

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | FRIDAY 4 | DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 25°C
Min: 22°C
Rainfall: 5 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Karthigai 19
Tithi: Chaturthi
Star: Punarpusam/ Pusam
Rahukalam:
10.30 am to 12 noon
Yamagandam:
3 pm to 4.30 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.00 am
Jumma: 12.03 pm
Asar: 3.14 pm
Maghrib: 5.40 pm
Isha: 6.55 pm
SUNSET TODAY 5.42 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.18 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 9.10 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 10.20 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+29,331)	(+416)
95,64,565	1,39,102

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,416)
TN: 7,86,1630 11,747

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

6,52,00,441

DEATHS

15,05,989

COUNTRIES,
AREAS WITH
CASES 218

worldometers.info

US senate scraps per country cap on green cards

Washington: The US Senate has unanimously passed a bill that eliminates the per-country numerical limitation for employment-based immigrant visas and raises it for family-based visas, a legislation that will hugely benefit hundreds of thousands of Indian professionals in America who have been waiting for years to get their green cards. The passage of the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act by the Senate on Wednesday comes as a big relief to Indian IT professionals who come to the US on H-1B work visas and their current waiting period for Green Card or permanent residency is running into decades.

SC upholds levy of GST on lotteries, betting and gambling

New Delhi: In a significant verdict, the Supreme Court Thursday held that the levy of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on lotteries, betting and gambling does not amount to hostile discrimination and is not violative of right to equality under the Constitution. Upholding the validity of the provisions under the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017 empowering authorities to tax lotteries, a bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan dismissed a plea of Skill Lotto Solutions Pvt Ltd, an authorised agent for sale and distribution of lotteries organized by Punjab government.

PM to address IIT2020 global summit

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will deliver the keynote address at the IIT2020 global summit on Friday. The theme of this year's summit, organised by the PanIT USA, is 'The Future is Now'.

COUNTER POINT



They are blocking roads in support of farmers' agitation!



STATE | 3

CM calls Stalin 'statement hero'

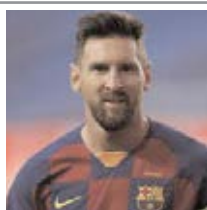


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Not game over in the fight against virus, warns UK PM

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Messi fined for tribute to Diego



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No breakthrough; farmers, Centre to meet tomorrow

ANIMESH SINGH | DC
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, DEC. 3

The marathon fourth round of talks on Thursday between the farmers' organisations and the Centre on the three controversial farm laws, which lasted for over seven hours, failed to break the impasse and the two sides are expected to meet again on Saturday, December 5.

Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar, however, said after the meeting that "no ego" over the issue, and the new laws ensure safety for marginal farmers and the minimum support price will always remain.

The government assured the group of nearly 40 farmers' leaders that "all their valid concerns" would be discussed and "considered with an open mind", but the other side flagged several loopholes and deficiencies in the laws, which they said were passed hastily in September.

The farmers said they did not get any concrete assurance from the Centre on doing away with the laws. The representatives of farm unions stuck to their line that no amendments in the laws would be accepted by them.

At the same time, there are some indications that when the talks resume on Saturday, contentious issues like an assurance on MSP for farm produce, stubble burning and the grievance resolution mechanism under the subdivisional magistrates' courts will be discussed.

Sources said the government is considering the farmers' demand that they can approach the courts in case of a dispute over contract farming. ■ **P4**

Issue may affect national security, Capt. tells Shah

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 3

Punjab Chief Minister Capt. Amarinder Singh, who met Union home minister Amit Shah on Thursday, cautioned that the ongoing farmers agitation will not only have an impact on the state's economy but would also have an implication on national security. During his 30-minute meeting with Mr Shah, Capt. Singh said the Centre should try and resolve the issue at the earliest so that protesting farmers can lift the roadblock along Delhi's main entry points. Talking to the media after his meeting, he said, "Discussions are on between the farmers and the Centre, there's nothing for me to resolve. I reiterated my opposition in my meeting with the home minister and requested him to resolve the issue as it affects the economy of my state and the security of the nation." ■ **P4**

Parkash Singh Badal returns Padma Vibhushan

Chandigarh, Dec. 3: Akali Dal stalwart and former Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal on Thursday returned his Padma Vibhushan award in protest against the Centre's farm laws.

"I am who I am because of the people, especially the common farmer. Today when he has lost more than his honour, I see no point in holding on to the Padma Vibhushan honour," he said.

"Parkash Badal today returned the Padma Vibhushan award in protest against the betrayal of the farmers by the Government of India and against the shocking indifference and contempt with which the government is treating the ongoing peaceful and democratic agitation of the farmers against the three farm Acts," a SAD statement said. —**PTI**

Advance winter session of Parliament: Congress

Chandigarh, Dec. 3: Congress leader Manish Tewari on Thursday demanded that the winter session of Parliament be convened at the earliest to debate various pressing issues facing the country like the ongoing farmers' protest against agriculture reform laws, Chinese aggression and the Covid-19 crisis.

"It is all the more important to convene the parliament for the winter session in view of the farmers' uprising when tens of thousands of farmers from different parts of the country are protesting around Delhi to seek the repealing of three controversial agricultural laws," he said.

"And the parliament is the best forum to debate and deliberate on these while keeping in view the concerns and demands of the farmers," he added. —**PTI**

ON MONEY TRAIL

ED raids PFI offices for links to anti-CAA stir

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 3

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday conducted searches at 26 premises across nine states linked to the Popular Front of India (PFI) in connection with its money laundering probe against the radical outfit.

The Central probe agency also raided the premises of PFI's chairman O.M. Abdul Salam and Kerala state president Nasarudheen Elamarom. The ED is investigating PFI's financial links on alleged charges of fuelling the anti-Citizen-ship (Amendment) Act protests in the country and the Delhi riots in February this year, among other things.

In Chennai, the ED officials raided the office of the outfit and the houses of its functionaries.

The searches were aimed at collecting evidence in multiple money laundering cases that have been clubbed into one and are being probed against the PFI and those linked to it, sources said.

The ED had said in November it was investigating financial links between the PFI and Bhim Army in its money laundering case registered to investigate allegations of illegal funds being used to "fuel" the anti-CAA protests.

The agency is investigating the PFI under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, since 2018.

In Chennai, PFI members held a protest against the raid and said that the BJP government at the Centre was trying to divert the attention from the massive farmers' agitation and to cover up the BJP's failures.

Mother, son spend 1 hour in mangled car on road, saved

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

A businessman and his 85-year-old mother had a miraculous escape spending an hour in their car, mangled after being rammed by a speeding tipper truck on GST Road in the city on Thursday.

The accident happened at around 3.30 pm on Thursday when Vasudevan (59), a businessman from Ranipet, and his mother Komalavalli (85), were heading towards Nanganallur in the city to attend a function at their relative's home. A tipper truck carrying sand reportedly tried to overtake the car and rammed against it and dragged it a few meters against the centre median on the road. The car was completely mangled.

The passengers were injured and in a semicon-



The mangled remains of a car that was involved in the accident on GST Road on Thursday. — **DC**

scious state and hence could not get of the car. Passersby who reached the accident site tried to rescue them but in vain. They were taken put only after the fire and rescue personnel from Tambaram and the Chromepet traffic investigation police arrived at the spot. They

had to cut the car open to save Mr Vasudevan.

The passengers were later admitted in Government hospital in Chromepet and are said to be in stable condition.

The Chromepet traffic police registered a case and arrested the truck driver.

■ Superstar wants to change the fate of Tamil Nadu

Rajini's party in 2021; to contest assembly polls

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

Announcing that the time has come to change the fate of Tamil Nadu, film actor Rajinikanth announced on Thursday that he would launch his political party in 2021 and make an announcement on that on December 31.

Along with a hashtag 'will change, will change everything.. if not now, never' in Tamil, Rajinikanth first announced his decision on Twitter before emerging from his house in the afternoon to meet the media corps waiting for hours.

"I don't mind giving my life," he said, adding "political change is very very important. It's a compulsion. So I am starting a party."

He said he never went back on his word. If he lost the election it would be the people's loss and if he won it would be the people's victory, he said.

In a tweet, Rajinikanth said he would usher in Tamil Nadu a politics based on honesty, integrity, transparency and spirituality without depending on caste or religion. "Sure to create. It will be a miracle, a wonder. Will happen," he said.

Recalling that he had said in 2017 that he would field candidates in all 234 constituencies and was planning to tour the state to create a revival among the people, he said he could not do it due to the Coronavirus crisis.

Since he had undergone



Actor-turned-politician Rajinikanth gestures during a press conference to announce the launch of his political party in January 2021, in Chennai, on Thursday. Also seen are former head of Tamil Nadu BJP's intellectual wing R. Arjunamurthy, and former Congress leader Tamizharuvi Manian. — **DC**

a kidney transplant, his body had less resistance when more immunity was needed during the time of Covid-19, he said. So, he could not meet the people directly, he said. "I came back alive from Singapore only because of the prayers of the people of Tamil Nadu," he added.

Mr Rajinikanth also introduced two office-bearers of his to be launched party. One was Tamilaruvidmanian, who has been meeting Rajinikanth for a long time and holding discussions with him for long hours, besides even giving interviews to media organisations on the actor's plans. He would be the overseer of the party.

The other one was Ra Arjunamurthy, who was the state president of the BJP's intellectual wing. ■ **P3**

OPS welcomes move, hints at electoral pact

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

Deputy Chief Minister and AIADMK leader O. Panneerselvam on Friday welcomed superstar Rajinikanth's decision to launch his political party in January 2021.

While welcoming Rajini's political innings, mr Panneerselvam said, "Anything may happen in politics," adding, "if there is an opportunity, there will be an alliance with him".

"The key battle will be probably between

Rajinikanth and Sasikala. BJP will be in a dilemma," said BJP leader Subramanian Swamy in a tweet, suggesting that the AIADMK may suffer. But fisheries minister D. Jayakumar said the actor's announcement would not affect the AIADMK.

Many BJP leaders, including S Gurumurthy, and fans of the actor were euphoric over the decision.

At one point, a hashtag on the announcement by Rajinikanth was trending in the state.



Varavara Rao to stay at private hospital till December 14

Mumbai, Dec. 3: The Bombay High Court on Thursday said the condition of poet-activist Varavara Rao, arrested in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, had improved but he will continue to remain at Nanavati hospital till December 14. A division bench perused a medical report submitted by the hospital where Rao was admitted on November 18. "There is some slight improvement. He shall continue to remain admitted there till December 14," it said. — **PTI**

Covid-19 caseload breaches 95-lakh mark

New Delhi, Dec. 3: India's Covid-19 caseload went past 95 lakh, while the total number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 89.73 lakh pushing the national recovery rate to 94.11 per cent, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday. The total coronavirus cases mounted to 95,34,964 with 35,551 new infections being reported in a day, while the death toll climbed to 1,38,648 with 526 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed. 'The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 89,73,373 pushing the national recovery rate to 94.11 per cent. — **PTI**

Karnataka asks officials to collect details on UP law

Bengaluru, Dec. 3: Karnataka will have a law against 'love jihad', and officials have been directed to gather information regarding an ordinance promulgated in Uttar Pradesh in this regard, home minister Basavaraj Bommai said on Thursday.

"When Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh governments started mulling over it (a law), we too started thinking about it- how to do it, how to ensure that there was pressure or force involved (in conversion)- it is the main thing," Mr Bommai said. **PTI**

Three years ago, the accused started pressuring her to undergo religious conversion and perform 'nikaah' (marriage) with him, according to the complaint. But when the woman opposed, he threatened to kidnap her, Tikaram has said in his complaint.

The complainant's daughter married someone else in June. However, Ahmed continued to harass her and her family members, he has alleged. —**PTI**

UP police arrests man under new anti-conversion law

Bareilly, Dec. 3: The Uttar Pradesh Police has made its first arrest under the new anti-conversion law, days after a man complained that someone is harassing his daughter in a bid to change her religion, officials said on Thursday. "This is the first arrest under the new law. Accused Owais Ahmad was arrested from the Richha railway gate in the Bahedi area here on Wednesday. He was produced before a local court and was sent to

14 days judicial custody," deputy inspector-general (DIG) of Police, Bareilly, Rajesh Kumar Pandey said.

The case was registered at the Devarniya police station in Bareilly district on November 28 against Ahmad, officials said.

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel on November 28 had given assent to the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, against

forcible or fraudulent religious conversions.

The law provides for imprisonment of up to 10 years and a maximum fine of Rs 50,000 under different categories.

The complainant has accused Ahmad, a resident of the same village, of trying to convert his daughter through "allurement", police said.

According to the complaint, Tikaram's daughter and Ahmed studied together in Class 12.

Chandrababu Naidu, Pawan Kalyan extend wishes

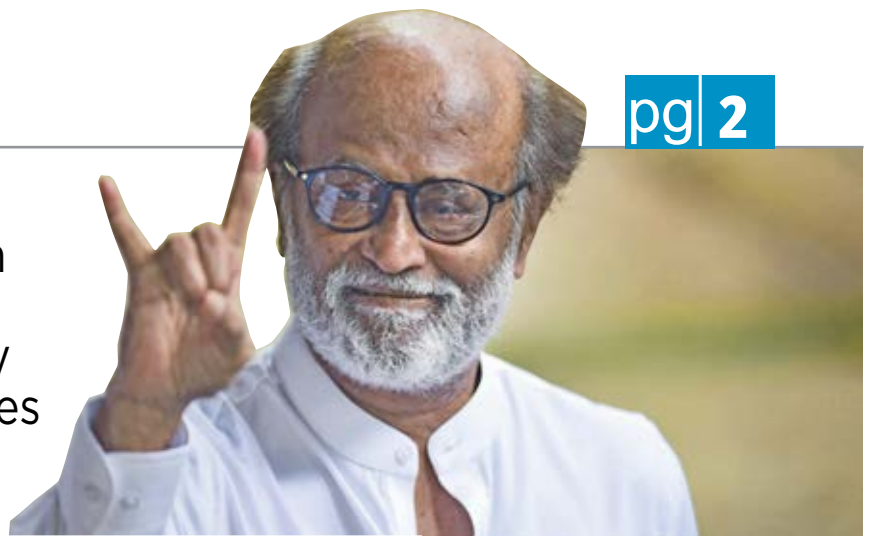
Amaravati, Dec 3: Telugu Desam Party president N Chandrababu Naidu and Jana Sena chief K. Pawan Kalyan welcomed Tamil superstar Rajinikanth's decision to join politics by floating a new political party. "Rajinikanth is my good friend. It's good that he is entering active politics. I welcome his decision," Chandrababu said at a press conference here on Thursday evening. In a democracy, it was natural for new political parties to emerge, he said, and hoped Rajinikanth would succeed in his new role as well. Speaking to the media in the temple town Tirupati, the Jana Sena president Pawan Kalyan noted that Rajinikanth had been in politics for long, though not directly. "Previously, he worked for the victory of one party. He has a huge fan base and Rajinikanth was wanting to join active politics for some time," Kalyan remarked. He wished the very best for Rajinikanth and hoped the latter would be successful in his new venture.

— PTI



No one will be more happy than me even if I happen to lose my life for people's sake. I will never fail to keep my word. A political change is compulsory and very important. It is the need of the hour. If such a change does not happen now, it will never materialise. We have to change everything"

— RAJINIKANTH



'Thalaivar Aaattam Aarambam'

Celebrities give thumbs up to Rajini

ANUPAMA SUBRAMANIAM | DC CHENNAI, DEC. 3

Some of the celebrities retweeted superstar Rajinikanth's tweet on his entry into politics and posted their views. They highlighted the hashtags posted by Rajinikanth in Tamil which roughly translates as— #WillChangeEverything, #IfNot—NowThenNever. Some of them like veteran comedian Senthil congratulated the superstar by calling him over phone.

RAGHAV LAWRENCE: Thank you so much Thalaiva. So happy to hear this

news @rajini ikanth. I am also one among your million fans waiting for this moment. I pray to Raghavendra Swamy for all your wishes to come true. During this Covid crisis without even considering your health, you have decided to come and serve the people. Your dream will surely come true!

KHUSHBU SUNDAR: Dearest

@rajinikanth Sir Great to know you are finally taking the plunge. Wishing you all the very best in your new role. Like always, very sure you will do to the best of your abilities. Good luck to you Sir.

KASTURI SHANKAR: Wonderful breaking news!

Superstar Rajinikanth political Party in January, announcement on December 31st. I suspected he didn't want to come. Never have I been so happy to have been wrong! #Vaa_Thalaivaa

Soun darya Rajinikanth retweeted her dad's political entry post with Baba icon.

ANIRUDH RAVI CHANDER: After this only it is going to start! Thalaivar Aaattam Aaram bam!

Dawn of new era in TN politics, say Rajini fans

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, DEC 3

A Rajini fan here aptly referred to the song 'Singam onnu purapatahey' in Rajini-starrer 'Arunachalam', where the actor plays the role of a political party leader campaigning for his candidate, making a comparison of matinee idol Rajinikanth's entry into politics.

Amid the pouring rain on Thursday, Rajini fans and supporters here celebrated the actor's announcement on Thursday about his plans to start a political party, and celebrated the moment bursting crackers and distributing sweets to the public. These are the ones, who in a first among Rajini fans association in the state, had gathered in mid-December 2017 for a walkathon from the Nilgiris border to Chennai, to urge their

hero enter politics.

Secretary, Rajini Makkal Mandram, the Nilgiris, S Kumar, said that Thursday was an auspicious day for Rajini fans. "No doubt our Thalaivar has decided to script a new history in state politics dominated by Dravidian parties. His entry into politics will certainly deal a blow to the five-decade-old political culture of Dravidian parties, where family and dynasty politics had been ruling the roost. Thalaivar's way is always unique with a touch of spirituality, honesty and simplicity, and he will definitely deliver clean and transparent governance if voted to power. During many film shoots in the Nilgiris, 'Thalaivar' proved himself to be people friendly and accessible. We are hopeful that people will be with him to usher in a new era of politics in the state," Kumar added.



Fans dance and burst crackers on hearing their *thalaivar's* decision to launch party in January.



Rajinikanth with director and co-stars during the shoot of block-buster movie *Mullum Malarum* at Geddai slopes, Ooty, in late 1970s.



Rajini fans distribute sweets to commuters and pedestrians in the city on Thursday.

FANS CELEBRATE IN CENTRAL DISTRICTS

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUCHY, DEC 3

Despite pouring rain, film star Rajinikanth's fans celebrated his announcement of floating a political party, by bursting crackers and distributing sweets to the public across the central districts of Tiruchy, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Pudukkottai, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam on Thursday. In Tiruchy district, many places including Srirangam, railway junction and central bus stand areas, his fans celebrated the moment by stopping buses and distributing sweets to the passengers.

SHRC orders ₹3 lakh to man who lost wife, newborn

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC. 3

The State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has directed the state government to pay a compensation of ₹3 lakh to a person who lost his wife and newborn child due to medical negligence during delivery of the baby at a primary health centre 10 years ago.

In the complaint, S. Selvarasu of Shakti Villagam village in Chidambaram taluk stated that on February 3, 2010 his wife Sumathy developed labour pain and was admitted at the government primary health centre, Sholapuram. After directing S. Jayalakshmi, staff nurse, to attend to the patient Dr. K. Vennila, (now deceased) the medical officer, left the hospital.

Medical officer Dr. S. Thangarathinam, nurses Jayalakshmi and Banupriya attended Sumathy. They did not follow the required medical procedures during delivery of the baby and Sumathy delivered a male child. However, the child died and subsequently Sumathy also died. Therefore, the complainant prayed to take action against the doctors and nurses for their negligence and recklessness during hospitalisation of Sumathy.

Challenging the complaint, the doctors and nurses stated that they acted as per the instruction of Dr. Vanilla. Despite the advice given by the respondent, Sumathy failed to cooperate during her delivery by not pushing the baby out, and the same was also informed to the relative of Sumathy. However, a male child was born and within a few minutes the baby died. Following that Sumathy fell sick and was taken to the government hospital, Kumbakonam by ambulance. There she was declared brought dead.

SHRC member Dr. A. Chittaranjan Mohandoss submitted that the patient was a

Challenging the complaint, the doctors and nurses stated that they acted as per the instruction of Dr. Vanilla. Despite the advice given by the respondent, Sumathy failed to cooperate during her delivery by not pushing the baby out, and the same was also informed to the relative of Sumathy

regular visitor to the PHC for checkup periodically. The doctors and nurses would be aware of the patient's health status. They also stated that "it is the mother's responsibility to push the baby while in labour". While this is a fact, if the mother is unable to do so, the medical persons present should have considered other options.

The plight of the patient after the unfortunate loss of the child is also not very clear, as the doctors and nurses state that everything was normal. It cannot be so if the patient collapsed within a few hours and is declared "brought dead on arrival" at a higher medical facility. This is clearly indicative of negligence and not ignorance as both the nurses claim to be very experienced. Though this medical team was fully aware of the health condition of Sumathy, being a senior nurse and junior nurses they had not responded to the condition of the patient promptly.

The SHRC member said the medical team is committed to their medical duties in treating and attending to patients with the best medical care that can be provided. In this case the medical team failed to do their duty. Negligence is a breach of a legal duty and a breach of this duty gives a patient the right to initiate action against negligence.

Stating that giving monetary relief will not bring back the life of two innocent people the SHRC recommended to the government to pay ₹3 lakh to the petitioner. The commission also recommended departmental action against the doctors and nurses.

Polluters of water bodies 'goondas': HC HC directive on building licence renewal plea

J. STALIN | DC CHENNAI, DEC. 3

The Madras high court has ruled that people who pollute water bodies should be termed as 'goondas' and must be detained under the Goondas Act.

Pointing out that pollution of water bodies causes a lot of health hazards to people and also affects the environment as well, the court said unless very stringent measures are taken, it will be very difficult to control the menace.

A division bench comprising justices N. Kirubakaran and B. Pugalendhi asked the Tamil Nadu government to take immediate steps in this regard.

The bench was passing interim orders on the suo motu proceedings initiated pursuant to a news report about pollution in Karur. The report stated that in Karur district, untreated effluents are discharged from the dyeing units and other companies into river Amaravathi. Considering the seriousness of the issue, the bench directed the registry to put up this matter as a suo motu writ



petition.

In its order, the bench said the main source of water pollution in India was untreated sewage. Most of the water bodies in India, including perennial rivers, were polluted. The pollution of water bodies was a pollution of the entire land as it affects human beings, animals, birds, plants, causing environmental imbalance. Though India has developed industrially, no proper steps have been made regarding pollution control. Though the Pollution Control Board was monitoring the pollution, there are no proper infrastructures for treating the sewage and industrial effluents, the bench added.

The bench said the industries were polluting water bodies not only in Karur district, but

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC. 3

The Madras high court has said that an application seeking renewal of a building licence is a fresh one and not a new application particularly when it is sought for the same project without any change made to the earlier plan which was sanctioned and permission was granted.

Justice N. Anand Venkatesh gave the ruling while quashing an order issued by the Udhagamandalam Municipality, rejecting two applications for renewal of the building licence on the ground that the applicants have approached the authorities with much delay and

throughout the country, by discharging untreated industrial effluents.

The Supreme Court in Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum Vs Union of India case, directed the polluters to pay compensation on the principle of polluters'

that too after the expiry of the licence period.

Allowing the petitions filed by M/s Mistair Realty's Private Limited, rep.by its director PKishore and Jansi Kishore, the judge directed the Udhagamandalam Municipality to renew their building licence after collecting the requisite scrutiny fee and other payments within four weeks.

Petitioner's counsel Abudukumar Rajarathinam submitted that his client was the owner of the properties, which were classified as 'primary residential zone' as per the master plan for Udhagamandalam Municipality. They also obtained a building licence for construction of residential

buildings in the said properties. However, due to financial constraints, they could not construct the buildings within the licence period.

Thereafter, they saved some money and applied for renewal of licence. But the authorities rejected their applications. Hence, they filed the present petitions, Abudukumar added.

The judge said once the authority concerned approves the site plan and a building licence was granted and the construction was not able to be completed within the licence period, on the application seeking for renewal, a fresh permit was given under section 204 of the Act for the site

plan already approved and there was no question of once again going through the entire process afresh once the building has already been approved by the authority concerned. The Municipality ought to have considered the renewal application submitted by the petitioners as a fresh application and dealt with the same under section 204 of the Act. The applications should not have been rejected merely on the ground of delay since the petitioners were not seeking for any change in the earlier plan that was sanctioned and they do not want to deviate from the earlier licence given for putting up the construction, the judge added.

very difficult to control the pollution of water bodies. Therefore, this court is of the opinion that those who are polluting the water bodies should be termed as 'Goonda' as per the definition in Section 2 of the Tamil Nadu Act 14

of 1982", the bench added. The bench also directed the secretary, District Legal Services Authority, Karur, to inspect the river Amaravathi at Karur and file a report about the actual position with necessary photographs.

DMK worker killed in 'revenge attack'

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC. 3

In a gruesome incident, a DMK worker was hacked to death in Tiruvannamalai on Thursday in a case of suspected revenge killing. The police have launched a manhunt for the accused, who escaped from the place after the murder.

Historysheeter 'Funk' Babu alias N. Babu, 47, of Gandhi Nagar, Tiruvannamalai was engaged in real estate business.

He was pursuing illegal

katta panchayat in the town and neighbouring villages. Several criminal cases, including murder charges, were pending against him in many police stations.

Babu was having tea in a roadside shop at 11.30 am. An unidentified gang reached the place and attacked him with deadly weapons.

They targeted his head and face. Within few minutes he collapsed and died on the spot. Immediately, the gang left the place on two-wheelers.

On information, the cops from Tiruvannamalai East police station rushed to the place and sent the body for post-mortem. On direction from the superintendent of police the cops collected CCTV footages from the area and found that four unidentified persons were seen escaping from the place in two-wheelers.

The cops also collected statements from the tea shop owner and others who were present in the place during the incident.

IIT-M releases book to help entrepreneurs

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, DEC. 3

Thoduvanam Thedi, a book authored by Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M) professors to help grassroots entrepreneurs enhance the success and sustainability of their businesses, was released on Thursday.

Written by Prof. A. Thillai Rajan, Prof. G. Arun Kumar and Prof. Saji Mathew from Department of Management Studies, IIT-M, the book was launched by Kamal Haasan in a

ceremony held at IIT-M campus.

Kamal said that the book would inspire the first-generation entrepreneurs raring to reach greater heights to realize their dreams and understand the nuances of running a business.

The book includes an edited collection of articles written in Tamil by faculty members and mentors who interacted with the participants of a pioneer training program IIT-M conducted in 2016 to train micro and grass-

roots entrepreneurs as a part of socially-relevant projects of the institute.

It was implemented in partnership with 'Hand in Hand India', a non-profit organization, with around 400 entrepreneurs in and around Kanchipuram district near Chennai having benefited.

The objective of the IIT-M initiative was to pioneer a social concept to enhance the creditworthiness of micro, marginal women entrepreneurs through training and development.

SHORT TAKES

Airport cancels 12 flights fro and to Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

In a recent development , in view of cyclone Burevi, Chennai Airport has cancelled as many as 12 flights from and to Chennai, Tamil Nadu on Thursday.

According to the Airport sources, six flights scheduled between Chennai and Thoothukudi have been cancelled. Similarly, two flights from Chennai to Trichy and two flights scheduled to depart from Trichy to Chennai has also been cancelled, owing to the cyclone. Two flights between Chennai and Kochi were cancelled too , sources added. “We will monitor the situation and decide on the further course of action for December 4”, said officials at the airport.

‘Safety of people, property ensured’

ARULOLI M | DC
THOOTHUKUDI, DEC. 3

Elaborate arrangements to ensure the safety of lives and property in the southern districts have been made in view of ‘Burevi’, said revenue and disaster management minister RB Udhaya Kumar. The minister also said that all fishermen had returned safe ashore.

Reviewing the precautionary measures taken in the southern coastal districts of Ramanathapuram, Thoothukudi, Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli on Thursday, Udhaya Kumar said that 490 relief centres in these southern districts including Tenkasi, are in a prepared state to accommodate 1,92,082 people at a time.

“Around 1,103 families living in low-lying areas in Ramanathapuram district have already been shifted to 66 relief centres on December 2,” he said, adding that 1,200 boats that ventured for fishing from Ramanathapuram district, had returned safe. “All the 423 mechanised boats and around 4,300 country crafts that went to sea from Thoothukudi district also returned to shore safe. Those Kanyakumari fishermen who ventured for deep sea fishing in 106 boats had landed safely in 12 locations in Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka and Lakshadweep islands, added the minister. The government has deployed official teams to monitor all the 7,505 irrigation tanks in the 10 southern districts of Theni, Madurai, Sivaganga, Dindigul, Ramanathapuram, Virudhunagar, Tenkasi, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Kanyakumari. Among these, 985 tanks now have water to their fullest capacity, said the minister.

Cops nab kinpin in mobile phone theft case

SANJEEVI ANANDAN | DC
KRISHNAGIRI, DEC. 3

The special teams appointed to nab criminals involved in cell phone robbery cases, have arrested the main accused here after a daring attempt.

A cell phone laden container truck was hijacked here in October at Melumalai, near Shoolagiri on the Chennai - Bengaluru national highway.

The criminals had waylaid the truck with a sedan car. They immobilized the truck driver and his assistant and escaped with the truck transporting mobile phones worth Rs 15 crore. Later, the empty truck was recovered from Alagupavi, 10 kilometers from Melumalai, the place from where the truck was hijacked.

Special teams were formed to nab the criminals. Investigations took the police team to Madhya Pradesh. The police had arrested five persons earlier, and later, another five including the main accused S Rajendar (40) of Ottu village in Sonkatch tehsil of Dewas district, in Madhya Pradesh.

“Our team made a daring attempt and arrested the main accused Rajendar who was hiding at home in his village. His relatives tried to attack us, but our team overpowered them and took custody of the accused,” a police officer said.

“Those who have been arrested so far belong to a particular community termed ‘criminal tribes’ by the British. Till date, they continue with this tag because of their criminal activities,” the officer added.

The special team camping at Madhya Pradesh to secure people who went into hiding after committing the crime here, have also recovered four trucks and a car used for robbing the mobile phone-laden truck.



Ten additional judges for the Madras high court sworn in on Thursday.

— DC

Ten judges sworn in as additional judges

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

Justices G. Chandrasekharan, A.A. Nakkiran, V. Sivananiam, G. Illangovan, S. Ananthi, S. Kannammal, S. Sathikumar, K. Murali Shankar, R.N. Manjula and T.V. Thamilselvi on Thursday were sworn in as additional judges of the Madras high court.

Chief Justice A.P. Sahi

administered the oath of office to the new judges at a simple function held on the premises of the Madras high court.

Advocate general Vijay Narayan delivered the welcome address.

With their appointments, the total number of judges has gone up to 63 as against the sanctioned strength of 75.

The Supreme Court

Collegium had on September 23 recommended the names of 10 district judges to be appointed as additional judges of the Madras high court for a period of two years. Accordingly, the Central government had on December 1 notified the appointment of these 10 judicial officers as the additional judges to the Madras high court.

Protesting farmers held

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, DEC. 3

Police arrested over 50 farmers and members of ‘The Desiya Then Indhiya Nathigal Inaippu Vivasayeegal Sangam’ including its state president P Ayyakkannu at the railway junction here on Thursday, as they attempted to board a Chennai-bound train en route New Delhi to join the on-going farmers’ stir in the capital.

It may be recalled that a nation-wide farmers’ stir is continuing for the last eight days in New Delhi, demanding among other things withdrawal of the Union Government’s

recent farm bills.

Ayyakkannu and a group of farmers were already under house arrest from November 24 as they attempted to catch the Chennai-bound train en route to New Delhi.

Ayyakkannu told the media, “The Union Government’s farm bills will destroy the entire domestic agriculture sector besides severely affecting the interests of domestic farmers. Till the Centre withdraws these ‘black acts’, farmers’ stir would continue.”

He thanked the Left and other political parties for extending their support to the stir.

Man dies of heart attack at Chennai airport

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

A 45-year-old Jharkhand man died of suspected heart attack at the Chennai airport here on Thursday, minutes before boarding a flight to his native, police said.

Umesh Kumar Sharma, a native of Jharkhand along with his wife had come board an Indigo flight to Ranchi this morning and collapsed at the Airport.

According to the

sources, Umesh Kumar Sharma suffered chest pains and collapsed while clearing the security desk. A team of doctors at the airport immediately attended to him, but to no avail and he passed away, police said.

Sources said the duo has come to Vellore CMC a few days ago for treating Umesh Kumar’s kidney disease. After the treatment , the duo was to board a flight to native, however he collapsed before boarding the flight.

Arjunamurthy quits BJP, joins Rajini team

From P1

Soon after Rajinikanth announced that he would be the chief coordinator, state BJP general secretary Karu Nagarajan issued a statement saying that Arjunamurthy’s resignation has been accepted and that he has been relieved from all responsibilities in the party permanently.

As far as party affairs went, the BJP cadre were urged to not have any truck with Arjunamurthy,

who had been taking active part in the state unit’s activities. He attended the meeting addressed by Union home minister Amit Shah when he visited Chennai about 10 days back.

He was also arrested for taking part in the Vel Yatra at Palani.

Reacting to Arjunamurthy’s appointment, VCK general secretary Thol Thirumavalavan tweeted that Rajinikanth was under pressure.

He would only function

as another face of the BJP, he said. Rajinikanth also wanted to project him as a right wing politician, he tweeted.

President of Tamil Maanila Muslim League Sheikh Dawood said that Rajinikanth would only divide the votes of the Congress-DMK enabling the AIADMK to emerge victorious in the elections.

His coming into politics would affect him and not the people of the State, he said.

₹59.85 lakh worth gold seized

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

The customs department at the Chennai airport seized 1.19 kg gold worth ₹59.85 lakh on Wednesday.

Based on a tip-off that gold was likely to be smuggled from Dubai in an aircraft , Indigo flight 6E 66 was taken up for special checking. On rummaging, a specially designed cloth pouch was found con-

On rummaging , a specially designed cloth pouch was found concealed in hollow pipe portion of one of the seats of the Airport

cealed in hollow pipe portion of one of the seats of the Airport.

On opening the pouch six gold cut bits of 24 K purity weighing 1 kg and valued at ₹50 lakhs were

recovered and same seized as unclaimed under Customs Act.

In another case on Wednesday, a customs officer intercepted a passenger Vivek Manokaran (30) of Vellore who was wearing sandals on suspicion that he may be concealing gold in them as a few days back a passenger was caught with gold in his slippers.

He had arrived from Dubai by Fly Dubai Flight

CORRUPTION CHARGES

CM calls Stalin ‘statement hero’

Salem, Dec. 3: Chief Minister K. Palaniswami on Thursday attacked the DMK and its leader M.K. Stalin, terming him a ‘statement hero’, over repeated allegations of corruption against the ruling dispensation, seeking to remind it of the “very big” 2G spectrum allocation scam. DMK MPs Kanimozhi and A. Raja, also former telecom minister, were earlier accused in the scam but acquitted by a special court. The CBI has since appealed against the lower court verdict in the Delhi High Court. Raja flayed Palaniswami, asking him to show any DMK leader who has been convicted for graft and said he was ready for a public debate on the issue with the chief minister. Speaking to reporters here, Palaniswami also defended the Centre’s contentious recent farm laws, against which farmers have been staging a massive protest near Delhi. Refuting Stalin’s allega-



tions of corruption and scam, especially in government tenders, Palaniswami said that due processes were being followed and ruled out any irregularities. “The 2G spectrum (allocation) scam was a very big scam. The amount of Rs 1.76 lakh crore (the alleged loss) is equivalent to Tamil Nadu’s budget. It happened when they were in power at the Centre with the Congress,” he said.

“(The then) Congress government took action and he (Raja) was put in jail,” Palaniswami said and questioned how the opposition party could

now make allegations against the AIADMK government. He also questioned the “first come first serve basis” of spectrum allocation then, an aspect that was scrutinised. “Such a big scam happened and they are targeting the AIADMK government to conceal this,” he said. Palaniswami also slammed the DMK for being a “dynastic” party and said Union Home Minister Amit Shah had also attacked it on the subject recently in Chennai, saying there would be no place for such politics in Tamil Nadu. On the protest by farmers against Centre’s new farm laws, Palaniswami reiterated it did not affect the riots and said it protected them from price fluctuation, among others. Farmers could now sell their produce anywhere in the country, he added. The chief minister quipped the BJP workers should be highlighting all these aspects and asked them to take the facts to people. He

also said he has not received any negative feedback from farmer unions in Tamil Nadu about the legislations. Responding to Palaniswami’s tirade against his party and himself, Raja said no DMK leader has been convicted of corruption, since the days of the late Indira Gandhi or MG Ramachandran, even in “politically influenced” cases. “The statement made by the chief minister does not suit his office and is not in good taste,” he told reporters in Chennai. Pointing out that he was picked by jailed former AIADMK leader VK Sasikala as CM prior to her incarceration in 2017, Raja alleged Palaniswami came to the post by “accident.” “I am prepared for a debate tomorrow or day after with him on 2G (case) if he can show if any DMK leader has been convicted for graft allegations including in 2G,” Raja said. — PTI

Holiday for southern districts

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

A public holiday has been declared in six southern districts for Friday as Cyclone Purevi that lay stationed in the Bay of Mannar near Pamban is likely to cross the shore between Pambam and Kanyakumari in the early hours.

An official press release, quoting a warning from the IMD, said that heavy rains and stormy winds were anticipated in the districts of Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Tenkasi, Ramanathapuram, Virudhunagar and Thoothukudi.

Other than those involved in essential services, people were advised not to venture out on any work, the release said, adding that government offices would function on one of the Saturdays in January, 2021 in lieu of the holiday declared on Friday.

Rains submerge crops in Thanjavur dt

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, DEC. 3

Heavy rains lashed the district for the past 36 hours under the impact of cyclonic storm ‘Burevi’. Rain which started on Wednesday night continued for the whole day on Thursday and is still raining continuously.

Samba and thaladi crops, in panicle initiation stage in some places, and ready for harvest in some places, were affected by the rain. One hut was damaged in Peravurani area and water logging was reported in low-lying areas.

At Manora near Pattukottai, high tides were witnessed and sea water entered the fort in a particular place. Joint director, agriculture, Thanjavur, Justin, said that crops in 200 acres were submerged rain water in the district. Samba transplantation has been completed in 1,37,000 hectares and farmers have insured crops in 2,21,000 acres.

FZ 8517. On examination of his sandals , small gold cut bits were found wrapped with cello tape and attached to the inside of straps.

Four gold cut bits of 24K purity weighing 199 grams valued at ₹9.85 lakhs were recovered and seized under Customs Act. Total 1.19 kg gold valued at ₹59.85 lakhs was recovered and seized under Customs Act. Further investigation is on.

Restructure post matric aid, fund on 60:40 basis, CM tells Modi

Chennai, Dec. 3: Chief Minister K. Palaniswami on Thursday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to issue suitable directions to the Social Justice Ministry to restructure the post matric scholarship scheme with a sharing pattern of 60:40 basis between the Centre and states. Emphasising that the Post Matric scholarship scheme should be considered “in line” with

other Centrally sponsored schemes, and funded with a sharing pattern of 60:40 between the Centre and the states, he said he had already addressed this issue in his earlier letters in 2018 and 2019 to the PM. In a letter to Modi, Palaniswami said, “I would like to bring to your kind attention an urgent and vital issue concerning Tamil Nadu; namely, the concept of allocation of

committed liability in releasing funds under the post matric scholarship scheme to the state.” “I request the Prime Minister to kindly issue suitable directions to the Ministry of Social Justice to restructure the post matric scholarship scheme with a sharing pattern of 60:40 basis between the Centre and the states,” he said in the letter. — PTI



Water-logging at Ram Nagar due to overnight rain.

— DC

Water released from Chembarambakkam reservoir City receives large excess rainfall

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

Days after cyclone Nivar, Chennai city is getting another spell of heavy rain in the ‘large excess’ category due to the cyclonic storm ‘Burevi’. For the last 24 hours (till 6am on Thursday), the city got 356.20mm rainfall, forcing the authorities to release water from the Chembarambakkam reservoir.

This comes in addition to 20.30 per cent excess rainfall during the last two months in Chennai and surrounding districts including Chengalpet, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur.

The district has already topped in the list by receiving 80cm actual rainfall against 59cm normal. With 23cm rainfall during cyclone Nivar between November 24 to 26, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has included Chennai in ‘large excess’ category with an increase of 190 percent from the normal rainfall till December 2.

It indicates that the city will get more rainfall during this northeast monsoon season due to ‘Burevi’. The officials expect the city will receive an additional 23cm of rain as a full one month of the season remains.

On Thursday morning, the Greater Chennai Corporation announced emergency helpline numbers to lodge complaints regarding issues due to the release of water from the Chembarambakkam reservoir after inflow rose on Wednesday night. At

Rains delay winter in Ooty

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, DEC. 3

The impact of ‘Burevi’ was well reflected here as incessant rains and inclement weather made up the weather profile of the region here on Thursday.

Usually frosting begins in the Nilgiris in the first week of December, but this year, rains have begun to dominate the weather condition here. Though winter was to set in by this time, there is a sudden change in the weather pattern since Wednesday evening

cyclone ‘Burevi’, as weathermen have predicted more rains here for the next couple of days.

Collector of Nilgiris J Innocent Divya, said that all precautionary steps had been taken to manage the cyclone. Disaster management teams are in a state of alert in all the taluks in the district. Control rooms in the taluk and district headquarters will be monitoring the rain situation round the clock, she added.

least 1,000 cusecs of water were released at 12 pm. A warning was issued to people living close to the Adyar river.

The cyclone Nivar hit the coasts at a time when the state had already received 376 mm of rainfall as against the normal of 284.6 mm between June 1 and September 17. Compared to the period between October 1, 2015

and December 9, 2015, the percentage of rainfall is still behind. In 2015, Chennai and surrounding districts had received at least 172.33 percent of excess rainfall, recording 489 cm actual rainfall against normal 182cm. The state by the time had received 64 cm excess rain with 65cm actual rain against the normal 39.3 cm.

SHORT TAKES

SC PUTS ON HOLD GUJARAT HC'S ORDER ON COVID

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 3

The Supreme Court on Thursday put in abeyance the Gujarat High Court order directing that those not wearing mask in public places be made to do community service in Covid-19 care centres as it expressed concern over the implementation of the Centre and the state government's guidelines at the ground level.

A bench comprising Justice Ashok Bhushan, Justice R. Subhash Reddy and Justice M.R. Shah directed the Gujarat government to ensure that the guidelines issued by the Centre under the Disaster Management Act and the one issued by the state government are implemented vigorously and those violating it are punished.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for Gujarat government said that the problem of people not wearing masks is serious but the solution prescribed by the High Court is not correct.

"Harm of not wearing masks is much less than sending such persons to Covid centre," he said.

However, Justice Shah said that there were serious gaps in the implementation of the guidelines on wearing masks and maintaining social distancing in public places, social gatherings and malls.

MALEGAON BLAST TRIAL TO START ON DEC. 19

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, DEC. 3

A special NIA court on Thursday directed all the seven accused in 2008 Malegaon bomb blast case to remain present before the court on December 19, as the trial in the case would begin on regular basis from that day. The court passed this order on Thursday, as BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur, Lt Col Prasad Purohit and two other accused failed to appear before the court despite an earlier court direction.

Meantime, the Bombay High Court on Thursday clarified that it has not stayed the trial in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, and said the trial must go on.

The lawyers of the absent accused told the special NIA judge P.R. Sire that their clients were absent due to the Covid-19 situation. Following this the court directed all the accused to be present before it on December 19.

A division bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and M.S. Karnik was hearing a plea filed by Lt Col Prasad Purohit, seeking that charges against him be quashed because prior sanction was not taken to prosecute him.

According to him, section 197 of the CrPC lays down the procedure for prosecution of public servants and mandates that a prior sanction be sought from the government. Purohit said that in the absence of prior sanction, the trial court couldn't have taken cognisance of the charges against him.

AIRLINES TO ALLOW MORE PASSENGERS

New Delhi, Dec. 3: The cap on the number of domestic flights that Indian airlines are permitted to operate was increased from 70 per cent to 80 per cent of their pre-Covid levels on Thursday, said Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

The minister had said on November 11 that the Indian airlines can operate up to 70 per cent of their pre-Covid domestic passenger flights due to the prevailing demand amid the coronavirus situation.

Puri tweeted on Thursday, "Domestic operations recommenced with 30K passengers on 25 May & have now touched a high of 2.52 lakhs on 30 Nov 2020."

"Ministry of Civil Aviation is now allowing domestic carriers to increase their operations from existing 70% to 80% of pre-Covid approved capacity," he stated.

The ministry had resumed scheduled domestic passenger services from May 25, after a gap of two months due to the coronavirus lockdown.

However, the airlines were allowed to operate not more than 33 per cent of their pre-Covid domestic flights.

On June 26, this was increased to 45 per cent and on September 2, it was further increased to 60 per cent.



Farmers block a part of the Delhi-Meerut National Highway during their protest march against the new farm laws, in New Delhi on Thursday.

— PTI

Farm laws: Mamata warns of a nationwide agitation

Mamata to hold party meet today, says Centre must withdraw farm laws

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, DEC. 3

As the farmers' protest against three laws continues, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday demanded that the Centre withdraw the laws immediately. Otherwise, she threatened to launch her agitation nationwide.

The Trinamul Congress supremo's threat came within few days of her support to the farmers' agitation and offer to join them, if invited, as the Left has already hit the streets over the issue in the state ahead of the Assembly election.

In a Facebook post, Banerjee said, "I am very much concerned about the farmers, their lives and livelihood. GOI must withdraw the anti-farmer bills. If they do not do so immediately we will agitate throughout the state and the country. From the very start, we have been strongly opposing these anti-farmer bills."

Clarifying her party's stand, she added, "We have called a meeting of the the All India Trinamul Congress on Friday, December 4. We will discuss how the Essential Commodities Act is

FARMER STIR MAY AFFECT NATIONAL SECURITY: CAPT

From Page 1

Asked if he was trying to mediate between the agitating farmers and the Central government, Capt. Singh said a discussion is going on between the two sides. "It is for them to resolve... we have reiterated Punjab's position," he said.

The meeting was held simultaneously with the interaction between the agitating farmer leaders and the government at Vigyan Bhawan here, sources said.

According to sources, the meeting with Capt. Singh, which was slated in the morning, was delayed by over two hours and started around noon.

The Punjab Assembly has already passed Bills to oppose the three contentious laws that were brought by the Centre.

impacting common people and resulting in sky rocketing prices. The central government must withdraw this anti-people

No breakthrough in talks, Centre, farmers to meet

From Page 1

Under the current rules, such a dispute can only be resolved by the subdivisional magistrate.

At the end of Thursday's talks, All India Kishan Sangharsh Coordination Committee general secretary Hannan Mollah said all the farmers' outfits would meet at 11 am on Friday to take a collective call on the next round of talks with the government on Saturday.

Another farmers' leader, Kulwant Singh Sandhu, said the government offered many proposals, including on MSP and the procurement system, which will be discussed among the farmers' organisations on Friday.

Earlier, the farmers had warned that the December 3 meeting was the govern-

ment's "last chance" to call a special session of Parliament and repeal the three contentious laws.

Mr Tomar told reporters after the meeting that the Centre had "no ego involved" over the issue, and it will ensure vexed issues like registration of traders, assurances on MSP and safety for small and marginal farmers are resolved.

He tried to reassure the unions that the farm laws give complete safety for small farmers and their lands would not be usurped by corporates. "MSP has always been there and will remain so in the future as well," the minister said. The government is also open to looking into the farmers' concerns on an ordinance on stubble burning and an electricity-related law, Mr

Tomar said.

The farmers had demanded a special session of Parliament to repeal the three laws, saying this is the "last chance" for the government.

Earlier in the day, after a meeting with Union home minister Amit Shah, Punjab chief minister Capt. Amarinder Singh appealed to both sides to resolve the issue, saying the unrest affects his state's economy as well as national security.

Ahead of the meeting, the farmers said that simply giving MSP a legal status "will not serve the purpose". They said that "nothing less than repealing the three laws" will do. They then added: "We will not leave till the government, repeals the three laws," they said.

Air India, Coal, BSNL, BHCL, banks, defence, etc. Withdraw ill-conceived disinvestment & privatisation policy. We must not

allow treasures of our nation to be transformed into Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) personal assets."

TMC MLA hails PM as 'head of family'

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, DEC. 3

Joining the league of rebel Trinamul Congress MLAs ahead of Assembly election in West Bengal, Bally legislator and late ICC president Jagmohan Dalmiya's daughter

Baishali Dalmiya has stumped her party, wondering how its leaders could call Prime Minister Narendra Modi an "outsider" when he is the "head of our family."

In a video message which went viral, she was heard saying, "These people are calling our honourable PM an outsider. Whenever someone comes here from another state, he is labelled as an outsider. They do not even know that India is a country. The PM is the head of our family. He is seen in

that way. When the PM, being the head, is tagged as an outsider in India then whom am I?"

Dalmiya's outburst, after several posters demanding no party ticket to an 'outsider' in the next Assembly polls circulated allegedly by the TMC in her Assembly constituency in Howrah, came ahead of Modi's visit to the state on December 24.

● **THE TMC** termed rebel Nandigram MLA Shubhendu Adhikari a 'closed chapter'.

city of which he is the Chancellor.

Meanwhile, the TMC termed rebel Nandigram MLA Shubhendu Adhikari a 'closed chapter' after his rebuttal to its claims of reaching a truce with him.

The former state minister, expected to make an announcement on December 6, is all set to quit his posts in the TMC though it remains a secret whether he would resign as an MLA before his defection to the BJP.

Senior MP Saugata Roy

Police close key routes connecting Ghaziabad-Delhi

New Delhi, Dec. 3: Police on Thursday closed routes on two national highways connecting Ghaziabad to Delhi as farmers remained adamant on their demand for scrapping of the Centre's agriculture reform laws and stayed put at the national capital's borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

The protesting farmers had on Wednesday threatened to block other roads of Delhi if their demands were not met.

"The local police have closed the routes on NH-9 and NH-24 from Ghaziabad to Delhi. On NH-1, both sides of the route have been closed near Shani Mandir," the Delhi Traffic Police tweeted.

The crowd of farmers continued to swell at Ghazipur, prompting the police to close the Delhi-UP border on NH-24.

"The Ghazipur border on NH-24 is closed for traffic from Ghaziabad towards Delhi due to farmers' protests. People are advised to avoid NH-24 for coming to Delhi and use Apsara/Bhopra/DND instead," the traffic police said.

It said NH-44 is closed on both sides and asked people to take alternate routes via NH-8, Bhopra, Apsara border, and Peripheral expressway. At the Chilla border, one carriageway from Delhi to Noida has been opened for traffic. However, the other carriageway from Noida to Delhi is still closed.

People commuting from Noida to Delhi are advised to avoid Noida link road, the traffic police said.

The Delhi-Haryana border at Jharoda and Jhatikra remained closed for traffic movement. The Badusarai border is open only for two-wheeler traffic.

However, people can travel to Haryana through Dhansa, Daurala, Kapashera, Rajokri, NH-8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam Vihar and Dundahera border points, the traffic police have said.

The police also kept the Haryana-Delhi border at Singhu and Tikri closed for traffic for the eighth day on the trot.

"Singhu border is still closed from both sides. Lampur, Auchandi & other small borders also closed. Please take alter-

FARMERS WHO END LIFE ARE COWARDS, SAYS K'TAKA MANTRI

Bengaluru, Dec. 3: Karnataka Agriculture Minister B.C. Patil on Thursday said the farmers who commit suicide are cowards.

"The farmers who commit suicide are cowards. Only a coward who can't take care of his wife and children commits suicide. When we have fallen (in the water), we have to swim and win," Patil said addressing farmers at Ponnampet in Kodagu district of Karnataka.

The Minister was explaining to bamboo growers of Ponnampet how profitable the agriculture business is, but some cowards do not realise that and commit suicide. To buttress his point, Patil cited an example of a woman who was wearing gold bangles.

"When I enquired with her how her hands were full of gold bangles, You know what she said? She said, This mother earth has given me for my 35 years of toil. Doesn't this please you all after listening to this?" Patil told the gathering. He said when a woman who had depended herself entirely on agriculture and achieved big why other farmers cannot do it.

Reacting to this, Congress Karnataka unit spokesperson V.S. Ugrappa condemned the Minister's statement, saying he has shown disrespect to the farming community.

"It's a disrespect to the farmers. He should apologise for it," Ugrappa said.

— PTI

nate routes. Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba Chowk & GTK Road," the traffic police tweeted.

"Traffic is very heavy. Please avoid Outer Ring Road from Signature Bridge to Rohini & vice versa, GTK road, NH 44 & Singhu, Auchandi & Lampur borders," it said.

As traffic spilled over to alternate routes, it led to long jams there as well.

The farmers' unions also called for a nationwide protest on Saturday to oppose what they claimed was "corporatisation" of farming.

— PTI

MEA STILL MUM ON BORIS AS R-DAY GUEST

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 3

At its weekly media briefing on Thursday, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) evaded a question from reporters on whether British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had been invited by India to be the chief guest at the Republic Day parade next month, saying that in such matters on the chief guest attending the Republic Day event, "the announcement is made closer to the event".

There had been reports on Wednesday that had said that the British Prime Minister had been invited by India to be the chief guest at the Republic Day parade.

It may be recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had spoken on phone to Johnson just last week on November 27 in which the two "leaders agreed that officials from both sides would continue their work to quickly finalise an ambitious long-term roadmap for the India-UK partnership".

The MEA had said last week, "The two leaders exchanged thoughts about the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and reviewed the promising cooperation between India and United Kingdom in the area of vaccine development and manufacturing."

BATTLE | READY

Stand off with China prompted Army to demand creation of powerful post

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 3

At a time of military stand off with China in Eastern Ladakh, government has finally cleared hurdle in the re-organisation of army headquarters by approving creation of all powerful post of Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy).

It was Doklam stand off of 2017 with China, which had led to Indian Army proposal to set up a new all

powerful Deputy Chief of Strategy.

According to sources Centre has issued government sanction letter for the creation of the post of Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy).

The current DG of Military Operations Lt Gen Paramjit Singh is likely to be the first Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy).

This will be the third Deputy Chief post which is being created in the

Indian army headquarters.

The creation of the post was suggested as part of the overall restructuring of the Army Headquarters in 2018.

The new Deputy Chief of Army Staff Strategy will deal with all operational and force planning. As per the plans, he will have DG Military Operations, DG Military Intelligence, Strategic Planning, Operational Logistics branches, as well as the

newly created Information Warfare branch under him.

Currently DG (Military Operations) and the DG (Military Intelligence) are reporting to Army Chief or Vice-Chief.

In keeping with the needs of the future battlefields, hybrid warfare and social media reality, the new DG Information Warfare will have under him the ADGs Strategic Communication and Information Warfare.

CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF PITCHES FOR THIRD AIRCRAFT CARRIER

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 3

Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh said on Thursday that his force is ready to face "dual-challenge" of Covid-19 and China, even as he pitched for a third aircraft carrier.

The Naval chief said that aircraft carriers are "absolutely necessary" for an aspirational India. He said Navy was moving forward with its plan to have a third aircraft carrier and will place a case for it before the government.

SHORT TAKES

FLORIDA COP, 1 OTHER WOUNDED IN SHOOTING

St. Petersburg (Florida), Dec. 3: A Florida police officer and at least one other person were wounded in a shooting Wednesday, authorities said.

The shooting occurred Wednesday afternoon, according to a St. Petersburg police Facebook post. The wounded officer was taken to a nearby hospital for medical treatment, the *Tampa Bay Times* reported. Officials didn't release details about the other person or how they were wounded. Police haven't released information about what led to the shooting.

A video posted to Facebook appears to capture the shooting. More than a dozen gunshots can be heard, as several plainclothes officers fire at a vehicle that appears to be blocked in by other vehicles, including marked police vehicles.

MAN GETS THREE MONTHS FOR SHOOTING FLARES

Fort Myres (Florida), Dec. 3: A Florida man has been sentenced to three months in federal prison for shooting distress flares from a boat when there was no real emergency and triggering a US Coast Guard rescue operation.

Justin Patrick Obert, 32, was sentenced Wednesday in Fort Myers federal court, according to court records. He must also pay \$13,414.78 to cover costs associated with the rescue. He pleaded guilty in August to communicating a false distress message. "Mariners on the water rely and count on Coast Guard assets and personnel to be ready and able to respond when they are in distress," Coast Guard Capt. Matt Thompson said in a statement. "Hoax calls can redirect critical rescue capabilities and put lives at risk in the dangerous maritime domain." Obert was on a vessel in the Gulf of Mexico near Fort Myers Beach in September 2019 when he drunkenly discharged two red flares, according to court documents.

The Coast Guard, Fort Myers Beach Fire Rescue and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission all responded. Officials determined that Obert had discharged the flares despite not needing emergency assistance.

KEYS-BYRNE, STAR OF MAD MAX FILMS, DIES

Los Angeles, Dec. 3: Veteran actor Hugh Keays-Byrne, who played villain Immortan Joe in George Miller's cult hit "Mad Max: Fury Road", has died. He was 73.

A representative for the actor told *Deadline* that the actor died peacefully on Tuesday morning. Filmmaker Brian Trenchard-Smith, who worked with Keays-Byrne for 1975 film "The Man from Hong Kong", was the first to break the news of the actor's demise in a Facebook post on Wednesday. "Hugh had a generous heart, offering a helping hand to people in need, or a place to stay to a homeless teenager. He cared about social justice and preserving the environment long before these issues became fashionable."

"His life was governed by his sense of the oneness of humanity. We will miss his example and his friendship. Vale, Hugh," Trenchard-Smith wrote. Born in 1947 in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir to British parents, the actor was very young when his family moved to Britain. Keays-Byrne later moved to Australia where he featured in many Royal Shakespeare Company productions, including "As You Like It", "The Balcony", "Hamlet", "King Lear", "The Man of Mode" and "Much Ado About Nothing". He started his acting career when he was cast in TV series "Bellbird", created by Barbara Vernon.

The actor appeared in a number of series and films, including as Morrie Grosse in Trenchard-Smith's 1975 action flick "The Dragon Flies". Keays-Byrne's big moment came when he was roped in to play Toecutter in Miller's 1979 movie "Mad Max", which featured Mel Gibson in the lead. More than thirty years later, Miller requested Keays-Byrne return for his another plunge into to the world of "Mad Max" with 2015's "Fury Road", starring Tom Hardy and Charlize Theron. In the movie, Keays-Byrne played the villainous Immortan Joe, the head of a cult reigning the Wasteland.

Throughout the film, Joe and his biker gang terrorised Theron's Furiosa and Hardy's Max Rockatansky as they seek to liberate the world.

China Moon probe to return with rocks

Beijing, Dec. 3: China's latest lunar probe has finished taking samples of the moon's surface and sealed them within the spacecraft for return to Earth, the government announced on Thursday.

Chang'e 5, the third Chinese probe to land on the moon, is the latest in a series of increasingly ambitious missions for Beijing's space programme, which also has a probe en route to Mars carrying a robot rover. The Chang'e 5 touched

down on Tuesday on a mission to return lunar rocks to Earth for the first time since 1976.

The probe "has completed sampling on the moon, and the samples have been sealed within the spacecraft," the China National Space Administration said in a statement.

Plans call for the upper stage of the probe to be launched back into lunar orbit to transfer the samples to a capsule for return to Earth. — *AP*

China tiff: Morrison seeks conciliation

Wellington, Dec. 3: A diplomatic war of words between Australia and China over a graphic tweet seemed to finally cool on Thursday as Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison struck a much more conciliatory tone.

Morrison's change in approach came even after he was thwarted in getting his views out directly to Chinese people over the messaging app WeChat, after the Chinese company deleted his post on the grounds it could distort historical events and confuse the public.

Earlier this week, Morrison expressed indignation and anger at the tweet posted by a Chinese official that showed a fake image of a grinning Australian soldier holding a bloodied knife to a child's throat. The post took aim at alleged unlawful killings and abuses by Australian soldiers during the conflict in Afghanistan.

Earlier this week, Morrison called the tweet "truly repugnant" and "deeply offensive" and demanded an apology from China. But China had not

backed down, saying that Australia should be the one examining its actions. On Thursday, Morrison took a much different approach, telling reporters in Canberra that his aim was for the two countries to have a "happy coexistence."

"My position and my government's position is to seek constructive engagement," he said. "The relationship with China is a mutually beneficial one. It supports both our countries, it is good for both of our countries." China is Australia's largest trading partner. Morrison said Australia had made its views very clear on both the tweet and the WeChat message. WeChat is ubiquitous in China and is used for everything from getting news to making electronic payments.

The company is held responsible for ensuring content doesn't attract negative attention, and censorship is relatively common. Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said he was disappointed about the tweet and the deleted post. — *AP*

JuD spokesperson gets 15 years' jail

Lahore, Dec. 3: Mumbai terror attack mastermind and Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed's spokesperson Yahya Mujahid has been sentenced to another 15 years in jail by a Pakistani anti-terrorism court in a terror financing case.

Mujahid was last month handed down 32 years jail term by the anti-terrorism court (ATC) in two terror financing cases. Besides Mujahid, the ATC Lahore on Wednesday also handed down 15 years' imprisonment to JuD's senior leader Zafar Iqbal and six months jail term to Saeed's brother-in-law Hafiz Abdul Rehman Makki.

Earlier, the ATC Lahore had sentenced Iqbal for 26 years imprisonment in three such cases. Judge Ijaz Ahmad Butt announced the verdict under different provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997. The three convicts were present in the court when the judge announced the verdict. The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab police had registered as many as 41 FIRs against JuD leaders, including Saeed in different cities.

The trial courts have so far decided 25 cases. The ATC has sentenced Saeed for a collective imprisonment of 21 years on terror financing charges under sections 11-N of Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 in four

COP GUARDING POLIO TEAM GUNNED DOWN

Peshawar, Dec. 3: A police officer assigned to guard a polio immunisation team was killed when unidentified gunmen opened fire at him.

The incident happened on Wednesday in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province's Bannu district. Sub Inspector Akhbar Zaman was on his way back home after performing his duty when two men on a motorcycle opened fire at him, resulting in his death on the spot.

The accused fled the scene. No group has claimed responsibility. Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria suffer from endemic polio, a virus that can cause paralysis or death. — *PTI*

cases so far.

Saeed-led JuD is the front organisation for the Lashkar-e-Taiba which is responsible for carrying out the 2008 Mumbai attack that killed 166 people, including six Americans. Saeed, a UN designated terrorist whom the US has placed a \$10 million bounty on, was arrested on July 17 last year in the terror financing cases. — *PTI*

COVID | CURBS

Virtual visits are on, where kids chat with Santa online for prices ranging from \$20 to \$100

Ho, ho — Whoa! Virus keeping most Santas at a distance

Miami, Dec. 3: Brad Six becomes Santa Claus, pulling his black boots over his red pants in the office of a Miami outdoor supply company.

It's hot, so he forgoes the traditional heavy jacket for a lightweight vest and grabs his Santa hat. But before sliding it on, the gray-bearded 61-year-old dons a plastic face shield and then takes his chair positioned behind a plexiglass sheet. "Getting paid is nice, but to get your battery recharged and to really get something lasting out of it requires interact-

ing with the kids — you don't get a lot of that this year," said Six, who first portrayed Santa 35 years ago. This is Santa Claus in the Coronavirus Age, where visits are conducted with layers of protection or online.

Putting hundreds of kids daily onto Santa's lap to talk into his face — that's not happening for most. The physical attributes that make the perfect Santa align perfectly with those that make Covid-19 especially deadly.

"Most of us tick all the boxes: We are old, we are

overweight, we have diabetes and if we don't have diabetes, we have heart disease," said Stephen Arnold, the president of IBRBS, an association for-

merly known as the International Brotherhood of Real Bearded Santas. That has spurred creativity in Santa's workshops. Santas conducting in-person visits are using some combination of masks, the outdoors, barriers and distance for safety. Others are doing virtual visits, where children chat with Santa online for prices typically ranging from \$20 to \$100, depending on the length and extras, such as whether customers want a recording. Some Santas are taking the season off.

"Santa safety is our No. 1 concern" and negotiated into every contract, said Mitch Allen, president of HireSanta, one of the nation's largest agencies. He said the pandemic initially dried up his business, but it bounced back, especially online.

The average Santa makes \$5,000 to \$10,000 during a normal season, Allen said. That's a welcome bonus for men often retired on a fixed income, but many Santas say revenue is down as corporate parties and other lucrative gigs evaporated.

100 world leaders to speak at UN session on Coronavirus

Will chalk out recovery path from pandemic which has claimed 1.5 mn lives

United Nations, Dec. 3: Nearly 100 world leaders and several dozen ministers are slated to speak at the UN General Assembly's special session starting Thursday on the response to Covid-19 and the best path to recovery from the pandemic which has claimed 1.5 million lives, shattered economies, and left tens of millions of people unemployed in countries rich and poor.

Assembly President Volkan Bozkir said when he took the reins of the 193-member world body in September that it would have been better to hold the high-level meeting in June. Nonetheless, he said Wednesday it "provides a historic moment for us to come together to beat Covid-19." "With news of multiple vaccines on the cusp of approval, and with trillions of dollars flowing into global recovery efforts, the international community has a unique opportunity to do this right," he said.

"The world is looking to the UN for leadership. This is a test for multilateralism." When financial markets collapsed and the world faced its last great crisis in 2008, major powers worked together to restore the global economy, but the Covid-19 pandemic has been striking for the opposite response: no leader, no united action to stop the pandemic that has circled the globe.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres sent a letter to leaders of the Group of 20, the world's richest nations responsible for 80 percent of the global economy ahead of their summit in late March as Covid-19 was starting its killing spree urging that they adopt a "wartime" plan and cooperate on an international response to suppress the coronavirus. But there was no response. The two-day special session will not be raising money to finance vaccine immunisations or taking any political action, and there will be no final declaration, just a summary document from Bozkir.

"The real point of this special is to galvanize concrete action to approach our response to Covid-19 in a multilateral and collective way," General Assembly spokesman Brendan Varma said Wednesday.

TURKEY PLANS TO USE CHINESE VACCINE

Istanbul, Dec. 3: Turkey's health minister has announced a vaccination plan starting with an experimental "inactivated vaccine" later this month to combat the Covid-19 pandemic amid a surge in infections and deaths. Fahrettin Koca had previously announced an agreement with Chinese biopharmaceutical company Sinovac Biotech for 50 million doses of CoronaVac, which is currently in Phase 3 trials.

Koca said in a statement late Wednesday that the first shipment of the inactivated vaccine will arrive in Turkey after December 11. Inactivated vaccines are made by growing the whole virus in a lab and then killing it. — *AP*



Local restaurant employees and staff members hold placards during a protest against the restrictions imposed by the authorities after indoor dining was banned following a rise in Covid-19 cases in Karachi on Thursday. — *AFP*

Not game over in the fight against virus, warns UK PM

London, Dec. 3: Prime Minister Boris Johnson sought to strike a note of caution amid the excitement of the UK becoming the first country to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19, warning that it is not "game over" for the deadly virus just yet.

Johnson hailed the "searchlights of science" fighting back against the world's "invisible enemy" but urged people to not get carried away with over optimism over the course of the "long and cold months" ahead while the two-dose vaccine starts to be injected into the arms of those at the highest risk of death from the disease.

He urged people to follow the Covid Winter Plan of tiered lockdown which is now in force across England, with a majority of areas still under high alert measures of social distancing.

"It is a fantastic moment, but the worst thing now would be to think that this is the moment when we can relax our guard and think it's game over in the fight against Covid. It's not. This is not the end," Johnson said, during a briefing at 10 Downing Street on Wednesday evening. "We have been waiting and hoping for the day when the searchlights of science would pick out our invisible enemy and give

us the power to stop that enemy from making us ill — and now the scientists have done it," he said.

"It is all the more vital that as we celebrate this scientific achievement we are not carried away with over optimism, or fall into the naive belief that the struggle is over. It's not, we've got to stick to our Winter Plan," he noted.

He said that in line with the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, the first phase of the vaccine deployment will include care home residents, health and care staff, elderly and those who are clinically extremely vulnerable. — *PTI*

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, and European Union chief Charles Michel.

The US will be represented by Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar. Friday's session will focus on three panels, the first on the UN's response

to Covid-19 and the second on vaccines that will include representatives from producers BioNTech and Oxford University-AstraZeneca, and the World Health Organisation's AstraZeneca, and the World Health Organisation's AstraZeneca, and the World Health Organisation's AstraZeneca.

CRONYISM AT CHINESE AGENCY SPREAD COVID

Wuhan, Dec. 3: Secrecy and cronyism at China's top disease control agency led to widespread test shortages and flaws that hampered the early response to the Coronavirus outbreak, an *Associated Press* investigation has found. China's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention gave test kit designs and distribution rights exclusively to three then-obscure Shanghai companies — Genedx Biotech, Huirui Biotechnology, and BioGerm Medical Technology — with which officials had personal ties.

It was based on interviews with more than 40 doctors, CDC employees, health experts, and industry insiders, as well as hundreds of internal documents, contracts, messages and emails. — *AP*

PAK TO START VACCINATION FROM APRIL '21

Islamabad, Dec. 3: The Pakistan government will provide the Coronavirus vaccine free of cost to its people and plans are afoot to start the immunisation drive by April next year, officials said on Thursday. Parliamentary Secretary on Health Naushan Hamid said the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government has approved funds to purchase the vaccine doses.

"The PTI government will provide the Coronavirus vaccines free of cost to the people. The government will start the vaccination from the second quarter of 2021," Hamid tweeted. Hamid said the phase III of clinical trials of Chinese vaccines was proceeding well and the shots would be available to the people soon.

Pakistan's Coronavirus caseload rose to 4406,810 on Thursday after 3,499 new cases were reported in the last 24 hours. The Ministry of National Health Services, in an update, said 39 people had died due to Covid-19 in the last 24 hours. — *PTI*

 TAMILNADU POLICE HOUSING CORPORATION LTD (A Government of Tamil Nadu Undertaking) No. 132, E.V.R. Salai, Kilpauk, Chennai-600 010.
e-TENDER-INVITATION FOR BIDS NO.43/2020-21 Dt. 03.12.2020 1. For details, visit www.tntenders.gov.in & www.tnphc.com 2. e-Bids are invited by the Superintending Engineer/CC/ TNPHC Ltd., for the Design, Manufacture, Supply, Delivery, Installation and Commissioning of Passenger Lift 3 Nos. with 13 Persons capacity for the work of Construction of New Building for Community Hall at S.M. Nagar, Avadi in Chennai City (SE/CC/DB/1791-A/2020). 3. Approximate value of work : Rs.54.75 Lakhs (with GST) 4. Date and time for Downloading/Uploading of bid documents through online : 14.12.2020 at 12.00 Noon to 21.12.2020 upto 6.00 P.M. 5. Date & time of opening of the bid : 23.12.2020 at 11.15 a.m. 6. Other details can be seen in the bid documents.
Superintending Engineer/CC TNPHC Ltd., Chennai. DIPN/4493/TENDER/2020

DECCAN Chronicle

4 DECEMBER 2020

Amid challenges, there is hope Covid's end is near

The British government clearing the vaccine against coronavirus, developed and manufactured jointly by German startup BioNTech and US pharma major Pfizer, so that vaccination in that country could start as early as next week, is perhaps the biggest news of 2020. The pandemic, Covid-19, which the virus causes, has made six crore ill and killed more than 14 lakh people, rendering itself into the biggest threat to public health in recent times. A vaccine to keep it at bay now offers humanity a reason to look at their lives and livelihoods with a little more hope than that they have done with in the past 10 months.

It was a truly global endeavour that resulted in the development of the vaccine at a record speed — the lead was taken by a Turkish couple who set up their startup in Germany and was supported by a US pharma major. And the final product, which the whole world was waiting for, was cleared for by the British regulator. The mRNA vaccine, or memory RNA vaccine, uses a fragment of genetic code from the coronavirus to teach the body how to prompt an immune response and fight the disease. It is for the first time that such a process has resulted in a vaccine that's authorised for public use. Reports say the vaccine is 95 per cent efficient, particularly among the elderly adults. The British regulator has insisted that the vaccine candidate has been subjected to thorough quality checking, allaying fears of expediency leading the push.

The challenges are not over. The vaccine needs to be stored at around minus 70 degrees Celsius, a logistical challenge only a few countries can take up. Mass production, safe distribution and proper administration based on a transparent protocol could still pose difficulties before the vaccine reaches all the needy people. One can take comfort from the fact that there are at least five more candidates that are easier to store and distribute and are in the final stages of clinical trials. Their arrival in the next few weeks will ease the situation substantially.

Now that science has done its job of coming up with an answer to a potential danger to human race, it's time for politics to take over and design a formula, which can address the needs of the last man on the street. Reports offer no hope in this, though: the entire bulk of early production has been pre-ordered by the rich western nations. India's hopes rest on its vast vaccine manufacturing capabilities built over decades; still the government has sounded cagy vis-a-vis assurances of inoculating everyone.

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Cricket: Individuals shine

On the current tour of Australia, Virat Kohli passed the milestone of 12,000 ODI runs in fewer innings than Sachin Tendulkar, who with 18,426 ODI and 15,921 Test runs, remains cricket's greatest gatherer of runs. More significantly, India stopped a run of seven ODI defeats on the trot since 2019 with a consolation win over Australia after having been comprehensively outplayed in the first two ODIs in Sydney when the series was alive. The celebration of Kohli's feat amid what is for him a leaner time at the crease in comparison to his purple patches in his more prolific years in international cricket since his debut in 2008 is, however, a pointer to how Indian cricket is extremely rich in individual feats of record breakers while rating considerably lower as a team.

The pattern of ineffectual cricket stemming from a lack of mental preparedness to be combat-ready even for what is considered a great rivalry with Australia was in stark evidence in the two defeats at the Sydney Cricket Ground, which presented belters for batsmen. The bowling attack was clueless about adjusting to the challenge and was taken to the cleaners twice by Australian batsmen, most of all Steve Smith who held out impressive lessons in how to make adjustments after a particularly poor IPL outing. Those Indian cricketers who seemed heroic match winners at times in the same IPL were found wanting when it came to chipping in for the national team cause.

A run of seven years without a trophy from any rated global event like the World Cups in the 50 overs and T20 formats or the Champions Trophy is a telling comment on Team India's record. The skipper Kohli's inability to inspire his team in the manner of Mahendra Singh Dhoni is clear even if he remains his team's pre-eminent performer, averaging an unprecedented 50+ in all three formats. Impressive as the comeback win in Canberra was, Team India's performances have been generally dissatisfactory. Fans must begin to appreciate that occasions arise for true celebrations when India performs as a combination in a team sport.

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Subhani



Keeping Big Biz out of banks not a good idea



Sanjeev Ahluwalia

It's curious how resistance to any big change, invariably, comes from the "progressives" within a political system.

Farmers in Punjab and Haryana — the "gold standard" of agricultural productivity in India — are up in arms over the government's hurried attempts to liberalise the marketing of agricultural produce, allowing farmers to sell to anyone they wish. So why are the farmers outraged?

They say that they never asked for this "gift", so why was it being imposed on them? They suspect that it is a move to allow the "back-door" entry of "corporates" enabling them to get control over the agricultural sector. Never mind that nothing is envisaged to stop farmers who are happy to sell to "Ardhita" cartels in Central government-regulated mandis (markets) to continue to do so. Conspiracy theories, once born, acquire a life of their own.

In a similar vein, otherwise forward-looking Indian economists of the "left liberal" American tradition condemn the recommendation by a working group of the Reserve Bank last month that industrialists should be allowed to own banks, albeit with suitable checks, to create a "Chinese wall" (bad name this one!) around the banking operations of such business groups, to avoid "connected or mutual" lending.

Never mind that the only "unconnected" lending in Indian banking is when a middle-class woman goes to a bank for a loan to buy a house or a scooter! For all other personal or business lending, the bank must know and trust the borrower. How else do you explain the constant socialising that rotund banking types engage in? Networking has always been

the traditional "oil" in the banking sector, and "connections" matter.

So why are economists of repute up in arms despite these ground realities. They say that "big business" cannot be "trusted" to play with a straight bat and would bend the rules to favour lending and, more important, soft-soap defaults, by borrowers connected to them.

Pause here for a fact check. The ₹10 trillion-plus non-performing loans, even before the Covid-19 pandemic, are not the result of happenstance. Much of this is "directed" lending to unworthy "favoured" business borrowers. These came to light when growth stalled, pulling out the plug from various ponzi schemes in real estate and the stock markets. Stiffer asset classification rules from the RBI also helped to unearth the scams. Publicly-owned banks are the most affected, though poor governance and low managerial propriety standards were visible in some private banks as well.

Formalising the reality of this "jugalbandi" by letting big business own banks transparently, rather than remain the unseen puppeteer, can only help reduce the existing systemic risk rather than increase it. Private banks should grow their asset share to equal that of public banks (which is now 70 per cent) while boosting credit levels to equal the GDP, up from 60 per cent today. Timely and forceful intervention by the RBI against delinquent management — private or public — as in the recent case of the Lakshmi Vilas Bank, is the way to go, to contain the rot, not to pull up the drawbridge against industry ownership in banks.

Consider the oldest, iconic Indian "brand" the Tatas. Do we envisage a Tata, a Godrej, a Bajaj

or a Mahindra managed bank being less sound than the "diversified ownership" private banks in operation today? Look at the "newbie" business brands — Jio for instance. Does Mukesh Ambani need to own a bank to get access to credit or to nudge its flow? What if N.R. Narayana Murthy or Azim Premji were to float banks. What could possibly compel them to damage their international stature and credit rating by committing irregularities in their banking operations?

We have moved well beyond the stymied sources for wealth creation which existed in 1949, when the Banking Regulation Act was framed. Regulatory systems and public expectations have evolved. Even the 2013 guidelines, liberalising the entry of private banks, did not specifically bar big business from owning banks. Forty per cent of the capital of the best private banks is held by international investors. The gains from retaining a healthy and "sustainable" asset profile and international governance standards far outweigh the domestic "benefits" from bending licensing norms for dodgy loans.

Left-leaning consumer activists raise the spectre of "concentration of wealth" and "higher inequality" if business is let in through the banking door. These fears are overblown. Increasing the number of well-capitalised private banks will induce competition and dilute the concentration of economic power. The way to reduce inequality is not by preventing billionaires from becoming richer, but by improving

public services, creating decent jobs and enhancing the incomes of the poor.

Globalisation, corporatisation and industrialisation do tend to concentrate surpluses at the top. But they also expand the economic pie. Walking away from these pervasive global trends is not an option if growth is to be preserved. Pushing it to the high single digits, requires extensive liberalisation — cutting through the post-1991 residual red tape and "re-liberalisation" — hacking through the new accumulation since then with a motorised saw.

The key to manage big corporates is to have strong community-based governments with heightened accountability to the people, so that "cozy deals" and "crony capitalism" — a much larger generic problem beyond banking — are exposed and the guilty brought to book.

Are we there yet? Possibly not. Can we get there. Yes, we can. But not by stepping into Emperor Xi's boots and undermining the public profile of big business — just to keep them in respectful submission. The Chinese regulators, last month, torpedoed the giant \$35 billion IPO of the Ant Group in Shanghai and Hong Kong to rein in the "outsoken" Jack Ma (shades pf Rahul Bajaj?), who criticised the government publicly.

Efficient banking is a key "commanding height" of the Indian economy. Accountability of banks to their creditors and minority shareholders needs to be strengthened. The RBI recognises that. But to shun the financial heft and managerial excellence of big business in scaling up bank services is like marching into the future with one hand permanently tied behind our back — ideologically pure, possibly. But irresponsibly courageous and blindly devotional to the blunt governance strategies of an earlier era.

The writer is adviser, Observer Research Foundation

LETTERS

RAJINI'S POLITICAL ENTRY

Actor Rajinikanth's announcing his decision to launch his new political party on December 31 finally ends lengthy suspense of over two decades when people kept asking all along, "Will he or will he not". This should bring about a considerable change in the present dynamics of Tamil Nadu politics, considering his huge popularity and fan base. As promised earlier by him, he has also confirmed that his proposed party would contest all the seats in the forthcoming crucial Assembly elections. Whatever might be the ultimate outcome of his big political plunge, his bold decision to face and take on some inevitable physical and mental challenges during the next few months preceding the polls despite some health related issues, is indeed praiseworthy, especially at a time when the pandemic is still very much on.

A. Mohan, Chennai

CASTE WAR

THE CURRENT imbroglio on PMK's insular demand of 20% exclusive reservation in education and government jobs for the Vanniyar community has stirred the hornet's nest (*PMK protest fizzles out the second day*, Dec. 3). One shudders to think on what would happen if every community made such a demand, leave alone the PMK's uncouth act of letting loose vandalism to draw the attention of the government. That said, it remains to be seen as to how the data of the Centre and the States would hand in the egalitarian society, even as all major political parties have caste tags attached to them to woo voters. Come what may, it is an undeniable fact that not all those who hail from SC/ST/OBC are financially poor, nor those who belong to FC are financially sound. The need of the hour is 'social justice policy' that would transform the fanatic concept into egalitarian perspective. Till then, caste differentiation would loom large.

E.S. Chandrasekaran, Chennai

NATARAJAN'S DEBUT

FROM A non-descript village of Chinnappampatti in Tamil Nadu to boarding the flight to Australia, pace bowler Thangarasu Natarajan's cricketing journey has been truly remarkable. The left-arm seamer stole the limelight during this year's IPL with his consistent performance for Sunrisers Hyderabad, and the highlight of it was the sensational yorker with which Natarajan took the big wicket of AB de Villiers in the play-offs. Though originally named in the T20 squad, Natarajan was drafted into the playing XI for the final ODI against Australia, and he helped India win the game by picking up two crucial wickets on his debut.

R. Sivakumar, Chennai

James Ball



Why 'immunity passports' can be problematic

A few months ago it wasn't certain we would find a Covid-19 vaccine. Now, we have three, with potentially more on the way — and the rollout of the Pfizer jab due to begin in Britain next week. It's an extraordinary achievement for the research community, our best hope of restoring normal life and a huge relief after a year of disappointments. But the UK government should beware of geeks bearing gifts. To get herd immunity, it has to persuade 60 to 90 per cent of people to get vaccinated.

You can see Boris Johnson's problem. If he makes vaccination voluntary, we may never hit the target we need for herd immunity. It's not just antivaxers. Some people who are usually amenable to vaccines will worry about a "rushed" new one — and fear the speed of its development means corners were cut. Others may not wish to take the vaccine offered by the government if they believe one of the others on the market, or on the way, will be more effective. The Oxford/AstraZeneca, with its 70 per cent effectiveness rate, is so last season, darling. Everyone's going 95 per cent gene-based Moderna this year. (Or they would if it was on

offer!) People holding out for a vaccine of choice could cause delays. So what to do?

Enter Nadhim Zahawi, a Tory MP who was set to rebel over this week's tier vote until he was given the new job of minister for vaccine delivery. He's a Cameron-era MP who came of political age when the "nudge unit" was at large, thinking of ways to change behaviour without passing laws. He has started floating the idea of cinemas, pubs and other venues creating a system by which people can socialise in ways the tier system would not normally allow — if they can prove they've had the vaccine.

This opens the door to a system where the government uses vaccination to decide in what ways citizens are allowed to be involved in which parts of society. The Prime Minister has tried to give his reassurance that making vaccines compulsory is "not the way we do things in this country". But if airlines, pubs and cinemas make them compulsory at the government's suggestion, that's presumably okay.

The first problem with this should be glaringly obvious: someone would have to provide verifiable information

of who had been vaccinated. That would need to be the government, likely via the NHS. Dido Harding has floated the prospect that her white-elephant £12 billion NHS Test and Trace app could be used for this purpose, which would mean transforming an app every Brit was assured would protect their privacy and anonymity into a health passport they might have to show before ordering a beer.

The Prime Minister, in typical amiable-buffoon mode, seems quite keen on framing immunity certificates as "freedom passes", as innocuous as pensioners' bus passes. If a piece of paper will let you go to a bar, visit the theatre or go to a football match, how could it be anything but a good thing — says the logic that ignores that before the coronavirus, people could do all of these without having to show their government-issued papers.

When David Blunkett proposed identity cards back in 2004, Boris Johnson said he'd rather eat one than show it when requested. He quoted 1964 US Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater to the effect that "extremism in defence of liberty is no vice". Now he seems to have ambled

into becoming a vocal advocate of an even more intrusive form of ID card, one that shares not only our identity but also our health information. It would be the cornerstone of a new biosecurity state.

Modern technology makes casual state intrusion into our daily lives easier than ever. But it doesn't change the rights and wrongs of any of it. Even if you care not one iota about civil liberties, you can still see the dangers in what's being proposed here. For one, there is an uncomfortable precedent in requiring people to prove their health or vaccination status before they can access public life. At what point should that stop? No access to schools for unvaccinated pupils? Routine tests for flu before getting the Tube? Why not an app showing a verified set of your latest STD results before you can have a government-sanctioned fling?

The final, grim truth of "immunity passports" is they're not even all that likely to work — not least because they are the absolute confirmation of what the most fervent anti-vaccination protesters have always warned about. If the government suddenly tries to make vaccines a condition of public

life, that plays into every conspiracy theory about mass vaccination now spreading like wildfire online. It is generally not a good idea for anyone to prove such people "right", especially not on such a vital issue. The more extreme fringes of the anti-vax movements warn vaccines would contain the mark of the devil, or some surveillance chip.

Tying vaccination into a government-run tracking app, and making it a requirement of engaging in public, risks turning a movement of dangerous cranks into this generation's civil liberties freedom fighters. Worse still, it risks radicalising people currently unsure about a vaccine into being absolutely sure they don't want one.

We must sympathise with the government, which faces a huge challenge, and one prone to frustrations. It could be that developing the vaccine is the easy part compared with persuading enough people to actually take it. But that's the job ministers have signed up for, and they owe the public better than making up poorly thought-through policy live on air.

By arrangement with the Spectator

SHORT TAKES

Messi fined for tribute to Diego

Barcelona: Lionel Messi was fined 600 euros (\$720) for taking his jersey off to pay tribute to Diego Maradona, the Spanish football federation said.

The federation's competitions committee fined the Argentine player for his actions after scoring in Barcelona's 4-0 win over Osasuna in the Spanish league on Sunday. After a strike from outside the box, Messi took off Barcelona's blue-and-burgundy to reveal the red-and-black of Maradona's jersey from his stint at Newell's Old Boys. Messi then blew a kiss with both hands to the sky as he looked upward. After the game, Messi posted a photo of his tribute alongside an older image of Maradona in the same shirt, adding the message Farewell, Diego in Spanish. Maradona died last week at the age of 60. The federation also refused to void the yellow card that was shown to Messi for taking off his jersey, and fined Barcelona 180 euros (\$216). — AP

48 NBA players test Covid positive

Los Angeles: The NBA announced Wednesday that 48 players have tested positive for the Covid-19, a dramatic increase over the zero positive tests reported during last season's quarantine bubble in Florida. The league said the positive tests are the result of 546 tests carried out between November 24-30 as the NBA gets set to begin preseason games in nine days. The zero positive tests were from the beginning of last season's quarantine bubble to the end of the season in mid-October.

One team, the Golden State Warriors, has already delayed the beginning of their individual workouts by a day this week because of players testing positive. This was the initial round of tests for players as they returned to their teams ahead of the start of individual workouts on Tuesday. — AFP

Grosjean's fiery crash to be probed

Paris: An investigation has been opened into Formula One driver Romain Grosjean's horrifying crash at the Bahrain Grand Prix, governing body FIA said Thursday. The FIA said it could take up to eight weeks before the conclusions are made public.

Grosjean was discharged from a military hospital in Bahrain on Wednesday.

"The investigation into the Grosjean incident will look at all areas including competitor safety devices such as the helmet, HANS (a head restraint device), safety harness, protective clothing, survival cell, headrest, in-car extinguisher system and the Halo," the FIA said in a statement. "Analysis will also include chassis integrity and the safety barrier performance," it added. — AP

State TT c'ship from Dec. 9

Chennai: Tamilzhaga Table Tennis Association will conduct the state championship from December 9 to 14. Matches will be conducted for all categories (cadet to senior singles). Entries close on December 6. For details contact: entriestamizhagatta@gmail.com.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Australia vs India: First T20 from 1.40 pm on Sony Six, Ten 1, HD

South Africa vs England: First ODI from 4.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

Lanka Premier League: Colombo vs Jaffna from 8 pm on Sony Six

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Chennaiyin vs Bengaluru from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

FORMULA ONE

Sakhir Grand Prix: Practice-1 from 6.55 pm; Practice-2 from 10.25 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

WWE

SmackDown: Bouts from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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Back to T20 mode

India look to pose tougher challenge to Aussies in T20s

Canberra, Dec. 3: Short of resources in ODIs, India will have enough options to choose from to pose a stiffer challenge to Australia when the two sides clash in a three-match T20 series beginning here on Friday.

The 1-2 ODI series loss reaffirmed that India have a lot of work to do in the 50-over format but they possess a much more balanced squad in the shortest format.

The presence of Washington Sundar, Deepak Chahar and T Natarajan, who did well on his ODI debut on Wednesday, lends much-needed balance to the bowling department.

With Hardik Pandya not bowling regularly, India had only one specialist all-rounder in Ravindra Jadeja in the one-dayers.

However, there is a possibility that Hardik can roll his arm over for a brief spell like he did from the second ODI onwards.

Natarajan could also make his T20 debut on Friday having shown enough promise in his maiden international appearance.

Unlike the SCG, the Manuka Oval surface had enough for both the spinners and pacers. It will be interesting to see who opens up the bowling alongside Jasprit Bumrah with the toss-up being between Mohammad Shami and Deepak Chahar.

Yuzvendra Chahal, who had a forgettable outing in the ODIs, will also be looking to bounce back.

In batting, K L Rahul is expected to go back to his preferred opening slot alongside Shikhar Dhawan.

Australia, after naming the same squad for ODIs as well as T20s, would be backing themselves to beat India after a clinical display over the last one week.

Star batsman David Warner is unavailable due to a groin injury and it remains to be seen if Marnus Labuschagne comes alongside Finch on Friday. — PTI



Virat Kohli (left) shares a light moment with his teammates in this file photo.

NUMBERS GAME

INDIA-AUSTRALIA IN T20 INTERNATIONALS

Team	M	W	L	T	N/R	Success%
India	134	83	44	3	4	64.55
Australia	128	68	55	2	3	55.07

HIGHEST INNINGS TOTALS:

India: 202-4 in 19.4 overs at Rajkot in 2013

Australia: 201-7 in 20 overs at Rajkot in 2013

LOWEST INNINGS TOTALS:

India: 74 in 17.3 overs at Melbourne in 2008

Australia: 86 in 16.2 overs at Dhaka in 2014

HIGHEST INDIVIDUAL SCORES:

India: 90* Virat Kohli at Adelaide in 2016

Australia: 124* Shane Watson at Sydney in 2016

BEST BOWLING IN AN INNINGS:

India: 4-11 Ravichandran Ashwin at Dhaka in 2014

Australia: 4-21 Jason Behrendorff at Guwahati in 2017

FOR THE RECORD:

● In Twenty20 International matches between the two countries it is 11-8 in favour of India although Australia won the previous series 2-0 in India.

● Virat Kohli who has scored 24 fifties in 76 innings needs one more fifty to equal Rohit Sharma's record of the most fifties scored in Twenty20 Internationals. Rohit Sharma has scored four hundreds and 21 fifties in 100 innings.

● Aaron Finch who has smashed 96 sixes in 64 innings needs four more to become the first Australian and sixth batsman overall to complete a century of sixes in Twenty20 internationals. — S.PERVEZ QAISER

WILLIAMSON GIVES KIWIS A FLYING START

Hamilton, Dec. 3: The West Indies delight at winning the toss on a lush green wicket turned to frustration as New Zealand were rarely troubled in posting 243 for two on day one of the first Test in Hamilton on Thursday.

Kane Williamson, despite being troubled with cramp late in the day, produced a masterful innings to be unbeaten on 97 at stumps with Ross Taylor on 31.

Williamson featured in a 154-run stand with Tom Latham for the second wicket before Latham was bowled for 86.

After the start of play was delayed two hours by rain, the Windies were delighted to win the toss with an emerald wicket that potentially offered untold demons for their pace attack.

But after Gabriel bowled Will Young early for five, the tourists found they did not getting the assistance they expected from the wicket.

Chase also saw flaws in the visitors' attack which they failed to rectify.

It appeared to be a case of not doing thorough homework as Latham said the pitch was not unusual for New Zealand.

Williamson, who will resume on Friday requiring just three runs to register his 22nd Test century. — AFP

BRIEF SCORES

Day 1: New Zealand 243/2 in 78 overs (T. Latham 86, Kane Williamson 97, Kemar Roach 1/53) vs **West Indies.**

BCCI set to add two teams in IPL

AGM AGENDA

- Election of Vice President
- Election of 2 representatives of General Body in IPL Governing Council
- Adoption of Annual Budget FY 20-21
- Adoption of Ombudsman and Ethics Officer
- Adoption of Cricket Committees and Standing Committees as mentioned in Rules 26 and 25 (Constitution) respectively
- Appointment of Umpires Committee in Rule 27.
- Appointment of representative/representatives in ICC and/or similar committees.
- Approval of two new teams to the IPL.
- Discussion on BCCI's stand on inclusion of cricket in Los Angeles Olympic Games in 2028.
- To update ICC Matters
- To update on NCA matters.
- To update on ICC T20 World Cup 2021 to be held in India.
- To update on India's FTP Program.

Future Tours Program for 2021, preparation with regards to organisation of next year's T20 World Cup (includes the ICC tax issue) and inclusion of cricket in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

On the administrative front, one of the primary points on the agenda is election of new vice president, a position which has been left vacant after Mahim Verma's resignation.

It is expected that the choice would be unanimous.

Also, two representatives from the governing body will get a seat in the IPL governing council. — PTI

Krishna dazzles as ATK edge Odisha

Fatorda, Dec. 3: An injury-time winner from Roy Krishna helped ATK Mohun Bagan secure a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Odisha FC in an Indian Super League fixture here on Thursday.

Krishna (90+5'), netted his third goal in as many games to ensure the Mariners climbed to the top of the ISL table.

The first half proved to be a cagey affair but both sides failed to grab their chances and take the lead.

ATKMB dominated the early exchanges and constantly raided the opposition box. However, Odisha did well to close down the spaces and keep things tight at the back.

Despite the dominance displayed by Habas' side early on, it was Odisha who missed a great opportunity to go ahead after the break.

A well-worked set-piece routine during the 38th minute saw Cole Alexander whip in a dangerous cross into the box. Jacob Tratt, unmarked, got to the end of it but failed to get his header on target.

Despite the miss, Odisha FC kept knocking on the door only for ATKMB's defense to thwart the danger.

The result ensured Odisha FC's winless run continued. — PTI

BENGALURU, CHENNAIYN TO RENEW RIVALRY

Bambolim, Dec. 3: Bengaluru FC will look for their first win of the season when they take on southern rivals Chennaiyin FC in an Indian Super League match at the GMC Athletic Stadium here on Friday.

Both the teams have played twice so far, with BFC winless following consecutive stalemates, while CFC registering a victory and draw.

The fixture between Chennaiyin and Bengaluru has become a huge rivalry since BFC entered the ISL fold in 2017. The final that season was a closely contested affair that CFC won 3-2 on Bengaluru's turf to lift a second ISL title.

In the head-to-head battle, both the clubs have won three apiece with one draw being played out last season.

It promises to be yet another intense contest, as the likes of Anirudh Thapa, Rafael Crivellaro and Lallianzuala Chhangte aiming to make it two wins out of three. — PTI

Not much fun without fans: Thapa

NEHA SURANA | DC
CHENNAI, DEC. 3

Playing in front of empty galleries is no fun for professional sportspersons. But players from ISL have learnt to deal with it. Chennaiyin FC's star player Anirudh Thapa, however, is missing the team's boisterous fans dearly.

"It is really different. The electrifying stadium filled with energetic fans...we used to enjoy them. It's not much fun this season. But we know they are watching us so obviously we need to give our best in every game," said Thapa.

After playing out a goalless draw against rivals Kerala Blasters, Chennaiyin FC are gearing up for another Southern Derby as they meet Bengaluru FC in an ISL game on Friday. Thapa, Chennaiyin's vice-



Chennaiyin FC players during a training session.

captain, said Bengaluru are a good team.

"They have been together for a very long time. It's just the beginning of the season, you never know what might just come up. Last season both our teams didn't start well. Hopefully, we will have a good season."

The 22-year-old midfielder feels training under Hungarian coach Csaba Laszlo is a great opportunity to learn and improve his game.

"This year we are playing a different formation and obviously I am learning a lot because of his vast experience from the European leagues. Wherever he puts me in, I will give my best," he said.

Thapa's season got off to a great start when he scored a stunner within a minute against Jamshedpur.

"It gave me the confidence to march forward and make more attempts. Hopefully, I will score more goals," said Thapa.

CFC head coach Laszlo said he has done his homework for the Bengaluru clash.

"In terms of physicality, they are a tall team. They create opportunities from set pieces and also from long throw-ins. We must be prepared for it. I think we have our weaknesses and they have theirs. But we have to use their weaknesses and focus on our strengths. We have to shoot more and score more," he said.

"We know that Bengaluru played out two draws and generally everyone wants to win such games. It is a special game, it is like a derby for us. If we win this game, it will help us stabilise our position in the table," Laszlo said.



Cristiano Ronaldo (right) of Juventus outruns Dynamo Kiev's Tomasz Kedziora (left) and Denys Popov during their UEFA Champions League Group 'G' match at the Juventus stadium in Turin on Wednesday. — AFP

Ronaldo rocks; PSG, Barca win

Paris, Dec. 3: Neymar's brace helped Paris Saint-Germain to a vital 3-1 win over Manchester United on Wednesday that took the French club to within touching distance of the Champions League Last 16, while Borussia Dortmund secured their qualification for the next round and Olivier Giroud scored all four goals in Chelsea's 4-0 thumping of Sevilla.

PSG could have been on the brink of elimination from Group 'H' with a defeat at Old Trafford but Neymar put last season's runners-up ahead in the sixth minute and the world's most expensive player sealed their victory in stoppage time.

In between, Marcus Rashford's shot went in off Danilo Pereira to bring United level in the first half

THE RESULTS			
Juventus (Chiesa 21, Ronaldo 57, Morata 66)	3	PSG (Neymar 6, 90+1, Marquinhos 69)	3
Dynamo Kiev	0	Manchester United (Rashford 32)	1
Barcelona (Antoine Griezmann 14, Martin Braithwaite 20, Ousmane Dembele 28-pen)	3	Borussia Dortmund (Guerreiro 44)	1
Ferencváros	0	Lazio (Immobile 67-pen)	1
Chelsea (Giroud 8, 54, 74, 83-pen)	4	RB Leipzig (Poulsen 26, Mukiele 43, Olmo 66, Sorloth 90+2)	4
Sevilla	0	Basaksehir Istanbul (Kahveci 45+3, 72, 85)	3

but Marquinhos prodded the French champions back in the 69th minute post which Neymar netted one more goal to send United packing.

There is a three-way tie on nine points at the top of the group with RB Leipzig right in contention after Alexander Sorloth scored in injury time to give them

a 4-3 victory at Istanbul Basaksehir.

Meanwhile, history was made in Turin as France's Stephanie Frappart became the first woman to referee a men's Champions League game when Juventus beat Dynamo Kiev 3-0.

The game was also notable for Cristiano Ronaldo scoring his 750th career goal, his record-extending 132nd in the Champions League.

Federico Chiesa and Alvaro Morata also scored for Juve, who had already qualified from Group 'G' before the game, along with Barcelona.

The Catalans kept up their perfect record and stayed on course to win the group by beating Ferencváros 3-0 in Budapest without the rested Lionel Messi. — AFP