

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VIJAYAWADA | SUNDAY | 13 DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 34.0°C
Min: 18.0°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Cloudy.
Max/Min temp.
34/18 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Bahula Chaturdasi till 12.45 am (Monday)
Star: Anuradha till 1.40 am (Monday)
Varjyam: 7.39 am to 9.46 am
Durmuhurtam: 4.11 pm to 4.55 pm
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Akhir 27, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.45 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 4.30 pm
Maghrib: 5.40 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.27 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.36 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 4.45 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 5.21 AM

COUNTER POINT



...this time he wants the Indian government to hold talks with Pakistan farmers!

Page 2

GOVT AGENCIES, ULBS CAUSE FOR DISAPPEARANCE OF WATER PONDS

NATION | 4

EC tells parties to set limit on poll spending

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SCOTUS rejects doubts over Biden victory

CORONA COUNT

CASES (+28,144)
98,54,175
DEATHS (+376)
1,42,994
covid19india.org

STATE GOVT BULLETINS
TELANGANA (+635)
2,77,151
ANDHRA PRADESH (+510)
8,75,025
(+4)
1,489
(+3)
7,052

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

RULES EASED TO REGULARISE INDIVIDUAL PLOTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 12

The state government has amended rules to regularise individual plots in unauthorised layouts in Andhra Pradesh. This will help 25,876 people to regularise their plots. Many people, unaware of this drawback, had bought plots and got into trouble. The regularisation of individual plots in unauthorised layouts was possible only after the layouts were regularised earlier. However, the government has now decided to regularise individual plots by directly relaxing the rules.

The government issued a circular amending the regularisation rules. It stated that in spite of continuous persuasion, monitoring and instructions being issued from time to time, out of the total 10,630 identified unauthorised layouts, only 26,28 layouts prepared by Urban Local Bodies (ULB) and Urban Development Authorities (UDA) and only 697 in principle patterns layouts were approved by the competent authorities.

■ Page 2: Unauthorised layouts pose big problem

Mystery illness in control

Two out of 614 cases in hosp care to be discharged today

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 12

The mysterious illness, which plagued the people of Eluru for nearly a week, was on Saturday brought under control, with the only two afflicted persons undergoing treatment from the overall 614 cases. The condition of the two persons is out of danger and they could be discharged on Sunday.

Eluru Government Hospital Superintendent Dr A.V.R. Mohan said that the cases may not be reported further and has not contracted others and the symptoms would be

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GUDUR MLA TESTS POSITIVE TO COVID-19 PAGE 3

diluted. He said that the Central expert teams will submit their medical reports on December 16.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas (Nani) visited the houses of patients who were discharged and enquired about their health.

They said that the medical and health teams in the hospital provided quality treatment. Nani

said that they need not be afraid as all steps would be taken by the government to end it completely. He also said that Eluru Municipal Corporation is supplying quality drinking water and no fault was found in the water in sample tests.

Meanwhile, East Godavari District Collector D. Muralidhar Reddy instructed officials from Panchayat, Rural Water Supply, Irrigation and other departments to conduct sample tests from all water sources immediately.

RWS superintendent engineer T. Gayatri Devi

said that generally the water samples are collected from tanks once in a fortnight. But, now water samples are being collected from 62 CWS schemes and more than 2,3000 Panchayat water tanks, including borewells (Panchayat department) in the district. She said that if traces of any contamination, or metallic substances or residues found anywhere, corrective measures would be taken immediately and would be brought to the notice of the higher authorities.

■ Page 2: Water samples sent for testing

KADAPA | GEM

AP's special operations to lure more industries

Kopparthi to grow industrially

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, DEC. 12

Kopparthi in Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh is set to become a platform for industrial progress in Kadapa district with Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy paying special attention to it.

Industrialists are also shifting focus towards

Kopparthi due to special subsidies and necessary resources.

An Electronic Manufacturing Cluster (EMC-2) has been set up under aegis of the Central and state governments. The state government has set up a special operation to bring more industries here. Efforts are underway to attract ₹25,000 crore

worth investments. Two-and-a-half lakh people will get jobs if the operation is implemented properly.

Under the directives of the Chief Minister to provide all necessary facilities and land for industries, the authorities have intensified efforts in that direction. About 7,000 acres in Kopparthi near Kadapa city is suitable for setting

up industries. The government has designated the area as an industrial hub under the APIC as YSR Jagananna Industrial Hub. The government is offering huge subsidies to industrialists who come to Kopparthi for setting up industries.

■ Page 2: Stamp duty to be 100% discounted

Reforms are for farmers, says PM

REPEAL AGRI LAWS, WILL TALK: FARMERS

New Delhi, Dec. 12: Sticking to their demands, farmer leaders on Saturday said they are ready to hold talks with the government, but will first discuss repealing the three new farm laws, and announced further intensification of their ongoing protest against the legislations.

Addressing a press conference here, farmer leader Kanwalpreet Singh Pannu said that thousands of farmers will start their 'Delhi Chalo' march from Rajasthan's Shahjahanpur through the Jaipur-Delhi Highway at 11 am on Sunday.

■ Report on Page 4

mes," he reiterated.

Hundreds of farmers from states like Punjab and Haryana have blocked some of the highways leading to Delhi borders for more than two weeks now against the new farm laws which they fear will prompt the government to stop making direct crop purchases at MSP. —PTI

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OTHER STORIES

NAIDU ASK DGP TO IMPLEMENT RULE OF LAW

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 12

Continuing his episode of writing letters to DGP Gautam Sawang, Telugu Desam Chief N. Chandrababu Naidu wrote another fresh letter on Saturday demanding that the police department implement 'rule of law' in the state to save people from the attacks of the ruling YSRC leaders.

He alleged that atrocities by the YSRC leaders have largely increased as the ruling party leaders were involved in every attack incident and expressed fear about breakdown of constitutional institutions in the future which he said would be a big threat to democracy.

Naidu in his letter stated that it appears that mafia and corrupt forces have taken over the state and the rule of anarchy now prevails over the rule of law. He alleged that most unfortunately, a section of police seems to be actively conspiring with the ruling party leaders in implementing law and order as per the dictates of the ruling party henchmen.

Naidu said that on December 11, 2020, TD leaders Nallari Kishore Kumar Reddy, Reddappagari Srinivasula Reddy, Gullolla Sankar Yadav, Dommalapati Ramesh, Challa Ramachandra Reddy, and Maddipatla Surya Prakash were among the others on their way to B. Kothakota mandal in Thamballapalle constituency for a commiserate visit to the bereaved families who had passed away. While on their way, the leaders were halted by around 200 henchmen of the YSRC leader at Angallu.

NARENDRA: GOVT DAMAGING DAIRY SECTOR IN STATE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 12

Former Telugu Desam legislator and Sangam dairy chairman Dhulipalla Narendra alleged that the ruling YSRC government was trying to damage the dairy sector in the state through Amul.

Addressing the media at a press meet at Guntur on Saturday, he claimed that the Sangam dairy largely developed due to the collective efforts of milk farmers as its turnover reached to ₹913 crore from mere ₹3 crore and refuted allegations of the YSRC leaders about anomalies in the Sangam dairy. He alleged that the government was harassing Sangam dairy under which vigilance notices were issued on baseless allegations.

He alleged that the government borrowed crores of money as loans to provide investment for AP-Amul project but reluctant to develop cooperative milk sector which shows the government's anti cooperative sector attitude.

He stated that the cooperative milk sector would fight against the injustice and demanded that the government promote native cooperative milk dairies for the empowerment

VENKAIAH HELP SOUGHT FOR SOLO CAPITAL TO AP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 12

Maha Padayatra (mega walkathon) was conducted at Guntur on Saturday, demanding continuation of Amaravati as the solo capital of AP in which farmers, women and leaders and activists of several political parties participated.

On completion of one year of Amaravati movement, the Amaravati Parirakshana Samiti JAC (APJSAC) has called for various protests for a week under which a walkathon was conducted on Saturday which started at Vidyanagar and concluded at Ambedkar statue Lodge Centre.

CPI national secretary K. Narayana, who joined the walkathon supporting Amaravati demand, asserted on the need of solo capital for AP. He demanded that the central government provide funds for construction of new capital. He recalled that Vice-President Muppavarapu Venkaiah Naidu played a crucial role during the time of United AP bifurcation hence he should interfere in the capital issue. He sought Venkaiah Naidu to convince the BJP-led NDA government for release of funds for capital construction and further cancellation of three capitals decision.

Telugu Desam MP of Guntur Galla Jaydev claimed that discussion in Parliament is essential to shift Capital from Amaravati.

Govt agencies, ULBs cause for disappearance of water ponds

CAG observes five ponds disappearing in Vijayawada and Nagari town

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 12

Three ancient ponds in Andhra Pradesh secured the World Heritage Irrigation Structures status. However, the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) has observed that the ponds were encroached by Urban Local Bodies leading to five ponds disappearing in Vijayawada and Nagari town. CAG studied 37 water bodies in six selected (out of 110) ULBs and found encroachments in 25 of them.

The CAG audit observed construction of an indoor stadium and a Rythu Bazaar in Nalla Cheruvu and ZP high school, gram panchayat office and an anganwadi centre in Nagari town. The water bodies especially in and around urban areas are facing a threat from rapid urbanisation without adequate attention to ecology.

The ancient Cumbam tank in Prakasam district, Porumamilla tank popularly known as Anantharaja Sagaram in Kadapa district and KC Canal in Kurnool district recently got the World Heritage status.

The audit also studied urban local bodies (ULBs) (Vijayawada, Markapur, Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Nagari and Pulivendula Municipalities/ Municipal Corporations) and 37 water bodies in the villages adjacent to them and found encroachments (in approximate area of 132.03 acre) in 25 out of 37 water bodies under the five ULBs and 9 out of 37



Indoor stadium built in Nalla Cheruvu in Patamata area of Vijayawada city



Anganwadi Kendra built in a tank in Gundrajakuppam area of Nagari town

test checked tanks in the adjacent villages. Of these, five tanks (three in Vijayawada city and two in Srikakulam town) did not physically exist as the entire area (25.21 acres) under these tanks was encroached.

The exact extent of encroachments was not known as the revenue department had not undertaken any physical survey in recent times. The last physical surveys/measurements were conducted way back in 1906 to 1956.

For example, the audit



Rythu Bazaar in Nalla Cheruvu in Patamata area of Vijayawada city



Panchayat office in a tank in Gundrajakuppam area of Nagari town

observed an indoor stadium and a Rythu Bazaar in Nalla Cheruvu in Patamata area of Vijayawada city.

Similarly, a Zilla Parishad High School, a Gram Panchayat Building, and an Anganwadi Kendra were seen in a tank in Gundrajakuppam area of Nagari town.

CAG found ULBs did not take any action for notification of the water bodies as municipal assets, geo-tagging/geo-mapping, formation of bunds, erection of fencing, etc. for protection of water bodies.

During the joint physical verification of the selected water bodies, CAG observed the total extent of 34 tanks was 1466.94 acres. As per the visual assessment of the officials of the ULBs/Revenue Department during the joint physical verification, an approximate area of 132.03 acres was encroached.

Interestingly, the government itself turned ponds into residential colonies causing disappearance of water bodies. The CAG report stated DKT or Darakastu Pattas issued

Unauthorised layouts posed big problem

FROM PAGE 1

The disposal of the in principle patterns was not progressing as expected due to which the processing of regularisations of individual plots was getting delayed. The director of town and country planning issued orders permitting ULBs and UDAs to process individual LRS applications irrespective of approval of layouts.

According to reports, as many as 26,956 applica-

tions were received for regularisation in 13 districts of AP in which only 628 were regularised and 11 were rejected. Notices were issued to 178 and 263 applications did not submit required documents and majority of applications were stuck due to absence of regularisation to their layouts.

The norms of mandatory regularisation of unauthorised layouts turned out to be a big hurdle for people who wished to reg-

ularise their individual plots. The buyers lamented that developers and promoters did not complete the layout regularisation processes and majority of buyers are unaware about the same. They welcomed the amendment of regulations paving way to regularise individual plots. They said that with regularisation of individual plots, they will get the opportunity to build a house on their land and

take bank loans.

State Town and Country Planning Department director V. Ramudu stated that the government has amended the rules to benefit those who were facing difficulties by buying lands in unauthorised layouts.

He said that realtors are also required to regulate the entire layout and the government would initiate measures for regularisation of unauthorised layouts.

Stamp duty to be 100% discounted

FROM PAGE 1

In addition to sales and leases, registration fee, transfer, and stamp duty will be 100 per cent discounted for the first time and 50 per cent for the second time.

In addition to providing 24 hours uninterrupted power supply, the government has announced a subsidy of ₹1 per unit. Sewage treatment will start and land, water facilities and other facilities will be provided. The government has also come forward to offer interest

rebates and subsidies on transport costs. Many companies are interested in setting up industries in Kopparthi. It seems that some companies have applied for land lease. Neel Kamal company is all set to put up a furniture manufacturing

unit. In addition to that, 20 pharma companies, engineering equipment industries, cylinder manufacturing, oxygen plant and several mobile companies are also interested in setting up their industries.

With the inclusion of Kopparthi Industrial Hub

in the Vizag Industrial Corridor, many companies are coming forward to set up their industries.

Industrial adviser to the state government Rajoli Veerareddy said several companies were in talks with the government for subsidies and other issues.

He said the government was also ready to provide all the necessary infrastructure to those in the respective industries. Veerareddy said the Kopparthi Industrial Hub would soon be in touch with new industries.

He said that after holding discussions with 26

FAITH | MATTERS

Devotees request TTD to set up Gosala in every district for stray cows

TTD allowing kids, elderly at their own risk: EO

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 12

The TTD is allowing children below 10 years and elders above 65 years to Tirumala at their own risk because of pressure from devotees though the central government guidelines advise them to stay at home for some more time.

TTD executive officer Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy has disclosed this during the Dial Your EO programme held at Annamaiah Bhavan in Tirumala on Saturday.

"As per the Central government Covid-19 guidelines, the people who are aged below 10years and above 65years are still advised to stay at home for some more time although the intensity of Covid-19 cases have decreased in the country. But since we are getting many requests from devotees to redeem long pending vows of ton-suring, ear-piercing,

TTD to build 500 temples in downtrodden colonies

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 12

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy said the 'Hindu Dharma Prachara Parishad, a wing of the TTD, would build 500 temples in Schedule Castes, Schedule Tribes, Backward Classes and Fishermen colonies in the

state soon.

The TTD's 'Cow and Calf' gifting scheme would be implemented in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu state. He gifted a cow and a calf to Goddess Balatripura Sundari Sametha Ramalingeswara Swamy Temple on Saturday.

He said Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy

said, "We have already released two lakh Rs 300 darshan in online on December 11 and the entire quota got booked by 5 pm itself and we will also release some offline tickets soon."

Responding to a caller from Chennai, Prem, who suggested the EO to ban plastic usage in Tirumala and also to erect Harinama boards all around Tirumala, the EO said that the TTD had

wants to expand "Hindu Dharma" programmes vastly and as a part of it, the TTD took up a project of giving a cow and a calf to the temples. But, he said that it would be the responsibility of the temple to feed the cow and calf and the TTD would not provide fodder.

He said that after holding discussions with 26

seers and chiefs of various Hindu Muttis, the TTD has decided to open Vykunta Dwara Darshan (Northside Darshan) for 10 days on the auspicious occasion of "Vykunta Ekadasi" from December 25 to January, 10. He said that all the general public could get Lord's darshan, but they should secure the tickets online.

cer Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy reacted positively to a suggestion from a caller Dr Narasimham from Prakasam district to set up a Gosala in every district for the stray cows during Dial Your EO programme held at Tirumala on Saturday.

In his reply, the EO said they have already set up a massive Cow Protection Centre at Palamaner in Chittoor district and are ready to enhance the pro-

gramme if the like-minded philanthropists come forward.

He reminded that the TTD Board has already resolved to donate a Cow and Calf to every temple in the states of AP, TS, TN and Karnataka in the name "Gudiko Gomata".

Referring to the overwhelming response to the month-long Karthika Masa Deeksha programme organised by the TTD, the EO said that they are now contemplating similar spiritual programmes in the ensuing Dhanurmasa also.

Reacting to appreciation for the spiritual programmes of SVBC from callers Sridevi from Tirupati, Srinivasacharyulu from Hyderabad and Neeraja from Chennai, the EO said the TTD has already planned a series of spiritual programmes during the auspicious month of Dhanurmasam starting December 16.



Endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivasa Rao and Kandukuru legislator M. Mahidhar Reddy take part in foundation stone laying programme for the renovation of Raja Gopuram at Sri Janardhan swamy temple in Kandukuru on Saturday.

Will protect temple lands, says minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 12

Endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivasa Rao took objection to projecting the state government as anti-Hindu while reminding that they have brought a legislation against sale of temple lands while 50 temples were demolished during the previous government.

He said that the TD government had accorded permission for the sale of lands belonging to Mantalayam but the YSRC government stalled the move by banning the sale of temple lands.

He was addressing a gathering after setting the foundation stone for the renovation of Raja Gopuram at Sri Janardhana Swamy temple along with Kandukuru legislator M. Mahidhar Reddy in

Kandukuru of Prakasam district on Saturday.

He claimed that the government was taking all necessary steps to prevent encroachment of temple lands while assuring to free the encroached lands of different shrines apart from taking action on the landgrabbers.

Referring to the 4 lakh acres of lands belonging to temples in the state, he said they will take steps to protect the lands and also develop them.

He said they are going to install CC Cameras to protect the properties of the temples.

Srinivasa Rao said the TTD would provide ₹2 crore for the reconstruction of Raja Gopuram at the Janardhana Swamy temple at Kandukuru, quoting the promise of TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy.

WATER SAMPLES SENT FOR TESTING

FROM PAGE 1

KMC superintendent engineer P.V.V. Satyanarayana Raju said that raw water samples have been collected from Aratlakatta and Maharshi Sambamurthy

reservoir at Samalkot and also drinking water samples from Jagannaickpur and other slum areas and sent for tests in a Visakhapatnam lab. He said that samples were found to 'quality' parameters.

Support BJP-JS candidate: Somu

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 12

Bharatiya Janata Party AP president Somu Veerajuu appealed to the electorate in Tirupati parliament segment to back the BJP-JSP nominee in the ensuing byelection.

"There is no benefit for the ruling YSRC with another MP seat since it is already having 21 seats in the state. Even the Opposition TD can do nothing even if it wins the one MP seat, whereas the victory of BJP-JSP candidate in the Tirupati bypoll would pave way for all-round development of the segment with the support at the Centre,"

Veerajuu said.

He was addressing partymen during BJP state executive meeting at a private hotel in Tirupati on Saturday.

BJP national leaders, including, party state affairs In-charge V. Murali-dharan, Sunil Deodhar, Rajya Sabha member G.V.L. Narasimha Rao and party national general-secretary Satya Kumar attended the meeting among others.

Earlier, the party has organised a huge rally in the temple town supporting the farmers bill and also appealed to the local public to support the party in the coming bypoll.

IN BRIEF

49 red sander logs seized

Nellore: Red Sanders Anti-Smuggling Task Force team (RSATF) apprehended a smuggler person and seized 49 logs weighing 1.5 tonne and worth ₹8 lakh in the open market during combing in the forest area close to Srivari Mettu near Tirupati on Saturday. The accused has been identified as Ravichandran, 20, from Thiruvannamalai district in Tamil Nadu. Task Force DSP Venkataiah said that the taskforce teams led by RSI Vasu and DRO Narasimha Rao stumbled upon the smuggler during the combing operation which commenced from Srivari Mettu from Friday evening. According to the DSP, the teams spotted around 50 smugglers carrying red sander logs in the dense Seshachalam forest area.

IIT student ends life by suicide

Kadapa: A student from IIT, Idupulapaya campus of Kadapa district committed suicide on Saturday. He was identified as Sai Manoj, from Hindupur of Anantapur district. He hanged himself from a ceiling fan in his hostel room. The co-students identified that he was locked inside the room. Immediately they informed the hostel warden about the incident. The security people, along with the hostel warden, came and brought down his body and shifted the body to the Vempalli hospital. The RK valley police filed a case and investigating.

RGUKTCET: 2 boys score 99

Counselling from Jan. 4 and classes will commence from 18 January

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 12

The results of Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies common entrance test (RGUKTCET) 2020 released on Saturday. Minister for education Audimilapu Suresh released the results and said that counselling for admissions into IIITs would be started on January 4 and classes will commence from 18 January.

Two students Gurram Vamsikrishna from Guntur and Pothuganti Jakeer Hussain from YSR Kadapa districts secured 99 marks getting top ranks in the RGUKTCET entrance exams results.

Mr Suresh said that the entrance test was conducted based on the Class X syllabus in the absence

TOP 5 RANKERS	
GIRLS CATEGORY TOPPERS:	BOYS CATEGORY TOPPERS:
● Tata Shalini 97 marks	● Gurram Vamsikrishna 99 marks
● Poreddy Mamatha 97 marks	● Pothuganti Jakeer Hussain 99 marks
● Mamidiseti Varshitha 97 marks	● Inamala Sivasankara Varayugandhar 98 marks
● Kalavakunta Kalyani 96 marks	● Yerragudi Rajesh 97 marks
● Goli Harshitha Sai Sri 95 marks	● Matta Durga Sai Keerthi Teja 97 marks

of X standard examinations due to the Covid-19 pandemic under which 85,755 students appeared for the exam.

He said that the counselling would be held from January 4. He stated that the results are announced within a week after the entrance exam was conducted.

Mr Suresh said that the examination was held in 630 exam centres in AP and eight centres in

Telangana state on December 5 from 11 am to 1 pm.

The entrance exam was conducted for taking admissions into six years integrated B.Tech programme and a few diploma programmes offered by Acharya NG Ranga University, Guntur, Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University, Tirupati and Dr YSR Hearly Culture University Venkataramannagudem for the aca-

demic year 2020-21.

The top five rankers in the boys category are Gurram Vamsikrishna from Guntur and Pothuganti Jakeer Hussain from YSR Kadapa, Inamala Sivasankara Vrayugandhar from Srikakulam, Y. Rajesh from Kurnool and M. Durga Sai Keerthi Teja from West Godavari.

In girls category, the top five rankers are T. Shalini from West Godavari, P.

Mamatha from YSR Kadapa, M. Varshitha from West Godavari, K. Kalyani from Nellore and G. Harshitha Sai Sri from Guntur.

Mr Suresh said that results are available on the RGUKT website through the hall ticket number. He stated that the candidates would receive cut off marks and call letters. He further said that 6.30 lakh X standard students were promoted due to Covid-19 in 13 districts of AP State without exams. He said that as per the guidelines of the government admission into intermediate will be carried in private colleges. He said that the government had permitted 300 Intermediate colleges to conduct Intermediate classes for the students for the current academic year.

Eluru illness triggers promotion of organic fertilisers

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 12

The mystery illness affecting several people at Eluru in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh has led to experts demanding the promotion of organic fertilisers and pesticides to cultivate crops, mainly vegetables.

A large number of tenant farmers take small farm land holdings on lease to raise vegetable crops, including leafy vegetables. As their harvest period is relatively less, they go for multiple crops in a year. Given the high demand for vegetables and their vulnerability to infections from pests, the overprotective farmers spray several varieties of pesticides without any control. This is resulting in high concentration of pesticides in vegetables.

For instance, cabbage and cauliflower are vulnerable to pests. Farmers keep spraying pesticides on them to protect the crop without following any protocol. There is a crop-wisely norm for using pesticides. They cannot be sprayed if the crop is to be harvested in 10 to 15 days. Farmers do not comply with any norms irrespective of their ill-effects on consumers as they want their crop to be sold for a good price.

As leafy vegetables like spinach, coriander, mint, etc., and others are also more vulnerable to get infested with pests, farmers use pesticides indiscriminately. When people fail to wash and cook them properly the residues of pesticides find their way into the human body affecting their health depending on the concentration levels. So is the case with chillies which are more vulnerable for pests and viruses and are subject to indiscriminate use of pesticides. Farmers use pesticides rampantly on vegetables like brinjal and okra.

Some farmers even raise vegetable crops in marshy lands with water surcharged from canals that carry polluted water discharged from untreated effluents from industries, civic bodies and processing units of fish and shrimps in some parts of the state. This causes deposit of high concentrations of harmful chemicals on them and they will affect health of consumers.

Dr YSR Horticulture University, director of research Dr R.V.S.K. Reddy said, "It is true that some farmers are using pesticides indiscriminately on certain varieties of vegetables to protect them from infestation. However, there is a need to promote usage of organic fertilisers and pesticides in a big way by educating the farmers to avoid health problems to their consumers."

West Godavari agriculture joint director Dr Gausia Begum said, "We have been educating the farmers to strictly follow the guidelines on usage of pesticides during cultivation of crops to avoid their harmful impact on health of the consumers in addition to advising them to use organic fertilisers and pesticides."

On the other hand, consumption of pesticide has come down to 1,738.20 metric tonnes when gross area sown in was 76.71 lakh hectares in 2017-18 to 4,253.06 metric tonnes in area of 81.27 lakh hectares in 2013-14 in all 13 districts in AP.

Agriculture commissioner H. Arun Kumar said, "The quantum of usage of pesticides for cultivation of crops by farmers is coming down as a series of awareness programmes are being taken up on their proper usage. We have yet to get scientific evidence on presence of pesticide residues on vegetables and their impact on health of the people with reference to mystery illness at Eluru."

ANDHRA VARSITY TO START FIVE-YEAR INTEGRATED BBM-MBA PROGRAMME

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 12

Andhra University to start a prestigious five year integrated BBM-MBA programme for the academic year 2020-21 for the benefit of both domestic and international students.

The university in a release issued here on Saturday said that for the first time, it was

going to start such programme in academic collaboration with IIM, Visakhapatnam, under the National Educational Policy 2020. It said that the course was meticulously designed to equip students with the knowledge, skills and expertise needed to succeed in life and assured a rich career potential in the context of career opportunities.

AP RECORDS 510 NEW CASES, THREE DEATHS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 12

Andhra Pradesh registered 510 new Covid-19 positive cases and three deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin on Saturday reporting that out of 67,495 samples tested, only 510 persons were found infected with Coronavirus. Out of a total number of 1,07,67,117 samples tested, 8,75,025 persons were infected with Covid-19 and of them, 8,62,895 were recovered while 5,078 persons are still active with the virus.

Chittoor recorded the highest number of daily cases of confirmed Covid-19 cases with 89 followed by 82 in Krishna, 74 in Guntur, 60 in West Godavari, 47 in East Godavari, 34 in Prakasam, 22 in Kurnool, 21 in Kadapa, 18 in Visakhapatnam, 17 each in Anantapur, Nellore and Vizianagaram and 12 in Srikakulam.

GUDUR MLA TESTS POSITIVE TO COVID-19

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 12

Gudur legislator Dr V. Varaprasad Rao went into home isolation after he was tested positive to Covid-19 on Friday.

It is a practice for the YSR Congress legislator to undergo Covid test during weekends after participating in various programmes in different parts of the Gudur constituency.

As per the routine, he gave the swab sample on December 10, and he tested positive to the infection on Friday.

Sources in YSR Congress said the MLA rushed to his residence in Chennai to isolate himself soon after learning of the results.

The information has been causing jitters to the followers of Dr Vara Prasad who moved closely with him during the last one week. Leaders suggested them to undergo Covid test and stay home.

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SHORT TAKES

ACTRESS ARYA BANERJEE FOUND DEAD AT HER HOME

Kolkata, Dec. 12: Actress Arya Banerjee who starred in several Bollywood films, including *‘The Dirty Picture’*, was found dead at her south Kolkata residence, police said.

The police broke open the door of her third-floor apartment on Friday and found that the body of the 33-year-old woman was lying in the bedroom.

The daughter of late sitarist Nikhil Bandyopadhyay, Arya had also starred in *‘LSD: Love Sex Aur Dhoka’* (2010) among other films. She had also done some modelling assignments in Mumbai. Her domestic help got suspicious as she did not respond to doorbells and phone calls in the morning and informed the neighbours who called the police.

Arya lived alone and kept to herself mostly, the domestic help said. Police said that the body was sent for post-mortem examination and a forensic team collected samples from her room.

K'TAKA: WORKERS GO ON RAMPAGE AT IPHONE PLANT

Bengaluru, Dec. 12: Violence broke out on Saturday at the Taiwan-headquartered Wistron Corporation's plant near here where iPhones and other IT products are manufactured as large number of workers went on a rampage over issues related to payment of salary, police said.

The Karnataka government condemned the violence at the manufacturing facility in Narasapura Industrial Area in Kolar district, about 50 kilometers from here.

Police said 132 people have been detained in connection with the violence that erupted around 6 AM during the morning shift.

“The information we received is that the employees had problems related to their salary payment,” Inspector General of Police Seemant Kumar Singh told reporters after visiting the Wistron facility, adding investigations were on.

The workers in the morning shift hurled stones, smashed glass windows, damaged vehicles, furniture, computers and laptops, another police officer said.

Video footages showed a violent group overturning vehicles, setting them on fire, breaking glass windows in the office leaving a trail of destruction. Condemning the violence, Deputy Chief Minister C. N. Ashwath Narayan said stringent action would be taken against the perpetrators.

INDO-SINO TALKS ENTER 8TH MONTH WITH NO DEAL

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 12

The military stand-off between India and China in Eastern Ladakh has entered in its eighth month with no agreement on disengagement in sight.

The winter season and snow in upper reaches has for time being reduced the possibility of an armed confrontation between the two sides in the region. However, soldiers deployed in front bases in Ladakh are now fighting the elements with temperatures dipping way below sub-zero temperatures.

The altitudes in Ladakh range from high to super high altitude and the area experiences heavy snow fall, after the month of November. This coupled with the wind chill factor, temperatures dips down to minus 3?-40 degrees.

The eighth round of Corps Commanders meeting held on November 6 had given rise to hope that the two sides could reach an agreement on a disengagement plan.

It had seemed that China has agreed to move back from the Finger 4 and take its troops beyond Finger 8 in the Northern bank of Pangong Tso. Even army chief General M.M. Naravane had said that he was hopeful that the Indian and Chinese militaries will be able to reach an agreement on disengagement and de-escalation of tension in eastern Ladakh.

However, since then things have got stuck with no forward progress. There has also been no further meeting of the Corps Commanders since then. India's position has been that it was China which had first moved its troops at the LAC and China will have to be first to withdraw from these positions.

All for Rajinikanth



Stage artistes from across Tamil Nadu dress up as Rajinikanth characters from several of his films on the occasion of the superstar's 70th birthday on Saturday.

Farmers: Repeal agri laws first, then talk

Sticking to demands, farmers to intensify their agitation

New Delhi, Dec. 12: Sticking to their demands, farmer leaders Saturday said they are ready to hold talks with the government, but will first discuss repealing the three new farm laws, and announced further intensification of their ongoing protest against the legislations.

Addressing a press conference at Singhu Border here, farmer leader Kanwalpreet Singh Pannu said that thousands of farmers will start their ‘Delhi Chalo’ march from Rajasthan’s Shahjahanpur through the Jaipur-Delhi Highway at 11 am on Sunday.

He said that farmers from other parts of the country are also on their way to join the protesters here and they will take the agitation to the next level in the coming days. “If the government wants to hold talks, we are ready, but our main demand will remain the scrapping of the three laws. We will move onto our other demands only after that,” the farmer leader said.

Farmer union leaders will also sit on a hunger strike between 8 am and 5 pm On December 14

How many more farmers will have to die, asks Congress

SREEPARNA CHAKRABARTY | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 12

Claiming that 11 farmers have lost their lives while protesting against the new farm laws over the last 17 days, the Congress on Saturday questioned how many agriculturalists would have to lose their lives to get the legislations repealed.

“How many more sacrifices will the farmers have to make to get the agri laws repealed?” former Congress president Rahul Gandhi tweeted. He tagged a media report which claimed that 11 protesting farmers had lost their lives in the last 17 days due to various reasons such as ill

health or a mishap. Congress’ chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala claimed that despite the death of 11 farmer brothers in the last 17 days, the Modi government was not relenting.

“They (government) are still standing with their ‘money providers’ not with ‘annadaatas’ (food providers),” Mr Surjewala tweeted. “The country wants to know — ‘Is Rajdharm (constitutional responsibility) bigger or Rajhat (stubbornness)?’” he asked.

Farmers, especially from the three food bowl states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh are protesting the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement

of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act 2020.

While the government has projected the three laws as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove middlemen and allow farmers to sell anywhere in the country, the protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of Minimum Support Price and do away with the mandis, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates.

some “antisocial” as well as “Leftist and Maoist” elements were conspiring to spoil the atmosphere of the agitation which has been going on for over two weeks now. — PTI

Puri Jagannath temple likely to reopen on Dec 23

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, DEC. 12

Devotees waiting to have darshan of Lord Jagannath and divine siblings — Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra — will soon have the opportunity as the Jagannath Temple administration on Saturday announced that the temple will reopen ahead of the New Year.

Speaking to media persons in Puri, Sri Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA)

chief administrator Krishan Kumar said that they were planning to reopen the temple for devotees soon with strict adherence to Covid restrictions.

“The recommendation in this regard will be sent to the state government to open the Jagannath Temple on December 23. We will urge them to allow us reopen for residents of Puri till December 31 evening,” Kumar said after chairing a meeting of temple priests.

However, the temple will

remain closed on January 1 and 2 in view of possibility of a huge flow of devotees to the pilgrim town. On January 3 onwards, the temple will be kept open for all devotees.

“We have decided to close the temple on January 1 and 2. An advisory will be issued after getting a nod from the state government,” he said.

Initially, as many as 5,000 devotees will be allowed to enter into the temple in phases after January 3.

TRANSPARENT | ELECTIONS

Expenditure limit for party candidates was last revised in 2014

EC tells parties to fix limit on poll expenditure

New Delhi, Dec. 12: The Election Commission has sought views of recognised national and state parties on what should be the limit of expenditure for candidates contesting Lok Sabha and assembly polls.

In a letter sent out on December 7, the commission asked parties to send their “views and suggestions” on as to what should be the ceiling limit of election expenditure for candidates for Lok Sabha and assembly elections in the future. The parties

have been asked to send their views to the nodal officer of the committee that was set up in October to revise the expenditure limit.

While there is a limit on candidates to spend on their election campaign, there is no such cap on political parties.

The committee was tasked to examine the issue of revising the expenditure limit for candidates for Lok Sabha and assembly polls in view of the increase in number of electors and rise in the

Cost Inflation Index. Expenditure limit for candidates was last revised in 2014.

For Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the limit was enhanced in 2018. “In last six years, the limit was not increased despite an increase in electorate from 834 million to 910 million in 2019 to 921 million now. Further, Cost Inflation Index during this period has increased from 220 to 280 in 2019 to 301 now,” the commission had said in October while announcing constitution of the panel.

The committee will assess the change in number of electors across states and union territories, and its bearing on expenditure. It has also been mandated to assess the change in Cost Inflation Index and its bearing on the pattern of expenditure incurred by candidates in recent elections.

The committee is likely to submit its report early next year to the poll panel. Considering the difficulties candidates could face in campaigning amid Covid-19. — PTI

Praful: Pawar couldn’t be PM due to coterie

Mumbai, Dec. 12: Senior NCP leader Praful Patel on Saturday claimed veteran politician and the party chief Sharad Pawar couldn’t become prime minister on two occasions in 1990s when he was with Congress due to a “darbar coterie” in that party acting against him. Speaking on the occasion of Pawar’s 80th birthday, Patel said this “unfinished dream can be fulfilled”.

“Pawar strengthened his position as a front-running leader in the Congress in a very little time. He was surely cut off for a prime ministerial role in 1991 and 1996, but the ‘darbar’ (nepotism) politics of Delhi put a spanner. This was definitely a personal loss to him, but moreover for the party and the country,” Patel wrote in a newspaper article. He stated a “scheming coterie” of the Congress ‘darbar’ in

Delhi used to engineer revolts in state units to weaken strong leaders. When asked about the article, Patel told reporters in Mumbai that “Pawar missed the opportunity to become a Prime Minister on two occasions...”. Bante, Bante rah gaye...Now, if the entire Maharashtra stands by him, our unfinished dream can be fulfilled”.

He was speaking after attending an event organised by the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) to mark Pawar’s birthday. “What I said (in the write-up) was we had seen when we (leaders) were with the Congress,” the NCP General Secretary said.

When contacted, a senior Congress leader said Pawar had rejoined the Congress in the year 1986, “and in Delhi his image was that he wasn’t a loyal Congressman. In 1978 too, he had revolted against the party”. — PTI

KERALA CM LASHES OUT AT INTEL AGENCIES

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC. 12

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday lashed out at the Central intelligence agencies accusing them of targeting political opponents in the state in the name of probe.

At a press conference the Chief Minister said that the Central agencies were working at the behest of the ruling party at the Centre to topple the democratically elected government. Instead of carrying out the responsibility entrusted with them in a fair manner, the Central agencies were acting as if they wanted to ensure electoral benefits for the BJP.

“We are planning to write a detailed letter to PM Narendra Modi explaining the actions of the central agencies in the state as part of the ongoing probe in various cases,” he said. The CM said unfortunately the Congress-led UDF was also walking on the BJP’s path.

Centre, Bengal clash over 3 IPS

New Delhi/Kolkata, Dec. 12: The West Bengal government will have the “last word” on releasing three of its IPS officers for central deputation, the state’s ruling TMC declared on Saturday, dubbing as “intimidatory” the Union Home Ministry’s order for shifting them out following the mob attack on BJP chief J. P. Nadda’s convoy.

Days after Nadda’s cavalcade came under attack by alleged Trinamool Congress supporters when he was on way to address a public meeting at Diamond Harbour near Kolkata, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) summoned the IPS officers to serve under it for alleged dereliction of duty.

● THE MHA’S move came a day after the Mamata Banerjee government defiantly rejected summonses to state chief secretary and police chief to appear before Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla to tender explanation for the attack on Nadda’s motorcade that left several BJP leaders and workers injured and their vehicles damaged.

The three officers — Bholanath Pandey (SP, Diamond Harbour), Praveen Tripathi (DIG, Presidency Range) and Rajeev Mishra (ADG, South Bengal) — were responsible for the security of the BJP chief during his December 9-10

visit to the politically volatile state that will likely have assembly elections in April-May next year.

The MHA’s move came a day after the Mamata Banerjee government defiantly rejected summonses to state chief secretary and police chief to appear before Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla to tender explanation for the attack on Nadda’s motorcade that left several BJP leaders and workers injured and their vehicles damaged. — PTI

India, Iran, Uzbekistan to hold trilateral meeting on Chabahar

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 12

In a major boost to Indian strategic interests, India on Saturday announced that the “first Trilateral Working Group Meeting between India, Iran and Uzbekistan on joint use of Chabahar Port will be held virtually on December 14”, adding that “besides Uzbekistan, other Central Asian countries have also shown interest in using the port”. The Iranian port of Chabahar provides sea-land connectivity between India and Central Asia through Iran, bypassing Pakistan.

It may be recalled that at the India-Uzbekistan Virtual Summit on Friday, India had cited the successful functioning of the

Chabahar port in Iran — being developed with Indian assistance — that could be a “fulcrum of connectivity to Central Asia” following which New Delhi had “welcomed the Uzbek proposal to hold trilateral dialogue among India, Iran and Uzbekistan to promote connectivity through the Chabahar port”.

In a statement, the MEA said, “The first Trilateral Working Group Meeting between India, Iran and Uzbekistan on joint use of Chabahar Port will be held virtually on December 14, 2020...India welcomes the interest of Uzbekistan to use the Chabahar port as a transit port. This would open up economic opportunities for the traders and business community of the region. Besides

Uzbekistan, other Central Asian countries have also shown interest in using the port. India seeks to cooperate closely with regional countries on this issue.” The MEA added, “The Meeting would be jointly chaired at Deputy Minister level by Republic of Uzbekistan and Islamic Republic of Iran and Secretary Level from Republic of India.”

Uzbekistan had also agreed “in-principle” on Friday to India’s request to join the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), an important initiative taken by India, Russia and Iran to promote transportation cooperation and to enhance connectivity with central Asian countries, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday.



SHORT TAKES

RUSSIA PROBES MYSTERY DEATH OF 300 SEALS

Moscow, Dec. 12: Russian authorities said on Friday they were investigating the mysterious death of nearly 300 endangered seals that had been discovered washed up on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

Between Sunday and Thursday, 272 dead Caspian seals had been found at a number of locations in the southern region of Dagestan including its regional capital Makhachkala and Derbent, another major city, said the state fisheries agency Rosrybolovstvo.

Some of the seals were pregnant. An agency spokeswoman said that more dead seals could yet be discovered. A team of experts arrived from Moscow to help conduct an investigation.

REVERSE TRUMP'S IMMIGRATION RULES, BIDEN TOLD

Washington, Dec. 12: Influential American lawmakers, including Indian-American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, have urged President-elect Joe Biden to reverse the immigration policies of Donald Trump, as they introduced a resolution, seeking reform of the immigration system that is just, empathetic and fair.

Jayapal and several of her Congressional colleagues on Friday in a resolution urged Congress to create humane, community-based alternatives to detention, and revamp the current deportation system to include, among other things, guaranteed access to legal representation.

Jayapal along with congressmen Jesus "Chuy" Garcia, Veronica Escobar, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Judy Chu and Yvette Clarke unveiled a Roadmap to Freedom Resolution as a progressive vision to transform the immigration system to one that is focused on dignity and rooted in the needs and lives of impacted people.

The Roadmap to Freedom Resolution will be introduced at the beginning of the 117th Congress.

US EXECUTES DRIVER WHO KILLED HIS CHILD

Terre Haute (US), Dec. 12: The Trump administration continued its unprecedented series of post-election federal executions by putting to death a Louisiana truck driver who severely abused his 2-year-old daughter for weeks in 2002, then killed her by slamming her head against a truck's windows and dashboard. Alfred Bourgeois, 56, was pronounced dead at 8.21 pm. Eastern time on Friday after receiving a lethal injection at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana.

His lawyers argued Bourgeois had an IQ that puts him in the intellectually disabled category, saying that should have made him ineligible for the death penalty under federal law. Victor J. Abreu, said it was "shameful" to execute his client "without fair consideration of his intellectual disability." In his last words, Bourgeois offered no apology and instead struck a deeply defiant tone, insisting that he neither killed nor sexually abused his baby girl.

LETTER FROM 'ZODIAC KILLER' DECODED

Los Angeles, Dec. 12: A team of cryptography enthusiasts announced on Friday they had successfully cracked one of the coded messages sent over 50 years ago by the "Zodiac Killer," who terrorised northern California in the late 1960s and remains unidentified.

The message was sent in November 1969 to the *San Francisco Chronicle* newspaper by the alleged serial killer, its code consisting of a series of cryptic letters and symbols. Sleuths hoped the coded message contained the identity of the killer, who committed at least five murders in 1968 and 1969 but claimed 37 in total and inspired other serial killers.

According to the trio said to have broken the code, the message includes boasts and defiance of authorities without any real clues on motive or identity.

It includes to message: "I hope you are having lots of fun in trying to catch me... I am not afraid of the gas chamber because it will send me to paradise (sic) all the sooner because I now have enough slaves to work for me."

Trump forces US regulator to approve Pfizer vaccine faster

FDA chief told to quit if drug regulator does not clear vaccine by end of day

Washington, Dec.12: US President Donald Trump on Friday piled pressure on the US drug regulator to quickly approve the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine as America readied to roll out mass immunisations.

The *Washington Post* reported that the White House told the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) chief Stephen Hahn to submit his resignation if the agency does not clear the vaccine by the end of the day.

Hahn later disputed the characterization of the call, but the alleged threat came as Trump tweeted that the agency was a "big, old, slow turtle" and told Hahn to get the "dam" vaccines out immediately.

An expert committee had already voted to grant an emergency use authorisation, which was expected within days, as the FDA worked to iron out last-minute details with Pfizer.

These included a fact sheet for doctors. The FDA has said it wants to warn people with severe allergies to avoid the shots for now. Trump's intervention reinserts politics into the scientific process, which could undermine vaccine confidence in the world's hardest-hit country, where the death toll is nearing 3,00,000.

It was also not clear whether having an EUA a day or two earlier than expected would change when the first Americans — nursing home residents and health care workers — would get their injections, which is expected Monday or Tuesday. The country hopes to have 20 million people inoculated this month.

The government also

Congress averts shutdown, buys time for more talks

Washington, Dec. 12: Congress sent a temporary government-wide funding bill to President Donald Trump on Friday that would avert a federal Shutdown at midnight and buy time for on-again, off-again talks on Covid-19 aid.

The bill sets a new deadline of midnight next Friday. The short-term measure passed the Senate by a unanimous voice vote without much drama and sent senators home for the weekend without a clear picture of what awaits next week. The House passed the bill Wednesday.

Trump was expected to sign it before midnight. The talks are stalled but there is universal agree-

ment that Congress won't adjourn for the year without passing a long-delayed round of pandemic relief. An emerging \$900 billion aid package from a bipartisan group of lawmakers hit a rough patch after Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.,

called adenovirus, could prove effective in offering people long-term protection against Covid-19. According to *The Times*, the idea is that by using different vaccines, each shot may prompt a stronger immune response. AstraZeneca, the pharmaceutical major which produces the Oxford University's vaccine, has agreed to collaborate with Sputnik in a

deal apparently sealed after an offer was made on Twitter, the newspaper said. Early results from the final-stage trial of the Sputnik vaccine showed it was 90 per cent effective and findings that involved more cases with the Oxford vaccine indicated it was 62 per cent effective in one regimen and 90 per cent in another.

— AP

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Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, Sputnik to be mixed for trial

London, Dec. 12: The Oxford University and AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine, currently awaiting regulatory approvals, is set to be used for a "mix and match" trial with Russia's Sputnik vaccine against the Coronavirus, according to UK media reports. The two sets of experts are to join forces to explore if a combination of the two jabs, both using a benign virus

swung against the effort. Still, negotiations are ongoing and pressure remains intense.

The House has recessed for a few days, with leaders warning members to be prepared to return to Washington to vote on the year-end deals. Negotiators on a separate \$1.4 trillion omnibus spending bill appeared to be moving in a positive direction, said the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala. This bill would serve as a vehicle to carry any year-end virus assistance. "I'm hopeful we're going to get there on both the omni and the Covid package," McConnell said.

— AP

SOUTH KOREA SEES STEEP SURGE IN COVID CASES

Seoul, Dec. 12: South Korea on Saturday reported its highest daily number of Covid cases so far, with a surge centered in the capital sparking fears the country could lose control of the spread. Officials announced 950 new infections after several days reporting numbers ranging from about 500 to 600.

Some 669 were reported in the greater Seoul area, according to Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency, prompting worries about a major outbreak in the densely populated area — home to half the country's 52 million people.

"This is the last hurdle before the roll-out of vaccines and treatments," President Moon Jae-in said, calling the situation "very grave".

— AFP

Britain promises to stop funding fossil fuel projects

London, Dec. 12: Britain is to end government funding for fossil fuel projects overseas, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Friday, on the eve of an international climate change summit.

Johnson announced a halt to funding of new crude oil, gas and coal projects before opening the Climate Ambition Summit co-hosted by Britain, the United Nations and France on Saturday.

"I'm pleased to say today that the UK will end taxpayer support for fossil fuel projects overseas as soon as possible," Johnson said in a statement released by his office.

Britain has been criticised for sending billions of pounds abroad to help extract and refine fossil fuels and build power stations.

It has promised to end this soon, while saying there will be "very limited exceptions".

"Calling time on financing overseas fossil fuel projects really is a welcome move," said the policy director at Greenpeace UK, Doug Parr.

Christian Aid's head of campaigns and UK advocacy Pete Moorey said to tackle the climate crisis, 80 percent of known fossil fuels needed to be left in the ground.

"The UK government is right to heed this warning and end support for fossil fuels overseas," he added.

"Developing countries need investment to leapfrog the dirty energy that has led us into this crisis and access the clean renewable that can both accelerate their development and tackle the climate emergency."

— AP

UN CHIEF URGES 'CLIMATE CRISIS' DECLARATION

London, Dec. 12: UN chief Antonio Guterres on Saturday urged world leaders to declare a "state of climate emergency" and shape greener growth after the Coronavirus pandemic, as he opened a summit marking five years since the landmark Paris Agreement.

The Climate Ambition Summit, being held online, comes as the United Nations warns current commitments to tackle rises in global temperatures are inadequate.

The commitments made in Paris in 2015 were "far from enough" to limit temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the UN secretary-general said in his opening address to the summit, which is co-hosted by Britain and France.

— AFP

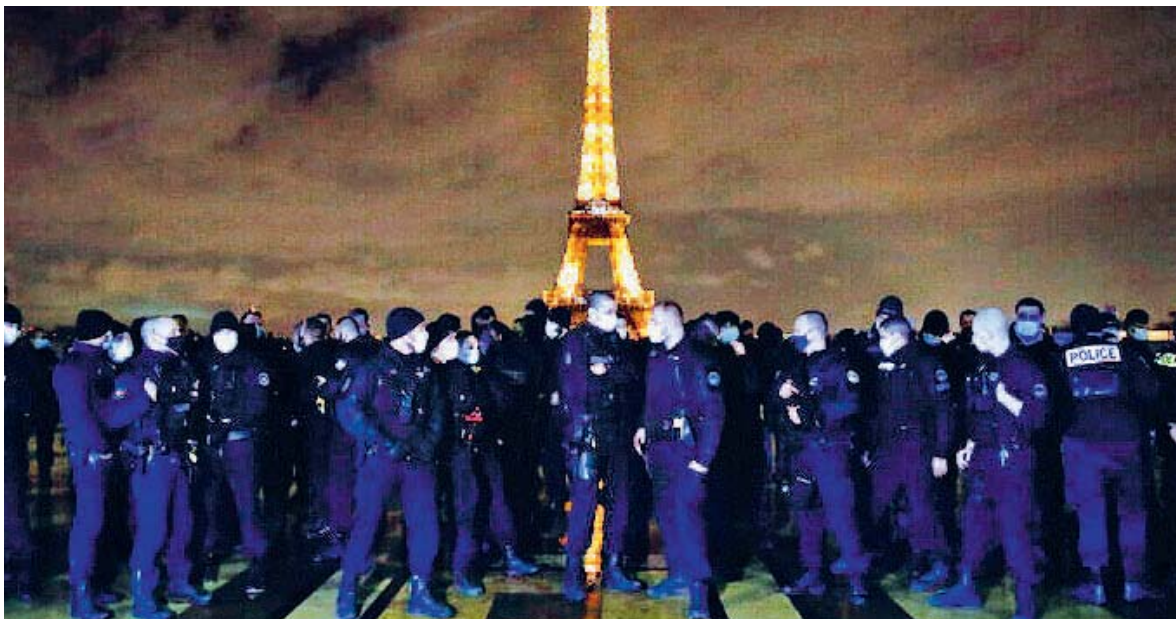
Downing Street said it intends to implement the policy by November next year, when Britain will host the UN summit on climate change COP26, in Glasgow.

Over the last four years, the British government "supported 21 billion (\$28 billion, 23 billion euros) of UK oil and gas exports through trade promotion and export finance", it added.

Britain has been criticised by watchdogs and activists including Swedish campaigner Greta Thunberg for financing dirty energy projects abroad.

— AFP

French police protest



French police officers gather on the Trocadero square in front of the Eiffel Tower to protest in Paris. About 50 cops gathered with their vehicles and blared their sirens to protest President Emmanuel Macron saying it is "unbearable" that people of color are more likely to be stopped by law enforcement than white people. Two unions threatened to stop carrying out identity checks after Macron's remarks a week ago in an interview with the online outlet Brut, meant to capture the youth audience. "We just want to say to the president and politicians that we are neither racist nor violent," one officer said.

— AP

Relatives seek info on Hong Kong detainees in China

Hong Kong, Dec. 12: Relatives of a dozen Hong Kong residents who have been detained in mainland China for more than 3 1/2 months made a plea on Saturday to be informed of the timing of any trials and whether they can attend.

The request underscored the sharp contrast between the relatively open legal system in Hong Kong, a semi-autonomous Chinese territory, and that of the mainland, where often little information is divulged until a trial is over.

"I miss my son so much," the mother of Wong Wai-yin, one of the detainees, said, choking up. "I want to visit him so badly. I haven't seen my son in a very long time — it's almost four months. Please tell me (about the trial). I'm just an

ordinary mother."

The 12 were arrested at sea in August while they were apparently making a bid to flee to Taiwan after a tough national security law took effect in Hong Kong earlier this year.

They were picked up after entering mainland waters for crossing the maritime border without permission. At least some took part in anti-government protests in 2019 and were facing charges in Hong Kong.

Though Hong Kong is a part of China, travelers must still pass through immigration when going to and from the mainland. Two are being held on suspicion of organising an illegal border crossing. The group has been locked up in Shenzhen, a southern Chinese city that borders Hong Kong.

— AP

PRO-CHINA NEWS CHANNEL TAKEN OFF AIR

Taipei, Dec. 12: Employees and supporters rallied for a Taiwanese pro-China cable news channel as it was taken off air on Saturday, after the government refused to renew its license, citing accuracy issues.

CTITV's channel 52 broadcast a countdown and then went black after midnight. The cable network, whose non-news channels were not affected, plans to continue putting news on YouTube and other digital platforms. A large crowd chanted "Hang on, CTITV" and held up signs reading "Thank you CTITV, we will see you again."

— AP

SCOTUS dismisses Texas election suit

Washington, Dec. 12: The US Supreme Court has rejected a lawsuit filed by Texas, along with 17 other States, and backed by President Donald Trump seeking to overturn the results of the presidential elections in several key battleground States won by Democratic candidate Joe Biden who now is the president-elect.

"Texas has not demonstrated a judicially cognisable interest in the manner in which another State conducts its elections. All other pending motions are dismissed as moot," the Supreme Court said in a brief unsigned order on Thursday, delivering a devastating blow to the efforts of Trump to challenge and overturn the election results decisively won by Biden.

Supreme Court Justices Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas said they believed the court was required to hear the case but expressed no position on Texas' claim.

— AP

CUOMO AMONG CONTENDERS FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL PICK

Washington, Dec. 12: New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo is one of several contenders under consideration by President-elect Joe Biden for the role of attorney general, a person with knowledge of the search process said on Friday.

The other three contenders at the moment include former Alabama Sen. Doug Jones, federal appeals court judge Merrick Garland and former Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates, said the person, who cautioned that no decision had been reached and no announcement was expected imminently.

The person was not authorised to discuss the search process by name and spoke on condition of anonymity.

— AP

Iran executes ex-opppn figure Ruhollah Zam

Tehran, Dec. 12: Iran authorities on Saturday executed Ruhollah Zam, a former opposition figure who had lived in exile in France and was implicated in anti-government protests, days after his sentence was upheld.

State television said the "counter-revolutionary" Zam was hanged in the morning after the supreme court upheld his

sentence due to "the severity of the crimes" committed against the Islamic republic.

Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili had on Tuesday said Zam's sentence was upheld by the supreme court "more than a month ago".

London-based human rights group Amnesty International, in a statement after his verdict was

confirmed, described Zam as a "journalist and dissident". It said the confirmation marked "a shocking escalation in the use of the death penalty as a weapon of repression".

Iran's Revolutionary Guards announced the arrest of Zam in October 2019, claiming he had been "directed by France's intelligence service".

State television said he

was "under the protection of several countries' intelligence services".

The official IRNA news agency said he was also convicted of espionage for France and an unnamed country in the region, cooperating with the "hostile government of America", acting against "the country's security", insulting the "sanctity of Islam" and instigating vio-

lence during protests in 2017.

At least 25 people were killed during the unrest in December 2017 and January 2018 that was sparked by economic hardship.

Zam, who was granted political asylum in France and reportedly lived in Paris, ran a channel on the Telegram messaging app called Amadnews.

— AFP

FERRY | FAREWELL

95-metre *Aurora Australis* was launched in September 1989

Icebreaker leaves Oz after 150 trips

Hobart, Dec. 12: The giant orange icebreaker *Aurora Australis* left Australia for the final time on Saturday after more than 150 trips to Antarctica. Next stop: a shipyard in Dubai, where it will be refurbished and either leased or sold.

The Australian Antarctic Division announced earlier this year that after 30 years of sailing to the frozen continent for research and to support Australian bases

in Antarctica, the *Aurora Australis* would be replaced by a larger ship.

The 95-metre (312-foot) *Aurora Australis* was built in Newcastle north of Sydney and launched in September 1989. It undertook its maiden voyage to Heard Island, an external Australian territory in Antarctica, in 1990.

It has since ferried researchers, crucial food and fuel supplies and been involved in several rescues. Sean Lawrence, a

seaman for 14 years on the vessel, planned to toast the icebreaker with a beer as he watched it leave the River Derwent. "You form a bond when you're isolated and working in extreme conditions," he said.

"To suddenly have that leaving your life, it leaves a bit of a hole." Lawrence was aboard the *Aurora Australis* when it ran aground near Mawson Station in Antarctica during a blizzard in 2016.

— AP



Australian icebreaker the *Aurora Australis* docked at Franklin Wharf in Hobart, Australia. The giant orange icebreaker *Aurora Australis* left Australia for the final time on Saturday.

— AP

DECCAN Chronicle

13 DECEMBER 2020



Ranjona Banerji

Off the beaten track

Confessions of an old feminist

It was when I hit 40 that it started to bother me. Now this is true: born in the 1960s, my sister and I were sure that we would never live to see the change of the century, the fin de siècle. We would be so old! Almost 40. Life would surely be over. In our youth, we did the usual thing: asked our parents what life was like in the “olden days”.

Well, karma. It's now my turn. And the millennium happened, I turned 40. Getting my reading glasses almost on the date was exciting. I had always wanted to wear glasses and decided that I had “lost” my eyesight at 7 I wanted them so bad but that's another story. Anyway. With my new reading glasses, I was instantly outraged by such newspaper headlines: “Elderly woman of 45 run over”.

The lifestyle pages might have been full of rubbish about 60 being the new 40 and 70 the new 30 or whatever. But as far as the general public was concerned, 45 was elderly. Yes, my joints had started creaking. My hair was greying. And all the rest of the accoutrements of ageing but you know, big deal. I didn't feel “elderly”. And at best, I had moved up a notch from being “Didi” to “Bhabhi” or “Madam” as far as the general public were concerned. Respect at last! What respect? Ephemeral, as you will discover soon.

That 40 bridge was crossed almost two decades ago. I'm looking forward to some senior citizen benefits in a couple of years, if Modi government hasn't done away with them by then of course: 1/4 per cent interest rate increase on FDs and such. But before I even get there, I have to get around the fact that I have in less than 20 years progressed from “elderly” to my death bed.

All day I get advice from the yooofs of India. Do not say this. Do not think like that. When you eat, lift your hand to your mouth. You don't know this, but the Earth rotates on its axis. Why did you say this when you meant that? Did you know that the tomato is not indigenous to India? Or even better, how dare you say the tomato is not indigenous to India you traitorous old coot. Go home Auntie and all the rest of it. Not that I mind being called Auntie. I've been an Auntie since I was in my 20s.

And then, there are the men. Earlier they explained menstruation to me. Now they explain menopause. In between they explain everything else. To be fair, it's not my age so much that forces them to be so generous with their little knowledge. It's my femaleness. The thing is, it doesn't stop.

I'm not unsympathetic to ageists, don't get me wrong. I understand. Between the ages of 12 to 39, I also thought I knew everything and this self-delusional omniscience peaked in my 30s. I do think my Mother conked me on the head a few times and I still didn't get it. Thick and a know-it-all. Imagine how annoying that was.

As is the manner of all things, I learnt. That I am elderly, aged, stupid, ignorant, in dire need of schooling, that my own words need to be explained back to me and especially all my jokes (they may be terrible but they're mine!), maybe I even need cancelling. Because as I have learnt (I can still pick up one or two things) that it's mainly older people who get “cancelled”.

I genuinely thought I would be philosophical about the whole thing. End on the last resort poetry like TS Eliot: “I grow old, I grow old...”

Or WB Yeats and “arise and go now”. But then I thought, what the what. There's still some life in the old dog. So here are the last two verses of Lewis Carroll's satirical version of Robert Southey's poem. Hah! I beat you to your “did you know”. And don't worry about the last line. I'm not that violent. Yet.

“You are old,” said the youth, “one would hardly suppose That your eye was as steady as ever; Yet you balanced an eel on the end of your nose— What made you so awfully clever?”

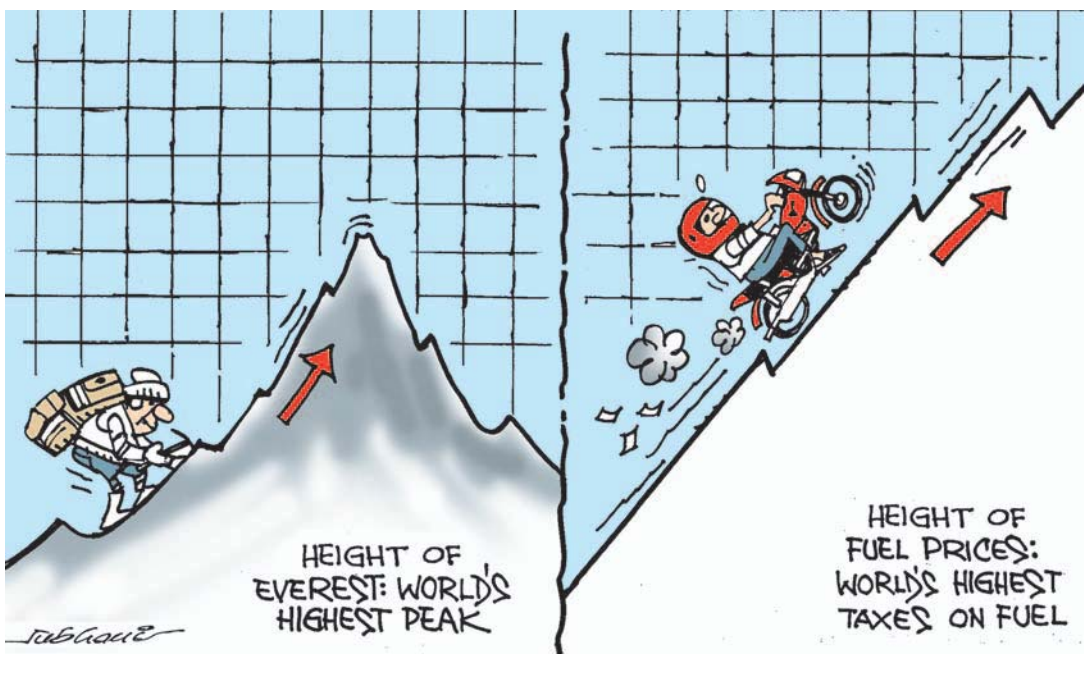
“I have answered three questions, and that is enough,” Said his father; “don't give yourself airs! Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff? Be off, or I'll kick you down stairs!”

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on media affairs, politics and social trends. She tweets at @ranjona.



And the millennium happened, I turned 40. Getting my reading glasses almost on the date was exciting. I had always wanted to wear glasses and decided that I had 'lost' my eyesight at seven I wanted them so bad but that's another story. Anyway. With my new reading glasses, I was instantly outraged by such newspaper headlines: 'Elderly woman of 45 run over.'

Subhani



Ground reality darkens PM 'vista' of democracy



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

At the *bhoomipoojan* of the proposed new Parliament building it was heartening to hear Prime Minister Narendra Modi speak about the ancient democratic traditions in India, and modern India's belief in the theory and practice of democracy. It is, indeed, a matter of pride that defying the Cassandras who predicted the early demise of democracy in independent India, our Republic continues to be the world's largest democracy.

However, the PM's espousal of democracy sits in rather strong contrast to the actual practice of the government he heads, where more and more decisions appear to be in the nature of *farmans*. Demonetisation, which caused immense economic dislocation, and from which the country has still not fully recovered, was announced by the PM himself like a bolt from the blue one evening. Similarly, the decision to impose the lockdown at the onset of the Covid pandemic was done at four hours' notice without adequate advance preparation causing unprecedented suffering for millions of migrant labour.

The categorical statements by home minister Amit Shah that the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAA) will be explicitly linked to the patently discriminatory NRC exercise, was unprecedented by consultation and deliberation, thereby leading to nationwide protests. Most recently, the three farmer's bills were rammed through Parliament through a voice vote, without sufficient discussion, and without referring them to

a select committee of Parliament for wide-spread consultations with legitimate stakeholders. Consequently, the farmer's agitation is there for all to see.

In a democracy there is a tangible dialectic between intent and process. In dictatorships the process can be overlooked, and the ruling dispensation can proceed unchallenged in implementing its intent. That is why, undemocratic polities may give the illusion of taking decisions faster, but their foundations are brittle and their decisions, precisely because of the lack of democratic debate, questionable and unsustainable. When the intent, even if laudable, is unaccompanied by democratic processes, the result causes unease, apprehension, and social instability.

At the *bhoomipoojan*, the PM's eloquence on India's democratic credentials, and the importance of civilised discourse, could not hide the fact that the plan for the massive restructuring of New Delhi has suffered from an overwhelming opacity and lack of transparency. Once again, it is evidence of the current government deciding unilaterally what is good for the people, and then proceeding to imple-

Why was an open design competition not held? This was the methodology followed for rebuilding the World Trading Centre in New York, the Notre Dame revamp in Paris, and the Indira Gandhi Centre for the National Arts in New Delhi.

Lutyens, who built New Delhi along with Herbert Baker, was a racist, and what he left us with is not sacrosanct. But, in terms of the process for change, the government has been opaque to the point of being undemocratic.

ment that decision without fully consulting the people.

The facts speak for themselves. The building of a new Parliament is only one piece of a larger decision to almost rebuild the key heritage areas of New Delhi. As per the plan, the existing Parliament will be junked and made into a museum; the North and South Blocks of the central secretariat will also be junked and made into museums; the iconic Central Vista will be jettisoned, and make way for a new residence for the PM and the Vice President. A new Central Secretariat to house all the babus of the government will be constructed. Several key buildings in these areas will be demolished. In other words, the existing Master Plan for New Delhi will be more or less thrown into the dustbin.

Cities cannot be fossilised and should change with changing times and needs. We can, therefore, give the government the benefit of doubt in terms of its intent. Lutyens, who built New Delhi along with Herbert Baker, was an incorrigible racist, and what he left us with is not sacrosanct. But, in terms of the process for change, the government has been opaque to the point of being undemocratic.

The original brief for a project of this magnitude simply said that New Delhi must represent “the values of a new India” and be “rooted in the Indian culture and social milieu”. Should not what this should entail be a matter of democratic discussion,

among experts and in Parliament? Then, why was an open design competition not held? This was the methodology followed for the rebuilding of the World Trading Centre in New York, the renovation of the Notre Dame in Paris, and the Indira Gandhi Centre for the National Arts in New Delhi. Again, the selection was based on tenders for which 80 per cent was allocated for quality, and 20 per cent for price. But who decided what constituted the best quality? The government itself. The result was that a Gujarat based company got the contract even when its price bid was reportedly the highest.

Nor were the technical scores for the winning company disclosed. No convincing study was presented to show that the existing Parliament building is falling apart, and cannot be repurposed for future needs. No public jury of eminent architects, environmentalists, landscapists and town planners was appointed to judge the proposals. Why was the meeting of the Central Vista Committee held without the presence of non-government members? Why were environmental clearances sought to be obtained piecemeal, rather than for the project as a whole? Why has the approval of the Heritage Conservation Committee not yet been obtained? The only thing we see is a tearing hurry to complete this architectural megalomania by March 2022, and to start construction even when petitions against it are pending before the Supreme Court.

In a democracy, the democratic bona fides of a government depend on its willingness to follow the democratic process of discussion and debate. In the absence of this, eloquence with regard to our democratic past appears less than convincing.

The writer, an author and a former diplomat, is in politics

LETTERS

BENGAL ATTACK

The attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party president's convoy near Kolkata is egregious. Change needs to come from both the Trinamul and the ruling dispensation (*Nadda stoning: All parties guilty of decorum breach, DC, Dec. 12*). Democracy calls for punctiliousness and constructive criticism and not confrontation.

Dr C. Ghanshyam Visakhapatnam

The so-called stone-pelting on Bharatiya Janata Party president J.P. Nadda is naturally an act of intolerance which could have been avoided if in the place of Nadda, someone from BJP's hierarchy with roots from Bengal could have been selected to woo Bengal voters for 2021 elections, (*Centre, WB engage in power play, DC, Dec. 12*). One cannot expect a leader from Tamil Nadu or Andhra to go to UP or Bihar or Punjab to woo voters there and be successful. Except PM, nobody will be successful.

Someswar Visakhapatnam

The smallest gesture the Bhodro Mohila of Bengal, the Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee could do was to say “sorry” for the unsavoury attack on Nadda's convoy, even if he was a baahirer bhadrakol on a visit to the state for political reasons! Bengalis have the reputation of entertaining rivals as “guests of honour”. Mamata has cast a shadow on Bengal's culture. She should correct the image suitably.

K. Nehru Patnaik Visakhapatnam

Perennially angry Mamata has dramatically dissed Bharatiya Janata Party president J.P. Nadda's name in bad taste on dais and asserted that stone throwing was planned by the BJP to tarnish the reputation of TMC. She asserted the BJP is a party of Gujarat and Delhi and they are outsiders to Bengal and unwelcome. Feeling insecure about future with many of her colleagues switching to BJP, she is lambasting Central leaders, Governor and Central forces. Even in the Marxist rule, WB witnessed lawlessness and political murders and now only the players have changed.

Parthasarathy Mandadi Tirupati

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

First IA Boeing lands in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Dec. 12. Garuda, the first of the seven Boeing 737 aircraft ordered by the Indian Airlines at a total cost of Rs. 30.34 crores flew into Delhi (Palam) this afternoon and will do the inaugural flight on the new year day.

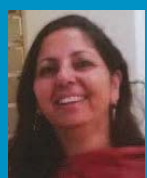
Dr Karan Singh, Minister of Civil Aviation was at Palam to greet the aircraft as Capt. N. Pareira and Capt. D. Chakravarty landed it smoothly after showing it off circling over the airport for a few minutes.

Dr Karan Singh hailed its addition to the IA fleet as “a historic event” in the airlines operation and an “auspicious beginning” for the decades domestic traffic.

The inaugural flight of this 119 passenger capacity aircraft on January 1 next will be operated on the “golden triangle” Delhi-Bombay-Calcutta route.

Anita Katyal

Political Gup-Shup



Madhav image irks BJP top brass, he may be repatriated

Once a favourite of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the BJP and the media, Ram Madhav is clearly in the wilderness today. When he was dropped as BJP general secretary some months ago, it was expected that the high-profile leader would be rewarded with a Rajya Sabha seat as a precursor to his induction as a minister in the Narendra Modi government. His cheerleaders, especially those in the media, were convinced that it was only a matter of time before Mr Madhav was rehabilitated. But, so far, there is nothing on the horizon. A Rajya Sabha seat that did fall vacant recently was awarded to Sushil Modi, former deputy chief minister of Bihar. Apparently, the BJP leadership is not happy with the larger-than-life image Mr Madhav has cultivated for himself. It feels he is far too individualistic to be contained by a system. It is now up to the RSS to take a call on Mr Madhav's future as he was loaned to the party by the Sangh. It is speculated that he will go back to the RSS

but there are many in the Sangh who are not happy about his return.

Finding itself on the back foot when the farmers began their agitation against the farm bills, the Modi government was busy defending itself and hard selling the agriculture reforms. The media, too, kept the focus on the protesters and pushed the government to respond to their demands. However, this narrative underwent a dramatic change when Opposition parties extended their support to the December 8 Bharat bandh called by the farmers. The government cleverly shifted the spotlight to what it described as the Opposition's “hypo-critical” stand on the farm bills. The government first fielded Union law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad to attack the Congress which, he said, had proposed the introduction of similar reforms in its election manifesto. On the day of the bandh, the BJP unleashed a galaxy of senior ministers and chief ministers to repeat the same accusations. Television news channels promptly

fell into the trap. As a result, most news bulletins were replete with interviews of BJP ministers with an occasional concession being made to an Opposition leader. The bandh and the farmers were last on the priority list.

For three years, the West Bengal police was on the hunt for Bimal Gurung, the founder of the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha, who had been charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for his role in the 104-day shutdown in Darjeeling. Mr Gurung suddenly emerged from hiding in October and declared he was snapping ties with the BJP and pledged support to West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee. As a result, fortune is now smiling on Mr Gurung. From being a hunted man and constantly on the run, he has now been provided security by the same police that was on the lookout for him. Not just that but the grapevine says Mr Gurung has also been given sufficient funds to enable him to campaign for the Trinamul

Congress as Ms Banerjee faces a tough Assembly election next year. In this process, the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland has been put on the backburner as the Trinamul chief has said a firm no to a division of the state.

The Capital is rife with speculation that it was not Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh who had sought a meeting with home minister Amit Shah. Instead, it is said, Mr Singh was summoned to Delhi by Mr Shah for a discussion on the farmers' stir. The home minister is not happy with Mr Singh's open support to the protesters and his laxity in dealing with them. Mr Shah wants the chief minister to initiate moves to end the blockade of the highways. Apparently, Mr Singh's attention was also drawn to the pending cases of financial impropriety against his son Raninder Singh. The Punjab chief minister, however, stuck to his guns and has instead put the onus of ending the agitation on the Centre.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

SHORT TAKES

Harris added to Australia squad

Sydney: Victoria's Marcus Harris was on Saturday added to an injury-plagued Australia squad for next week's first Test against India after Will Pucovski was ruled out of the series opener alongside David Warner. The four-match series begins with the day-night Test at Adelaide from December 17. Harris was drafted into the squad for the seasoned Warner, who suffered a groin injury during the second one-day international against India, while Pucovski sustained a concussion while batting for Australia A in a tour match against the visitors at Drummoyne Oval in Sydney. Cricket Australia (CA) said both batsmen will target a return ahead of the Boxing Day Test, scheduled to be held in Melbourne from December 26-30. — PTI

Windies struggle against Kiwis

Wellington: Kyle Jamieson has made a reputation in his short Test cricket career for New Zealand as a man who makes things happen. He enhanced that reputation on the second day of the second Test, taking 5-34 as NZ had the West Indies 124-8 at stumps in reply to its first innings of 460. The tourists need 136 to avoid the follow on. It was Jamieson's second fifer in only five tests in which he has increased his claim to the designation allrounder with a half a century and two innings of 40 or more. — AP

Angulo on target as Goa post win

Goa: A second successive win helped FC Goa climb to fourth on the ISL Season 7 table as they beat a gritty Odisha FC 1-0 at the GMC Stadium on Saturday. Igor Angulo (45+1') netted the winner to help Juan Ferrando's side register another victory. Arshdeep Singh shone for Odisha between the sticks but their inefficiency upfront meant Stuart Baxter's side remained winless in the competition. Vinit Rai was handed his first start of the season as Odisha made four changes to their line-up. Ferrando rang in just one change as Alberto Noguera replaced Edu Bedia. Goa outplayed their opponents in the first half and headed into the break with a one-goal lead. — Agencies

Ashwin, Amir steal the show

Coimbatore: The season's opening round of the 23rd JK Tyre — FMSCI National Racing Championship (JKNRC) witnessed lots of excitement, with Ashwin Datta and Amir Sayed stealing the show on Day 2 here on Saturday. The 16-year-old Sayed from Kottayam proved his class winning every other race, four in all, with ease in the JK Tyre Novice Cup. It was his first visit to this circuit but he mesmerised one and all with his magic on the wheel. Even as the others struggled to tackle the tricky and slow first corner, Sayed, despite limited track time, handled it with ease. In fact, he turned it to his advantage winning both the races on Friday in a commanding manner. He further shifted top gear to win two more races on Saturday.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Australia 'A' vs India: Day 3 from 9 am on Sony Six, HD

Big Bash League: Sydney Sixers vs Melbourne Renegades from 1.45 pm on Sony Ten 1, HD

Lanka Premier League: Semifinal-1 from 7.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL
English Premier League: Southampton vs Sheffield United from 5.30 pm; Crystal Palace vs Tottenham Hotspur from 7.45 pm; Fulham vs Liverpool from 10 pm; Arsenal vs Burnley from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, Leicester vs Brighton from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 2

FORMULA ONE
Abu Dhabi Grand Prix: Main race from 6.35 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

UFC
Fight Night: Junior Dos Santos vs Cyril Gane and other bouts from 8.30 am on Sony Ten 2, HD

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ROHIT OR MISS?

Sharma 'clinically fit', to be reassessed in Oz

New Delhi, Dec. 12: The BCCI on Saturday declared senior batsman Rohit Sharma "clinically fit" to join the Indian team in Australia but said a call on his participation in the last two matches of the Test series there will be taken after a reassessment by the squad's medical team. Rohit had sustained a hamstring injury during the IPL, which led to him missing the white-ball leg of the ongoing Australia tour. He is out of reckoning for the first two Tests of the four-match series. The opening Test starts at Adelaide on December 17.

"He has been given a detailed programme to follow for the duration of the two weeks he will be quarantined for. He will be reassessed by the Team India medical team post his quarantine to establish his fitness status and a call on his participation in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy will be taken accordingly," the BCCI said in a statement.

Rohit on Friday cleared an eagerly-watched fitness test at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru and will leave for Australia on December 14, three days before the start of the marquee Test series against the world's number one team. "... Rohit Sharma has completed his rehabilitation process at the NCA in Bengaluru and is now clinically fit. He has been rehabilitating and training at NCA since 19th November following a high-grade left hamstring injury suffered during the Indian Premier League (IPL)," the statement said.

The BCCI said the NCA medical team is satisfied with Rohit's fitness but added that he will need to work on his endurance.

Rohit's fitness test took place under the supervision of NCA director Rahul Dravid, who was entrusted with the responsibility of giving him his fitness certificate. — PTI



Rohit Sharma



Hanuma Vihari of India 'A' in action against Australia 'A' during their tour match at Sydney on Saturday. — BCCI

VIHARI SLAMS CENTURY, STAKES CLAIM

Sydney, Dec. 12: Rishabh Pant and Hanuma Vihari put themselves in the reckoning for next week's first Test with contrasting hundreds as India thoroughly dominated Australia A in the pink ball warm-up match here on Saturday.

Needing 19 runs to reach his century when Jack Wildermuth commenced the second evening's final over, Pant clobbered him for 4, 4, 6, 4, 4, to remain unbeaten on a blistering 103 off

only 73 balls. Overall, he hit nine fours and six sixes. At the other end, Vihari laboured his way to a fine 104-run knock off 194 balls.

Also staking a claim for selection is young Shubman Gill, with an elegant 65 off 78 balls and 10 sweetly-timed boundaries. In the final session of play, Pant's aggressive approach paid dividends as he smashed the Australia A bowlers to all corners of the Sydney Cricket Ground, the southpaw making a

strong case for himself for the wicketkeeper's job in Adelaide ahead of Test specialist Wriddhiman Saha.

To cite an example of his power-hitting, Pant swept one over the cow corner for a six, leaving Nic Maddinson to search for the ball among the rows of chairs at the SCG.

At the close of play, India were strongly placed at 386 for four for an overall lead by 472 runs, having bundled out the home team out for a

paltry 108 in their first innings on Friday.

In their first innings, India were all out for 194, which would have been far less if not for pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah's maiden first-class fifty, but the visitors staged a strong comeback with both bat and ball. — PTI

BRIEF SCORES
India 194 and 386/4 in 90 overs (Hanuma Vihari 104*, Rishabh Pant 103*, Shubman Gill 65; Steketee 2/54) vs Australia 'A' 108.

Siraj earns praise for sporting gesture

Sydney, Dec. 12: India fast bowler Mohammed Siraj's fine gesture of rushing in and attending to rival Cameron Green after he was hit on the head during the opening day of the warm-up game here has got praise from the Australian media.

Green attempted a catch off a straight drive from Jasprit Bumrah off his own bowling but the ball flew through his fingers and hit on the right side of his head.

Siraj immediately dropped his bat and rushed to check on Green. Bumrah also did the same following his teammate.

Green, who suffered concussion, was later ruled



Mohammed Siraj (right) rushes to check on Cameron Green, who got hit on the head by a Jasprit Bumrah straight drive. — BCCI

out of the remainder of the three-day pink warm-up game between the Indians and Australia 'A' side. "Indian cricketer Mohd Siraj has been praised for his sportsmanship in helping young all-rounder Cameron Green after he suffered a blow to the head during the match," tweeted 9News Australia.

"Non-striker Mohammed Siraj and umpire Gerard Abood rushed to check on the star all-rounder, who patted Bumrah on the leg to assure him he was OK," said abc.net.au.

"Mohammed Siraj, at the non-striker's end, dropped his bat and immediately

rushed to check on the injured bowler," wrote cricket.com.au.

Siraj's gesture has also taken the internet by storm with netizens lauding him for his sportsman spirit. "Absolutely brilliant from Mohammed Siraj ... did not care about the run and straightaway dropped his bat and checked on Green. Top spirit by him," wrote a Twitter user.

The Indian Board also shared a picture in which Green can be seen on his knees after the blow on his head and Siraj standing next to him and checking on the Australian bowler. — PTI

Wolves outfoxed by 10-man Villa

London, Dec. 12: Aston Villa snatched a 1-0 win at Wolverhampton Wanderers in the Premier League on Saturday after substitute Anwar El Ghazi drilled in a stoppage-time penalty as both sides finished the game with 10 men.

Villa had Douglas Luiz sent off in the 85th minute and Wolves midfielder Joao Moutinho was dismissed shortly after the visitors scored against the run of play to register their fourth away win of the season.

The result lifted Villa up to eighth on 18 points from 10 games while Wolves, again sorely missing injured striker Raul Jimenez, stayed 11th on 17 points from 12 games.

El Ghazi said he felt relaxed about taking the penalty.

"I practise penalties a lot, even if I am not playing," the Dutch midfielder told the BBC.

"I did not feel a lot of pressure to be honest. I appreciate Jack Grealish gave it to me, but he knows my capabilities."

The home side looked more likely to grab the winner in a dour clash, with their 18-year old striker Fabio Silva hitting the post midway through the second half as he made his first start for the club. Villa keeper Emiliano Martinez pulled off several fine saves, taming a stinging low shot from Daniel Podence before he somehow kept out a fierce Leander Dendoncker volley 10 minutes from time.

When the match seemed to be heading for a draw, Nelson Semedo hauled down John McGinn in the penalty area and El Ghazi made no mistake with the spot-kick as he blasted the

THE RESULTS

Wolves	0
Aston Villa	1
<i>(Anwar El Ghazi 90+4 p)</i>	
Leeds United	1
<i>(Mateusz Klich 6 p)</i>	
West Ham	2
<i>(Tomas Soucek 25, Angelo Ogbonna 80)</i>	

ball past keeper Rui Patricio.

Wolves manager Nuno Espirito Santo said he wanted his team to be more ruthless.

"In the first half it was an intense game and both teams were tight," he said. **Moyes fumes**

West Ham United manager David Moyes has taken aim at the video assistant referee (VAR) after a decision went against his side in the 2-1 win at Leeds United on Saturday and called on the Premier League's more influential managers to protest.

West Ham goalkeeper Lukas Fabianski conceded a penalty in the second minute when he brought down Patrick Bamford but seemed to have redeemed himself by saving Mateusz Klich's spot kick.

But after a review by VAR, a retake was ordered due to Fabianski leaving his line, and Klich scored at the second attempt.

"Until we get the rules sorted out I don't think I'm going to be too happy," said Moyes, whose side fought back to clinch victory with headed goals by midfielder Tomas Soucek and defender Angelo Ogbonna.

"There are some terrible decisions that are happening. Whoever saw it must have had (Fabianski's foot) X-rayed. The decision was rubbish." — Reuters



Anwar El Ghazi (centre) celebrates after converting a penalty for Aston Villa. — TWITTER

VERSTAPPEN SNATCHES FINAL POLE OF SEASON

Abu Dhabi, Dec. 12: Red Bull's Max Verstappen snatched the final pole position of the year, denying rivals Mercedes a front-row lock out in Saturday's qualifying for the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

The Dutchman, who had led a one-two for Red Bull ahead of team mate Alexander Albon in final practice, produced a stunning one minute, 35.246-second lap under the floodlights at the Yas Marina track.

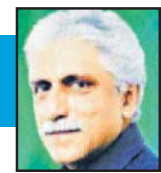
Verstappen's time was 0.025 seconds quicker than Valtteri Bottas, who urged on by team boss Toto Wolff over the team radio, still put his Mercedes on the front row. World champion Lewis Hamilton, back in the car after his COVID-19-enforced absence in Sakhiir, was third and 0.086 seconds off the pace.

Verstappen's display around the 5.5km long lap earned him only the third pole of his career and his first since last year's Brazilian Grand Prix.

It was only the second time Mercedes had been denied pole this season and the first time all year that a non-Mercedes powered car will start from the front, with Lance Stroll having started on pole for Mercedes-engined Racing Point in Turkey.

It ended the Brackley-based team's streak of six straight pole positions in Abu Dhabi. — Reuters

India's batting needs to deliver in Test series



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

By the time you read this, Rohit Sharma will hopefully have joined the Indian team in Australia. A 14-day quarantine period is mandatory Down Under so Rohit will perforce have to miss the first two Tests. Considering his experience and caliber, this is a setback for India.

There has been so much debate on the Rohit issue that I have nothing further to add save that this unsavoury episode need never have been had key

members in the Indian cricket establishment shown better co-ordination and communication. There's a serious lesson to be learnt.

Of immediate importance, however, is how the Indian team in Australia can make the Test rubber, which starts on December 17, rewarding too after having shared honours in the white ball series.

In ODIs, India evaded a whitewash with a fine performance in the third match. Likewise, Australia

prevented a clean sweep by India in the T20s, winning the last match. Both teams missed key players in one or the other series, so there was no advantage for either.

Keen competition in the ODIs and T20s has set the tone for the marquee show on this tour, the Test matches. White ball cricket can't be compared to the longest format, but seeing the intensity of players from both side, my appetite is whetted for a stirring contest.

In 2018, India had created history winning a rubber for the first time ever Down Under. That this had taken 70 years (Independent India's first assignment was against Don Bradman's team in 1947-48) shows what a massive psychological hurdle

beating Australia in Australia had been.

Doubtless the Australians will be revenge hungry this time. Of the two major domos missing in 2018, David Warner has unfortunately injured himself and will not play at Adelaide. But Steve Smith has looked in ominous touch this season, and young Marnus Labuschagne has taken the cricket world by storm since the 2019 Ashes.

The big challenge for India, however, is not so much in keeping the Aussie batsmen quiet, but for their own batsmen to come good on pacy, bouncy pitches and give their bowlers enough runs to defend.

In 2018, Bumrah, Shami and Ishant performed magnificently, but without

the dogged and determined batting of Pujara — ably supported by Kohli — the best efforts of the bowlers would have been in vain. As a ball park figure, India's batting needs to delivery 380-400 runs first up to be competitive.

With Rohit not available for the first two Tests and Kohli returning home after Adelaide, India's batting has a vulnerability about it that the formidable Aussie attack of Cummins, Hazlewood, Pattinson/Starc and Lyons will want to exploit.

In the two warm up games, the team has shown spirit, skill and ambition. Both in batting and bowling there have been some fine performances, though it must be said that most of the front-line Aussie players were

not involved.

The second match at Sydney, which finishes today, was the more important being a day-night affair played with a pink ball, in preparation for the first Test.

Several Indian players (Shaw, Gill, Vihari, Pant, Saha, Saini, Siraj) are on trial, some key ones (Bumrah, Shami, Rahane, Agarwal) were looking to get into rhythm before the first Test. In the two days play as yet, India have been quite impressive.

Bundled out for a paltry 194 on a spicy pitch — largely through a spunky 71-run partnership between Bumrah and Siraj — India's pace bowlers struck back marvelously to bowl out the opponents for 108. The hostility with which Bumrah, Shami,

Saini and Siraj bowled wouldn't have been lost on the Aussies.

In the second innings, with the pitch having eased considerably, India (barring Shaw who threw his wicket away) batted consistently down the order to swell the lead past 325 and put themselves in a potentially winning position.

But this success has also created a vexing situation for the think tank: there are multiple claimants for the second opener's spot, the number 6 slot, the wicket-keeper, the spin all-rounder, and who the 3rd/4th seamer should be. Skipper Kohli and chief coach Shastri have a head scratching dilemma of getting the right combination for Adelaide over the next few days.



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