway from either January or February.

Banerjee told a TMC rally at the domain of the Matuas in Bongaon of

North 24 Parganas, “There are lot of refugees who live here after coming from Bangladesh. It is your home like ours. There is no need to get a fresh certificate because all of you are citizens. You are being cheated in the name of the CAA. If it gets underway, your grandparents’ age proof will be sought. Can you arrange it now?”

She informed that all the 94 refugee colonies, under the state government, were legalised already to give its residents citizenship “in exchange of nothing.”

“There were 250 more such colonies which existed privately on central government premises. We have legalised them also to give citizenship to its residents. Remember, the state government, not the central government, holds the main power. Work of the two governments is different. The state government decides who will live in the state. So there is no point in lying in the name of CAA. We will not allow the NRC and NPR to happen.” Banerjee claimed.

front of Scottish Church College — Cultivate the habit of discipline and toleration. Surrender not to the convictions you hold dear but learn to appreciate the points of view of

your opponents. This is very much relevant to Bengal even today. If we look at Mamataji, intolerance thy name is Mamata. Intolerance is growing so fast here!”

BACK | HOME Tigress was translocated to Satkosia reserve in 2018

‘Sundari’ to relocate to MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, DEC. 9

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh on Wednesday gave his nod for relocation of tigress ‘Sundari’, translocated to Satkosia tiger reserve in Odisha in a re-introduction programme in 2018, in Kanha National Park in MP.

Chouhan’s decision to restore Sundari to her original home in Kanha tiger reserve has ended after almost a yearlong impasse over relocation of the wild animal with MP forest department hitherto unwilling to take back her contending that she was not fit to be released in the wild.

In a letter to his Odisha

counterpart Naveen Patnaik, Chouhan said MP would take back Sundari. He, however, indicated that it would take some time for relocation of Sundari in Kanha tiger reserve.

“It has been decided to relocate Sundari in the Ghorela re-wilding centre in Kanha tiger reserve to make her fit to be released in the wild. But, an orphan cub is currently being trained in the centre to restore its wild character. Sundari could be relocated to the centre only after the tiger cub was released in the wild”, the letter written in Hindi said.

Chouhan said an expert team from MP which visited Sundari in her enclosure in Satkosia tiger

reserve has found that the wild animal was not fit to live in the wild since she has become habituated to human presence due to her prolonged captivity in the enclosure.

“It is learnt from media reports that rehabilitation of Sundari in the enclosure in Satkosia tiger reserve was not done as per provisions of wildlife Act, leading her to lose her natural wild nature”, the letter said.

A male tiger, Mahavir, and a female big cat Sundari, were translocated within a gap of a couple of months to Satkosia tiger reserve in 2018 from Madhya Pradesh in a re-introduction programme.

This was the first experimental interstate translocation of tigers in the

country.

However, Mahavir was allegedly killed by locals a few months after his translocation.

Later, Sundari killed 2 humans in the tiger reserve, forcing the Odisha forest department to shift her to a small enclosure in the reserve forest.

Later, National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and Odisha government requested the MP government to take back Sundari.

A wildlife activist moved Madhya Pradesh high court seeking a directive to the MP government to take back Sundari.

The court last month ordered the MP government to relocate Sundari in Kanha.

RUSSIA UNHAPPY WITH CLOSE INDO-US TIES

From page 1

“The West is attempting to undermine our close partnership and privileged relations with India. This is the goal of the US’ very tough pressure on New Delhi,” Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov said.

Observers point out that the remarks highlight Russia’s unease with India’s growing proximity and strong strategic ties with the United States, with whom Russia has had a sharply deteriorating relationship.

It also highlights India’s challenge in continuing to maintain excellent ties with both Russia and the US.

DECCAN
Chronicle
10 DECEMBER 2020

Democracy and reforms:
How much is too much?

Is there a connection between democracy and Niti Aayog? Or, not to put too fine a point on it, between India's democracy and the government's think tank on economic affairs that was created as the National Institute for Transforming India (Niti) by dismantling the Planning Commission, which had planned to achieve balanced development of the various regions to remove poverty. Probably not, if putative observations of the Niti Aayog CEO, Amitabh Kant, made recently, are to be taken at face value.

The transformation of India in the conception of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is the chairman of the think tank he created in January 2015 through a mere cabinet decision and not the constitutional route, is to be achieved, fundamentally through de-regulation in all fields of economic activity. This means taking away any role for the government through "hard reforms" that Mr Kant spoke of while addressing an event virtually on Tuesday.

The country's major news platforms quoted the Niti Aayog operational chief as saying that "tough reforms" were very difficult in the Indian context because there

The agri-laws were rammed through Parliament virtually without discussion — in an example of the 'political will' shown by the regime

ing the words attributed to him though it is highly unlikely that all reputed media outlets would misquote him. The videos of his only underscore that his clarification and denials are to be regarded with a stiff dose of skepticism.

Mr Kant went to the extent of saying that India can compete with China only through "hard reforms" and not through holding seminars. Seminars imply discussion and debate. This China reference would also suggest that in the Niti Aayog CEO's scheme, debates are not the way to push "tough reforms", implying a failure of the well-known basis of democracy. Presumably, then, hard reforms can only be achieved through bulldozing, the way it is done in China, a totalitarian state where a single leader is all knowing and all-powerful.

Examples of so-called "hard reform" (even when they undervalue public welfare by privileging the market principle on an exclusive basis), pushed through the methods of democracy, have evidently eluded Mr Modi's most powerful economic bureaucrat. He could have recalled, for instance, that former Britain PM Margaret Thatcher battled and debated in Parliament and the media to get her way in scuttling welfare measures of an earlier era to set her country on a new path.

In fact, to make economic reforms non-sliding, acceptance by the widest sections of the people is a necessity, not a luxury, and the political principle of democracy provides for the most thorough means to install a new idea or practice. The present regime has failed to do just that, the most recent egregious example being the contentious agri-laws against which a storm is brewing. These were rammed through Parliament virtually without discussion — in an example of the "political will" shown by the regime.

The rise of Everest

Measured in 2005 by a Beijing survey to be 8,844 m, Mt Chomolungma (meaning mother goddess) was a harder climb from the Chinese side, but also shorter by a good four metres. It prompted mountaineers to rush over to Nepal to summit Sagarmatha (literally, top of the world) whose height was generally acknowledged to be 8,848 metres. It cost the Communist country no small amount of Everest tourism.

Following the 2015 earthquake in Nepal which left 9,000 dead, including some climbers, the country's survey department experts, fearing that the mountain had become shorter, called for a fresh taking of measurement. So far, Nepal had been following the findings of the 1954 Survey of India, which had put out the second figure. An American survey in 1999, however, had calculated Everest to be higher, at 8,850 metres. It added grist to speculations as to whether the young-fold mountain was still growing.

The speculators were correct. The two newest satellite aided surveys — Nepal's in 2019 and the one completed by China earlier this year — finally agree — the height of Everest is 8,848.86 metres — the mountain having grown by three feet or 86 centimetres. It is 164 years after Radhanath Sikdar used trigonometry and machines called theodolites to first calculate it on behalf of Sir George Everest to be 8,839 metres, making it the highest peak of the world.

It wasn't easy measuring the earth's tallest mountain this time either. Surveyors had to climb the mountain with a GPS receiver. A Nepali surveyor who stayed at the summit for two hours lost a toe to frostbite.

Now comes the key question — can this increase be attributed to rock, or is it merely icecap, as China once claimed? Yes and no, says Sridevi Jade, plate tectonics expert. The Himalayas stand on the boundary between the Indian and Eurasian plates. Jade calculates that the Indian plate is slipping under the Eurasian plate by about five centimetres a year. After accounting for erosion on the top, Everest is gaining about one centimetre every 10 years. So while the quake may have taken off centimetres, replicating Hillary and Norgay's feat just got harder.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
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Leher Sethi



Is pollution
a greater
pandemic
than Covid?

As a parent, I dread Delhi winters, not just because of the cold, but because of the terrible pollution in the air. We live in the city with the worst air quality in the world. Air quality index is generally Moderate (101-200) between January and September, and then it drastically deteriorates to Very Poor (301-400), Severe (401-500) or Hazardous (500+) between October and December.

It amazes me how year after year, as the winter approaches, there is a huge outcry over pollution in the city and then it dies down its own natural death as the summer returns. There is no urgency to tackle this pandemic!

Although some of us are still getting used to wearing masks, to many of us with little children, this is nothing new because our kids have been wearing masks for the past couple of winters. In my son's Montessori pre-school, it was made compulsory for the little babies to wear masks to school. Back then, it felt like I was entering a science fiction film set every time I would go to school. Little did I know that it would become the new normal soon!

As per the current data, as on

November 28, 2020, there have been 1,35,906 deaths due to the coronavirus in India. Globally, there have been 1.45 million deaths. Now, compare this to the deaths caused due to pollution. In 2019, exposures to outdoor high average levels of PM 2.5 caused 9,80,000 deaths in India — nearly 60 per cent of all air pollution — attributable deaths. Globally, there were 4.14 million such deaths in 2019. Even if we were to double the coronavirus-related deaths, they would still amount to just about 27 per cent of the deaths caused due to air pollution in India. Then, why is this pandemic being ignored?

What will it take for the authorities and the government to wake up to its reality? Is it that the awareness of this epidemic is only with the educated and urbane few, that it will only become important once the vote bank of the poor make it an issue?

As per the State of Global Air 2020 report (SoGA 2020) released on October 21, a report published by the US-based think-tank, Health Effects Institute, there were at least 1,16,000 infant deaths due to air pollution recorded in India last year.

For the youngest infants, most deaths were related to complications

from low birth weight and premature birth — direct outcomes of mothers' exposure to air pollution during pregnancy. More than half of the infant deaths were due to PM2.5 in outdoor air and the rest were linked to household air pollution due to use of solid fuels such as charcoal, wood and animal dung for cooking, as per the study that claims to be the first-ever comprehensive analysis of air pollution's global impact on newborns. There is a growing body of evidence about the link between infant death and air pollution and several Indian and international studies have tried to explain it.

In 2019, India's population-weighted annual average concentration of PM 2.5 was recorded at 83.2 micrograms per cubic metre — seven times higher than the WHO's safe standards of 10 µg/m3 - and remained highest in the world. (The "population-weighted annual average concentration" is the average level of air pollution to which a country's population is exposed.)

As per the American Lung Association, children face special risks from air pollution because their lungs are growing and because they are so active and breathe in a great deal of air. Children's exposure to air

pollution is a special concern because their immune system is not fully developed when exposure begins.

Just like the arms and legs, the largest portion of a child's lungs will grow long after he or she is born. Eighty percent of alveoli develop after birth. Children have more respiratory infections than adults, which also seems to increase their susceptibility to air pollution.

Furthermore, children don't behave like adults, and their behaviour also affects their vulnerability. They are outside for longer periods and are usually more active when outdoors. Consequently, they inhale more polluted outdoor air. They are also closer to the earth, where the pollutants are higher.

As per a study titled "State of Global Air 2019", the average life of a South Asian child growing up in the current high levels of air pollution will be shortened by two-and-a-half years. This means that a child born today will die 2.5 years sooner, on average. That is a really scary prospect, and one that makes me want to leave this city, and country, along with my child. Doing a little bit of research on my own, here's what I found:

■Children are more at risk from the effects of pollution since they have faster breathing rates, and their lungs are still developing.

■Children exposed to high pollution are more likely to have reduced lung function as adults.

■Long term exposure to air pollution may cause asthma and other health risks, including cancer, in children.

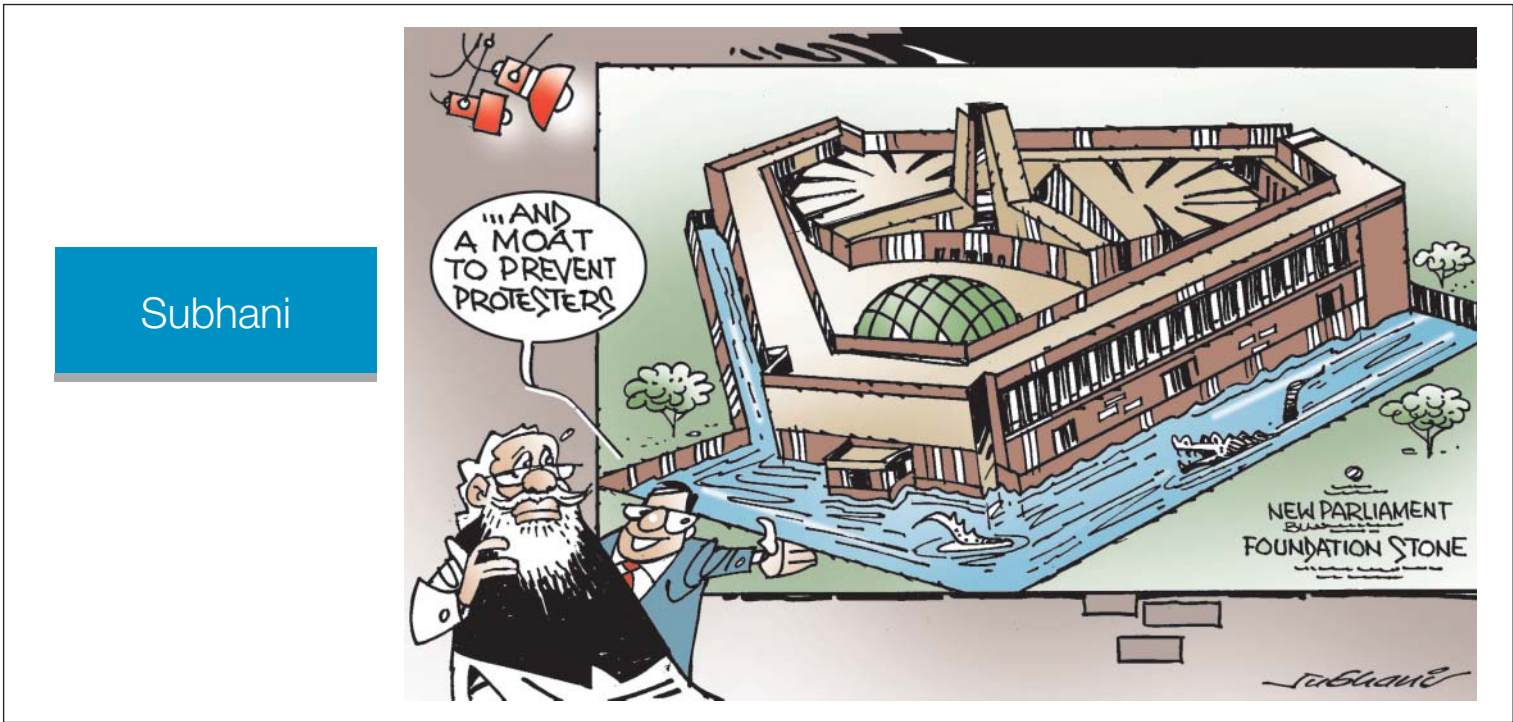
■Air pollution is one of the leading threats to child health, accounting for almost one in 10 deaths in children under five years of age.

■Pregnant women exposed to air pollution can hinder the development of the brain and lead to cognitive problems later in the children.

As per the World Health Organisation, in Delhi, poor air quality irreversibly damages the lungs of 2.2 million or 50 per cent of all children. My child and your child could be part of that number! There is no way of sugarcoating this; as a parent, I am afraid for my child.

If this is not a national emergency, then what is? Our children are the future, and the future is at stake here!

Leher Sethi is an entrepreneur and social activist



Subhani

Boris' fumbling holds
lessons for the world



Sunanda K.
Datta-Ray
Reflections

An important lesson for the pandemic-stricken world to remember as challenge after challenge casts its shadow on Prime Minister Boris Johnson's beleaguered government in London is that no opinion — not even that of a suspected adversary — should be dismissed or derided at a time of grave international danger.

More of that later. Immediate attention focuses on another aspect of the coronavirus crisis which inspired Britain's Agra-born business minister, Alok Sharma, to exult grandiloquently: "In years to come, we will remember this moment as the day the United Kingdom led humanity's charge against this disease." He meant — as every British spokesman repeats ad nauseam — that the UK is the first country to agree to use the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19.

Not everyone is equally boastful. While the German ambassador reminded listeners that the vaccine represents collective European enterprise, the tiny oil-rich island kingdom of Bahrain quickly muscled into the limelight to share Britain's glory with its own agreement with Pfizer/BioNTech. Another critic with little stomach for bombast that might resound to applause in Mr Sharma's ancestral Uttar Pradesh sharply reminded him that this moment might also be remembered for "the UK having one of the worst death rates and the worst economic impact due to poor governance".

Going beyond the United Kingdom's 1.71 million Covid-19 cases and 61,014 deaths, he might have been speaking of the frantic last-minute parleys in Britain's pro-

tracted divorce negotiations with the European Union which suggest that the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, did not think things through when he played up to domestic separatists with his aggressive Brexit agenda. With time running out for the December 31 deadline, this week's last throw of the dice (as it's called) in the negotiations may be heading for a breakdown rather than a breakthrough. If so, it would be catastrophic for both parties who cannot escape their interdependence. While British waters are much richer in fish than the seas surrounding Europe, British trawlers make their money selling to the European nations.

As Mr Johnson continues to pander to the insular lobby by accusing the EU of riding roughshod over British sovereignty, Rachel Reeves, a senior member of the Labour Party's shadow cabinet, has warned that he "needs to deliver the deal he promised the British people". He can't ignore her for Brexit has exposed his reliance on Labour votes in the House of Commons. Neither can he ignore the new Cold War against China and Russia that US President Donald Trump had launched with vehement diatribes against the so-called "Wuhan virus" to woo American voters ahead of the presidential election.

With talk of Washington invoking the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act to blacklist the popular Chinese video app TikTok as "an unusual and extraordinary threat", Mr Johnson has taken up the cudgels for the United States like another British leader, Tony Blair, who kowtowed to George W. Bush and joined the American invasions of Iraq and

Afghanistan. That probably explains the sudden £16 billion increase in Britain's defence budget over the next four years, despite the pandemic's calamitous damage to the economy. Such gestures appease the Americans, as do accusations of the Kremlin trying to penetrate Britain's secret scientific research programmes and promises to reveal Russia's alleged covert interference in British politics.

Initially, Mr Johnson rejected pressure, American as well as from the rightists among his own Conservatives, to ban the Chinese technology company, Huawei, from any role in building the UK's 5G infrastructure. He has since done a volte face and now cites "sound technical reasons" for giving Huawei marching orders. But although Huawei is said to threaten British security and is excluded from the 5G network, Mr Johnson cannot be seriously concerned since the eviction will become effective only over seven years.

Neither this anomaly nor the ban itself seems to have attracted much public attention in Britain. The reason may be that people are genuinely horrified by China's oppression of the Uighurs, its tightening grip on Hong Kong, the military assertiveness in the South China Sea and muscle-flexing in Ladakh. But the Brexit controversy makes Britain vulnerable, and succumbing to American pressure at this juncture may compound London's depen-

Dr Hans Kluge, who heads the WHO's European operations, says that lockdowns are unnecessary if 95 per cent of the population wears masks. Sadly, many European and American leaders dismissed masks then as politically unacceptable.

dency on Washington. Instead of taking back control of his country's destiny — the publicly reiterated reason for leaving the EU in the first place — Mr Johnson might end up by moving closer to the old joke of Britain as the 51st state of the United States of America.

Obviously, the pandemic aggravates the impact of all other crises. Covid-19 might also have caused less suffering and spread less terror if a sane approach had been followed from the beginning. Dr Hans Kluge, who heads the World Health Organisation's European operations, says that lockdowns are unnecessary if 95 per cent of the population wears masks. This should have been far more widely and forcefully propagated when the pandemic was exploding across the world. Sadly, many European and American leaders dismissed masks then as politically unacceptable.

As Britain and the EU nations were going into lockdown, Dr George Fu Gao, director-general of the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, China's main public health body, corroborated Dr Kluge's view. Asked about the mistakes being made by other countries trying to control coronavirus, he replied that "the big mistake in the US and Europe, in my opinion, is that people aren't wearing masks".

That opinion should have been taken seriously even though China had already been cast as the adversary. According to independent observers, China's return to normality was largely the result of old-fashioned public health measures, with a heavy emphasis on test-and-trace and travel bans, vigorously enforced by mobilising the country's vast resources and, of course, invoking the state's coercive authority.

There's a lesson there for the rest of the suffering world.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

NEW FARM LAWS

A solution to the farmers' agitation seems unlikely in the near future with both the government and farmers are sticking to their guns. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure the agitation does not escalate and become unwieldy and anti-social elements step in to take advantage of the situation. The Centre could stop being adamant and address the apprehensions of farmers.

S. Nageswara Rao
Hyderabad

Many are at a loss to understand why farmers are agitating when the government strongly feels the new farm laws are beneficial. Government should make public the benefits to farmers. Otherwise, Opposition parties will take undue advantage of the situation.

G. Vijay Kumar
Hyderabad

MOVIE THEATRES

The CM's think tank should provide a proper solution to avert any rise in Covid-19 cases. We have experienced the trauma of losing many artists, celebrities, leaders, doctors and other leaders to Coronavirus. This is the worst situation in medical history. With people habituated to watching movies and shopping on the net we do not need movies in theatres for the time being. So-called mega stars who slept all this while in their lavish bungalows now wake up and come outside like caterpillars from chrysalis to do their business. Bureaucrats must advise the CM to close movie theatres and save lives.

Garlapaty Sitharamaiah
Hyderabad

High Court upholds
Mulki rules

From our legal staff reporter

HYDERABAD, Dec. 9.

The full bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court today held that the Mulki rules relating to appointment of public servants in so far as they are applicable to

Telangana region revive and survive to continue after the judgement of the

the Supreme Court striking down in 1969 Section 3 of the Public Employment Act 1957.

The full bench consisted of Chief Justice Kumarayya, Mr. Justice Gopal Rao Ekbote and Mr. Justice Sambasiva Rao.



SHORT TAKES

CHOPPER CRASH
IN FRENCH ALPS
KILLS 5, 1 HURT

Paris, Dec. 9: Five members of a mountain rescue team were killed and a sixth was seriously injured when their helicopter crashed in the French Alps, authorities said. The helicopter was carrying the team on a training mission in the Savoie region on Tuesday evening. The helicopter came down at an altitude of 1,800 meters (5,905 feet), the prefecture of Savoie said in a statement. The surviving crew member was able to give the alert.

He has been transported to a hospital in the city of Grenoble, the prefecture said. Weather conditions were particularly bad, local authorities said. French President Emmanuel Macron paid tribute in a tweet overnight to rescuers who “to save lives, are taking all the risks.”

GERMAN POLLS
TO BE HELD ON
SEPT. 26, 2021

Berlin, Dec. 9: Germany's next parliamentary election, which will determine the country's new leader after Chancellor Angela Merkel's long rule, will be held on September 26, 2021.

President Frank-Walter Steinmeier's office said Wednesday that the head of state set the date in line with a recommendation from the government. It will be post-World War II Germany's 20th parliamentary election Germany holds elections every four years.

The lower house of parliament, or Bundestag, elects the chancellor. That may not happen until well after the election, because the process of putting together a governing coalition can be lengthy. After the 2017 election, it was nearly six months before Merkel was sworn in for her fourth term — a record.

ETHIOPIA DENIES
PROBES INTO
TIGRAY CONFLICT

Nairobi, Dec. 9: Ethiopia's government is rejecting calls for independent investigations into the deadly conflict in its Tigray region, saying it “doesn't need a baby-sitter.”

The declaration comes amid international calls for more transparency into the month-long fighting between Ethiopian forces and those of the fugitive Tigray regional government that is thought to have killed thousands, including civilians.

At least one large-scale massacre has been documented, and others are feared. Senior government official Redwan Hussein told reporters on Tuesday evening that Ethiopia will invite others for assistance only if it feels that “it failed to investigate.”

To assume the government can't carry out such probes “is belittling the government,” he said.

Frustration is growing as the northern Tigray region remains largely cut off from the outside world, with food and medicines desperately needed by the population of 6 million — some 1 million of them now thought to be displaced.

INDIA'S WEAPONS
PURCHASE FROM
US AT \$3.4 BILLION

Washington, Dec. 9: India's weapons procurement from the United States jumped from a meagre \$6.2 million to a whopping \$3.4 billion in the final year of the Donald Trump's administration, according to official data.

As per the data released by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), the jump in the sale of American weapons to India comes at a time when sale of weapons from the US to other countries has dipped to \$50.8 billion in 2020 from \$55.7 billion in 2019.

In 2019, the sale of US weapons to foreign countries was \$55.7 billion. In 2017, it was \$41.9 billion, it said. Major buyers of American weapons in 2020 were India (\$3.4 billion up from \$6.2 million in fiscal year 2019), Morocco (\$4.5 billion up from \$12.4 million), Poland (\$4.7 billion up from \$673 million), Singapore (\$1.3 billion up from \$137 million), Taiwan (\$11.8 billion up from \$876 million), and the United Arab Emirates (\$3.6 billion up from \$1.1 billion), the data showed.

Several countries reported a drop in purchase of weapons from the US.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attends a ceremony to mark the arrival of a plane of the international courier company DHL, carrying over 1,00,000 of doses of the first batch of Pfizer vaccines which landed at Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv, on Wednesday.

— AFP

UK body issues allergy
warning for Pfizer jab

Caution was given after 2 NHS workers suffered allergic reactions

London, Dec. 9: Britain's medicines regulator on Wednesday issued a warning for people with “significant” history of allergic reactions to medicines, food or vaccines to not have the Pfizer/BioNTech jab, a day after the first set of patients were administered their first of two doses of the vaccine against Covid-19.

The warning comes after two National Health Service (NHS) workers experienced “anaphylactoid reaction” symptoms shortly after being injected, but are now said to be recovering well. NHS England said all its trusts involved with the mass vaccination programme have been informed and from Wednesday, all patients scheduled to receive the vaccine will be asked if they have a history of allergic reactions.

“As is common with new vaccines, the MHRA has advised on a precautionary basis that people with a significant history of allergic reactions do not receive this vaccination after two people with a history of significant allergic reactions responded adversely,” said Professor Stephen Powis, medical director for the NHS in England.

An anaphylactoid reaction tends to involve a skin rash, breathlessness and sometimes a drop in blood pressure and both the NHS workers who experienced this are said to have a history of serious allergies and carry adrenaline pens around with them.

“We have been advised by MHRA [Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency] of two yellow card reports that may be associated with allergic reaction due to administration of the Covid-19 BNT162b2 vaccine,” Pfizer UK said in a statement. “As a precautionary measure, the MHRA has issued temporary guidance to the NHS while it conducts an investigation in order to fully understand each case and its causes,” it said.

Dr June Raine, the head of the MHRA, told a joint select committee hearing on Tuesday that “real-time vigilance” will continue throughout the vaccine rollout process.

—PTI

Biden promises 100 mn
vaccine shots in 100 days

Washington, Dec. 9: US President-elect Joe Biden has said that in the first 100 days of his administration, he would mandate everyone to wear a mask, ensure 100 million Covid-19 vaccinations and reopen the majority of schools as he assured Americans that his “crisis-tested” team of experts will deliver better healthcare and revive the economy.

The US is in the midst of a deadly pandemic that has infected almost 15 million Americans and killed 2,86,000. Globally, there are 68.2 million Covid-19 cases and the pandemic

has claimed more than 1.5 million lives.

Announcing his national health team, Biden asked the Trump administration to act now to purchase the doses it has negotiated with Pfizer and Moderna and to work swiftly to scale manufacturing for the US population and the world.

“This can be fixed. If it does, my team will be able to get at least 100 million vaccinations done in my first 100 days. Third, it should be a national priority to get our kids back into school and keep them in school,” he said. —PTI

Don orders vaccine
priority for America

Washington, Dec. 9: US President Donald Trump has signed an executive order that prioritises Americans' access to Covid-19 vaccines before the US potentially begins helping other nations.

If necessary, Trump said, he is ready to invoke the Defence Production Act to ensure that Covid-19 vaccines first get to the Americans.

The Defence Production Act allows a president to force private manufacturers to ramp up production and give the federal government priority on any orders it places. American companies, he said, were the first to produce a verifiably safe and effective vaccine.

“Together, we will defeat the virus, and we will soon end the pandemic, and we will save millions and millions of lives, both in our country and all over the world. And we've already started,” Trump said during signing the executive order on Tuesday at a White House event celebrating “Operation Warp Speed”, his administration's effort to produce and distribute safe and effective vaccines for Covid-19.

Trump told reporters

that his administration provided a total of \$14 billion to accelerate Coronavirus vaccine development and to manufacture all of the top candidates long in advance.

“As a result of this “unprecedented investment”, both Pfizer and Moderna have announced that their vaccines are approximately 95 per cent effective, he said.

Pfizer has developed its vaccine outside of “Operation Warp Speed”, but is collaborating with the US government on manufacturing and distribution. The UK on Tuesday began its vaccinations with the first set of people injected with their first of two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech jab.

—PTI

MERKEL BACKS
TOUGHER VIRUS
RESTRICTIONS

Berlin, Dec. 9: German Chancellor Angela Merkel advocated tougher restrictions on public life and pleaded with her compatriots to cut down on socializing as the country reported its highest single-day death toll of the Coronavirus pandemic on Wednesday.

Germany is gradually moving toward a tighter lockdown, at least for a limited period after Christmas, as new virus cases remain stubbornly high — and are even beginning to creep higher — despite a partial shutdown that started on November 2. —AP

U.S. SANCTIONS
HINDERING ACCESS
TO VACCINE: IRAN

Tehran, Dec. 9: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that US sanctions are making it difficult for Iran to purchase medicine and health supplies from abroad, including Covid-19 vaccines needed to contain the worst outbreak in the Middle East.

President Donald Trump's administration has imposed crippling sanctions on Iran's banking sector and its vital oil and gas industry since unilaterally withdrawing the US from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018. While the United States insists that medicines and humanitarian goods are exempt from sanctions, restrictions on trade have made many banks and companies across the world hesitant to do business with Iran, fearing punitive measures from Washington.

The country is also cut off from the international banking system, making it difficult to transfer payments. —AP

Biden picks retired Army
general to lead Pentagon

Washington, Dec. 9: US President-elect Joe Biden has announced retired Army general Lloyd J. Austin as his nomination for Defence Secretary. If confirmed by the Senate, 67-year-old Austin would be the first African-American to lead the Pentagon.

The nominee for the 28th Secretary of Defence comes with a distinguished record of military service spanning four decades. “General Austin shares my profound belief that our nation is at its strongest when we lead not only by the example of our power, but by the power of our example.

Throughout his lifetime of dedicated service — and in the many hours we've spent together in the White House Situation Room and with our troops overseas — General Austin has demonstrated exemplary leadership, character and command,” Biden said while making the announcement on Tuesday.

“He is uniquely qualified to take on the challenges and crises we face in the current moment, and I look forward to once again working closely with him as a trusted partner to lead our military with dignity and resolve, revitalise our alliances in the face of global threats, and ensure the safety and security of the American people,” the Democratic leader said. An accomplished, respected and trailblazing figure in the US military history, Austin retired from the Army in 2016 after over 40 years of service.

The first African-American to serve as Commander of US Central Command, Austin is a trusted and crisis-tested leader who has overseen some of the most complex and impactful operations in the history of the armed services — including serving as the chief

Trump: Hopeful of
continuing as Prez

Washington, Dec. 9: Days before the official certification of the November 3 US presidential elections in favour of his Democratic opponent Joe Biden, President Donald Trump claimed that he would continue to hold the position as he has won the elections.

Trump has been making unsubstantiated claims about widespread voter fraud and electoral malpractice in the presidential polls. State election officials and the media

have denied any such fraud.

Election officials have declared Biden as the President-elect as he received more than the required 270 of the 538 electoral college votes. The elections are officially scheduled to be certified next week. However, Trump is continuing his legal efforts to upend Biden's victory. He has allowed the official start of Biden's transition to power but has not yet conceded defeat. —PTI

U.S. TOP COURT REJECTS GOP BID TO
HALT BIDEN'S PENNSYLVANIA WIN

Washington, Dec. 9 (AP) The Supreme Court has rejected Republicans' last-gasp bid to reverse Pennsylvania's certification of President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the electoral battleground.

The court without comment on Tuesday refused to call into question the the certification process in Pennsylvania.

Governor Tom Wolf already has certified Biden's victory and the state's 20 electors are to meet on December 14 to cast their votes for Biden.

Biden won 306 electoral votes, so even if Pennsylvania's results had been in doubt, he still would have more than the 270 electoral votes needed to become president. —AP

architect of the effort to defeat ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and working closely with Biden to bring nearly 1,50,000 American military personnel home from Iraq, the transition said.

US President-elect Joe Biden has also selected Ohio Rep. Marcia Fudge as his housing and urban development secretary, according to three people familiar with the decision.

Fudge was first elected to Congress in 2008 to represent a district that includes Cleveland, and

had been considered a leading candidate for agriculture secretary in the Biden administration. Her intended nomination was confirmed on Tuesday by three people familiar with the decision who spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid preempting the president-elect's announcement.

She enjoys the strong backing of South Carolina Rep. Jim Clyburn, the No. 3 House Democrat who gave Biden a key nod of support in the primaries. —PTI

Pak lawmakers to resign to
paralyse govt: PDM chiefPAKISTAN TO BUY RAJ KAPOOR'S
ANCESTRAL HOUSES IN PESHAWAR

Peshawar, Dec. 9: Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has determined the price of the ancestral houses of legendary Bollywood actors Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor in the heart of this city at ₹80,56,000 and ₹1,50,00,000 respectively.

The provincial government in September decided to purchase their ancestral houses to conserve the historic buildings which are in dilapidated condition and facing demolition threat.

The two buildings, located in the heart of this northern Pakistani city, have been declared as national heritage. Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar Muhammad Ali

Asghar, following a report of the Communication and Works Department, fixed the price of Dilip Kumar's four Marla house for ₹80,56,000 while that of Raj Kapoor's six Marla house for ₹1,50,00,000. Marla, a traditional unit of area used in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, is considered as equal to 272.25 square feet or 25,292 square metres.

The archaeology department has sent a formal request to the provincial government for releasing over ₹2 crore for purchasing both the historic buildings, where the two greats of the Indian cinema were born and raised in their early days before the Partition. —PTI

believed that en masse resignation is the only way to bring the government on its knees and force it to call early elections.

The PPP government in the Sindh province was considered as a hurdle as it was not sure if that it would sacrifice its government to help the Opposition alliance.

The leaders also agreed to go ahead with a rally in Lahore on December 13 as a show of power to the government. It will be the sixth rally after similar

gatherings held in Gujranwala, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar and Multan.

The Opposition parties succeeded in attracting a huge number of people despite hurdles created by the government. Prime Minister Imran Khan rejected the demand to step down or call early elections and consistently advocated that Opposition was protesting to put pressure to stop probes in corruption cases against their leaders. —PTI

MISSION | MARS

Automatic engine abort occurred with just 1.3 secs remaining in countdown, no word on next flight

SpaceX aborts test Starship flight in last second

Cape Canaveral (US), Dec. 9: The first high-altitude test flight of SpaceX's futuristic Starship was aborted at the last second in Texas on Tuesday.

SpaceX came close to launching a prototype of the rocketship that company chief Elon Musk is designing to carry people to Mars.

The goal was to shoot Starship to an altitude of

eight miles (12.5 kilometres) — the highest yet — and then bring it back to a vertical landing. But an automatic engine abort occurred with just 1.3 seconds remaining in the countdown.

SpaceX announced on its web broadcast it was done for the day, and there was no word on when it might try again. SpaceX already has conducted five Starship test

flights, but these earlier, simpler models have gone no higher than 490 feet (150 metres.) The stain-

less steel version on the launch pad on Tuesday was the first to feature a nose cone, body flaps and

three Raptor engines. SpaceX has taken over Boca Chica in the far southeastern corner of Texas, near the Mexican border, to build and test its Starships. The company intends to use Starships — the upper stage atop Super Heavy boosters — to deliver massive satellites into orbit around Earth, and send people and cargo to the moon and Mars. —AP

occurred with just 1.3 seconds remaining in the countdown.

● THE STAINLESS steel version on the launch pad on Tuesday was the first to feature a nose cone.



This image shows SpaceX full-size Starship SN8 rocket prototype before its launch.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

Ex Argentina coach Sabella no more

Buenos Aires: Former coach Alejandro Sabella, who led the 2014 World Cup runner-up Argentina team, died on Tuesday at a clinic in Buenos Aires suffering from heart disease.

He was 66 years old. The former boss of Estudiantes de La Plata died at the Cardiovascular Institute of Buenos Aires, where he had been admitted on November 25 — the day soccer legend Diego Maradona died — after suffering an arrhythmia. The medical center said in a statement that Sabella was the victim of “secondary dilated heart disease and long-standing cardiotoxicity.” — AP

Ben Stokes' father passes away at 65

Christchurch: England all-rounder Ben Stokes lost his father Ged, who died here on Tuesday after a year-long battle with brain cancer. He was 65.

Stokes is currently with the England team in South Africa for the limited over series. He had played all three T20Is and was rested for ODIs, which was cancelled on Monday after multiple cases of Covid-19 were detected in the bio-bubble. Ged, a former rugby player and coach, had been suffering from brain cancer for some time and Stokes was there in Christchurch for more than a month taking care of his ailing father.

Stokes' famous “bent middle finger” gesture during the 2019 South Africa series was a tribute to his father's amputated finger. Ged had to remove a part of his finger in order to continue playing. — PTI

Former runner Earnest is dead

Hyderabad: Former middle distance runner and secretary of Ranga District Athletics Association B. Earnest Das passed away on Monday night. He was 81.

Das participated in the Indo-German Athletics Test held in Hyderabad in 1965. An international athletics official, he officiated in the 1982 Asian Games in New Delhi, 2002 Asian Grand Prix in Hyderabad and the 2003 Afro-Asian Games in Hyderabad. He also served as manager of the South Central Railway Athletics team for 30 years.

His son B. E. Stanley Jones is Athletics Federation of India's Technical Committee chairman. Telangana Athletics Association general secretary K. Sarangapani and Hyderabad District Athletics Association president Prof. Rajesh Kumar mourned the demise of Das and offered condolences to the family members.

Chess tourney at the weekend

Hyderabad: The Brilliant Chess Academy is conducting the 175th Brilliant Trophy Open chess tournament online on Saturday and Sunday. A total of ₹10,000 will be given to Top 20 places in the Open category. Special prizes will also be given to top two places in the Under 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 age groups for boys and girls separately. For further details contact J. Subrahmanyam on 9247399717.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Big Bash League: Hobart Hurricanes vs Sydney Sixers from 1.45 pm on Sony Six

Lanka Premier League: Jaffna vs Colombo from 3 pm; Galle vs Kandy from 7.30 pm on Sony Six

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: East Bengal vs Jamshedpur from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Europa League: CSKA Sofia vs Roma from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 3; Dundalk vs Arsenal from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Napoli vs Real Sociedad from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 1; Sparta Prague vs AC Milan from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 1; Tottenham Hotspur vs Antwerp from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2; Wolfsburg vs Feyenoord from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Six; Leicester City vs AEK Athens from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 3

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Ronaldo bests Messi

Cristiano nets brace as Juve crush Barcelona 3-0

Barcelona, Dec. 9: Cristiano Ronaldo struck twice from the penalty spot to win his battle with rival Lionel Messi and guide Juventus to a 3-0 win over Barcelona on Tuesday, earning the Italians top spot in Champions League Group G.

The former Real Madrid striker and his Argentina counterpart traded Ballon d'Or wins for a decade between 2008-2017 and were figureheads for the duelling Spanish giants, but there was only one winner at the Camp Nou as they met for the first time since Ronaldo's departure for Juve in 2018. Juventus lost 2-0 at home against Barcelona in October without Ronaldo, sidelined with Covid-19, but were greatly improved and earned the first Champions League away win against Barcelona since Bayern Munich triumphed in 2013.

Both sides, tied on 15 points, were assured of qualification before kick-off, but Juve's three-goal victory handed them a superior head-to-head record.

Ronald Koeman, reeling from Barcelona's 2-1 defeat by promoted minnows Cadiz on Saturday in La Liga, reacted by making four changes but the hosts started badly.

It only took 13 minutes for Ronaldo to break the deadlock, slotting home from the penalty spot after the referee deemed Ronald Araujo's challenge on him a foul. Juve's did not relent and their pressure led to a second goal, Weston McKennie volleying home. Juan Cuadrado's sweetly clipped cross in the 20th minute. — AFP

THE RESULTS

Juventus 3
(Ronaldo 13-pen, 52-pen, McKennie 20)
Barcelona 0

RB Leipzig 3
(Angelino 2, Haidara 13, Kluivert 69)
Manchester United 2
(Fernandes 80-pen, Pogba 82)

Chelsea 1
(Jorginho 28-pen)
Krasnodar 1
(Cabella 24)

Borussia Dortmund 1
(Piszczek 68, Witsel 78)
Zenit Saint Petersburg 1
(Driussi 16)



Cristiano Ronaldo (right) of Juventus lines up a shot to score his team's third goal against Barcelona during their UEFA Champions League Group 'G' football match at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Tuesday. — AFP

Racist slur halts PSG game

Paris, Dec. 9: Manchester United were knocked out of the Champions League after a 3-2 defeat by RB Leipzig on Tuesday, while Paris Saint-Germain's qualification for the last 16 was overshadowed by a racism row involving a match official that caused their game against Istanbul Basaksehir to be suspended for 24 hours.

Requiring just a point to advance, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side fell behind to an Angelino goal inside two minutes in Germany. Amadou Haidara soon added a second and United and were trailing 3-0 heading into the final quarter after a Justin Kluivert strike.

Bruno Fernandes's penalty and a deflected Paul Pogba header gave United a lifeline but Leipzig, who reached the semifinals last term, held on to move top of Group 'H' on 12 points.

Leipzig must wait until Wednesday to find out whether they finish first or second in the section, after the contest between last season's runners-up PSG and Turkish champions Basaksehir was interrupted with the score 0-0 in the 14th minute.



Kylian Mbappe (third from right) of PSG looks on after the game was suspended amid allegations of racism by one of the match officials during the UEFA Champions League Group 'H' football match against Istanbul Basaksehir at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris on Tuesday. — AFP

Players walked off in Paris amid allegations of racism by the fourth official, in an unprecedented incident in European football's elite club competition.

The row erupted after Basaksehir assistant coach Pierre Webbo, the

former Cameroon international, was shown a red card during a fierce row on the touchline with staff from the Turkish club appearing to accuse the official of using a racist term.

Television microphones picked up a furious Webbo

repeatedly asking why a racist term had been used to describe him.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he “strongly” condemned the incident, while UEFA announced it would open a “thorough investigation”. — AFP

KASHMIR INTO SEMIFINALS

Kolkata, Dec. 9: Real Kashmir and United SC secured their second successive wins to seal semi final berths from their respective groups in the 123rd IFA Shield here on Wednesday.

Fresh from a 2-1 win over Peerless SC, the Snow Leopards were caught unawares by the aggressive brand of football by Aryan SC before they finally broke the deadlock with a Mason Robertson strike in the 72nd minute. — PTI

Injured Warner out of first Test

Sydney, Dec. 9: Australia's star opening batsman David Warner has been ruled out of the first Test against India, but will try to return for the blockbuster second instalment on Boxing Day, Cricket Australia said Wednesday.

Warner is recovering from a strained adductor muscle that forced him to limp out of Australia's second one-day international against India last month, after a knock of 83.

“I feel I have made great progress in a short amount of time and it's best for me to stay here in Sydney to continue working on getting back to full fitness,” Warner said.

“The injury feels a lot better, but I need to be able to satisfy in my own mind and to my team-mates that it is 100 percent ready for Test match conditions.”

“That includes running between the wickets and being agile in the field. Right now I feel I am short of being able to play at peak fitness and another 10 days will make a difference,” he added.

The day-night first Test



David Warner

will begin in Adelaide on December 17, kicking off a four-match series.

It is not yet clear who will take Warner's place in Adelaide, but Cameron Green's century this week for Australia 'A' against a strong India 'A' attack — featuring Ravichandran Ashwin, Umesh Yadav and Mohammed Siraj — has put him in the running.

In contrast, Will Pucovski and Joe Burns, in line to form Australia's top order, both flopped in the warm-up match and Pucovski also had to leave the field with concussion symptoms after a delivery struck his helmet. — AFP

RAHUL CRUISES INTO TOP 3 IN T20 RANKINGS

Dubai, Dec. 9: India captain Virat Kohli moved up a place to eighth while K. L. Rahul broke into the top three in the latest ICC rankings for T20 batsmen, after their impressive performances in the three-match series against Australia.

Taking the third spot in the chart, Rahul has bagged 816 rating points and is 55 points behind second-placed Babar Azam in the current standings.

England batsman David Malan (915 points) retained the top spot, while Australian limited-overs skipper Aaron Finch slipped to the fourth spot. — PTI

Kohli rues DRS miss in last tie

Sydney, Dec. 9: Captain Virat Kohli wasn't happy that his team lost out on a perfect DRS call just because replay of the delivery bowled to Matthew Wade was shown on giant screen before the permissible limit of 15 seconds.

India lost the third T20 International by 12 runs and one of the reasons could be attributed to the fact that Wade, who could have been adjudged leg before off T Natarajan at a score of 50, got a lucky reprieve and added 30 more runs.

“That lbw was a strange one because we were still discussing whether the ball was going down and within the 15-second time, they showed the replay on the screen. We decided to go for the review but the umpire said they have already shown the replay on the screen,” Kohli said.

In fact had the review been taken, TV replays showed that the umpire would have been forced to reverse his decision.

That lbw was a strange one because we were still discussing whether the ball was going down and within the 15-second time, they showed the replay on the screen.

— VIRAT KOHLI
Indian cricket captain

“I had a chat with Rod (Tucker, the umpire) and said: ‘what do we do in this situation’ and he said ‘nothing can be done. It's a mistake from TV.’” Kohli narrated the incident.

He said the Indian team management had made its displeasure clear with the authorities, saying a mistake of this magnitude in an international game is unacceptable. “I thought from the management perspective, a message has to be passed that this can't be done at the highest level because in a very important game, it can be very costly,” he said. — PTI

Gopi delves into athletes' minds

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 9

Badminton guru Pullela Gopichand has stepped up his training by a notch, and has decided to delve into the minds of his trainees.

On Wednesday, the champion coach launched Dhyana for Sports, an app that measures mental aspects via meditation and helps achieve emotional fitness.

Vouching for its mechanism, Gopi termed the application a ‘game changer’ and stressed on the importance of mental training. As many as 10 meditation sessions designed, voiced by himself and inspired from his on-ground training sessions will now be available on the app that tracks mindfulness.

The 10 sessions in the ‘Dhyana for Sports’ section in the app — Uniting Your InnerSelf, Forgive, Winner Instincts, Gratitude, Stillness, Visualisation, Strengthen Discipline, Pre-Workout, Post-Workout and End of the Day — cater

to athletes and assist them in monitoring and analysing their state of meditation in order to help inculcate a champion's mindset.

“I am certain that these guided sessions will prove to be fruitful to anyone wanting to become the best version of themselves. In sport, you need to be a warrior and possess killer instinct. This is what we talk about in the app — the winning attitude,” the chief national coach said, adding, “I am so proud to be associated with it.”

Athletics coach N. Ramesh echoed Gopi's opinion. “This is a huge plus for track and field athletes, who have very little time to recover between the heats and the finals, that's when mental strength comes into play,” he said.

“Physical abilities can make you a national champion but if you want to excel on the international stage and stay there, mental ability is a must,” the Dronacharya awardee added.

Parthiv announces his retirement

New Delhi, Dec. 9: Parthiv Patel, one of the youngest to have played Test cricket for India at the age of 17, on Wednesday announced his retirement from all forms of the game, three month's short of his 36th birthday.

The baby-faced Parthiv, who made his Test debut under Sourav Ganguly, aged 17 years and 153 days, played 65 international games for the country, which included 25 Tests, 38 ODIs and two T20 Internationals.

“Today, I announce retirement from all forms of cricket and as I bring down curtains on this 18 year-old cricketing jour-

ney, I feel heavier with gratitude for many,” the 35-year-old Parthiv said in a statement on his official twitter and instagram account.

The left-handed batsman scored nearly 1700 runs (1696) across formats with 934 runs (6 half centuries) coming in the longest format.

In ODIs, he scored 736 runs with four half-centuries and a highest score of 95. He effected 72 dismissals in Tests, which include 62 catches and 10 stumpings.

Parthiv burst onto the scene in early 2002, when he was sent to England after having played for India A in South Africa



Parthiv Patel

and even before he made his Ranji Trophy debut.

“The BCCI showed generous amount of confidence and faith in a 17-year-old boy to play for India. I have enormous gratitude towards them for guiding me and hand-

holding me in the formative years of my young career,” Parthiv further stated.

In fact, he played his first Ranji Trophy after he was dropped from the India squad in 2004 due to below-par glove work on tours of Australia and Pakistan.

He was thankful to all his captains and “especially Dada”, referring to BCCI president Sourav Ganguly.

Parthiv Patel called his first Test captain Sourav Ganguly a “leader in true sense” along with the legendary Anil Kumble and said their influence in his life went beyond the cricketing arena.

“I would always hold Sourav Ganguly as a leader in true sense with his man management skills. Sourav and Anil Kumble were great leaders and they made me the kind of person I am,” Parthiv said.

“I still have the Test cap with my name wrongly printed ‘Partiv’ that Dada gave me. The victories at Headingley (2002) and Adelaide (2003-04) and the half-century opening the innings at Rawalpindi will be my favourite memories.”

He said that retirement was on his mind for the last one year and that the timing couldn't have been better. — PTI