


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | SUNDAY | 20 DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 31.0°C

Min: 21.0°C

RH: 73%

Rainfall: NIL

Forecast: Partly Cloudy.

Max/Min temp.

31/20 °C

COVID-19

COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+26,998)	(+342)
1,00,31,618	1,45,509

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+627)

(+4)

TS: 2,80,822

1,510

(+479)

(+4)

AP: 8,78,285

7,074

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

7,63,15,127

DEATHS

16,86,923

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana

Tithi: Margasira Shuddha Shashti till 2:57 pm

Star: Satabhisham till 9:04 pm

Variyam: 4 am to 5:44 am(Monday)

Durmuhurtam: 4:14 pm to 4:58 pm

Rahukalam: 4:30 pm to 6 pm

HILIRI CALENDAR

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 4, 1442 AH

PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5:30 am

Zohar: 1:30 pm

Asar: 4:15 pm

Maghrib: 5:38 pm

Isha: 8:30 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6:27 AM

SUNSET TODAY 5:34 PM

MOONRISE TODAY 11:12 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 23:53 PM

COUNTER POINT



As a matter of principle, I never use my company's products!

SHORT TAKES

RSS ideologue Vaidya, 97, dead

Nagpur: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ideologue and the organisation's first spokesperson Madhav Govind Vaidya died here on Saturday after a brief illness, his family said. He was 97. Vaidya, who had recovered from coronavirus infection, died at a private hospital in Nagpur, his grandson Vishnu Vaidya said. The last rites will be held on Sunday. Vaidya became a volunteer of the RSS almost two decades years after the organisation was set up. A former chief editor of the Tarun Bharat, Vaidya became a RSS member in 1943.

Report on Page 4

Winstrom India VP removed

New Delhi: Apple's contract manufacturer Wistron on Saturday removes its vice-president Vincent Lee, who was heading operations in India after finding fault in the process of wage payment during its internal investigation. The Taiwanese electronics services major admitted the mistakes at its end and apologised to the workers. "We are removing the Vice President who oversees our business in India. We are also enhancing our processes and restructuring our teams to ensure these issues cannot happen again," Wistron said.

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Cops probe Akhtar

plaint on Kangana

WORLD | 5

UK discovers new strain

of Covid spreading fast

SPORTS | 8

Gavaskar hails

Aussie bowlers

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Cadets celebrate after the Combined Graduation Parade at the Air Force Academy in Dundigal, Hyderabad on Saturday.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

APSRTC to operate Sankranti specials

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 19

APSRTC, which suffered huge losses due to Corona pandemic, is now planning to operate 3,607 special buses during Sankranti festival season to make good use of the festival demand.

The special buses will be plying from January 8 to January 14 between AP, Hyderabad and other areas of Telangana, Bangalore and Chennai. Further, the APSRTC will also run special buses

between various destinations within the AP state. As per information, 1,251 buses will operate from Hyderabad and other places in Telangana. 433 buses will run between Bangalore and various destinations in AP.

133 special bus services will be from Chennai and while an equal number will be run from various districts of the state to Vijayawada.

About 551 special bus services will operate from other districts to Visakhapatnam while

1,038 buses will operate along the inter-district routes during the week-long pre-Sankranti period. Last year, during the same period, APSRTC had operated 4,200 buses.

The corporation is yet to decide on fares it will charge for the special bus services. Last year, it was one-and-a-half times the actual fare. APSRTC executive director (Operations) K.S. Brahmananda Reddy said additional services may be pressed into service as per the need and rush of passengers.

MODERNA GETS US NOD, UK TO CLEAR OXFORD IN 2021

Washington, Dec. 19: Moderna has become the second company to get emergency use authorisation for its anti-coronavirus vaccine from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA determined that the vaccine has met the statutory criteria for issuance of an emergency use authorisation.

Meanwhile, the Oxford University vaccine being produced by AstraZeneca may get approval from the UK's regulator by the end of this year for a rollout from early 2021.

■ Reports on Page 5

TS STUDENTS GET RAW DEAL IN AP MBBS ADMISSIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 19

Scores of students belonging to Telangana were denied an opportunity to participate in the second phase of counselling for admission into the first year MBBS by the Kaloji Narayana Rao University of Health Sciences (KNRUHS).

These students were allotted seats under the convener quota in the first phase but were barred from the second phase as they had joined Siddha-arth Medical College (SMC), Vijayawada, a 'statewide institution' in which students from the three regions of erstwhile AP were allotted seats as per the quota fixed in the Presidential Order.

■ Reports on Page 2

29 adivasis walk free from bonded labour Karnataka

DC CORRESPONDENT MAHBUBNAGAR, DEC. 19

Twenty-nine Adivasis, including eight children and 13 women, walked to freedom from two years of bonded labour in a Karnataka village. All the rescued belong to Nagarkurnool district of Telangana, announced district collector L. Sharmam.

Those rescued mostly belong to the Chenchu tribe and Scheduled Caste communities hailing from Peddakottal, Lingal, and Balmoor villages in the district.

The collector said the 29 freed have been provided all facilities including job cards to find work in Nagarkurnool. "The administration will extend all support to them

● **THOSE RESCUED** mostly belong to the Chenchu tribe and Scheduled Caste communities

under various social welfare schemes of the government for leading a free life," the collector assured.

"These labour neither knew the language nor the location they had been working", said Krishnan, secretary of National Solidarity Council, Tamil Nadu-based NGO that was involved in the rescue.

Narrating the harrowing experience of the bonded labour, Krishnan said two labour contractors belonging to Mahabubnagar, Gundiya Naik and Eshwaraih, paid an advance of ₹50,000 to Rs. 1,00,000 per adult person to

deploy them as labour at a construction site of the University of Agriculture and Horticulture at Iruvakkki in Sagara taluk of Shivamogga district in Karnataka.

Post that, each labourer was paid a measly Rs. 5,500 per month and forced to work longer hours as captives, Krishnan pointed out. Moreover, a part of this monthly amount the workers received was adjusted towards the advance already paid. The 29 labour were just provided food and shelter. Even their children aged five to nine years, were made to work on the site, the NGO representative said.

He said the rescue was carried out with the help of Karnataka's Sagara assistant commissioner V. Prasanna.

New Delhi, Dec. 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday hard sold his government's reforms spanning from manufacturing to taxation to labour, saying they have changed the world perception about the country from 'why India' to 'why not India' and went on to quote record foreign investment (FDI) during the Covid-19 pandemic as a testimony to that.

Speaking at industry association Assocham's Foundation Week event, Modi also said agriculture reforms brought by his government six months back have started benefiting farmers. The reforms in the last six years have influenced in changing the sentiment of the industry from 'why India' to 'why not India' in investing.

"There was a situation in the past when investors would question 'why India' (for investing in the country). With reforms (of past six years) and their effects, its proposition has changed to 'why not India'," he said.

● **SPEAKING AT** industry association Assocham's Foundation Week event, Modi also said agriculture reforms brought by his government six months back have started benefiting farmers.

He cited scrapping of 1,500 old and obsolete laws and farming new ones that are in tune with the changing investment order as an example of his government's outlook.

"Earlier investors cited high tax rates to say 'Why India' but today (corporate) tax rates are so competitive that they say 'why not India'," he said.

Previously, a web of regulations and rules were cited by investors to ask why to invest in India but easing compliance burden in the new labour laws have made them say 'why not India', he said.

Red tape previously made investors say 'why India' but a red carpet is now making them say 'why not India', he said.

— PTI

CONGRESS PLANS 'CHINTAN SHIVIR' TO ADDRESS WOES

ASHHAR KHAN | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 19

The logjam within the Congress continued even after Congress president Sonia Gandhi along with senior leaders met some of G23 letter writers. The letter writers also stood their ground, demanding that the issues they had raised in their August letter should be addressed at the earliest.

These issues include a "decisive, active and visible" leadership, as well as sweeping changes in the party's working. After a marathon five-hour meeting, the party agreed to hold a brainstorming session or a "chintan shivir" soon so that all issues can be discussed.

Insiders claim that Mrs Gandhi heard the entire gathering patiently and said that more such interactions will take place. Addressing the media after the meeting, senior leader and acting treasurer Pawan Kumar Bansal said the discussions centred mainly on strengthening the party.

Mamata will be isolated: Shah

Says BJP will win 200 seats in Bengal elections

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 19

Tearing into the "dynastic politics" of West Bengal's ruling Trinamul Congress, Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday claimed Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who he claimed was planning to make her MP nephew Abhishek Banerjee the next CM, would soon find herself "isolated" ahead of next year's Assembly elections.

He also claimed that the BJP would win 200 out of the state's total 294 seats in the election.

Mr Shah, who is on a two-day visit to the state, made the forecast in Midnapore after former TMC heavyweight Shubendu Adhikari joined the BJP in his presence with a long list of loyalists, including nine MLAs, an MP and at least six dozen key district TMC office-bearers in what turned out to be a mega defection fair on the coldest day of the season in the state.

Among the prominent were six TMC MLAs -- Banasri Maity of Kanthi North; Biswajit Kundu of Kalna; Saikat Panja of



Union home minister Amit Shah flashes the victory sign during his visit to Swami Vivekananda's ancestral house in Kolkata on Saturday.

— PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

Burdwan East; Shilbhadra Dutta of Barrackpore; Dipali Biswas of Gajol and Sukra Munda of Nagarkata. There were also one MLA each from several other parties — Sudip Mukherjee of the Congress from Purulia, Tapasi Mondal of the CPM from Haldia and Ashoke Dinda of CPI from Tamluk — apart from two-time TMC MP of Burdwan East Sunil Mondal, ex-Alipur-duar MP Dasharath Tirkey and former textiles minister Shyamapada Mukherjee.

Praising Mr Adhikari's leadership in bringing "all

the good people" to the BJP, Mr Shah told the grand rally: "Didi claims the BJP is a party of converts. I remind her: What was your party at the root? Was it TMC? When you left the Congress and built the TMC, wasn't it a change of party? Now, when Shubendu comes to work under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership against injustice and exploitation, you find it a switchcover! This is just a beginning. You will be left alone as polls near. I see a tsunami like Didi has never imagined."

DOWN | UNDER Batsmen fail to capitalise on advantage created by bowlers, dropped catch goes over line for six

Kohli's India records lowest score of 36 in Tests

R. MOHAN I DC CHENNAI, DEC. 19

This will go down as the "Summer of 36". Team India achieved history of the notorious sort in going down for a bus route kind of number in their total of 36 (innings closed as last man Mohammad Shami retired hurt). The ignominy of being shot out for their lowest total since India played their first Test at Lord's in 1932 is that of Virat Kohli's team. Is this an aberration or is it a "representation of new India?" Only time will tell.

The previous low for India was on the 1974 tour of England when they were a miserable set of tourists, huddled at Lord's against the blustery cold of Old

Blighty as the ball swung and seamed. But this was a bright Australian summer day on which the ball hardly swung and moved off the seam only a smidgen.

This Team India of the new millennium sank without a trace, done in by precise bowling, the ball pitched up to a full length and aimed at the corridor of uncertainty by Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc and the stump-tump line as in Josh Hazlewood's pinpoint accuracy.

Cummins was brilliant in using the in-till to draw the batsmen into playing at the ball and taking it away. Hazlewood carried out his plan of persistent accuracy around off stump. Up against such a planned



Virat Kohli congratulates his Aussie counterpart Tim Paine after the first Test in Adelaide on Saturday.

— AFP

assault, the worst of Indian batting erupted in indistinct footwork, hesitancy and bats presented to the ball held in hard hands and the outside edge drawn like

moths to the flame. Even skipper Kohli, who compiled that flawless innings of 74 — the highest in the match on a pitch that was nowhere near Adelaide

Oval standards and far from ideal for a Test match played with the pink ball that does a lot more when new than its red cousin — in the first innings managed just one boundary before being taken low in the slips cordon, as indistinct a stroke as that of any others in the top order.

The last time a similar situation occurred may have been when Team India seemed to be on the cusp of making history but flopping was in Bridgetown, Barbados in 1997 when 120 was the fourth innings target. The West Indian attack was charged up that final morning, bowling the wicket-to-wicket line with an iron discipline and close catchers doing the rest. Young

Tendulkar was the skipper then and a deeply disappointed man after India were bowled out for 81.

The best laid plans of men and mice can often go awry. But this seems to happen to Team India more often. A handy first innings lead and a bowling attack manned by such splendid men as Jasprit Bumrah and Ravi Ashwin had too small a bank of runs to defend even on such a pitch offering plenty of assistance. And Shami, the third prong of the seam trio, had to retire hurt after ducking, swaying and swishing at the ball like a man in a trance.

The Indian approach to bowling on this pitch was in sharp contrast to what the Australians did in

keeping the ball up to the bat. The number of times Burns pulled Bumrah amply illustrated how the Indians were pitching it that much shorter. Bumrah had bowled so much better in the first innings to exploit the variable bounce.

The shabby ways of Team India were exemplified in the finish too with a dropped catch going over the line for six. The embarrassment was complete. This team didn't have the mental toughness needed to win a Test match in what is the hardest country in the world to beat the home team in. Kohli's men flattered to deceive and they will be without their leader in the rest of the series.

SHORT TAKES

WATER RESOURCES
OFFICIALS SEEK
VIEWS ON PROJECTSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 19

The water resources authorities posted details of works of Papayapalem Lift project of package-1 and Babu Jagjeevan Ram Uttarandhra Sujala Sravanthi project phase-II of package-2 proposed to be taken up at internal bench mark value of ₹3,080 crore and ₹2,054.50 respectively on the official website of Judicial Preview Commission for scrutiny.

The authorities are taking up detailed investigation, formation of gravity canal and construction of Papayapalem lift scheme with all allied component works, branch canals and distributors network including cross masonry and cross drainage works.

Similarly, they are also taking up Jagjeevan Ram Uttarandhra Sujala Sravanthi project including formation of main canal, branch canals and distributary network including cross masonry and cross drainage works.

They say that those interested can visit the website and post their views up to 5 pm on December 22, 2020, and maintain that once the JPC gives its approval, tenders will be invited to finalise the agencies for taking up the execution of both the projects.

Meanwhile, Polavaram Project Authority chief executive officer J. Chandra Sekhar Iyer is scheduled to inspect the progress of Polavaram irrigation project and other works from December 20 to 23.

ALL SET FOR APSET
TODAY, EXAM TO BE
HELD IN 76 CENTRESDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 19

All is set for conducting the Andhra Pradesh State Eligibility Test-2020 at 76 exam centres in the state on Sunday.

In a release issued here on Saturday, APSET member secretary Prof K. Srinivasa Rao stated that 35,862 candidates applied to appear for the test. He said that no candidate would be allowed into the exam centre even if he or she arrived late by a minute.

The APSET is being held in 30 subjects and the exam will be held from 9.30 am to 10.30 am for Paper-1 and from 10.30 am to 12.30 pm for Paper-2. Exam centres are set up in Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry, Guntur, Nellore, Anantapur, Tirupati, Kadapa and Kurnool in the state.

The candidates will be allowed into the exam centre one hour before the scheduled time for commencement of the exam, and mobile phones and calculators will not be allowed into the exam centre. The candidates are advised to wear face masks and use sanitiser as per the Covid-19 protocol.

NTR VARSITY TO
CONDUCT WEB
COUNSELLINGDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 19

NTR university of health sciences issued notification for exercising web options for the first phase of web-based counselling for admission into MBBS/BDS courses under management quota seats for the academic year 2020-21, here on Saturday.

All the eligible candidates whose names are present in the provisional final merit list for admission into management quota seats can exercise their web options from 6 am on December 20 to 1 pm on December 21 in the university website: <https://apvmedadm.apntruhns.in>.

The NRI category seats in Sri Padmavathi Medical College for Women (Under SVIMS) will be filled after receipt of merit lists of eligible candidates under NRI category and NRI sponsored category, based on NEET rank, from the principal of the college concerned after scrutiny and verification of uploaded NRI documents of the candidates claiming such category seats as per the rules.

Only Muslim minority candidates are eligible to exercise web options for management quota seats in unaided private minority medical colleges.

All the eligible candidates can exercise web options as per their eligibility for the seats available under management quota for both MBBS and BDS courses. Both category B and category C, seats available in private unaided non-minority/minority medical and dental colleges will appear to the candidates who are found eligible for both category seats and such candidates have to exercise web options carefully as per seat category/college.

Awareness programme



Additional DCP Srinivasa Rao and ACP Varma interact with students at an awareness programme on Anti Drugs at a college in Vijayawada on Saturday.

— DC

Mobile vendors raided,
stale food destroyed

50 vehicles seized, a fine of ₹500 slapped on each vendor

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 19

To check sale of stale and adulterated food and its impact on health of people, food safety and municipal corporation authorities carried out raids against street food vendors in several parts of the state on Friday from morning till late in the night.

The raids are in the aftermath of “mystery illness” affecting nearly 600 persons and claiming one life at Eluru recently. Deputy Chief Minister in-charge of health Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas directed food safety and municipal authorities to conduct surprise checks on street food vendors. Accordingly, food safety officials from West Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts, apart

● Officials inspected chicken and mutton shops too for ensuring whether they are maintaining hygiene.

● Major findings of officials during the raids are that streets vendors sell food by encroaching upon drains and other public places.

from those of Eluru Municipal Corporation, carried out raids, focusing on mobile street food vendors, including those who sell tiffins, fast food, curries and the locally popular chicken pakora.

Officials destroyed tonnes of stale and adulterated food. 50 vehicles have been seized and a fine of ₹500 slapped against each vendor. Subsequently, all vehicles were released with a warning to vendors not to resume sale of state or adulterated food.

Food safety authorities also inspected three hotels and collected sam-

ples of chicken biryani, chicken fry and vegetable curry and sent them for analysis to the State Food Lab in Hyderabad.

Eluru food safety officer M. Srinivasa Rao said, “Based on directions from the deputy CM, we carried out raids against street food vendors, apart from hotels. We have also collected samples of food following suspicions that they are using banned food colours and mono sodium glutamate. We will continue to inspect all food-selling establishments to safeguard the

health of people,” he underlined.

Major findings of officials during the raids are that streets vendors sell food by encroaching upon drains and other public places. They prepare and sell food items in unhygienic conditions. The waste being generated by them is carelessly dumped either in drains or in public places.

Eluru municipal health officer (in-charge) K. A. Kondala Rao said, “Even as several people were affected by the mystery illness and national institutions are trying to find out the source of this illness, people are continuing to visit street food vendors with no concern for their health. We have instructed vendors to stop sale of food for the time being.”

TD ASKS JAGAN
NOT TO GIVE NOD
TO CHEMICAL UNITSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 19:

Telugu Desam MLC Yanamala Ramakrishnudu wrote a letter to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, seeking denial of permission to chemical and bulk drug industries. Leader of Opposition in AP Legislative Council and senior Telugu Desam leader, Ramakrishnudu, on Saturday expressed concern over the setting up of chemical and bulk drug industries which were posing a serious threat to the livelihoods of farmers, fishermen and the local people in the Konaseema area. He urged Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to deny permission to any chemical industry from Arthurpeta to Uppada and adequate compensation should be paid to the farmers and fishers who had suffered losses till now.

In a letter addressed to the Chief Minister here, Ramakrishnudu stressed the need for relocating the Divis industry from Kona region in the overall interests of the local people.

He sought that the false and illegal cases filed against the fishermen and women should be lifted. He blamed the government's negligence for tense situations in Tondangi mandal and the rapid spread of unrest in the otherwise peaceful Godavari districts.

He claimed that the twin threats were being posed to the environment on the one side and democracy on the other.

FARMER CUTS
PADDY IN ‘JAI
JAGAN’ SHAPEDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 19:

A farmer and YSRC leader wished Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on his birthday in an innovative way by cutting the paddy yield in the shape of “Jai Jagan” in Karumuru-varipalem village of Chunduru mandal in Guntur district on Saturday. The photos of the creative paddy cutting and videos went viral in various social media platforms and attracted people.

While harvesting his paddy, YSRC state joint secretary Kanumuru Venkat Reddy of Vemuru village cut it to get in ‘Jai Jagan’ shape to express his admiration and wished Jagan on his birthday in a creative way.

With the help of drone, Venkat Reddy captured photos and video of the paddy field. He said that Jagan was promoting agriculture in all aspects to turn farming into a profitable profession and all farmers of the state benefitted with the Rythu Bharosa and other welfare schemes. He said that he thought of extending is greetings to Jagan in an innovative way hence cut the paddy yield in Jai Jagan formation.

Vemuru MLA Merugu Nagarjuna was also at the paddy fields to mark Jagan's birthday.

Cops say Naidu claim
on assault is wrongDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 19

Telugu Desam supremo N. Chandrababu Naidu found himself on a wrong foot by slamming the ruling YSRC party with a wrong post on social media handle twitter.

Naidu tweeted, “A shocking and horrifying picture of what Andhra Pradesh has become. This brazen attack on a policeman guarding MLA Velagapudi Ramakrishna's office shows the extent to which the YSRC goondas have been emboldened. Even a policeman isn't safe in AP anymore.”

He shared an image where a man wearing white shirt was seen placing a hand on the head of a policeman while two other men wearing YSRC party scarves, approaching the policeman. He alleged that the policeman who was guarding the TD MLA from Visakhapatnam (East) Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu, was being assaulted.

In a sharp reaction to

Naidu's tweet, AP police clarified on it by saying that the man being seen holding the policeman in the image was in fact helping him by doing some massage as he suffered injury on his head when he fell down on the road. The AP police made it clear that Naidu's post was not correct.

Meanwhile, the Visakhapatnam police denounced the social media post by Naidu and explained that when the circle inspector Emmanuel Raju suffered some injury while on bandobust duty, the YSRC activist was helping him by rubbing the head to provide some relief.

Dwaraka ACP Murthy released the entire footage of the incident and said that the photograph posted on social media was distorted as if it was an assault on the policeman and made it clear that the police in Visakhapatnam had been working in the most transparent manner and even won several awards.

Lokesh says policeman
injured in YSRC attackDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 19

Telugu Desam MLC Nara Lokesh claimed that a policeman suffered injuries in an attack by the ruling YSRC men in Visakhapatnam, but the police were trying to hide the facts. He slammed the YSRC activists for posing a threat to even the policemen in the state. He said it is unfortunate that some police officials were stooping to lower levels just for the sake of getting favours from the YSRC leaders.

Lokesh recalled that the policeman suffered injuries after the ruling party goondas attacked him outside the office of Visakhapatnam East MLA Velagapudi Ramakrishna. He made a strong plea not to

mortgage the self-respect of the police department to Jagan Mohan Reddy. He stated that their party stuck to its stand that the YSRC goondas attacked and pushed the police officer who later fell on a moving autorickshaw and sustained injuries. He accused the YSRC leaders of resorting to illegal activities and then taking up cover-up operations to mislead the public.

Former minister Ch. Ayyanna Patrudu said that YSRC Rajya Sabha member Vijaya Sai Reddy was making shameless statements to twist the facts concerning the attack on the policeman. He alleged that it had become a routine for the ruling YSRC leaders to commit misdeeds and then blame them on the Opposition TD.

Naidu sponsored
fake movement in
Amaravati: BotsaDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 19

Minister for municipal administration Botsa Satyanarayana said that the YSRC government created 4 lakh jobs and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy served the needy despite the Covid-19 pandemic and the financial crises.

He refuted allegations of opposition parties and claimed that Chandrababu Naidu and Telugu Desam leaders were conspiracy to defame the government to tarnish its reputation through baseless allegations.

Ministers Satyanarayana and Ch. Sriranganadha Raju set foundation stones for various development works in Chilakaluripet on Saturday. They alleged that Naidu sponsored a fake movement in the name of Amaravati to protect himself and his benamis interests.

Satyanarayana alleged that Naidu had used BCs as vote banks and never worked for the development

of those communities. He claimed that Jagan established corporations for the development of BCs and further appointed women to half of the posts which shows the dedication of the YSRC government towards BC welfare. He alleged that the TD was obstructing the welfare schemes like housing scheme by knocking the doors of the courts against the distribution of house sites and affirmed that the YSRC government adhered to provide house sites to all needy people.

Narasaraopeta MLA Dr Gopireddy Srinivas Reddy recalled that Naidu neglected agriculture sector and telling farming is a wasted effort but Jagan following the path of his father Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy turning farming as a profitable profession through various agriculture schemes.

Sattenapalli MLA Ambati Rambabu stated that Naidu backstabbed TD founder NTR and snatched the party and termed him as a backstabber.

BJP demands White Paper
on development of SeemaDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, DEC. 19

BJP state president Somu Veerraju demanded a White Paper on Rayalaseema development and alleged that both the YSRC and TD are in cahoots with each other.

Veerraju questioned Chief Minister for not instituting an inquiry into the alleged irregularities of N. Chandrababu Naidu despite accusing him of looting thousands of crores. “We believe there is a tacit understanding between them”, Veerraju said.

Addressing the media on Saturday along with Rajya Sabha MP T.G. Venkatesh, Veerraju said that Rayalaseema region was endowed with river waters and natural resources but political will is lacking in realising the dreams of people.

He questioned Jagan Mohan Reddy why he was not showing the same interest in Seema

● The BJP president said Kurnool would be made Winter Capital of AP and Assembly Sessions would be held here.

projects while he wants Polavaram project to be completed on war-footing. Rayalaseema projects also need solutions on a war-footing and BJP was on its way to realising that dream, he said.

On repeated demands for referendum by TD leaders, the BJP state president asked Naidu to declare where he spent ₹7,200 crore on Amaravati. He challenged both of them to conduct a referendum in all 51 constituencies of Rayalaseema.

He added that the state government was putting up stickers of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's schemes and claiming them as their own.

Be it medical colleges in each parliamentary constituency or national highways, it was Modi

who released funds for the projects that are in operation, Veerraju said.

On red sanders smuggling, he said why Jagan and Naidu and his MLAs and ministers could not control the smuggling activity. “Our party is for industrialisation of all regions but the lack of will to plug smuggling activity in red sanders is quaint,” he said.

The BJP president said Kurnool would be made Winter Capital of AP and Assembly Sessions would be held here. Batting for Kurnool as an ideal place for holding Assembly sessions, he said the party would discuss the issue and do all that is required to make Rayalaseema regain its lost glory as it had sacrificed the first Capital after bifurcation from Madras State.

Venkatesh has been prodding for Winter Capital at Kurnool in all party deliberations and the high command was favourably disposed to it, Veerraju said.

EDU | MATTERS

KNRUHS notification prevents students from questioning the decision in HC

TS students not allowed in MBBS counselling

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 19

Scores of students belonging to Telangana state have been denied an opportunity to participate in the second phase of counselling for admission into the first year MBBS by the Kaloji Narayana Rao University of Health Sciences (KNRUHS).

These students were allotted seats under the convener quota in the first phase but were barred from the second phase as they had joined Siddhartha Medical College (SMC), Vijayawada, a ‘statewide institution’ in which students from the three regions of erstwhile

Andhra Pradesh were allotted seats as per the quota fixed in the Presidential Order.

The KNRUHS hurriedly gave notification for the second phase and scheduled it on Saturday and Sunday, preventing the students from questioning the decision in the Telangana High Court.

“Wrong application of rules by the KNRUHS is preventing students from Telangana state who joined Siddhartha College to ‘slide’ to a better college in Telangana. But students from Andhra and Rayalaseema who also took admission in the same college are extended the privilege by their

health university. This is creating a class within class, which is illegal,” said a student.

SMC and the Hyderabad-based Government Dental College were declared as “statewide institutes” in undivided Andhra Pradesh and the status is being continued after bifurcation. Students from Telangana state get admission in SMC by virtue of their Osmania University local status.

After the first phase of counselling in Telangana state which ended on December 10, the NTR University of Health Sciences (NTRUHS) of Andhra Pradesh held the first-phase counselling for

colleges in AP along with SMC.

“We had submitted our original certificates in the colleges allotted to us in the first phase in Telangana state. When we got allotment in Siddhartha, the NTRUHS insisted that we produce the original certificates. The KNRUHS and the respective colleges in Telangana state forced us to give an undertaking that we are surrendering the seat to give certificate,” a parent pointed out.

Normally, when sliding takes place, the students need not submit certificates in the second college which directly obtains cer-

tificates from the first college. “Except for the location of the college Siddhartha is equivalent to any college in Telangana state and those who joined there should be allowed for second phase of counselling,” said another parent.

Ironically, the university also misrepresented in its notification that these students did not join colleges allotted to them in the first phase of counselling.

“The fact is that they paid fee in the college and secured admission only to be forced to give it up. None of the rules governing admission into MBBS or the prospectus and guidelines have a mention

about giving up a seat to join Siddhartha,” the parent pointed out.

When contacted, Vice Chancellor Karunakar Reddy said the decision was taken to prevent blocking of seats by students.

However, blocking of seats are done in the private colleges but in case of Siddhartha Medical College the students were allotted seat by the convener under the OU quota. Even if they are allowed in the second phase of counselling and move to another college, students next in the merit order from Telangana state would get the seat in Siddhartha Medical College.



SHORT TAKES

MINISTER TO
START ANNUAL
FESTIVALDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 19

The 12 days annual Shashti Kalyana Mahotsavams of Srivalli Devasena Sametha Sri Subramanneswara Swamy temple at Singarapalem in Mudinepalli mandal of Krishna district would start on Sunday amidst Corona protocol. Minister for endowment Vellampalli Srinivas Rao with MLA Dulam Nageswara Rao, MP Kotagiri Sridhar and endowment commissioner P. Arjuna Rao would launch the annual devotional celebrations. Temple executive officer K.V. Gopala Rao said that devotional worship and cultural programmes would be held from December 20 to 31. He said that Kalyana Mahotsavam would be held on December 20, Kalyana Radhotsavam on 23 and traditional Teppotsavam would be held on December 24.

3 OF A FAMILY
END LIFE IN
GURYAMDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, DEC. 19

In a tragic incident, three members of a family have committed suicide by hanging at Gulyam village in Halaharvi mandal, and the deceased were identified as Kavitha, 35, Sai Nischal, 10, and Venkata Sai Muni, 8.

According to V. Bhaskar, the Circle Inspector of Alur police station, the deceased along with husband Satish and two children were staying at Gulyam village. Satish was running a retail grocery shop while Kavitha is looking after household works besides helping her husband at the shop. Kavitha has been exerting pressure on her husband to separate from the joint family. Satish and his five brothers have migrated to Gulyam village from the neighbouring Karnataka State.

The police said bodies were shifted to Alur government general hospital for conducting an autopsy and later handed over to the deceased family members. A case under Section 174 CrPC was filed based on the complaint lodged by Hanumesh the brother of deceased Kavitha and taken up investigation, added the CI.

MYSTERY
SHROUDS
CHARRED BODYDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 19

In a bizarre incident, the charred body of a differently-abled woman volunteer was found in her wheelchair on the road between Dasara-jupalli and Kammappalli road near Ongole city late on Friday night.

The police are in a dilemma over confirming whether it is a murder or suicide as circumstantial evidence indicate that the body was doused with petrol before setting the fire.

According to Deputy Superintendent of Ongole, K.V.N.V. Prasad, the woman identified as Bhuvanewari, 22, is a village volunteer working at her native Kammappalem village.

She is the elder among the two daughters of her parents. An attendee working in an electric substation near Dasarajupalli helped her to scale a steep in her wheelchair when he noticed her struggling to move forward while going towards Kamma-palem around 7.30 pm.

Later a few passersby alerted the police when they noticed Bhuvanewari in flames. The police, along with fire personnel, rushed to the spot only to find the charred body of the woman who consigned to flames by then. As her mobile was not found, police have collected details of some of her last messages with the help of the administrator of the WhatsApp group of the village volunteers.

In some of her last messages posted in her status, she said it is going to be the last message from her mobile, and she opposed using women for collection of money. In a message addressed to her sister, she said: "I love you and I miss you". Police found a phone call from the victim's mother in her office mobile and another call from an autorickshaw driver hours before her death.

The auto driver identified as Anji told police that she sought three litres of petrol and he delivered the same.

Pathway to Tirumala used
by Annamayya neglected

Refurbish historical Annamayya trail to Tirumala, say devotees

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, DEC. 19

The historical pathway to Tirumala shrine has again come into debate with thousands of devotees, including those who take the Govinda Mala Deeksha, taking this footpath in December every year.

Devotees from Kadapa district accuse the state government of neglecting this historical pathway to Tirumala that they take.

The path is 23-kilometres long through a deep forest. It is stated this is the way Hindu Sage Tallapaka Annamacharya, a devout follower of Lord Venkateswara, who has written 32,000 san-

keerthanas (hymns) in praise of the Lord, first used this footpath 1,000 years ago to reach the Lord's shrine in Tirumala. Annamacharya is from Tallapaka village in Rajampet mandal of Kadapa district.

Since the time Annamacharya traversed this path, thousands of devotees have been taking this walkway to Tirumala annually. It starts near Kukkaladoddi village in Railway Kodur mandal and reaches Tirumala via Tumburu Theertham.

Since the last 18 years, former MLA of Rajampet Akepati Amarnath Reddy, now YSR Congress party district president, has been taking this path

■ Annamacharya is from Tallapaka village in Rajampet mandal of Kadapa district.

■ There are currently two footpaths and a road way to Tirumala for devotees.

when taking up the Govinda Mala Deeksha along with thousands of other devotees.

Incidentally, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) had once proposed to develop the pathway used by Hindu sage Annamacharya.

Unfortunately, the proposal has continued to be

neglected by successive governments. Not only people of Rajampet, but devotees from Telangana, Rayala-seema, and Maharashtra also use this footpath to reach Tirumala.

As the pathway passes through forests, the walk in quest of having Lord Venkateswara darshan is exhilarating for devotees. Referred to as Annamayya trail, it runs through the entire Seshachalam forests. Along the way, there are many natural locations that provide a beautiful view.

There are currently two footpaths and a road way to Tirumala for devotees. The pathway that starts from Alipiri is 7.8 kilome-

tres and takes approximately three hours to reach Tirumala.

The other footpath that starts at Srivari Mettu is about 2.1 kilometres and takes devotees only one-and-a-half hours for to reach Tirumala.

"I have been asking governments for decades to develop the trail that Annamayya took to visit Lord every time the Sage wished to," says Amarnath Reddy. He recalled that during the reign of the late chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, the government proposed to develop this pathway. After his death, the proposal remained neglected by his successors.

OBJECTION TO
SHIFTING OF
NEHRU STATUEDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 19

The Poura Sankshema Sangham, CPM, Congress and other opposition parties strongly objected to the municipal council resolution that shifted Jawaharlal Nehru statue to another place.

The Sankshema Sangham president Dusarlapudi Ramana Raju said that in 1974, the then MLA C.V.K. Rao and the then Municipal chairman P. Ramana have made resolution in the council and installed the Statue of the first prime minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at Balaji Cheruvu.

Fun time



Children enjoy surfing at the sea while the fishermen come back to the shore on catamaran boats at Peddajalaripeta beach in Visakhapatnam on Saturday.

— K. MURALIKRISHNA

TTD offline tickets to Tirupati
residents only: Additional EODC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 19

As TTD has prepared to issue offline tickets for Vaikunta Dwara Darshanam in Tirupati on December 24, additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy appealed to non-locals not to come to Tirupati for offline tickets.

Along with local MLA and the TTD board special invitee B. Karunakar Reddy and Tirupati Urban SP Ramesh Reddy, he inspected all the ticket issuing centres in the temple city on Saturday.

Later talking to media

persons, he said darshan will be provided only to 35,000 devotees by strictly following all the Covid-19 guidelines during Vaikuntha Dwara Darshanam this year as against the usual darshan provision to nearly one lakh devotees every year.

"For the first time, we are opening Vaikuntha Dwaram for 10 days starting from December 25 to January 3. We have already issued 20,000 tickets online for each day in ₹300 Special Entry Darshan quota. We have also released 20,000 SRIVANI tickets online for these 10 days. Devotees

from across the country booked these tickets and the entire online quota exhausted within a few hours," he added.

He said TTD will release one lakh tickets for these 10 days for the sake of the residents of Tirupati in offline at five earmarked centres in Tirupati on December 24 following all the Covid 19 norms.

Due to the prevailing Covid-19 situation, this year we have decided to issue offline tickets only to locals for Vaikuntha Dwara darshanam.

"So, we appeal to non-local devotees not to come

to Tirupati for offline tickets as it may result in huge crowding and might increase the chances of Covid as well as impact the law and order situation," he observed.

Tirupati Urban SP said, elaborate policing arrangements will be made at these five counters and every Aadhaar card will be scrutinised before tokens are issued to locals. TTD CE Ramesh Reddy, SE 1 Jagadeeshwar Reddy, SE Electrical Venkat-eswarulu, Additional Health Officer Dr Sunil, VGO Manohar were also present.

KMC approves hiking
property taxes amid stirDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 19

The Kakinada Municipal Council has approved the hiking property and water taxes amid the protests of Telugu Desam corporators on Saturday. The Council meeting was held here presided by the Mayor Ms Sunkara Pavani. The YSRC Corporators proposed

that the property and water taxes issue should be discussed as the last issue. But, the TD Corporators like Vomm Balaji, Palivela Ravi, Tummala Sunitha and others strongly objected to the hiking of property taxes. They demanded that the hiking proposal should be withdrawn immediately. They surrounded the Mayor's podi-

um and made picketing. Heated arguments were held between the Mayor and the TD Corporators and also YSRC Corporators. In one stage, the TD corporators walked out from the meeting. Later, the Mayor postponed the meeting for 10 minutes. Later, the same chaos has continued on the issue. Some of the resolutions were approved.

POLLUTION | FEAR

Police have booked cases against 160 persons for setting fire to generator

No unit of Divis Pharma at Kothapakalu: MLA

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 19

As the agitation against the proposed Divis plant at Kothapakalu village in Thondangi mandal of East Godavari District is intensifying, ruling YSRC MLA from Tuni constituency Dadisetty Raja assured agitators that under no circumstances will the pharma unit be able to come up in the sea shore area.

"I myself will join the direct agitation if the government decides to establish the unit," the ruling party legislator declared. Supporters of left parties and people of the area had set fire to the generator shed three days back against setting up of the pharma unit. Police have booked cases against 160 persons in the area. Following this, MLA Raja visited Kothapakalu village on Saturday. He point-

● Raja pointed out that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has assured people of the area during his padayatra as opposition leader that Divis company will not be allowed

ed out that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has assured people of the area during his padayatra as opposition leader that Divis company will not be allowed to set up the phar-

ma unit in the area. He said that he had met the CM 20 days ago and reminded the latter of his promise. Dadisetty Raja said Jagan then advised him to hear the company's view. If it is not found convincing, the pharma unit will not be allowed in the area, the MLA quoted the CM as saying. He accused opposition parties of provoking people to take advantage of the situation.

AP records 479
new Covid casesDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 19

Andhra Pradesh registered 479 new Covid-19 cases spiking the tally to 8,78,285 and four deaths taking the toll to 7,074 in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities released Covid-19 bulletin on Saturday reporting that out of 62,215 samples tested, 479 persons were found infected with Coronavirus.

Out of a total number of 1,11,96,574 samples tested so far, 8,78,285 persons were infected, and out of them, 8,66,856 were recovered in the course of treatment while 4,355 infected patients are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of confirmed Coronavirus infections, Krishna topped the state with 92 followed by 87 in Chittoor, 62 in Guntur, 47 each in East Godavari and Visakhapatnam, 26 in Kurnool, 23 in Kadapa, 22 in West Godavari, 21 in Prakasam, 16 in Nellore, 13 each in Anantapur and Vizianagaram and 10 in Srikakulam.

With regard to the cumulative Covid-19 active cases, Krishna was the worst affected with 809 followed by 621 in Guntur, 570 in Nellore, 489 in East Godavari, 452 in Chittoor, 287 in West Godavari, 243 in Visakhapatnam, 207 in Prakasam, 178 in Srikakulam, 149 each in Anantapur and Kurnool, 122 in Kadapa and 79 in Vizianagaram.

AP registered a total number of four Covid-19 deaths with one each at Chittoor, Guntur, Krishna and West Godavari.

Among cumulative deaths, Chittoor continued to be the worst affected with the highest number of 837 followed by 660 in Guntur, 657 in Krishna, 636 in East Godavari, 595

PEOPLE TOLD TAKE
CARE ON COVID
PRECAUTIONSDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 19

The Covid-19 training team project officer Mr Satyanarayana urged the people to take care of Covid-19 precautions carefully, though the cases are being decreased gradually.

He convened an awareness meeting on Covid-19 with the representatives of different institutions like temples, Masjid and Churches on Saturday. He said that everyone should wear a mask and maintain social distance compulsorily without fail and also apply sanitizer once in every 20 minutes and wash the hands with soap. He said that it is safe that they wear a mask in the house also. He said that Covid-19 vaccine would come up in the coming days and it would be administered on a priority basis and already the governments issued guidelines on it.

The Health Education Extension Officer Mr Vishnu, DPMO D.V.V. Satyanarayana and others were present.

in Anantapur, 578 in Prakasam, 549 in Visakhapatnam, 532 in West Godavari, 504 in Nellore, 487 in Kurnool, 455 in Kadapa, 346 in Srikakulam and 238 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities discharged 497 Covid-19 infected patients after recovery from various hospitals in the state.

AP conducted Covid-19 test on 2,09,674 samples per one million population and recorded a positive rate of 7.84.

No security for women
in state: TD women wingNAGAMMA'S BROTHERS WARN TD
LEADERS OVER POLITICISING ISSUEDC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, DEC. 19

Incidentally, the murdered woman's brothers are furious with Telugu Desam leaders politicising the murder of their sister. They maintain that police has done justice. The government has also responded and provided them with financial assistance of ₹5 lakh.

The brothers told reporters on Saturday that they are incensed at

the attitude of Telugu Desam leaders who are exploiting the murder to take political advantage.

But this was bringing disrepute to their family, as wild allegations are being made by Telugu Desam leaders in connection with Nagamma's murder.

"We have no affiliation with any party and the government has assured us that it will support us in all possible ways," they said.

● Anita expressed concern over sexual assaults against women in AP. She charged that the state home minister could not protect women in her own constituency. Now, there is lack of security for women in Chief Minister's hometown Pulivendula.



tioned why women and villagers attacked a man after the minors were shifted to a juvenile home. He questioned why the man, who is believed to be the main accused in the case, has been under protection of the police.

The TD leaders demanded a speedy re-post mortem of Nagamma,

who had been murdered brutally. TD state executive secretaries Hariprasad, Govardhan Reddy, and Reddy Venkata Subba Reddy, Kadapa parliamentary party president Mallela Linga Reddy, Kadapa constituency in-charge V. S. Amerbabu and other leaders were present.

SHORT TAKES

POLICE TO PROBE AKHTAR'S PLAINT AGAINST KANGANA

SAURABH JOSHI | DC
MUMBAI, DEC. 19

The Mumbai police will now probe a defamation complaint filed by Bollywood lyricist Javed Akhtar against actor Kangana Ranaut following the orders of the Andheri court. The Juhu police has been asked to probe into the complaint pertaining to the remarks of coterie in the film industry naming Mr Akhtar.

The lyricist had sought action against Ranaut after she allegedly made statements on national television and in social media in connection with the coterie operating in the film industry. The complaint stated that Ms Ranaut had mentioned Mr Akhtar when speaking about coterie and that she had also claimed that the lyricist had threatened her to not speak about her alleged relationship with actor Hrithik Roshan.

The plea before Andheri metropolitan court sought for criminal case under relevant sections against Ms Ranaut. The magistrate court on Saturday ordered the Juhu police to investigate the matter and submit their report on January 16.

PRAGYA SKIPS MALEGAON BLAST CASE TRIAL AGAIN

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, DEC. 19

BJP's Bhopal MP Pragya Singh Thakur, an accused in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, has again given a skip to a hearing before a special NIA court. This is the second consecutive time this month she has missed the court hearing, which invoked a discontent from the court.

According to Ms Thakur's lawyer, she was admitted to a hospital in Delhi on Friday, due to which she could not attend the hearing. Of all the seven accused, five remained present in the court, whereas Ms Thakur and another accused Sudhakar Chaturvedi did not appear in court, the later citing personal reasons. Expressing displeasure on this, judge P. R. Sitre directed all the seven accused to appear before it on January 4.

"Ms Thakur has been undergoing treatment at AIIMS Delhi since April. She had gone there for a check-up and had to be admitted there on Friday on the advice of doctors following her medical reports," her lawyer J.P. Mishra said.

HONDA STOPS PRODUCTION AT GREATER NOIDA

New Delhi, Dec. 19: Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL) has decided to pull the plug on production at its Greater Noida plant in Uttar Pradesh, sources said on Saturday.

The automaker, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Japanese Honda Motor Co, had set up the Greater Noida plant in 1997.

Industry sources said the plant would, however, continue to house the company's corporate head office, spare parts division and research and development (R&D) centre among other functions.

The company declined to comment on the matter. The automaker would now rely only on its Tapukara facility in Rajasthan to roll out its entire product range in the country, sources added.

HCIL had earlier this year initiated a voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) for its manufacturing line associates at the plant to increase productivity and efficiency.

Govt must protect vaccine makers: Poonawalla

India to inoculate 30 crore, says Health min

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 19

Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare Dr Harsh Vardhan on Saturday chaired a meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on Covid-19 to discuss vaccination development, and its roll out process. Apart from catering to its own huge population, India has got requests from about 12 countries for its vaccines as and when they are ready.

With all focus now on vaccination, the govern-

ment is working out a strategy for its roll out from January 2021. "India's Covid-19 Pandemic Growth has dropped to 2 per cent and Case Fatality Rate is amongst lowest in the world at 1.45 per cent. India's Recovery Rate has peaked to 95.46% while the strategy of testing 1 million samples has decreased the Cumulative Positivity Rate to 6.25%," said Dr Harsh Vardhan.

Among the latest to have caught the Covid-19 infection is the chief of Indian Council of Medical Research

Dr Balram Bhargava who was admitted in Delhi's AIIMS trauma centre.

Observing the fact that despite festivals in the month of October November, no new surge of cases were observed in this period due to comprehensive testing, tracking and treatment policy implemented on the ground, the Union Health Minister reiterated his concern and appeal to diligently maintain Covid-19 appropriate behaviour even at a time when the country is at the cusp of

authorising the first set of vaccines. He also expressed the need for an expeditious vaccination drive to cover all the target populations estimated to be around 30 crores.

Dr. Vinod K. Paul, Member NITI Aayog apprised the GoM on three critical aspects of vaccination — the process of pre-clinical and clinical trial of all vaccines, the details of the six vaccine candidates undergoing trial in India (in terms of composition, manufacturers and technical partners).

are going to propose, he added.

Last month, Serum had

rejected charges that a 40-year-old man who took part in the 'Covishield' vaccine trial in Chennai had levelled against the company, alleging serious side effects, including a virtual neurological breakdown and impairment of cognitive functions.

He had also sought ₹5 crore compensation in a legal notice to Serum and others, besides seeking a halt on the trial.

Refuting the charges, Serum had said, "It is evident that the intention behind spreading of such malicious information is an oblique pecuniary motive. The Serum Institute of India, will seek damages in excess of ₹100 crore for the same and will defend such malicious claims". — PTI

Adhikari joins BJP, hails Amit Shah, reveals their past link

Lashes out at Mamata, her nephew for branding him a 'traitor'

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, DEC. 19

Joining the BJP on Saturday in his home turf, Shubhendu Adhikari described Union home minister Amit Shah as his "Dada" and "Aan Baan Shan" of the country before raising a slogan "Tolabaj Bhaipo Hatao (Remove Extortionist Nephew)" in an oblique reference to Diamond Harbour Trinamul Congress MP and chief minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee.

"The Union home minister, who has accepted me as a primary member of the world's biggest party: BJP that believes in pluralism, is my elder brother, my Dada and Aan Baan Shan of our nation. He fulfilled all the promises, he made earlier, within eight months of winning the Lok Sabha Election in 2019 under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership," Mr Adhikari told a grand rally in Midnapore.

Revealing his long connection with Mr Shah for the first time, he said, "My relation with him has been since when he was the BJP all India general secretary in charge of East Uttar Pradesh. He led the party's victory in Lok Sabha polls in 2014 and steered the saffron storm in UP. I met him in a small room in the party's old office at Ashoka Road. The present UP health minister Siddharth Nath Singh had arranged the meeting. But he never asked me to join the BJP."

Mr Adhikari claimed, "When I was infected by Covid-19, none from the party, I then belonged to, inquired about me. But Mr Shah did twice. I offer my Namam to him."

Lashing out at Ms Banerjee and her nephew for branding him as a "traitor," he alleged, "They (TMC) are claiming of my betrayal to mother. Mother is who gives birth to a child. My mother is Gayatri Adhikari. There is another: Bharatmata as my motherland. None else. Yesterday an old TMC friend sent me a video showing my slogan 'BJP Hatao, Bharat Banchao' before the Lok



Union Home Minister Amit Shah being garlanded by party leaders during an election rally ahead of West Bengal Assembly polls 2021, in West Midnapore district, on Saturday.

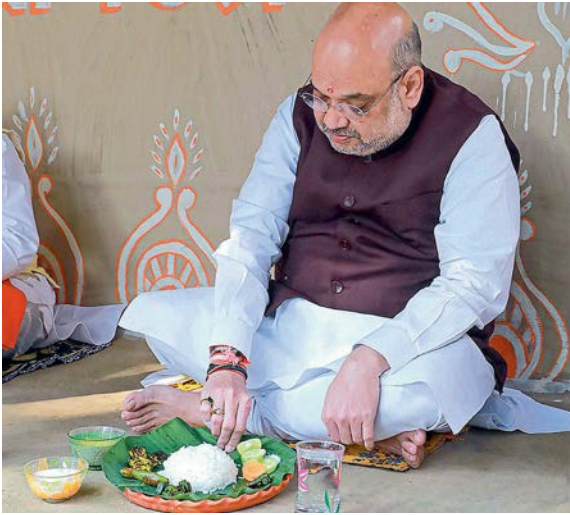
— PTI

Shah has lunch at house of farmer in West Bengal

Midnapore (WB), Dec. 19: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday had lunch at the house of a farmer in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district as part of his exercise to strengthen relations with the agriculturists ahead of the Assembly elections in the state.

Shah's move assumes significance in the wake of the ongoing farmers' protests in Delhi against the three farm laws. Shah, who is on a two-day visit to West Bengal to take stock of the BJP's affairs in the state, arrived here on Saturday and offered puja at a local temple. Then, the union minister went to the residence of Sanatan Singh at Balijhuri and had lunch there, sitting on the floor of the house.

Shah was accompanied by BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya. BJP national vice-president Mukul Roy and state party chief Dilip Ghosh. It was a vegetarian platter of Bengali delicacies, served on a



Union Home Minister Amit Shah having lunch at the house of Jhunu Singh and Sanatan Singh, at Beljuri village in Midnapore, on Saturday.

— PTI

banana leaf by the women family members of Singh. Shah and other guests, who sat on the floor of the verandah of the two-storey house with a tin roof, had 'saak bhaja', 'lou daal', 'shukto' (mixed vegetable which is slightly bitter), 'phulkopi tarkari' (ca-

uliflower curry), 'posto' (potato cooked in poppy seed paste) and 'tok doi'.

Earlier, the union minister and other BJP leaders were greeted by ululating and blowing of conch shells by the women members of the household, including Singh's wife. — PTI

Sabha polls. I replied to him my slogan today here would be 'Tolabaj Bhaipo

Hatao' (Remove Extortionist Nephew)." Mr Adhikari also

released his open letter to TMC workers urging them to join BJP.

TIWARI SEES DISSENT IN BJP, BACK IN TMC

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, DEC. 19

Stung by a massive dissent against him in the BJP, heavyweight Pandabeshwar MLA Jitendra Tiwari, who quit the ruling Trinamul Congress on December 17 hoping to join the saffron party, took a U-turn barely few hours before union home minister Amit Shah's arrival in West Bengal on Friday night on a two-day visit.

Apologising to West Bengal chief minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee, the former Asansol Mayor returned to her party within 24 hours of his exit in an overnight drama after state minister Aroop Biswas, accompanied by TMC election strategist Prashant Kishor, called, placated and finetuned him at a meeting in his club: Suruchi Sangha in New Alipore of south Kolkata.

Mr Tiwari told the media, "I have no grievance. I am also not a big leader who will go to Didi for a discussion about my grievance. I was, am and will be in the TMC. Did you ever hear me saying anything against Didi? Did I ever talk of joining the BJP? I will request my party not to accept my resignation letter sent earlier. I want to withdraw it. Those I met now are my well-wishers who love me too."

He said, "I felt sad to learn from Aroop that Didi was hurt by my behavior (resignation from the party). I am not after getting something by hurting her. I will personally apologise to her by offering my Pranam. It was my misunderstanding and fault which have been sorted out. I have forgotten everything now. When I respect Didi, all others in her party must be respected also."

Mr Biswas said, "A family can have problem over which brothers do not leave their mother however. Mr Tiwari, as a soldier of Ms Banerjee, will continue to fight against the BJP."

ED attaches Farooq assets

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, DEC. 19

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached former chief minister and National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah's six properties worth ₹11.86 crore including his residential houses in twin capitals of Srinagar and Jammu in connection with a probe into alleged scam in Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA).

Mr. Abdullah termed the move as an attempt to "make me now". He, however, pledged, "But I won't...let them do what they want to. I will do what I have to do."

The NC said that the ED's attaching its president's properties is "political vendetta, meant to settle political score". In a joint statement, the party's general secretary Ali Muhammad Sagar, MPs Mohammad Akbar Lone and Hasnain Masoodi and ten other senior functionaries and leaders said "such acts are nothing but unwarranted and unjustified as there is no evidence worth the name on record to justify the order of attachment of the property".

The ED sources here said that it has received an order from its headquarters in Delhi listing six properties of Mr. Abdullah including three residential buildings and

four plots of land. The sources added that the properties have been attached under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The move has been necessitated by the "laundering of funds" of JKCA under the PMLA, an ED statement confirmed. It reads "The attached properties include three residential houses, one at Gupkar Road, Srinagar, one at Tehsil Katipora, Tangmarg, and one at Bhatindi, village Sunjwan, (Jammu), commercial buildings at posh Residency Road area of Srinagar. The lands at four different places in J&K have also been attached."

The 83-year-old Abdullah, J&K's three-time chief minister, was recently interrogated by the ED and earlier also by a team of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the alleged scam. The CBI had filed a charge-sheet against him and three others in alleged ₹13.66 crore scam in Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) Court in Srinagar in July 2018.

The alleged scam surfaced in March 2012 and Mr. Abdullah, the then JKCA president, along with several others, was named accused in it. Mr. Abdullah had not denied there has been a scam in the association but had insisted on him not being involved.

MLAs, leaders, cops in poll cash row: MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, DEC. 19

Unaccounted money was sent to MLAs, a particular political party, some senior leaders of Congress by individuals, government departments and a number of private companies ahead of 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the investigation wing of the income-tax department has found.

The Election Commission has sent a report of Central Board of Direct Taxation (CBDT) to Madhya Pradesh government seeking action against those involved in the alleged 'poll cash scam' that came to light

following raids by IT sleuths at 52 places in Madhya Pradesh and Delhi in April 2019.

The CBDT's report has listed names of purported donors and receivers of alleged poll cash reportedly used in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

"The CBDT report was deliberately leaked. It (leakage) amounted to breaching of confidentiality by CBDT and IT department. A probe should be done into leakage of the report", Congress veteran and former chief minister Digvijay Singh who was among a few senior Congress leaders those figured in the list told reporters here on Saturday.

RSS ideologue Vaidya passes away

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
Mumbai, Dec. 19

Veteran Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ideologue Madhav Govind Vaidya (97) passed away in Nagpur on Saturday after a brief illness. He was the first official spokesperson of the organisation. Mr Vaidya was undergoing treatment for illness at a private hospital in Nagpur, where he breathed his last at 3.35 pm. The final rites will be held at Ambazari Ghat on Sunday.

The veteran RSS leader was the father of RSS Sah-Sarkaryawah (joint general secretary) Manmohan Vaidya,

who tweeted, "Shri MG Vaidya, my father breathed his last today at 3.35 pm at Nagpur after completing 97 years of active, meaningful and inspiring life. He was a veteran journalist, a Hndutva 'Bhashyakar' and active Sangh (RSS) Swayamsevak for 9 decades."

Born in Taroda village in Wardha district, Mr Vaidya joined the RSS from his college days. He became a member of the RSS in 1943 while at the Morris College in Nagpur. When the RSS was banned after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, he did the organisational work by going underground.

SALARY | DEFAULT

Taiwan firm admits lapses in its wage payment processes in Apple probe

Wistron put on probation, fires India head

New Delhi, Dec. 19: A week after violence broke out at its Narasapura facility in Karnataka, contract manufacturer Wistron on Saturday said it has fired its vice-president who was heading India operations even as iPhone maker Apple placed the Taiwanese firm on probation.

Wistron, which assembles the latest version of the iPhone SE at the violence-hit plant, admitted that there were faults in its wage payment processes. A section of workers at Wistron Corporation's facility in Narasapura Industrial Area in Kolar district near Bengaluru

went on rampage last week over non-payment of their wages.

"We are removing the Vice President who oversees our business in India. We are also enhancing our processes and restructuring our teams to ensure these issues cannot happen again," the Apple's contract manufacturer, Wistron, said in a statement.

While Wistron did not name the executive removed, sources said Vincent Lee has been fired. Wistron said the company has been investigating the matter and has "found that some workers were not paid correctly, or

COMPANY SAID it has established an employee assistance programme for workers at the facility, and has set up a 24-hour grievance hotline in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and English to ensure all workers can voice any concerns they may have, anonymously.

on time". "We deeply regret this and apologise to all of our workers. This is a new facility and we recognise that we made mistakes as we expanded," Wistron said.

The Taiwanese company noted that some of the

processes put in place to manage labour agencies and payments, need to be strengthened and upgraded and that it is taking "immediate action to correct this, including disciplinary action".

Wistron has increased its headcount from 2,000 in the middle of this year to around 9,000 recently. "Our top priority is to ensure all workers are fully compensated immediately and we are working hard to achieve that," Wistron said.

The company said it has established an employee assistance programme for workers at the facility, and

has set up a 24-hour grievance hotline in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and English to ensure all workers can voice any concerns they may have, anonymously.

Apple, in a separate statement, said it has placed Wistron on probation and that the contract manufacturer will not receive any new business from the US-based company before corrective actions are completed. Apple is also undertaking a detailed investigation in this matter.

Apple said while these investigations are ongoing, preliminary findings

indicate violations of its Supplier Code of Conduct by failing to implement proper working hour management processes that led to payment delays for some workers in October and November.

"We have placed Wistron on probation and they will not receive any new business from Apple before they complete corrective actions. Apple employees, along with independent auditors, will monitor their progress. Our main objective is to make sure all the workers are treated with dignity and respect, and fully compensated promptly" Apple said. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

SOMALIA SUICIDE BOMBING KILLS 15, MISSES PM

Mogadishu, Dec. 19: A suicide bomber attacked a stadium in Somalia's central city of Galkayo Friday, killing 15 people shortly before the arrival of the country's new prime minister, according to police.

Ali Hassan, a police officer in Galkayo, said others were injured in the blast, which occurred at the entrance to the sports stadium. Some high-ranking members of the Somali army were among those killed in the explosion, according to local reports.

The bombing has been claimed by Somalia's al-Shabab jihadist rebels, according to the group's Andalusi radio station.

Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble, who took office in September, was visiting the city as part of a tour of the central state of Galmudug.

RAPE CHARGE ON EPSTEIN-LINKED MODELLING AGENT

Paris, Dec. 19: A modeling agent associated with disgraced US financier Jeffrey Epstein has been charged in France with sexual harassment and the rape of minors over 15 years old.

Jean-Luc Brunel was arrested as part of an ongoing investigation on Wednesday at Charles de Gaulle airport as he was preparing to take a flight to Senegal.

The Paris prosecutor announced in a statement Saturday that the charges were handed out Friday by a magistrate at the end of Brunel's custody period. It said Brunel was not handed any human trafficking charges, which was one of the main lines of inquiry.

The magistrate decided that there was not currently enough evidence to rule on that count, but he was not acquitted and could be charged in the future if anything new emerges. Brunel was remanded in custody.

'LAST ATTEMPT' TO GET BREXIT TRADE DEAL: EU

Brussels, Dec. 19: The European Union and the United Kingdom are heading into the weekend on a "last attempt" to clinch a post-Brexit trade deal, with EU fishing rights in British waters the most notable remaining obstacle to avoid a chaotic and costly changeover in the new year.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Friday that the only way to get a deal is for the 27-nation bloc to compromise since "the UK has done a lot to try and help, and we hope that our EU friends will see sense and come to the table with something themselves." "That's really where we are," Johnson said, adding "no sensible government" could agree to the EU demands as they stand.

EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier told the EU parliament both sides were in the "home straight of the negotiations", which have already come a long way in nine months of talks but are still short of a final compromise. Barnier called it "a very serious and sombre situation".

IMRAN: PAK ARMY WORKS UNDER ME

Islamabad, Dec. 19: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has asserted that the Army is a state institution which works under him, amidst Opposition's allegations of the powerful military establishment's interference in the country's politics and elections.

Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), a 11-party opposition alliance, has been holding massive rallies since its inception in September to seek Khan's ouster and press the military to stop interfering in politics. The PDM has been accusing the Pakistan Army of installing "puppet" Prime Minister Khan through a manipulated election in 2018.

The Army, which has ruled Pakistan for more than half of its 70 plus years of existence, has hitherto wielded considerable power in the matters of security and foreign policy. However, the military has denied meddling in the country's politics. Khan also denies that the army helped him win the election in 2018.

According to the 'Lahore Declaration' signed by the Opposition parties on Monday, the military establishment had stolen the people's mandate in the 2018 election.

As new Covid strain spreads faster, UK discusses action

New higher set of curbs, govt to cut back relaxation rules over Christmas

London, Dec. 19: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson discussed with his senior ministers on Saturday what urgent action to take after it was confirmed that a new strain of the Covid-19 virus could spread more quickly and lead to a surge in cases.

The BBC reported that London and southeast England would be placed in a new higher tier of restrictions and the government would cut back on a planned relaxation of the rules over Christmas, but gave no further details.

Johnson will hold a news conference at about 1600 GMT during which he will discuss what his plans are in light of a rise in infections across London and southeast England linked to a new, more transmissible variant of the virus.

England's Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty said that while there was no current evidence the variant of the novel Coronavirus caused a higher mortality rate or impacted vaccines, urgent work was underway to confirm this.

"We have alerted the World Health Organisation and are continuing to analyse the available data to improve our understanding," Whitty said in a statement.

Britain reported 28,507 new Covid-19 cases on Friday and 489 deaths, with the reproduction "R" number estimated to be between 1.1 and 1.2, meaning the number of cases is rapidly increasing. Johnson said on Friday he hoped England would not need a third lockdown after Christmas and has so far resisted calls to change plans to ease restrictions for five days over the festive period, allowing three separate households to meet indoors.

UK to bring in new higher tier of Covid restrictions for London, southeast England -BBC

Much of the country, including London, is currently in the highest of a three-tier system of restrictions to curb the pandemic's spread. The *Daily Telegraph* newspaper said ministers could now announce curbs on travel between southeast England, including the capital, and the rest of the country.

The BBC said these areas would now be placed in a new "Tier 4", with a tightening of rules for Christmas.

"Failing to act decisively now, will mean further suffering," Jeremy Farrar, director of the Wellcome Trust and a member of the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, said on Twitter. "It has been apparent for some days that the virus is again out of control in parts of the country," said Jonathan Ashworth, Labour's health spokesman. — Reuters

Meanwhile, at least nine Coronavirus patients died on Saturday after an oxygen tank explosion triggered a fire at a hospital in southeastern Turkey.

The blaze in an intensive care ward of the hospital in Gaziantep broke out when a tank on an artificial respirator exploded. "We are saddened by this tragedy," Turkish Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said before a planned visit to the hospital. — AFP



Protesters march up Whitehall after gathering in Parliament Square at an anti-lockdown demonstration, "Unite in the Fight" in central London on Saturday. British PM Boris Johnson resisted calls to tighten Covid restrictions over Christmas, as London faced stricter measures and concern grew about rising case numbers. The government has been under mounting pressure to toughen proposals allowing up to three households to meet indoors during the festive window from December 23, as European neighbours curb their easing plans amid surging infections. — AFP

**BIDENS TO GET 1ST VACCINE DOSE TOMORROW**

Washington, Dec. 19: President-elect Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, will be getting their first dose of the Coronavirus vaccine on Monday.

That's according to Biden's incoming press secretary, Jen Psaki. Vice President-elect Kamala Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff, will receive their doses the week after next.

The announcement was made Friday, hours after Vice President Mike Pence and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi became the highest-ranking government officials to receive their first doses of a vaccine. Psaki told reporters that Biden would be receiving the shot in public, as Pence did Friday. — AP

WHO: Expert team off to China in Jan.

Geneva, Dec. 19: The head of emergencies at the World Health Organisation says a team of international experts looking into the origins of the Coronavirus pandemic will travel to China the first week of January.

Dr Michael Ryan says there will be quarantine arrangements for the team, which will visit the suspected site of the outbreak in the city of Wuhan. "The purpose of the mission is to go to the original point at which

human cases were detected and that we fully expect to do that," he said. He says the team of international experts will work "with our Chinese colleagues," and he adds they "will not be ... supervised by Chinese officials."

Ryan says the world should celebrate the arrival of vaccines, but the "next three to six months are going to be tough." He seemed to allude the Americas, which is home to roughly three-fourths of the global cases. — AP

China 'obstructing' WHO probe: US

Washington, Dec. 19: Urging the international community to demand transparency from China about the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic, the US has accused Beijing of "obstructing" a WHO probe into the origin of the deadly virus in the central Chinese city of Wuhan and "peddling" questionable vaccines one year after the disease

broke out. "Even today, nearly a year after the world first learned of the outbreak, the Chinese Communist Party is still spreading disinformation regarding the virus and obstructing a World Health Organisation (WHO) investigation into its origin and spread," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Friday. — PTI

Nod to Moderna vaccine in US, 2nd shot in arsenal

Washington, Dec. 19: The US added a second Covid-19 vaccine to its arsenal on Friday, boosting efforts to beat back an outbreak so dire that the nation is regularly recording more than 3,000 deaths a day.

The much-needed doses are set to arrive on Monday after the Food and Drug Administration authorised an emergency rollout of the vaccine developed by Moderna Inc. and the National Institutes of Health. The move marks the world's first authorisation for Moderna's shots.

The vaccine is very similar to one from Pfizer Inc. and Germany's BioNTech that's now being dispensed to millions of health

care workers and nursing home residents as the biggest vaccination drive in US history starts to ramp up.

The two work "better than we almost dared to hope," NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins said. "Science is working here, science has done something amazing." Early results of large, still unfinished studies show both vaccines appear safe and strongly protective although Moderna's is easier to handle since it doesn't need to be stored at ultra-frozen temperatures.

A second vaccine represents a ray of hope amid despair as the virus continues to spread unabated

even before holiday gatherings that are certain to further fuel the outbreak.

The scourge has claimed more than 3.12,000 US lives and killed 1.7 million people worldwide. New cases in the US are running at over 2,16,000 per day on average. Deaths per day have hit all-time highs, eclipsing 3,600 on Wednesday. California has emerged as a lethal hot spot, with hospitals running out of intensive care beds and ambulances lining up outside emergency rooms in scenes reminiscent of the calamity around New York City last spring. California on Friday reported over 41,000 new cases and 300 more deaths. — AP

China to 1st inoculate frontline workers

Beijing, Dec. 19: China will begin its Covid-19 inoculation programme by first vaccinating some key priority groups, including those involved in medical treatment and disease control, within the winter-spring period, before starting a mass roll out, the National Health Commission (NHC) said on Saturday. The vaccination programme will also cover those who plan to work or study in counties and regions

with medium or high risks of exposure to the virus, Cui Gang, an official with NHC's disease control department, told reporters. This will help relieve the pressure on China in preventing and controlling imported Covid-19 cases, and lower the risks of domestic outbreaks of the epidemic, the official said.

In a two-step vaccination drive, the vaccines will be first given to the priority

groups, including those engaged in handling imported cold-chain products, and people working in sectors such as port inspection and quarantine, aviation, public transport, fresh market, medical treatment and disease control, said Cui.

There is no word yet on the mass roll out of the vaccine programme and no announcement has been made about the government approval of various va-

cines under trial. China has roped in more than a dozen countries, including Brazil, to conduct the final phase trials of its Covid-19 vaccines. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain have approved a vaccine developed by Chinese state-owned Sinopharm.

Chinese officials say the Coronavirus has been largely controlled in the country and herd immunity can be built with gradual roll out of the vaccination

programme covering most of its population. The health officials said over a million people had been given vaccines under emergency use. The officials, who took part in Saturday's press briefing, said no major side effects were reported during the trials. China has been focusing on developing five types of vaccines. In total, 11 vaccine candidates are at different stages of testing at home and abroad. — PTI

Russians hack into networks, cause alarm

Hack against US is 'grave risk': Cybersecurity agency

Washington, Dec. 19: Federal authorities have expressed increased alarm about an intrusion into US and other computer systems around the globe that officials suspect was carried out by Russian hackers.

The nation's cybersecurity agency on Thursday warned of a grave risk to government and private networks.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency said in its most detailed comments yet that the intrusion had compromised federal agencies as well as critical infrastructure in a sophisticated attack that was hard to detect and will be difficult to undo.

CISA did not say which agencies or infrastructure had been breached or what information taken in an attack that it previously said appeared to have begun in March. The Department of Energy acknowledged in a separate statement that it was among those that had been hacked.

This threat actor has demonstrated sophistication and complex trade-craft in these intrusions, the agency said in its unusual alert. CISA expects that removing the threat actor from compromised environments will be highly complex and challenging.

The hack, if authorities can indeed prove it was carried out by a nation such as Russia as experts believe, creates a fresh foreign policy problem for President Donald Trump in his final days in office.

Trump, whose administration has been criticised for eliminating a White House cybersecurity advisor and downplay-

ing Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, has made no public statements about the breach.

President-elect Joe Biden said he would make cybersecurity a top priority of his administration, but that stronger defences are not enough. We need to disrupt and deter our adversaries from undertaking significant cyberattacks in the first place, he said. We will do that by, among other things, imposing substantial costs on those responsible for such malicious attacks, including in coordination with our allies and partners.

The cybersecurity agency previously said the perpetrators had used network management software from Texas-based SolarWinds to infiltrate computer networks. Its new alert said the attackers may have used other methods, as well.

Amid reports that the Treasury and Commerce departments were breached, CISA directed all civilian agencies of the federal government to remove SolarWinds from their servers. — AP

CYBERATTACK ON US: POMPEO BLAMES RUSSIA

Washington, Dec. 19: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo says Russia was "pretty clearly" behind the gravest cyberattack against the United States on record, the first administration official to publicly tie the Kremlin to the widespread intrusion at a time when President Donald Trump has kept silent on the failure to protect government and private-sector computer networks.

It's not clear exactly what the hackers were seeking, but experts say it could include nuclear secrets, blueprints for advanced weaponry, Covid-19 vaccine-related research and information for dossiers on key government and industry leaders. "We're still unpacking precisely what it is, and I'm sure some of it will remain classified," Pompeo said in an interview late Friday with radio talk show host Mark Levin.

"But suffice it to say there was a significant effort to use a piece of third-party software to essentially embed code inside of US government systems and it now appears systems of private companies and governments across the world as well. This was a very significant effort, and I think it's the case that now we can say pretty clearly that it was the Russians that engaged in this activity." — AP

Rana extradition case to continue till Apr. 22: Judge

Washington, Dec. 19: The case of extradition of Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, a key accused in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, to India will continue till April 22, a federal US judge has determined.

Rana, 59, has been declared a fugitive by India, where he is facing multiple criminal charges for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack in which 166 people, including six Americans, were killed. He was rearrested on June 10 in Los Angeles on an extradition request by India.

"The Extradition Hearing in this case is continued to April 22, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.," Magistrate Judge Jacqueline Chooljian, the US District Court of Los Angeles, said in his order dated December 17. Rana is a childhood friend of David Coleman Headley, the Pakistani-American LeT terrorist who was involved in plotting the 2008 Mumbai terror attack. Headley, 60, was made an approver in the case, and is currently serving a 35-year prison term in the US for his role in the attack.

Judge Chooljian said Rana will file opposition to the request for extradition by not later than

February 1. The US government, which is supporting the extradition of Rana to India, has time till March 22 to file its reply motion.

Both the parties have agreed that their motion either in support or opposition to the extradition request by India would not be of more than 50 pages. The judge on December 10 had denied Rana his bail application asserting that he is a flight risk.

Judge Chooljian, in his order on December 10, said that Rana "presented a robust bail package" and offered conditions that significantly mitigate the risk of flight. But the "Court cannot find that he has negated the risk of flight" and as such granted the request of the US government to the continued detention of Rana.

Meanwhile, the US government in the court has supported India's request that the documents submitted by it in support of extradition of Rana be not made public. The extradition documents presented by India apparently include information about Rana's involvement in the Mumbai terrorist attack that would be shared with him. — PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

20 DECEMBER 2020



Geeta Chandran

Off the beaten track

Of dancers, artists and the new normal

While the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been food for analysis across all sectors of the economy, one glaring omission is the artist! What has the lockdown and the slowdown done to all of us and our work? This is a silence that is deafening in our public discourse.

As a performing artist, I of course — like all others in my fraternity — lost out on all my scheduled performances and stage shows, both group and solo, and all the travels associated with that. This had two impacts — first, of course, was the loss of income; but also then, my creative graph was ruptured since my interaction with musicians was forced into a hiatus. However, this seemed inconsequential when one realised what was happening to the wider artists' community at various levels. We are a large sector, very unorganised, scattered and diverse. From folk performers to dancers who are part of group shows, to classical artists — just the "dance" category within the performing arts group is incredibly large. The folk performers who largely depended on weddings and tourist groups were suddenly completely out of their jobs and many had to seek to alternate ways to survive. Nobody in the media or in the government is even talking about this sector, and that is appalling.

SOCIAL MEDIA SHARING

There were silver linings, of course. In the performing arts' community, we saw that there was lot of sharing that hadn't happened before. Artists were talking about their lives, the way they learnt their art forms, the way they practised, and the problems that they had had and continue to face at various points in their career. One also saw a lot of discussion and engagement on various subjects relating to the arts, that was a welcome development. Of course, these were the first few months when one could engage with a lot of things happening online. But with the passing of time these, too, have given way to the predictable; and too much of the good thing is now leading to "art reflux".

As far as performances online go, it has been a mixed bag. Everybody seems to be performing, and that may be a good thing in terms of short-term self-gratification. But sharing everything for free, and placing valuable professional skills acquired over a period of time in the public domain without any thought of monetising them, has become an extremely worrying trend. Economic models of sharing work have not been deliberated upon, and hence there is a danger of the arts being further marginalised.

Let's face it: Even before the pandemic, artists were not really in a great place in terms of economic viability. Buying a ticket to watch a show was getting more and more difficult. Now with so much happening for free at the click of a button, one worries even more about how artists will manage to survive in the future. Would people ever again buy tickets at all to watch performances?

I agree that artists are anxious and worried about their uncertain future and hence want to be a part of the social media, lest they be left out of some imaginary race. We are all in an introspective mode. But this mood cannot last for too long. We realise that as well.

Artists need to perform, and they need to be watched. Their self-esteem and self-confidence takes a huge beating if performances do not happen. The government hasn't spoken a word about artists and their concerns. Even existing skeletal schemes for artists are not being honoured. The sector as a whole has taken a huge beating, even though everybody acknowledges the fact that during the lockdown all the arts — dance, music, theatre and the visual arts — have kept the morale of everybody high and helped them to stay sane.

In India, the problem is even more daunting as the arts and performers in general are not an organised sector. The diversity in art forms and the geography of this country has not helped in creating a roster — be it folk or classical. Hence organising the artists' community and helping them has become a huge challenge. A *nadaswaram* player who earned his bread and butter by playing in temples during festivals or played at weddings is today at his tether's end, with both tourism and temple gatherings in moratorium. How does, for example, can one reach support and help to artists located in a remote village in Tamil Nadu?

Could this time be used by all of us to put our heads together and think of ways to reimagine culture for the "new normal" times to come? And what about our future? What happens when things open up once again? What place will the arts then have in our lives? Will the economy be resilient enough to support the arts? And will audiences return to auditoriums to watch live performances? We need to start thinking of the role of artists in our society, what they mean to us and what we must do for them. But (alas!) will it happen?

Delhi-based classical dancer **Geeta Chandran** is a force multiplier in the world of the arts, and is the founder-president of *Natya Vriksha*

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Subhani



Is farm bills' real aim to cover fiscal deficit?



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

With the farmers' agitation now entering the 25th day jamming the borders of the national capital the time has come to ask a fundamental question. Are the farm bills aimed at addressing a problem that the government is even terrified of acknowledging?

The NDA/BJP government inherited a robust economy from its predecessor the United Progressive alliance despite protestations to the contrary. Between 2004 and 2014 the India economy grew at 7.8 per cent year on year for 10 long years with 2004-05 as the GDP base year. At the revised base year 2011-12 the growth figure is 8.13 per cent. Despite strong global headwinds in the form of the economic meltdown of 2008 and the Eurozone crisis of 2011 this robust rate of economic growth not only increased the size of the economy, created jobs and employment opportunities but, most importantly, it helped create a robust social security infrastructure in the form of Right to Information, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment programme (MNREGA), Right to free and compulsory education Education (RTE) and the National Food Security Act, to name but a few of the initiatives in this direction. As many as 27.1 crore people were lifted out of poverty between 2004 and 2014. The flipside of this high growth paradigm was high inflation but then again there is no free lunch in life. On balance, ordinary people benefited as growth with equity brought all around prosperity.

The NDA/BJP government could not sustain this growth trajectory and then on the 8th of November 2016 it inflicted a grievous blow on the body economic. It demonetised 500 and 1,000 rupee notes thereby sucking liquidity out of the economy. In its overzealousness to reform it overlooked a basic fact that India was a 2.6 trillion dollar formal economy riding on an almost similar sized non-formal economy and all cash is not black money. This was followed by a badly implemented Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime that further sucked the remaining liquidity out of the economy.

Even before Covid-19 knocked the bottom out of India's economic paradigm the Indian economy was in serious trouble. In H-1 (April-September) of 2019-20, the total flow of funds from banks and non-banks that include public issues, commercial papers (CPs), external commercial borrowings (ECBs) and foreign direct investments (FDIs) crashed by 87.63 per cent to ₹90,995 crores. It was ₹7.36 lakh crore for the corresponding period of 2018-19 as per to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) monetary policy report.

On the 23rd of March, 2020, the day before the country went into the harshest lockdown on planet earth, Parliament passed the Union Budget of 2020-21 of ₹30.42 lakh crores. The projected revenue receipts were 22.45 lakh crores leaving a fiscal deficit of 7.96 lakh crores. With the Indian economy now officially in recession and expected to contract by over 10 per cent the country is up the proverbial creek without a paddle, with all budgetary projections up in the air.

What does this economic havoc have to do with farm bills? Quite a lot, in fact. For it has everything to do with the food subsidy component of the Union Budget. The Food Corporation of India is the state instrumentality that oversees the purchase and supply of food grains. Founded in 1965 under the Food Corporations Act it is

mandated to procure food grains at Minimum Support prices (MSP) stow them, create buffer stocks including a strategic reserve of food grains in addition to disseminating them through the Public Distribution System (PDS) to identified beneficiaries.

The Union government determines the MSP for purchasing food grains as well as their distribution price also called issue price. This is the rate at which food grains are supplied to the states. Variance in these two rates along with supply costs are recompensed by the government to FCI in the form of food subsidy. The FCI, therefore, is totally reliant on the central government and does not have any other sources of revenue.

Prior to 2014 the Union government used to try and fund the entire food subsidy as a line item in the Union Budget. In other words the money for this activity was appropriated directly from the Union budget. Even then the FCI used to borrow some amount of money from banks backed by a sovereign guarantee or even get a ways and means advance from the Union government. However, these repayments were manageable. When the UPA demitted office FCI had a debt of 91,409 crores.

In 2016-17, realising that the economy was in trouble primarily because of demonetisation and mismanagement from 2014-16 and to window dress its budgetary deficit, the government moved a substantial component of the food subsidy off budget and compelled FCI to borrow from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). It is entirely another matter that lending to government organisations like FCI was not the initial mandate of NSSF.

First, it would bring the food subsidy deficits under control and since the government would not procure it also then would not have to distribute food grains thereby ending its obligation under the NFSA

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

For a country where 65 per cent of the population lives of agriculture and 36.4 crores are poor this is nothing short of suicidal. The government must grow the economy so that it has enough revenue to meet its commitments. It cannot roll up the social safety nets of farmers and the poor, namely MSP and the NFSA. It must, therefore, repeal these ill-conceived farm bills and give an unequivocal statutory guarantee that it would continue open-ended public procurement at MSP and would fulfill its obligations under NFSA.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

MATURE JUDICIARY

The apex court terming as 'disturbing' and staying the AP High Court's order on examining 'Constitutional breakdown' is a corrective step for judicial overreach. That the HC used the term 'Constitutional breakdown' is rather harsh and not proportionate. Anyway, self check, matured judiciary is the boon for Indian democracy.

Dr D.V.G.Sankararao
Vizianagaram

Not only the CJI, but the entire country finds the AP HC's order disturbing. Almost all decisions have gone against the state government and interests of the people of the state ever since YSRC got elected. Perhaps it (APHC) was out to prove that there was indeed a constitutional break down and therefore the government could be dismissed. It is now upto APHC to rethink on the issue. Otherwise, we would be witnessing a real Constitutional breakdown.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

CINEMA SOPS

It is shocking that the state government has shown zero interest on Telugu film industry as their sops are so poor (*Cabinet showers soaps on theatres, DC, Dec. 19*). The government should not forget about the importance of cinema industry as it provides employment to thousands of people, entertaining many more and bringing so much revenue through taxes.

P. Govardhana Rao
Kankipadu, Krishna district

PUNISHING A STATE

The summary transfer on deputation of 3 officials from West Bengal cadre to the Centre seems nothing short of high handed and coercive stance as they were the officers who were supervising the BJP rally led by its president J.P. Nadda in Diamond Harbour. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has a formidable adversary in BJP to tackle the 2021 elections.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

17 killed as relief plane crashes near Panagarh

CALCUTTA, Dec. 19. A Russian relief aircraft, on a flight from Dacca to Palam, crashed in flames near Panagarh airport about 120 kms from here in Burdwan district at four this evening killing all 17 people aboard.

The 'A N 22' plane which left Dacca at 2-26 pm was approaching the airport when on of its engines burst into flames. Attempting a crash landing, the plane touched the runway, veered off and streaked along for about a mile before crashing.

As the plane crashed through the runway fencing it set alight several trees and bushes, besides destroying some huts. But no ground casualties have been extricated from the wreckage. Deputy Officer Panagarh airport M. R. Dutta told UNI that the airport staff heard a loud bang in the air and saw the plane descending with its tail ablaze. All the airport emergency and fire services were alerted.

— UNI

James Forsyth



How to fight 'wolf warrior' diplomacy of Xi's China

The most significant and lasting change brought about by Covid-19 is that it has woken the West up to the threat posed by Communist China. The fact that the pandemic's initial severity was covered up by the Communist Party of China authorities didn't surprise Western governments. It was Beijing's "wolf warrior diplomacy" as the virus raged worldwide that made them grasp the true nature of President Xi's China.

In March, Britain was taken aback by the extreme misinformation by the CPC as it tried to suggest that the American military was somehow to blame for the virus' emergence. The shortages of personal protective equipment reminded Western governments how reliant they had become on Chinese manufacturing and also exposed the difference between dealing with China and dealing with companies in democratic countries: ministers hesitated to criticise the CPC for fear that the next plane loaded with PPE wouldn't take off. This was a valid concern. When Australia suggested there should be an independent inquiry into the virus' origins,

Beijing aggressively slapped tariffs on its goods. The CPC's behaviour shows that if you develop a close economic relationship with China, it will be used to "bully you politically".

All this has led to a shift in UK government policy. At the start of the 2010s, David Cameron and George Osborne wanted the UK to be China's best friend in the West. This approach was inherited by Theresa May and, at first, Boris Johnson. In early 2020, Britain was still on track to have Huawei, a Chinese firm with close links to the PLA, play a key role in the building of its 5G network. This is changing, thanks to pressure from both the United States and Tory backbenchers.

A new national security and investment bill, now in Parliament, is meant to stop Chinese firms from buying up British companies in strategically important fields. This is overdue, given how vital technology will be to the coming rivalry between China and the West. To allow Chinese firms, which are not independent of the state, to purchase technology start-ups is extremely shortsighted. There is a strong case for far stricter rules

regarding universities' research deals with Chinese companies too.

During his presidency, Donald Trump reversed Barack Obama's overly passive approach to China's rise. But Mr Trump was ill-suited to galvanise the West to respond to this threat. First, his fondness for autocrats made him wholly unfit for the role of moral leader in this struggle. Second, pushing back on China requires building of alliances and working through multilateral institutions — which Mr Trump was atrocious at. He withdrew the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, that was to act as an economic counter to China, and his decision to pull America out of the World Health Organisation only increased China's influence within it.

Joe Biden's incoming administration in many ways represents a return to the Obama era, but US ties with China will be an important exception; Mr Biden will take a much more headline approach. There is now a bipartisan consensus in the US that China is a strategic threat. In his recent memoir Mr Obama suggests he would have taken a stricter line if he hadn't also had to deal with the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis.

As the host of next year's G-7, the UK has a major role to play in this Western pushback and intends to use the meeting to launch the D-10, an alliance of democracies to counter China. Australia, South Korea and India — all countries vital to any strategy to contain China — will be invited. Boris Johnson's government believes it has a vital role to play in bringing India into this alliance, given that relations between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Biden will not be easy.

In Whitehall there is also interest in the idea of a T-12: a grouping of democracies with a particular interest in technology. Any attempt to contain China must produce an alternative to its technological solutions. But the West is hampered by the split between the US and EU over data and privacy rules. This divide has led to two separate tech ecosystems and held back the effort to respond to China. The West must overcome these internal divisions if it is to prevent Beijing from taking a decisive lead in the industries of the future. This is just as important as coordinating investment in 6G technology to prevent a repeat of the current situation, where

Huawei offers a dramatically cheaper solution than any company from a democratic nation.

China's technological edge is one of the reasons it is in so many ways a more formidable competitor than the Soviet Union was. Another is its position in the world economy. It is no coincidence that no leading Hollywood studio has made a movie critical of China since Seven Years in Tibet in 1997.

China's integration into the global economy also means there are many in the business world who don't want anything to change. One influential Tory pushing for a tougher line on Beijing laments: "You didn't have UK corporates calling to express disappointment if you criticised the Soviet Union."

2020 has been an awful year for the world. Nearly every Western country has handled the pandemic badly. The IMF estimates China will be the only major economy to grow in 2020. But the rapid development of vaccines should restore some of the democratic world's intellectual self-confidence. It will need that in the coming generational struggle with Xi's China.

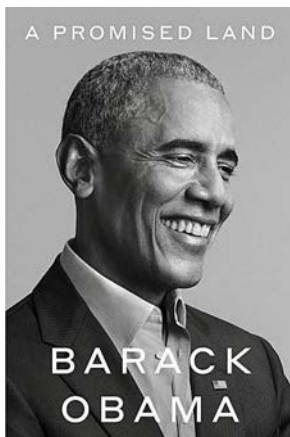
By arrangement with the Spectator

INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

NON-FICTION

- A PROMISED LAND**
Barack Obama
Penguin Viking, ₹1,999
- JUGALBANDI: THE BJP BEFORE MODI**
Vinay Sitapati
Penguin Viking, ₹799
- JTHE BATTLE OF BELONGING**
Shashi Tharoor
Aleph, ₹799
- REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra
HarperCollins, ₹599
- THE COMMONWEALTH OF CRICKET**
Ramachandra Guha
4th Estate, ₹699
- THE INDIA WAY**
S. Jaishankar
HarperCollins ₹699
- JINNAH: HIS SUCCESSES, FAILURES AND ROLE IN HISTORY**
Ishfaq Ahmed
Penguin ₹999
- TILL WE WIN**
Dr Chandrakant Lahariya, Dr Gagandeep Kang, Dr Randeep Guleria
Penguin Viking ₹299

- MY OWN WORDS**
Ruth Bader Ginsburg
Simon & Schuster, ₹599
- THE BOOK OF INDIAN ESSAYS: TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF ENGLISH PROSE**
Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (Editor)
Black Kite Press, ₹699



FICTION

- SHUGGIE BAIN**
Douglas Stuart
Picador, ₹499
- THE DISCOMFORT OF EVENING**
Marieke Lucas Rijnveld,
Faber & Faber, ₹499
- HAMNET**
Maggie O' Farrell,
Tinder Press, ₹699
- HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT**
Jeffrey Archer
Pan Macmillan, ₹450
- DAYLIGHT**
David Baldacci,
Pan Macmillan, ₹650
- THE HEART ASKS PLEASURE FIRST**
Karuna Ezara Parikh,
Picador, ₹699
- WHAT THE BODY REMEMBERS**
Shauna Singh Baldwin
Tara- India Research Press, ₹599
- VANISHING HALF**
Brit Bennett
Dialogue Books, ₹799
- THE ARCHER**
Paulo Coelho,
Penguin Viking, ₹250
- A TIME FOR MERCY**
John Grisham,
Hodder & Stoughton ₹699



Bahrison, New Delhi

A top cop's gripping diary



Anand K. Sahay

review

Retired senior officials in India have been, on the whole, shy to write about what they saw and did in their work lives. There is always the difficulty about how much to reveal. Social, political, national sensitivities live long and do not necessarily fade away when an officer retires. Then there is the Official Secrets Act. Writing must be careful in the extreme if it's not going to be all puff. So, most don't bother. It is too much trouble even if they could summon the energy once they've been there, done that.

Amod Kanth, among the most remarkable Indian Police Service (IPS) officers of his generation, appears to be a clear exception to the rule. In fact, he has written this book in part to inform the public. He believes, he says, that people ought to know.

This is healthy acknowledgment that in a democracy the apparatus of the state is run in

the name of the people, based on tax money they provide, and the burdens they must bear when governance goes haywire, as is frequently the case in this country. In fact, this volume is sub-titled "Police Diaries Book 1". So, there is more to follow. In the main, the observations below derive from that expectation.

The heart of the book is gripping. This is not on account of any juicy, lazy gossip about key people but because the book reveals what dedicated police work can do — and no less what it takes to make police work dedicated. This is especially the case in the backdrop of shortage of resources and manpower, to say nothing of political interference. These are a given in the Indian situation.

Kanth was the young officer who, first as Deputy Commissioner of Police of the Central District in the Union Territory of Delhi and subsequently as Deputy Commissioner, Crime and Railways, in the national capi-

tal, overcame these handicaps and led the police with courage and distinction. He had his share of luck. He had some great bosses, such as M.B. Kaushal, Vijay Karan and Ved Marwah, whose personality and guidance are unstintingly acknowledged in these pages along with the shining qualities of some individuals who reported to the protagonist in this chronicle.

"May you live in interesting times", is said to be a Chinese curse. The decade of the early 1980s to the early 1990s was just that sort of a time in India, especially in the national capi-

tal and the north of the country. The story began with the Khalistan movement in Punjab. This book deals with its blowback which burnt Delhi, leading to one crime wave after another at the vortex of which was the author of the present volume as a young police officer — armed with common sense, integrity and a sense of duty.

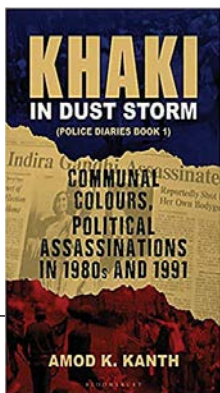
When Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was shot dead by her police bodyguards in 1984, medieval era-style mayhem broke out in the nation's capital, as this reviewer was witness. Anti-Sikh riots broke out. Thousands were killed. In certain cases, young Sikhs sought to take revenge and this took the form of terrorist actions. Delhi Police was found unequal to the task. It was overwhelmed by the enormity of the tide. It lacked resources, didn't have specialised training, and there weren't enough police. And — it is important to say this — large sections of the police force had turned communal and callous. Thus, in many cases, the victims just burned.

But, in Kanth's neutral telling, in the Central district where he was in charge, the situation was somehow managed better — with boldness and dedication. The way it is told, it is an absorbing story. After the riots came the retribution in the form of terrorism, and

Kanth was the leader for all of Delhi in these investigations and operations, not just for a part of the great and growing city which is medieval and modern in parts all of the time, and for that reason poses special challenges to the administrator and the cop.

High profile assassinations were par for the course in that Delhi, and spraying of bullets by car-borne terrorists killing innocent civilians was something that was known to happen. In the centre of that story stood the author of this book. He has won a gallantry award on the recommendation of the Army (which motivated parties tried to traduce but the judiciary upheld it), and earned kudos. Later, while doing a stint in CBI, he was the head of the investigation in the Special Investigation Team created to crack the mysteries in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. The mission was accomplished in record time.

Some of these tales, based purely on what's presented here, can make a motion picture. But being a special kind of cop is part of Kanth. He has also done pioneering work in the field of child rights for as long as he has done policing. May be, that is another volume. Tidier editing and differently constructed editorial design and conception could have helped sharpen the focus.



KHAKI IN DUST STORM

By AMOD K. KANTH
Bloomsbury ₹799

HOW CULTURE FILLIP CAN FAST-FORWARD PANDEMIC RECOVERY

Jaya
Bhattacharji
Rose
essay

The creative economy refers to a range of economic activities where value is derived from the generation or exploitation of knowledge and is copyright relevant, such as music, writing, art, fashion, design, and media. Also, a wider range of production activities including goods and services that rely on innovation, research and development such as film, museums, galleries and photography, reside in its ambit.

Unesco survey "Cultural Times" (2015), the first global map of the cultural and creative industries, acknowledges the societal value of arts and culture. It assesses the contribution of cultural and creative industries to economic growth. It estimates that they generate US\$250 billion in revenue a year, creating 29.5 million jobs worldwide.

On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared the Covid-19 pandemic; drastically impacting national economies. Essential industries were permitted to function but other sectors suffered terribly. Many governments did not offer any support, and certainly not for the creative industries. But there were some exceptions.

In June 2020, under a programme called New Start for Culture, Germany earmarked Euro 1bn for arts. Indeed, in November 2020, under Germany's infec-

tion protection law, culture got a new legal status. It is now no longer classified as entertainment. Hence, cancelling arts events in the pandemic might become difficult in this country.

On March 19, 2020, France, too, did something similar. It modified the rules of the country's specific unemployment scheme for artists and technicians. It announced that artists and authors could benefit with a lump sum from a solidarity fund.

Meanwhile, Italy set aside Euro 130 million for authors and audio-visual content creators.

On December 11, 2020, the United Kingdom's Arts Council announced that the Culture Recovery Fund has marked its £1 billion milestone, with £654 million being invested in arts and cultural organisations, as part of its £1.57 billion support package.

On November 30, Germany approved a culture budget of Euro 2.1 billion (\$2.5 billion), nearly at par with the European Union's budget for culture at 2.8 billion euros, albeit to be distributed over the next seven years.

Over in the United States, of the US \$2 trillion coronavirus stimulus bill announced by its government, approximately \$75 million was for the National Endowment for the Arts.

While in South Africa, where seven per cent of the workforce is employed in this sector, 45 per cent informally, the direct contribution to the country's GDP of which is 1.6 per cent, the National Arts Council committed its support to the artists by continuing to pay them during the pandemic.

In May 2020, Jacinda Ardern, the newly returning Prime Minister of New Zealand, announced a \$175 million pack-

Art and literature can generate critical insights that policy makers need to factor for bringing about a sustainable recovery of the economy

age for "decimated arts" — a "resilience grant". The creative sector contributes nearly \$11 billion a year to NZ's GDP and employs 90,000 people. The New Zealand Libraries Partnership Programme with a funding package of \$58.8 million will support librarians and library services and assist them to support community recovery. Ardern said, "A healthy cultural sector has many positive flow-on effects for other important parts of our economy, such as technical production, hospitality, venues and domestic tourism."

According to World Bank (August 2020 report), in 2013, creative industries around the world generated revenues of over \$2 billion and employed 29 million people. The market for creative goods is estimated to be \$508 billion as of 2015. In 2015, developing economies exported more than 250 billion creative products including design goods, fashion, and films. Top exporters included China, Turkey, India, Mexico, El Salvador and Pakistan. In the United States, the non-profit arts and culture industry generated \$166.3 billion of economic activity in 2015, supporting 4.6 million jobs, while receiving only \$5 billion in arts allocations by the public sector. A phenomenal return on investment at 3,326 per cent!

According to Megha Patnaik's report titled "Measuring India's Creative Economy", May 2020, however, approxi-

mately 1.1 million workers are employed in this sector, contributing 0.58 per cent of the GDP (2016-17). This is less than the international average as measured by WIPO where the mean contribution is 5.48 per cent. But again, in India, this can be partially attributed to the lack of comprehensive data. Patnaik states that with the right growth impetus through policy and markets, the creative economy can create a large share of jobs.

Sanjoy Roy, co-founder, Jaipur Literature Festival, confirms this by estimating that during the six days of the event there are more than 500,000 footfalls and 110,000 unique visitors.

In fact, culture can accelerate socio-economic recovery from the pandemic, as outlined by World Bank and Unesco in its report, "Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery" (2018). The framework, entitled "Cure", offers principles and strategies to apply in city reconstruction and rehabilitation in post-crisis situations.

There are four prominent ways in which culture positively impacts community resilience — by building social cohesion, fostering social and psychological well-being, offering critical tools for expression and community engagement, and finding authentic narratives, perspectives and experiences. These are critical insights that policymakers need to recognise for promoting sustainable and inclusive recovery from the pandemic's effects with full ownership from communities. Investing in creative industries and developing cultural capital is worth exploring for the Indian government.

Jaya Bhattacharji Rose is an international publishing consultant

The importance of being earnest in a villainish and banal world

Kushalrani
Gulab

review

It was at about page 243 of this 264-page book that I actually fell off my chair. I was laughing so hard. Laughing not at poor Ruby, the protagonist of Moni Mohsin's novel *The Impeccable Integrity of Ruby R.*, whose whole concept of her own existence had just been upended, but at myself.

Because I had read this book so earnestly right from the start, mentally noting a Modi here, a Trump there, possibly even a Putin lurking in a sentence or two. I had muttered darkly to myself throughout about messiah-type politicians, the trolls who worship them and the apparently global inability to think. I had begged Ruby again and again to use her head and open her eyes and see what was happening in front of her. But it was only when I got to page 243 that I understood that I had been reading this book all wrong.

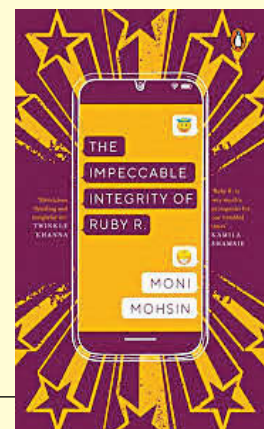
I could easily tell you what happened on page 243 to bring me to this revelation; it certainly would not be a spoiler because there are zero points of surprise in this book. Ruby Rauf, a hard-working and ambitious young woman, is focussed on her studies with the aim of working for a bank and returning to the upper middle class lifestyle she and her mother had lost when her banker father died, when she listens to a brand new politician speak and falls for his sincerity.

The brand new politician, Saif, a former film-star, says what every politician says, but with such charm and conviction that Ruby genuinely believes he will change the country. So when her mother, who works as a visiting tutor, is humiliated by a drug baron with such strong political connections that he is untouchable, Ruby abandons her education and ambition and joins Integrity, Saif's political party, as its social media head.

At no point in the book is Mohsin subtle about Ruby's inevitable fall from her great height at Integrity. Nothing is hidden from the reader or even Ruby herself. Saif's sliminess and sexually predatory behaviour, Integrity's complete lack of honour, Ruby's increasing belief that the end so justifies the means that even her closest friend can become social media prey — everything is made as clear as crystal. In fact, the author's total openness in the telling of this story almost makes it dull: you know right at the start that Ruby's life will be a trainwreck and sure enough, it is.

But then page 243 arrives. And you understand the importance of the book. *The Impeccable Integrity of Ruby R.* is not a political novel. It's a novel set in politics, but it's about Ruby and no one else. It is, in fact, a coming of age novel about a young woman, her insecurities and dreams and what her first decisions as an adult make of her. It is also about its readers, like me: how we lose ourselves in the ephemera of politics; how we must come of age ourselves. In one word, it's brilliant.

Kushalrani Gulab is a freelance editor and writer who dreams of being a sanyasi by the sea



THE IMPECCABLE INTEGRITY OF RUBY R.

By MONI MOHSIN
Penguin Viking ₹499

Barack Obama was decidedly a man of action as well as words

Sam Leith

review

Well, it's quite the title, isn't it? It tends to invite comparisons. The first part of the book, which is a 500-page *A Promised Land* is just north of 700 pages, and there's another volume to come.

That speaks of a certain self-regard. Then again, Barack Obama has a good bit to be self-regarding about. He overcame a modest background, a Muslim-sounding middle name and the melanin thing to win the presidency, in large part thanks to an unsurpassed gift for oratory. He helped avert a global depression after the 2008 crash. He passed the Affordable Care Act in the teeth of a ferociously obstructionist GOP. He kept a lid on

the Iranian nuclear programme, just about negotiated the Arab spring with honour intact, saw off Colonel Gaddafi — and it was on his watch that they got Osama Bin Laden, a thrilling account of which closes the book. He managed to win the Nobel Peace Prize ("what for?" he was self-aware enough to wonder) even as he sent tens of thousands more troops to Afghanistan and waged unceasing drone war in the sovereign territories of other nations. What's more he has a good singing voice, a nifty jump shot and a smart, smoking hot wife — he notes, approvingly, the "cult of Michelle's arms" taking hold of the media.

Whether or not you rate his achievements as highly as he does, to keep company with his elegant prose, complex science and unmistakable intelligence is a cool drink of water after four years of the other guy. Did he *bring about* the other guy? That's something Obama frets about — and though in these pages Trump is a minor comic character, the book describes with dismay the truth-indifferent, competence-optional rise of what was to metastasise into Trumpism. *A Promised Land* is long, in part, because it wants to do two things: to serve the historical

record (which means huge passages about the minutiae of passing legislation, complete with hat-tips to obscure staffers and bush-league congressmen); and to offer for the ordinary reader a sense of what it's like, in human terms, to be the 44th President of the United States of America. Plus, it needs to do a lot of the former to explain to his critics on the right why he's not a Marxist revolutionary, and to his critics on the left, whose disapproval stings him more, why he was not able to right the wrongs of the world in one go. Doing that — in an age of 280-character position statements — means a patient attention to detail.

But, as I say, there's a lot of it: he takes two and a half pages to describe his daily commute down the White House's West Colonnade; complete with picturesque old Black grounds-men (sign of the times; he capitalises Black, as he did not in his first book) who, it occurs to the President, are in a way just like him: "guardians... the quiet priests of a good and solemn order." There is a good bit of what in the past would have been called "pi-jaw"; and a lot, too, of what these days gets called "humblebrag". He does like to namecheck the predecessors he admires, and com-

Obama's cool conscientious pragmatism, rather than his optimism, is the takeaway from his memoir

pare his travails with theirs — Lincoln, JFK, FDR, Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel and Gandhi are among those who get an outing.

Also, schmaltz. Obama salts his narrative with passages of novelistic colour and implausibly verbatim dialogue. One of

his tics is to describe himself, at one resonant moment or another, contemplating the scene and having a Deep Thought or a Meaningful Memory.

"As Michelle and I leaned out to wave, the night air brisk on our cheeks, the crowd cheering wildly, I couldn't help but think about the daily fighting that continued to consume Iraq and Afghanistan and all the cruelty and suffering and injustice that my administration had barely even begun to deal with."

Visiting the pyramids in Egypt really sets him off. He contemplates an old graffiti of a jug-eared figure who looks a bit like him: "All of it was forgotten now, none of it mattered, the pharaoh, the slave, and the vandal all long turned to dust." He also, in more prosaic moments, has the Alan Partridge quality of liking to end sections by quoting his own witticisms and the approving reactions to same ("We both got a good laugh out of that").

But under all that hopey changey stuff, and where the long sections about wrangling policy through Congress really come into their own, is a superbly engaging study in realpolitik. He was famous for his windy rhetoric; but to get

anything done in office required a steely political operator. Obama, the centrist dad's centrist dad, is again and again confronted by the hard arithmetic of the caucus at home, and of tangled interests abroad. He really shows you how the sausage is made — and his cool, conscientious, covering-all-the-angles pragmatism, more than his optimism, is the real fascination in this book.

He delivers crisp little put-downs, too. Nicolas Sarkozy is a "bantam cock" whose conversation "swooped from flattery to bluster to genuine insight, never straying far from his primary barely disguised interest, which was to be at the centre of the action and take credit for whatever it was that might be worth taking credit for." Putin leads a Russia that "resembled a criminal syndicate as much as a traditional government".

And the man himself? He likes vodka neat, has a weakness for nicotine, loves to play basketball, golf and spades. He's uxorious, devoted to his kids, introspective and self-questioning. He doodles in meetings. He psyches himself up for rallies by listening to Jay-Z and Eminem. And as a young man he read Marx, Marcuse, Fanon and Foucault — but (he makes clear so as not

to give Jordan Peterson fans an embolism) mainly to impress girls.

And, wow, what a weird world the President lives in: empty motorways wherever you go, "armed SWAT teams" filling every staircase, rooftops cluttered up with "Secret Service countersniper teams, clad in black". If you take off for the loo, hulk men in black suits will mutter "Renegade to Secondary Hold" into their cuffs. Every day starts with a briefing dossier that Michelle calls the "Death, Destruction and Horrible Things Book".

It's plain that Michelle doesn't like any of it all that much. When Barack was originally thinking about running for president, he told her: "You get the final say." Michelle lifted her eyebrows as if to suggest she didn't believe me. "If that's really true, then the answer is no," she said. "I don't want you to run for president, at least not now." Three pages later, he's running for president anyway. "If one of the qualifications of running for the most powerful office in the world was megalomania," he writes, "it appeared I was passing the test."

By arrangement with the Spectator

SHORT TAKES

Panghal clinches gold at World Cup

New Delhi: World silver-medalist Amit Panghal (52kg) notched up a gold medal without having to fight his final bout, while veteran Satish Kumar (+91kg) settled for silver after an injury prevented him from competing in his summit clash at the Cologne World Cup in Germany on Saturday. Panghal was given a walkover by Germany's Argishti Terteryan.

Satish, who made the final after beating France's Djamil Dini Moindze in the semifinal on Friday night, had to withdraw against Germany's Nelvie Tiafack owing to an injury. Also making the final were Sakshi and Manisha in the women's 57kg category. Asian Games bronze winner Pooja Rai, Mohammed Hussamuddin and Gaurav Solanki settled for bronze medals. — PTI

Chennaiyin snap winless streak

Goa: Chennaiyin FC finally managed to register a win after five games, with 2-1 victory over FC Goa in the Indian Super League here on Saturday.

In a game that saw 39 shots at goal, Rahim Ali (53') scored the match-winner after Jorge Ortiz (9') cancelled out Rafael Crivellaro's (5') olympic-goal opener. It was an easy win for the visitors who should have finished with a bigger goal margin, had it not for their poor finishing. Goa coach Juan Ferrando named three changes to the line-up that lost against ATK Mohun Bagan with Aiban Dohling and George Ortiz being the other two. — PTI

Real Kashmir lift maiden IFA Shield

Kolkata: Real Kashmir FC clinched their maiden major trophy by lifting the IFA Shield after beating George Telegraph 2-1 in the summit clash here on Saturday, though the 127-year-old tournament was held without some of the country's top sides. This year, four I-League teams and eight Calcutta Premier League sides took part. Besides RKFC, Mohammedan Sporting, Gokulam Kerala and Indian Arrows were the other I-League sides.

Fresh from a hat-trick against Mohammedan Sporting in the semifinals, Nigerian forward Lukman Adefemi broke the deadlock (38th minute) from a penalty but the Georgians restored parity in the second half with a terrific solo run by substitute Gautam Das (50th). But 10 minutes later, skipper Mason Robertson snatched the lead for the Snow Leopards with a towering header. — PTI

BDL bats show no mercy to Dayanand

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 19

Sandeep Goud and K. Hima Teja shone with the bat for BDL on Saturday, the second day of their A-1 Division three-day league match against R. Dayanand. Sandeep hit 58 while Teja is one run short of his half century. Prateek Pawar also struck a decent 49 for BDL. Sandeep and Teja are at the crease as BDL made 193 for 2 to ramp up pressure on the Dayanand side which were all out for a paltry 160 in their first innings. Tejodhar and Akash Sana were pick of bowlers for BDL, scalping three wickets each. Earlier, BDL posted 292 in their first innings.

A-1 DIVISION (THREE-DAY)

Day-2:
■ BDL 292/9 in 90 overs & 193/2 in 36.3 overs (Prateek Pawar 49, Sandeep Goud 58 batting, K. Hima Teja 49 batting) vs R Dayanand 160 in 46.5 overs (K. Bhagath Varma 41, B. Tejodhar 3/37, Akash Sana 3/43).

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Brighton vs Sheffield from 5.30 pm; Tottenham vs Leicester from 7.45 pm; Manchester United vs Leeds United from 10 pm; West Brom vs Aston Villa from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Italian League: Torino vs Bologna from 5 pm on Sony Ten 2; Sassuolo vs AC Milan from 7.30 pm; Atalanta vs Roma from 10.30 pm; Lazio vs Napoli from 1.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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NEW LOW

India slump to their lowest score as Australia clinch first Test

Adelaide, Dec. 19: The Indian cricket team under Virat Kohli faced their worst hour of embarrassment while collapsing to their lowest Test score of 36 as a rampaging Australia cruised to an emphatic eight-wicket victory inside two and half days in the opening Day/Night Test here on Saturday.

There were no demons in the pitch but Josh Hazlewood (5-38-5) and Patrick Cummins (10.2-4-21-4) displayed fast bowling of highest quality to dismantle the visitors.

The sequence of 4, 9, 2, 0, 4, 0, 8, 4, 0, 4, and 1 on the scorecard will rattle the fans but more so this team, for a very long time.

India's earlier lowest score was 42 at the Lord's in 1974 against England, known in Indian cricket parlance as the "Summer of 42". Saturday's total was also the lowest score in the brief history of D/N Tests and the joint fifth lowest overall.

The easy target of 90 runs was achieved by the home side in only 21 overs without much fuss.

They only lost Matthew Wade (33) and Marnus Labuschagne (6) in pursuit of the easy goal.

The home team collected 30 World Test Championship points from the win, while its skipper Tim Paine was adjudged player of the match for his gritty first innings knock of 73.

India have now lost three successive Tests well inside three days with two being in New Zealand earlier this year.

To make matters worse for the visitors, star pacer Mohammed Shami's series could well be over due to a wrist injury. — PTI

Our worst batting show: Virat

Adelaide, Dec. 19: India captain Virat Kohli can't remember a "worse batting performance" by his team than the lowest ever Test score of 36 against Australia here but at the same time, he has urged people not to "make mountain out of a molehill".

He did speak about batsmen "lacking intent" to take forward the lead and although he

didn't take names, Mayank Agarwal's approach (9 off 40 balls) in the morning was hard to explain when the team had a 62-run overnight advantage. "I don't think we have ever had a worse batting performance than this. So we can only go upwards from here and you will see guys stepping up and realising their true characters,"

Kohli said. The Indian captain desperately tried but looked at pains to defend the indefensible — another inept overseas batting show with six successive scores of less than 250 just this year. "It's a strange one to be honest in my opinion. The ball didn't do much but we didn't have too much intent of going out there and taking the

game forward," he lamented. "Everything happened so quickly that no one could make any sense of it," Kohli was unable to fathom what hit his team. "I don't think it's alarming and we can very well sit here and make a mountain out of a molehill, it's basically looking at things in the right perspective," he reasoned. — PTI



India captain Virat Kohli (right) leads his players off the field after their loss to Australia on the third day of their first Test in Adelaide on Saturday.

SCORECARD

India 1st Innings: 244 all out

Australia 1st Innings: 191 all out

India second Innings (overnight 9/1):

Prithvi Shaw b Cummins 4, Mayank Agarwal c Paine b Hazlewood 9, Jasprit Bumrah c and b Cummins 2, Cheteshwar Pujara c Paine b Cummins 0, Virat Kohli c Green b Cummins 4, Ajinkya Rahane c Paine b Hazlewood 0, Hanuma Vihari c Paine b Hazlewood 8, Wriddhiman Saha c Labuschagne b Hazlewood 4, Ravichandran Ashwin c Paine b Hazlewood 0, Umesh Yadav not out 4, Mohammed Shami ret'd hurt 1. Extras 0. Total (for 9 wks, in 21.2 overs) 36.

FoW: 7-1, 15-2, 15-3, 15-4, 15-5, 19-6, 26-7, 26-8, 31-9.

Bowling: Mitchell Starc 6-3-7-0, Pat Cummins 10.2-4-21-4, Josh Hazlewood 5-3-8-5.

Australia 2nd Innings: Matthew Wade run out 33, Joe Burns (not out) 51, Marnus Labuschagne c Agarwal b Ashwin 6, Steven Smith (not out) 1. Total (For 2 wks, in 21 overs) 93.

FoW: 70-1, 82-2. **Bowling:** Umesh Yadav 8-1-49-0, Jasprit Bumrah 7-1-27-0, Ravichandran Ashwin 6-1-16-1.



The OTP to forget this is 49204084041.

— VIRENDER SEHWAG
Ex-India opener

Wait what happened? I just went to play 9 holes came back game over. What a spell by The Australians. Pace matters.

— WASIM AKRAM
Pakistan cricketer

With the way India batted & bowled in the 1st innings, they were in the driver's seat, but the Aussies came back really hard this morning. That is the beauty of Test cricket. It's NEVER over till it's over. India was out-classed in the 2nd half. Congratulations to Australia!

— SACHIN TENDULKAR
India great

Gavaskar hails Aussie bowlers

Adelaide, Dec. 19: The legendary Sunil Gavaskar on Saturday sympathised with the Indian team after it slumped to its lowest Test score, saying it would be a bit unfair to be critical given that the Australian pace bowlers were simply "superb".

The trio of Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc produced a sensational performance as the visitors collapsed to their lowest Test score of 36. India's earlier lowest score was 42 against England at the Lord's in 1974 and Gavaskar was a part of that team.

"I mean, any team that is all-out for its lowest Test score since the time it started playing Test cricket, that's never good to see," Gavaskar told 'Channel 7' after India's eight-wicket loss here.

"But having said that, if any other team had been facing that kind of bowling, they would have also got out, maybe be not all-out for 36, maybe 72 or 80-90 but the way Hazlewood, Cummins bowled and the earlier three-over spell from Starc, they asked a lot



Australia's Pat Cummins celebrates the wicket of India's Cheteshwar Pujara on Saturday. — AP

of questions," he explained. "So it's not fair to blame the Indian batsmen for the way they got out because it was just simply superb bowling by the Australian bowlers," he added.

After ending the second day with a handy 62-run first innings lead, India faced a batting collapse in the first session of day three. None of their batsmen reached double-digit scores as Hazlewood (5/8) and Cummins (4/21) terrorised the tourists into submission. — PTI

ZERO FOR FOUR WAS MORE SHAMEFUL, SAYS GAEKWAD

BY BIPIN DANI

1-0 (Pankaj Roy), 2-0 (Datta Gaekwad), 3-0 (M.K. Mantri) and 4-0 (Vijay Manjrekar). India losing four wickets without a run on the scoreboard against England at Leeds in 1952 was more shameful than Virat Kohli & Co.'s second innings debacle at Adelaide, according to former India opener Dattaji Gaekwad.

"Team India's 36 all out at Adelaide is not as shameful as our debacle," Gaekwad, one of the two surviving members of India's 1952 team, said.

"There have been other international teams who have scored lesser than 36 runs but losing four wickets without a run on the board was very hard to digest. Even today, I am ashamed of this (zero for four) debacle".

Hazlewood warns India of aftershock

Adelaide, Dec. 19: India will feel the aftershocks of crumbing to their lowest Test total of 36 heading into the remainder of the four-match series against Australia, Adelaide Oval's wrecker-in-chief Josh Hazlewood said Saturday.

Virat Kohli leaving for paternity leave from the second Test will also add to the visitors' woes, according to Hazlewood.

"Getting bowled out for 36 is going to leave a few headaches here and there and their best batter (Virat) is leaving as well, it is going to leave a bit of whole," Hazlewood said at

the post-match press conference.

Kohli's absence is also an opportunity for others to prove their mettle after the forgettable outing at the Adelaide Oval.

"...But they have got plenty of class batters on the side-lines to come in, not of Virat's class. But in terms of the series, it is great to be one up, it is better than being one-down, as we found out last time," he added. The pacer though cautioned his teammates that the win is history now and they must look forward to the coming matches. — PTI

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