

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | 23 DECEMBER 2020

deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle

83408 36222 / 70953 33335 aparnaconstructions.com

Unwind in Style

Marketing office open on Sunday



APARNA KANOPIY Marigold
Value Apartments @ Gundapochampally, Komparla
2, 2.5 & 3 BHK Apartments
1250 - 1980 SFT.
Image used is for illustrative purpose only

Current Price ₹4299/sft. Price W.E.F 01.01.2021 ₹4399/sft. **BOOK TODAY** TS RERA: P02200001827



A
APARNA
Lead the future

INCOME-TAX MEN RAID YASHODA HOSPITALS, CHIEFS

ATHER MOIN | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Income-Tax officials are conducting raids on offices of Yashoda Hospitals in Hyderabad and Secunderabad, in addition to its corporate office at Nagarjuna Hills in Punjagutta.

I-T sleuths have further raided homes of Yashoda's three directors Dr G. Surendar Rao (in-charge, Somajiguda branch), G. Ravinder Rao (in-charge, Secunderabad branch) and G. Devender Rao, chartered accountant (in-charge, Malakpet branch).

Included in the ambit of raids are several senior doctors of the hospitals. More than 20 separate teams are involved in the multiple raids at several locations. I-T officials were not allowing employees of the Yashoda Group to enter residences of their directors. When *Deccan Chronicle* tried to contact officials of Yashoda for their reaction, none was available.

■ Page 4: Details of I-T raids awaited

Kishan: Farm laws meant to make agriculture profitable

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, DEC. 22



Union minister of state for home affairs G. Kishan Reddy on Tuesday said the three farm laws brought in by the BJP government at the Centre are aimed to transform agriculture into a profitable profession and bail out farmers from the clutches of middlemen.

While addressing a meeting to create an awareness about the farm laws, Kishan Reddy criticised

"Why did the CM sell his

turmeric and capsicum produced at his farm to corporate companies for higher profits while denying the same for other farmers," the minister asked.

He said the farmers in the CM's Gajwel constituency have entered into an agreement with top seed firms for producing seeds. "So why does Rao oppose the same for the farmers in other areas?" He said people have decided to bring about a change in the politics of Telangana.

CIC: NO PUBLIC INTEREST IN POLITICAL PARTY DONORS

TS SANCTIONS ₹2,931.18 CR FOR AASARA PENSIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

The state government has accorded administrative sanction for release of ₹2,931.18 crore towards payment of Aasara pensions. Panchayat raj minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao said Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has released these funds to ensure that old age people, physically challenged and other beneficiaries do not face hardships.

■ Page 3: 38,72,717 people to benefit: Min

HC: Allow one more for MBBS counselling

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

The Telangana High Court on Tuesday directed the Kaloji Narayana Rao University of Health Sciences to allow another NEET ranker for the phase-2 counselling into first year MBBS course.

The court had already

given directions with regard to one ranker on Monday. A division bench comprising Justices M.S. Ramachandra Rao and T. Amarnath Goud gave the interim direction in this regard based on the plea of the rankers that they were denied opportunity to participate in the phase-2 counselling following their

admission in Siddhartha Medical College, Vijayawada, a state-wide institute, where Telangana has quota for 10 years after bifurcation. Counsel for the rankers Vedula Srinivas brought to the notice of the court that the varsity had communicated to all rankers on Monday that the allotments made during

the phase-2 counselling were cancelled. *Deccan Chronicle* had filed reports highlighting the faulty approach of KNRUHS and NTR University of Health Sciences, with regard to students taking admission in state-wide institutes.

■ Page 2: Students denied opportunity for counselling

MALABAR GOLD & DIAMONDS
CELEBRATE THE BEAUTY OF LIFE

mine DIAMOND FESTIVAL
18th Dec - 17th Jan

A celebration of exquisite diamond jewellery that comes with the assurance of 28 internal quality tests and international lab certifications. Trust and workmanship reaffirmed at every stage, right from the mines to the showroom.

UP TO 20% OFF ON DIAMOND VALUE

ONE INDIA ONE GOLD RATE

FAIR PRICE PROMISE

MERRY CHRISTMAS

To browse our exquisite collection and to buy online visit www.malabargoldanddiamonds.com

- 1 Complete Transparency 2 Assured Lifetime Maintenance 3 Zero-deduction Gold Exchange 4 100% BIS 916 Hallmarked Gold 5 Tested & Certified Diamonds 6 Guaranteed Buyback 7 Your Jewellery Is Insured 8 Karat Analyser Facility 9 Responsibly Sourced Gold 10 Fair Wages, Benefits And Working Conditions For Karigars

Call: 1800 572 0916, 040 68138916

INDIA | USA | SINGAPORE | MALAYSIA | UAE | QATAR | KSA | OMAN | KUWAIT | BAHRAIN

Mahesh Bank elections row spills on to the road

Officials hint at political pressure; protests staged for counting

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC
HYDERABAD DEC. 22

Stalemate continued for the second day over the suspension of vote counting in the elections for the board of directors of Hyderabad-based AP Mahesh Cooperative Bank even as the supporters of incumbent bank chairman Ramesh Bung staged a protest in front of the office of commissioner of cooperatives.

Though the counting of votes — polled on Sunday — began on Monday, returning officer Esther Rani John abruptly stopped the counting later in the day after Bhagwati Baldewala lodged a complaint against the panel headed by Ramesh Bung.

Senior officials of the cooperative department claim objections raised by both the sides were serious in nature and they are being looked into. Sources in the department, however, hint at pressure mounting on senior officials from



Supporters of AP Mahesh Cooperative Bank Ramesh Bung stage a protest at the office of the Cooperative Society Commissioner at Nampally on Tuesday, against the returning officer's decision to suspend the counting of votes. The poll was conducted to elect a new board of directors of the bank.

— P. SURENDRA

highly-influential political forces in the state and at the Centre.

"We have conducted several elections to cooperative banks and societies in the past, but we have never faced this kind of pressure," said a senior officer in the cooperative department on the condition of anonymity.

The returning officer suspended on Monday evening after the counting of around 60 out of the 70 EVMs were completed.

With the returning officer failing to resume counting on Tuesday, the supporters of Ramesh Bung staged a protest in front of the office of the commissioner of co-operative societies at Gagan Vihar on Tuesday afternoon.

The Abids police reached the spot and detained 39 men and set them free later on.

■ Page 4: Legal action planned on returning officer

DIAGEO IS RAISING THE BAR



Your favourite bar is now open and ready to serve you with the best hygiene, sanitation and safe serve protocols. Show your support for your local bars, they are waiting to serve you again.

..... DIAGEO

BAR ACADEMY

..... RAISING THE BAR

SPONSORED BY

BLACK DOG

OPEN NOW

✓ SANITISATION
✓ SOCIAL DISTANCING
✓ TRAINED STAFF
✓ LIMITED CAPACITY
✓ YOUR MEMORIES

II SAVOUR IT ALL AGAIN II

#STANDTOGETHER
#SUPPORTLOCALBARS

DIAGEO
BAR ACADEMY
RAISING THE BAR
BLACK DOG



THE BOTTLE

FAT PIGEON
BAR HOP

PARK HYATT HYDERABAD®
LUXURY IS PERSONAL

AMNESTIA

Celebrate Responsibly * Communication intended for people above the age of 25

SHORT TAKES
STUDENTS DENIED OPPORTUNITY FOR COUNSELLING

From Page 1

It is a norm that students who take admission in the phase-1 would move to a better college in sliding in phase-2.

But Kaloji University authorities treated students who took admission in Siddhartha in the "not joined anywhere" category and denied them an opportunity to take part in phase-2 counselling.

"The court directions shall be an eye-opener to the university authorities. It's a grave injustice done to Telangana students because the NTR University is allowing students from Andhra and Rayalaseema to slide to better colleges in AP even after they took admission in Siddhartha while the same is denied by Kaloji University to students from Telangana," a parent pointed out.

EMAAR SCAM ACCUSED SEEKS QUASHING OF FIR

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

One of the accused in the Emaar - APIIC properties scam, Koneru Pradeep, son of Koneru Rajendra Prasad, the kingpin in the Emaar scam and a director of Emaar Hills Township Project Limited, approached Telangana High Court seeking to quash the FIR registered against him by Enforcement Directorate (ED) on charges of money-laundering.

The ED had filed a case against him in 2012, based on a confession statement by Tummala Ranga Rao MD of Stylish Homes Pvt Ltd, the marketing firm which sold 134 villas in Emaar projects to high-profile persons at a lesser price. Pradeep says in his petition that he has nowhere connected to Emaar Properties. He brought to the notice of the court that CBI had not named him as accused in the charge-sheet submitted in a separate case lodged by CBI, regarding a probe into the scam.

358 recent UK returnees identified in Telangana

Will undergo Covid tests in view of new virus strain from UK

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Around 358 persons who have flown in from the United Kingdom between December 15 and 21 have been identified in Telangana.

Covid-19 tests will be conducted on them and those who test negative will be kept in quarantine for a week while those testing positive would be offered institutional isolation.

According to the surveillance team, their test samples will be sent to the National Institute of

Virology for genome sequencing. In view of the new virus strain from UK SARS-CoV 2 - VUI-202012/01, contact tracing and containment will be carried out aggressively again. Dr Ramesh Reddy, director of medical education, said, "Mutations are common in new viruses. If there is a new variant, it will be treated separately. So far there has not been any report on the new corona variant."

Meanwhile, surveillance teams on the ground are back on the tracing and tracking job where they

are reaching out to people who have returned from the United Kingdom.

A senior health official in the surveillance team explained, "Safety protocols followed in SARS-CoV 2 have to be followed in the new variant.

There is nothing to panic and people must not stigmatize them. However, it is important that protocols of masks are followed strictly. People have given up on masks thinking that corona is gone but that is not true. Old and new variants both require one to abide by safety protocols."

Testing at airports has been increased and surveillance will be carried out across the state too. This is to ensure that if anyone has the new strain it can be identified and treated. Controlling its spread is very important to protect everyone and for that reason testing has to be intensified. The State government has stated that they will test 55,000 persons every day.

The Health department has asked all those who have returned from the UK to voluntarily contact them on 040-24651119.

British diplomat hails 'vibrant' UK-TS relations

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

A month ahead of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's visit to India as the guest for Republic Day celebrations, British Deputy High Commissioner Andrew Fleming met reporters at his residence here on Tuesday. The focus of the briefing was on climate change and health.

Fleming spoke extensively on cooperation between India and the UK on issues related to Covid-19 pandemic and works undertaken in 2020.

On the mutual cooperation during the Coronavirus outbreak, he appreciated India's efforts to maintain the flow of medical goods for British citizens.

He said that the UK received 11 million face-masks and three million packets of paracetamol from India, and that the two countries continue to work together to keep the vital supply chains open.

"As the 'pharmacy capital of the world', India supplies more than 50 percent of the world's vaccines, and indeed Hyderabad currently manufactures the bulk of them. Over a billion doses of the UK's Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine are being manufactured at India's Serum Institute in Pune", he said.

On the efforts made specifically by the British in Hyderabad, he recalled the response to the pandemic by his team of 20 officials in the state, saying that getting British nationals within India and repatriating those wanting to return safely was a huge challenge.

Telangana and Andhra Pradesh had relatively few British nationals, compared to Punjab and Gujarat, but the exercise to identify all who wished to head home and bring them from across the



British Deputy High Commissioner Andrew Fleming speaks during a press conference at his residence in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

region to join flights out of Hyderabad during the lockdown was a challenge that my small team rose to", he added.

He mentioned the recent purchase by UK-based pharma company, ZNZ Parma of a controlling stake in Hyderabad based Celon Laboratories worth ₹559 crore.

"These kind of figures underline the scale of confidence British companies have in the ecosystem in this region both to do business and invest, and equally the confidence of the Telugu speaking states with regard to business in the UK", he said.

On the trade and investment front, he said that the British Prime Minister's visit to India will boost cooperation in areas that matter to the UK, from trade and investment, defence and security, and health and climate change, and these will be prioritised for international engagement throughout 2021.

He focused on the emerging tech partnership between the two countries in new-age industries. He said that sectors like pharma and life sciences, which are a natural strength for both Hyderabad and the UK, have seen a consolidation of the partnership.

"Indian companies continue to partner with their

UK counterparts in order to adopt the best of British technologies be it in sectors like deep tech, infrastructure or life sciences.

Companies from the Telugu region have benefited by adopting UK tech and services to the tune of 45 million pounds this financial year. Similarly, companies from the Telugu region continue to benefit and expand their global reach using UK as the preferred destination.

Companies from the region invested 55 million pounds in the UK to grow their global footprint and those from Hyderabad to make a mark in the EU region", he said.

Fleming mentioned the education ties between India and the UK saying Indians were among the fastest growing nationalities of students in the UK. During 2019-20, close to 50,000 Indian students successfully received Tier 4 visas to pursue higher education in the UK, an increase of 136% from the previous year; he said.

He also indicated the work being undertaken in the emerging Ed-tech sector between Telangana government and the UK representation in Hyderabad, saying that while more details cannot be divulged at this point, a meeting was held between the education department and his office on Monday.

Bharat Biotech set for phase-III Covaxin trials

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

BHARAT BIOTECH has signed a binding letter of intent to co-develop Covaxin with Ocugen Inc for the United States. Ocugen will be responsible for clinical development, registration and commercialisation of the vaccine in the US.

There has been an overwhelming response from volunteers for human trials of Covaxin produced by Bharat Biotech against Covid-19.

Within December, as many as 13,000 volunteers have come forward, including from small cities and towns in India, for trials of the vaccine. The target of the company is to enrol 26,000 volunteers.

The Pharma company states that getting so many people within a month is an achievement and the target of 26,000 volunteers will be met soon. It said volunteers have come forward from small towns like Bhopal and Nagpur. The company had to stop enrolling volunteers from these places as their number exceeded the limit set.

Hospitals, where vaccination is already taking place, have found that

vaccine-induced neutralising antibodies have been reported in two divergent strains of SARS-CoV-2.

Covid-19 strains have been collected by National Institute of Virology and developed in collaboration with Indian Council of Medical Research.

Bharat Biotech joint managing director Suchitra Ella said, "This is an unprecedented vaccine trial ever to take place in India. We are overwhelmed with the steady rise in participation. Support from pro-vaccine public health volunteers is a morale booster for us."

Bharat Biotech stated that Haryana minister Anil Vij, who received the first dose, will not be given the second one as he has acquired Covid-19 disease.

But his health is improving. They are frequently tracking the minister's medical development and evaluating his progress.

Telangana has reported 617 new cases of Coronavirus, apart from three deaths. With this, the active cases in the state have reached 6,569.

Among the new cases, 103 have been reported from within the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits.

Following a new strain of SARS-CoV 2 emerging, Health Department officials have advised people to avoid participating in festivities that involve a large number of people. Safety protocols, including wearing of masks, must be strictly followed.

People must ensure that proper care is taken when they are going out and returning home.

Authorities have collected 45,227 new samples for testing. This number will be increased to 55,000.

As the 'pharmacy capital of the world', India supplies more than 50 percent of the world's vaccines, and indeed Hyderabad currently manufactures the bulk of them. Over a billion doses of the UK's Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine are being manufactured at India's Serum Institute in Pune", he said.

On the efforts made specifically by the British in Hyderabad, he recalled the response to the pandemic by his team of 20 officials in the state, saying that getting British nationals within India and repatriating those wanting to return safely was a huge challenge.

Telangana and Andhra Pradesh had relatively few British nationals, compared to Punjab and Gujarat, but the exercise to identify all who wished to head home and bring them from across the

region to join flights out of Hyderabad during the lockdown was a challenge that my small team rose to", he added.

He mentioned the recent purchase by UK-based pharma company, ZNZ Parma of a controlling stake in Hyderabad based Celon Laboratories worth ₹559 crore.

"These kind of figures underline the scale of confidence British companies have in the ecosystem in this region both to do business and invest, and equally the confidence of the Telugu speaking states with regard to business in the UK", he said.

On the trade and investment front, he said that the British Prime Minister's visit to India will boost cooperation in areas that matter to the UK, from trade and investment, defence and security, and health and climate change, and these will be prioritised for international engagement throughout 2021.

He focused on the emerging tech partnership between the two countries in new-age industries. He said that sectors like pharma and life sciences, which are a natural strength for both Hyderabad and the UK, have seen a consolidation of the partnership.

"Indian companies continue to partner with their

AT STORE • ONLINE • PHONE DELIVERY

spencer's

YEAR END'S BIGGEST PRICE DROP

Dec. 23rd-27th, '20

Upto ₹750 Cashback | **HDFC BANK** | **Flat 10% CASHBACK**

LOWEST PRICE OF MEN'S, WOMEN'S & KID'S WEAR IN TOWN!*

₹499/599/799 Onwards | **FLAT 30% OFF**

Flat 60% OFF | **₹149/249/299 Onwards**

Smart Choice Sona Masoori BPT Steam Ricebag 25kg | **₹18/kg**

Smart Choice American Almond+ Cashew Whole (320No.) 500g

Freedom/Gold Drop Pure Sunflower Oil 1L

Vaseline Deep Restore/ Cocoa Butter Body Lotion 400ml

₹35 | **₹179** | **BUY 1 GET 1 FREE***

Orange Kinnar | **Apple Royal Gala** | **₹179**

₹255/kg | **₹119/kg** | **MRP ₹70**

Rohu Medium / Mutton Bones in Cubes | **UPTO 40% OFF** | **₹169**

Christmas Merchandise (Entire range) | **MRP ₹79 Onwards**

Smart Choice Atta 5kg | **₹240**

Plum & Dundee Cake 300-500g | **₹249/399**

₹20 Onwards | **₹99** | **₹1590**

Snacks 45-524g (On wide range) | **Kissan Fresh Tomato Ketchup 1kg** | **Dabur Honey 1kg (*On purchase of 2)**

SAVE ₹150* | **MRP ₹120*** | **MRP ₹395***

20% OFF | **₹899 ONWARDS** | **₹1499**

Range of Mink/Flannel Blankets & Comforters | **La Opla Opalware Dinner Set Novo (Pack of 35N) (On wide range)** | **Sansui 32(80cm) Android HD LED TV**

BUY 2 GET 1 FREE* | **₹169** | **₹11990**

Charkeens | **Kissan Fresh Tomato Ketchup** | **Dabur Honey**

SNICKERS | **HERSH** | **ROHIT**

205/299 per kg | **₹175/675** | **₹899 ONWARDS**

MRP ₹1999 Onwards | **Range of Mink/Flannel Blankets & Comforters** | **MRP ₹2895 onwards**

20% OFF | **₹899 ONWARDS** | **₹1499**

Range of Mink/Flannel Blankets & Comforters | **La Opla Opalware Dinner Set Novo (Pack of 35N) (On wide range)** | **Sansui 32(80cm) Android HD LED TV**

BUY 2 GET 1 FREE* | **₹169** | **₹11990**

20% OFF | **₹899 ONWARDS** | **₹1499**

Range of Mink/Flannel Blankets & Comforters | **La Opla Opalware Dinner Set Novo (Pack of 35N) (On wide range)** | **Sansui 32(80cm) Android HD LED TV**

BUY 2 GET 1 FREE* | **₹169** | **₹11990**

20% OFF | **₹899 ONWARDS** | **₹1499**

Range of Mink/Flannel Blankets & Comforters | **La Opla Opalware Dinner Set Novo (Pack of 35N) (On wide range)** | **Sansui 32(80cm) Android HD LED TV**

BUY 2 GET 1 FREE* | **₹169** | **₹11990**

20% OFF | **₹899 ONWARDS** | **₹1499**

Range of Mink/Flannel Blankets & Comforters | **La Opla Opalware Dinner Set Novo (Pack of 35N) (On wide range)** | **Sansui 32(80cm) Android HD LED TV**

BUY 2 GET 1 FREE* | **₹169** | **₹11990**

20% OFF | **₹899 ONWARDS** | **₹1499**

Range of Mink/Flannel Blankets & Comforters | **La Opla Opalware Dinner Set Novo (Pack of 35N) (On wide range)** | **Sansui 32(80cm) Android HD LED TV**

BUY 2 GET 1 FREE* | **₹169** | **₹11990**

20% OFF | **₹899 ONWARDS** | **₹1499**

Range of Mink/Flannel Blankets & Comforters | **La Opla Opalware Dinner Set Novo (Pack of 35N) (On wide range)** | **Sansui 32(80cm) Android HD LED TV**

BUY 2 GET 1 FREE* | **₹169** | **₹11990**

20% OFF | **₹899 ONWARDS** | **₹1499**

Range of Mink/Flannel Blankets & Comforters | **La Opla Opalware Dinner Set Novo (Pack of 35N) (On wide range)** | **Sansui 32(80cm) Android HD LED TV**

BUY 2 GET 1 FREE* | **₹169** | **₹11990**

20% OFF | **₹899 ONWARDS** | **₹1499**

Range of Mink/Flannel Blankets & Comforters | **La Opla Opalware Dinner Set Novo (Pack of 35N) (On wide range)** | **Sansui 32(80cm) Android HD LED TV**

BUY 2 GET 1 FREE* | **₹169** | **₹11990**

20% OFF | **₹899 ONWARDS** | **₹1499**

Range of Mink/Flannel Blankets & Comforters | **La Opla Opalware Dinner Set Novo (Pack of 35N) (On wide range)** | **Sansui 32(80cm) Android HD LED TV**

BUY 2 GET 1 FREE* | **₹169** | **₹11990**

20% OFF | **₹899 ONWARDS** | **₹1499**

Range of Mink/Flannel Blankets & Comforters | **La Opla Opalware Dinner Set Novo (Pack of 35N) (On wide range)** | **Sansui 32(80cm) Android HD LED TV**

BUY 2 GET 1 FREE* | **₹169** | **₹11990**

20% OFF | **₹899 ONWARDS** | **₹1499**

Range of Mink/Flannel Blankets & Comforters | **La Opla Opalware Dinner Set Novo (Pack of 35N) (On wide range)** | **Sansui 32(80cm) Android HD LED TV**

BUY 2 GET 1 FREE* | **₹169** | **₹11990**</p

WEATHER

Max: 29.4°C
Min: 10.4°C
RH: 29%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Cloudy sky. Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 29/11 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+23,942)	(+324)
1,00,99,021	1,46,458
covid19india.org	

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+617)	(+3)
TS: 2,82,347	1,518
(+402)	(+4)

AP: 8,79,339 7,082

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

7,80,61,507
DEATHS
17,16,170
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana Tithi: Margasira Shuddha Navami till 8.40 pm

Star: Revati till 4.32 am (Thursday)

Variyam: 3.05 pm to 4.52 pm

Durmuhurmat: 11.53 am to 12.36 pm

Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 7, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.37 am

Zohar: 12.25 pm

Asar: 4.12 pm

Maghrib: 5.54 pm

Isha: 7.07 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.42 AM

SUNSET TODAY 5.47 PM

MOONSET 12.39 PM

MOONRISE 12.06 AM



COUNTER POINT



Double bonanza... you will get party ticket and Cabinet berth if you bring 2 MLAs along with you!

Encroachment in progress



Kiosks come up on the footpath meant for pedestrians right in front of the HMDA office in Tarnaka. — GANDHI

Nodal heads not to act on oral orders

A babu had orally asked officials to resume Dharani Survey

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

The nodal government agencies in the state capital have decided not to act on oral instructions from higher authorities in the state government. The decision has come after top bureaucrats have conveniently taken "U" turn on their oral instructions once something acquires political overtones.

Lower-rung officials too have been asked to act only on official instructions that too given in writing.

According to highly placed sources, a top bureaucrat has been orally instructing officials to resume Dharani

Survey and focus on property tax collection. Ever since the outbreak of Covid-19, this bureaucrat has been bypassing higher ups of nodal agencies and directly giving instructions to low-rung officials. This way, he got involved in demarcation of containment zones, Dharani survey, floods, GHMC elections and various other vital issues. This has led to unhappiness among top officials of all departments related to running and maintenance of the state capital.

Sources said that the top bureaucrat, without informing the GHMC commissioner, directly released through a close aide figures of financial

assistance provided during the recent floods. When there was a huge public outcry over not all eligible getting the financial assistance, the bureaucrat chose to remain mum. As a result, all heads of departments had to bear an earful from flood victims and politicians.

Very recently, during a recent review meeting, the top bureaucrat orally asked civic authorities to embark on Dharani survey, which had been put on hold during October due to floods. Wizened by now, heads of departments asked him to send an official communiqué in a written form, before they start implementing these instructions. Heads

of departments have also made it clear to lower-rung officials to act only upon formal instructions and ignore all informal ones.

Significantly, officials have not set any property tax collection targets.

They have also asked their staff not to touch any controversial subject until formal instructions are received from the state government.

Incidentally, the state government itself has issued oral instructions to officers that they avoid interactions with media to the extent possible. The government further asked them to not give interviews on any issue related to city development.

DRDO, ESIC pact to boost healthcare system in state

38,72,717 PEOPLE TO BENEFIT: MIN

From Page 1

The minister pointed out that 38,72,717 people, including old aged, physically challenged, destitute, beedi and handloom workers, toddy tappers, apart from filariasis and HIV patients, will benefit from Aasara pensions.

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

The Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) will continue its collaboration with ESIC Hospital and Medical College here in the city, a partnership that has seen many innovations in patient care systems developed, particularly on the Covid-19 treatment front.

The partnership between the two organisations, according to DRDO chairman Dr G. Sateesh Reddy will actively seek ways to put to use DRDO's

● THE COLLABORATION also saw development of protective equipment for doctors and nurses, Covid-19 safety enabled neo-natal incubators, among other things.

research expertise in various fields, and the ESIC's health care experience and imperatives in developing equipment and systems aimed at reducing medicare costs for people.

Dr Reddy was at the ESIC Hospital at Sanathnagar on Tuesday where he spoke with students and

recalled how, since the outbreak of Covid-19, the two organisations have developed several systems, including Bio Safety Level 3 mobile virology, diagnostic and research labs.

It also saw development of protective equipment for doctors and nurses, Covid-19 safety enabled neo-natal incubators among other things. The mobile labs, according to ESIC Hospital Dean Prof. M. Srinivas said the mobile labs have helped in conducting 60,117 RT-PCR tests since their inauguration a few months ago.

Raids on loan app offices, 11 arrested

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Following repeated complaints from victims in the last few weeks about harassment from loan apps, Cyber Crime Police of Hyderabad conducted raids at two places in Udyog Vihar of Gurgaon and three places in Hyderabad and arrested 11 individuals for running call centres.

The call centers were being run on behalf of four companies, Liufang Technologies Pvt. Ltd., Hotful Technologies Pvt. Ltd., Pinprint Technologies and Nabloom Technologies Pvt. Ltd., having registered offices in Bangalore. Their directors were identified as Jeevan Jyothi, Selvaraj Singi, Ravi Kumar Mangala and Venkat, added the police.

The cops seized nearly 700 laptops, servers, computer systems among other things from the firms. Further investigation is on to find out the web of financial transactions, funding and technology base etc.

ONLINE ANTI-DOWRY SWAYAMVARAM TO BE ORGANISED ON DECEMBER 27

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Gifts of cash and gold may be essential to getting a husband in India, but hundreds of people are flocking to a matrimonial website, which finds suitable partners averse to the practice of dowry. One such website <http://www.idontwantdowry.com/> www.idont-

wantdowry.com is to conduct 15 online swayamvarams on December 27. The swayamvaram will be held between 10 am and 5 pm on Zoom meeting applications. Interested candidates can contact 98858-10100. As part of the website's activities, all registered members can check out prospective brides and grooms face-to-face during 'Swayamvarams' at a common venue.

55 STONES REMOVED FROM WOMAN'S KIDNEY USING ADVANCED ENDOSCOPY

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Doctors of Aware Global Hospitals have removed 55 stones from the kidney of a 60-year-old woman using minimal invasive surgery and advanced endoscopy.

The patient had come with acute pain in abdomen, nausea and vomiting, apart from reporting pain during urination.

Dr P. Naveen Kumar,

senior consultant urologist, said: "New technology helped us find small and medium-sized stones, which were creating obstruction at the pelvic ureteric junction.

Minimal invasive technology helped us remove these stones without any complications."

The patient has recovered very well after the surgery, the doctors said.

Online / Classroom course for CAT 2021/22

THE RIGHT TIME IS NOW
DON'T DELAY.
START PREPARING TODAY!

2610+ T.I.M.E. students into the IIMs in CAT 2019
(Results validated by VSMR & Associates on 21/09/2020)

Write FREE ONLINE T.I.M.E. TALENT SEARCH EXAM
27th Dec. (Sunday) 10 am - 6 pm
Get up to 100% discount if you join the course till 27th Dec.
Register at www.14e.in/TSECAT

T.I.M.E. Call: 40088300/ 9121177680
Trumphant Institute of Management Education Pvt. Ltd. www.14e.in/enroll

Andhra Pradesh State Co-operative Marketing Federation Ltd.,
55-17-2 to 4, 5th Floor, Stalin Corporate Building, Road No-2
Autonagar, Vijayawada-520 007, Ph: 986237288 & 9031421312

Applications are invited for HR-Payroll services for Consumer Division of AP MarkFed, Govt of AP. Applications will be open till 05/01/2021 13.00 PM. RFP containing detailed description of the Tender is available on AP MarkFed's Website, www.apmarkfed.in under "Tenders" section. Firms are advised to go through the detailed RFP, and ensure their eligibility and other details before submitting the tender.

Sd/-
MANAGING DIRECTOR

Premium RMD PAN MASALA

FOR THOSE WHO DREAM BIG

MRP ₹7 - 2g
MRP ₹12 - 3.5g

OONCHE LOG, OONCHI PASAND®
Formulation by: Rasiklal Manikchand Dhariwal

RMD PAN MASALA CAN BE STORED & SOLD FREELY IN THE STATE.
Available at all leading outlets

STATUTORY WARNING: CHEWING OF PAN MASALA IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH. NOT FOR SALE TO MINORS
NO TOBACCO, NO NICOTINE



અંતા
પેણન
યોજના

prda

Go for Atal Pension Yojana that ensures life of dignity after sixty

More than
2 crore 70 lakh

beneficiaries and counting...

You also join and avail not one, but three guaranteed benefits from the age of 60 years

Life-time guaranteed pension, from ₹1,000 to 5,000 per month

Guarantee of equal pension to the spouse in case of the death of the account holder

In the event of the death of both account holder and life-partner, the nominee will receive the entire accumulated corpus
(Indicative amount : ₹ 1.70 lakh to ₹ 8.50 lakh)

If you are between 18 and 40 years of age, you can join the Atal Pension Yojana.

Contact your nearest Post Office/Bank Branch today or call 1800 110 069 (toll-free) or Visit: www.pfrda.org.in

IN BRIEF

Masaipet to become a mandal HQ: CMO

Hyderabad: Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao has agreed to form a new mandal in Medak district. According to Chief Minister's Office (CMO), responding to a request by Narasapur MLA Chilumudi Madan Reddy, CM gave his consent for formation of Masaipet as a new mandal in the Tooppan revenue division of Medak district. As per the CMO, the new Masaipet mandal will have three villages from Chegunta mandal and six from Yelurdu mandal. Orders to this effect will be issued shortly.

In TS Covid-19 tests now for ₹500

Hyderabad: With increased availability of testing kits, Telangana government has reduced the rates of RT-PCR tests to ₹500 in laboratories and ₹750 for home testing. An order to this effect has been issued on Tuesday by Directorate of Health and Family Welfare. Earlier, the RT-PCR test was costing ₹850 while ₹1,200 was being charged for home testing. The state government has issued instructions to all accredited laboratories, hospitals and institutes to charge only the revised amounts of ₹500 in laboratories and ₹750 for home testing. District Medical and Health officials have been asked to monitor rates being charged and take action against those not complying with government's orders.

DETAILS OF I-T RAIDS AWAITED

From page 1

They did not respond to even WhatsApp messages. Details of raids are awaited. Raids have been conducted after the I-T department initially found discrepancies in payment of I-T.

According to sources, however, about 170 complaints had been received by the district medical and health officer about abnormal charges being collected by Yashoda for treatment of Covid-19 patients. The maximum bills, ranging from ₹15 lakh to ₹20 lakh, circulated on social media were those of Yashoda Hospitals. These came to the notice of I-T department and raids have followed. It is learnt that I-T officials are verifying whether or not these bills are getting reflected in the Yashoda Hospitals' records.

AP REGISTERS 402 NEW CASES, 4 DEATHS IN 24 HRSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 22

Andhra Pradesh registered 402 new Covid-19 cases and four deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities release Covid-19 bulletin on Tuesday reporting that out of 56,425 samples tested, 402 persons were found infected with Coronavirus and out of a total number of 1,13,57,530 samples tested so far, 8,79,339 persons were found infected with Covid-19 positive while 8,68,279 infected patients were recovered and 3,978 infected patients are still active with the virus.

Among the daily cases of Covid-19, Chittoor recorded the highest number of 86 followed by 72 in Krishna, 38 in East Godavari, 35 in Visakhapatnam, 34 in West Godavari, 32 in Guntur, 25 in Kadapa, 19 in Anantapur, 18 in Prakasam, 16 in Nellore, 14 in Srikakulam, eight in Vizianagaram and five in Kurnool.

Krishna district topped the state by registering the highest number of cumulative Coronavirus active cases with 687 followed by 555 each in Guntur and Nellore, 433 in Chittoor, 422 in East Godavari, 257 in Visakhapatnam, 236 in West Godavari, 176 in Prakasam, 171 in Srikakulam, 163 in Anantapur, 148 in Kadapa, 99 in Kurnool and 76 in Vizianagaram. With regard to the daily Covid-19 deaths, Krishna registered two followed by one each in Guntur and Kadapa, taking the toll to 7,082. Chittoor continued to be the worst hit with the highest number of death cases of 838 followed by 662 in Guntur, 660 in Krishna, 636 in East Godavari, 595 in Anantapur, 578 in Prakasam, 549 in Visakhapatnam, 532 in West Godavari.



TPCC chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy along with other party leaders attend take part in the Rajiv Gandhi Panchayati Raj Sangathan to highlight neglect of PR institutions and urban local bodies by the elected representatives of the TRS government, at Dharna Chowk in Hyderabad, on Tuesday.

— DC

Uttam: TRS using local bodies for corruptionDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Tuesday alleged that the TRS government was using panchayat raj institutions and urban local bodies for corrupt practices.

He was addressing a day-long Satyagraha Deeksha at Indira Park which was organised by the Rajiv Gandhi Panchayati Raj Sangathan to highlight how PR institutions and urban local bodies are being neglected by the elected representatives belonging to the TRS.

He said that the strengthening of Panchayat Raj institutions and other local bodies was essential for the survival of democracy in the country.

The TRS government has turned the elected representatives of PR institu-

tions and urban local bodies into symbolic entities with no powers or say in the decision-making process, Uttam Kumar Reddy said.

Stating that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao has crushed gram panchayats by ending their relevance, he alleged that the government was harassing elected representatives of the Congress especially in rural areas of state.

He reminded that the previous Congress regimes used to issue funds to the gram panchayats directly. However, the TRS government was not only reducing the protocol and relevance of sarpanches, but also planning to end their cheque powers.

CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said that panchayats were being forced to purchase the tractors through selective contrac-

tors. He demanded that the state government permit direct funding for Panchayat Raj institutions to ensure development in rural areas.

The deeksha was also addressed by MLAs Seethakka and Jagga Reddy, former PCC presidents V. Hanumantha Rao and Ponnala Lakshmaiah, former Leader of Opposition in Council Mohammed Ali Shabbir, Working President Ponnambalam Prabhakar, AICC Secretary G. Chinna Reddy, former minister Dr. J. Geeta Reddy, Panchayati Raj Sangathan State Incharge Kiran, PRS State convener Dr Palvai Harish and other leaders.

Congress leaders also paid tributes to senior leader Motilal Vora who passed away on Monday. They observed two minutes silence as a mark of respect to the former CM of Madhya Pradesh.

ISB: TS Sona rice is healthy alternative**Jayashankar University too backs TS Sona rice**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

The Indian School of Business (ISB) and Professor Jayashankar Agriculture University suggested branding Telangana Sona variety as a healthy and tasty alternative for daily consumption of rice. The Telangana Sona rice is a paddy variety, which is innovated by PJTSAU as RNR-15048.

Agriculture Minister S. Nirjanand Reddy on Tuesday released a report on 'Marketing Strategy for Telangana Sona Rice', a study jointly executed by Indian School of Business, Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agriculture University (PJTSAU) and Telangana Agriculture department.

The study was conducted to create a marketing and branding plan to spread awareness about the Telangana Sona rice variety. The report pointed out that there was a lack of awareness about Telangana Sona rice when compared to other popular brands despite its benefits being superior.

The report says that

● **ACCORDING TO** the University, Telangana Sona has a distinctive flavour, higher protein composition, carbohydrates, energy, Vitamin B3, and low-glycaemic index.

'Health' and 'Taste' are two attributes that consumers consider important while buying rice. The report recommended an awareness strategy by involving digital and TV influencers and kirana stores.

According to the University, Telangana Sona has a distinctive flavour, higher protein composition, carbohydrates, energy, Vitamin B3, and low-glycaemic index. It is a climate smart variety and is suitable for both Kharif and Rabi seasons. It is a fine-grain, high-yielding, good quality, and has high blast resistance. It is advantageous for farmers, as it grows in a relatively shorter time.

After releasing the report, the Agriculture Minister emphasised the need to deal with both demand and supply and create the required balance through

proper branding and marketing strategy.

He urged ISB to conduct more such studies for other government innovative products like Tandoor dal, Palamoor palli and Telangana cotton.

Dr Janardhan Reddy, principal secretary of Agriculture department, opined that the collaboration between the State government, PJTSAU and ISB was the first of its kind collaboration for marketing government innovated products.

Dr P. Vraveen Rao, Vice-Chancellor of PJTSAU, said that there was a need to have a five to 10-year action plan to bolster the brand image.

Prof. Rajendra Srivastava, Dean ISB said "for successful outcomes of any product innovations, it is important to have a good marketing strategy. This is best possible through collaborations. It is heartening to see that a strong partnership between ISB, PJTSAU and the TS department of agriculture has emerged to bridge the gap between public sector innovations and a marketing strategy."

LEGAL ACTION PLANNED ON RETURNING OFFICER

From Page 1

The bank chairman's nephew Deepak Bung, who was a part of the protesters, sought the reason for the suspension of the counting. "We wanted to meet the Commissioner and give a representation asking as to why counting was stopped and why the results were withheld. You can withhold the result but why stop the counting process?" he demanded.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Ramesh Bung said he will take legal action against the returning officer for stopping the counting.

His rival Bhagwati Baldeva, however, alleged that polling was rigged by Ramesh Bung using bogus votes in connivance with the poll officers.

Explaining the electoral mismanagement, she said one EVM was arranged for 1,500 voters, where senior members of the bank, while one EVM was provided to 100 to 500 young members. The bank has around 36,000 shareholders who were eligible to vote.

She alleged that the poll officials have made arrangements such that elections could be rigged as per their wish. She also accused police of being hand-in-glove with the supporters of Bung and didn't allow even contesting candidates in the booths.

"We have complained to the officers concerned and sought justice by conducting a free and fair poll," she said.

● **HIS RIVAL** Bhagwati Baldeva, however, alleged that polling was rigged by Ramesh Bung using bogus votes in connivance with the poll officers.

Urdu Social Sciences Cong heldDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Prof. Vibhuti was speaking during inauguration of the 4th National Urdu Social Science Congress on Tuesday. The theme of this two-day Congress is "Social Sciences: Decline and Resurgence." The event is being organised online by School of Arts and Social Sciences (SA&SS), Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU).

She underlined that findings of research on women need to be translated into letter and spirit

to ensure progress of women in various fields.

Prof. Shahid Amin, formerly with Delhi University, in his keynote address traced the evolution of historiography and said the most difficult part of it is writing history of the common man. He described Hyderabad as a knowledge hub of Urdu, what with establishment of Osmania University and work on Asafia Glossary giving the city a distinct place in the Urdu World.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

"Blessed is the memory of righteous Proverb 10:7"



Smt. SHARNAKAMMA
W/o. R.L. Samuel - Retd Teacher
D/o N.P. John
(Village Pastor Methodist, Tandur)
DOB: 29-09-1950 DOD: 19-12-2020
Memorial Service on 23-12-2020 at
6.00 p.m. (Wednesday), Methodist
Church, Sanjeevayya Colony,
Instructed by: R.L. Samuels Family
& Mrs. Shyamala Mark & Family, Secbad
(S/2021/D00979)

9th DEATH ANNIVERSARY

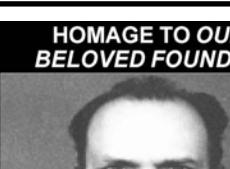
Late. Shri ASHOK KUMARJI M. PATNY
D.O.B:12-11-1943 D.O.D:23-12-2011
Time flies fast. Life goes on at its own pace. But your memories can never be forgotten or erased. You will always remain in our thoughts..

SHRADHANJALI

Sri KALAKONDA RAMA RAO
D.O.B: 18-12-2020
Left for his Heavenly Abode
May his divine soul attain Utmost Sadgati.
Inserted by: D. Shivakumar & Dachapally Family
(S/2021/D00979)

1st Death Anniversary

Saraswati Devi Narang
DOD: 23.12.2019
We miss you every moment in our life, your presence continues to surround us, in our hearts, you are always there. Inserted by: Narayan Dholandas Narang
NARANG FAMILY, Ph.: 9963901023

HOMAGE TO OUR BELOVED FOUNDER

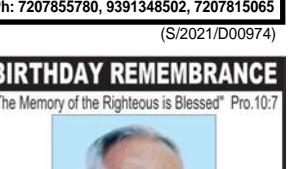
Sri LN. P. PAPAIH SETTY, m/f
31-07-1939 23-12-1994
"WE REMEMBER YOU WITH DEEP RESPECT IN OUR HEARTS."
Inserted by: PPS FAMILY
(S/2021/D00974)

FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Smt. CILAMKOTI JANA
W/o C.L. Jenapkin
Fond Remembrance From Family Members
"We miss you every moment in our life."
Ph: 7207855780, 9391348502, 7207815065
(S/2021/D00974)

In Remembrance

Mrs. MAVIS GOVIND
(W/o C.L. Jenapkin)
Retd. Nurse, E.S.I Hospital Sandeshnagar
DOB: 23-03-1934 DOD: 23-05-2019
Son-Daughter-in-Law
Grand Children
9985756962, 9849727700

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE

Dr. A.J. Sanjeeva Rao
M.A. D.Div.
(Retd. Commercial Instructor, ZTS, SCR.)
Dear Thatha, You were our Strength, Inspiration and Pride. Your memories are still fresh in our hearts.
In fond remembrance : Grand Children
Mrs. Prathima & Mr. Sam, USA
Preetham Asoda, USA



Union minister of state for home affairs G. Kishan Reddy pays floral tributes to the portrait of the late G. Venkataswamy statue on the occasion of the latter's sixth death anniversary, at Tank Bund in Hyderabad, on Tuesday. — S. SURENDRA REDDY

Aditya Nath Das is AP's new Chief Secretary**When Das was hit by a Naxal's bullet**N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Senior bureaucrat Aditya Nath Das will be the new chief secretary of Andhra Pradesh. He will assume charge on December 31 following the superannuation of incumbent Nilam Sa-whney.

Das' term could have been one year if he took charge in July, 2020.

However, it is now cut short to five months, till May 31 to be precise, as Sawhney managed to cling on to the top post with two extensions of three months each, thanks to the pandemic which came in handy to cite as a reason for extension and get approval from the Centre.

The 1984 batch non-nonsense officer was the first choice of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to head the CMO but he was posted in the irrigation department as it didn't materialise.

Sawhney joined the long list of advisers to the Chief Minister as a post-retirement benefit. She will be yet another principal adviser to the Chief Minister in addition to

Surprising as it may sound, but there was another person who saved his life — a member of the Naxal group who took his finger off the remote of the explosive in the nick of the moment realising that Das was not the intended target. The member was assigned to set off claymore mines planted all over the area.

Once normally was restored, Das rushed his driver to a private hospital for timely treatment even as he got himself admitted to the MGM hospital in Warangal.

"It's a miracle and I strongly feel Sammaka Saralamma saved my life," Das told this correspondent in a tête-à-tête on his elevation as chief secretary smiling in his inimitable style.

Das is known in bureaucratic circles for his positive approach towards dispute resolution providing a win-win situation for government and the agitating parties.

Ajay Kallam. Ironically, the government decided to allot subjects of health, Covid-19 management, Centre-state relations and bifurcation issues, administrative reforms and survey after it stripped other adviser Kallam of

all the subjects. It is not known whether she would be looking into files.

Another

SHORT TAKES

VAIKUNTA DWARA DARSHAN AT TTD ON DEC. 25

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 22

For the first time in the known history of Lord Venkateswara temple, the TTD is organising a 10-day Vaikunta dwara darshan to devotees commencing om Vaikunta Ekadasi day on December 25 up to January 3.

As part of the festivities, Thiruppavai parayanas will be held in the temple between 12.05 am and 1.30 am on that day. Since it will be a Friday, Abhishekam will be performed in Ekantham at 1.30 am followed by Thomala Seva and Archana at 2.30pm.

The Vaikunta dwara darshan will commence at 4.30 am. Later, the TTD will organise a Swarna Ratham between 9 am and 11 am in which Lord Malayappa Swamy and his consorts will will taken out along the four mada streets.

Later in the evening, Sahasra Deepalankara seva will be conducted between 5 pm and 7 pm, followed by Adhyayanotsavams in Ranganayakula mandapam between 9 pm and 10 pm. The next day Vaikunta Dwadasi, Chakrasanam will be performed at the Swami pushkarini.

Meanwhile, the traditional temple cleansing festival – Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam — was performed at Tirumala temple on Tuesday. Additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy said that this traditional fete is observed four times in a year on Tuesdays occurring before Vaikunta Dwadasi, Chakrasanam will be performed at the Swami pushkarini.

After the fete, TTD EO Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy and the Additional EO inspected all the token issuing centres for Vaikunta dwara darshan in Tirupati. Speaking to media persons here, the EO said that the offline tickets for Vaikunta dwara darshan would be issued from December 24 in Tirupati.



Motorists make their way on a chilly morning in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

AIR POLLUTION CLAIMS 1.7 MN LIVES IN INDIA

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Air pollution has claimed lives of as many as 1.7 million Indians, accounting for nearly 18 per cent of total deaths during 2019. It has also resulted in an economic loss of ₹2.6 lakh crore, nearly 1.4 per cent of GDP; a comprehensive report of disease burden attributable to air pollution and its economic impact has revealed.

The report titled – Comprehensive estimates of disease burden attributable to air pollution and its economic impact in every state of India in 2019, however, highlights that the disease burden due to household air pollution is reducing in India, even though the ambient outdoor air pollution has increased.

Morbidity in Telangana due to air pollution has been noted as 275, which cost the exchequer anywhere between \$202 and \$356 million. The paper has put the number of premature deaths in the state at 841. The report says economic loss due to air pollution as percentage of the state GDP is higher in the northern and central Indian states, the highest being in Uttar Pradesh (2.2 percent) and Bihar (2 percent).

Highlighting the broad-ranging impact of air pollution on human health, the report says while 40 per cent of the disease burden due to air pollution is because of lung diseases, the remaining 60 per cent is attributable to ischemic heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and neonatal deaths related to preterm births.

Prof. Lalit Dandona, Indian Council of Medical Research, New Delhi; Public Health Foundation of India, Gurugram, told *Deccan Chronicle*: "There is a difference in indoor and outdoor air pollution. While there has been a decrease in the amount of indoor air pollution, there is a concurrent rise in the outdoor air pollution."

Prof. Vinod Paul, member of NITI Aayog, said: "This scientific paper presents the latest evidence on air pollution in India, translating the health loss to economic impact. Its findings show that economic loss due to lost productivity from deaths and morbidity due to air pollution in India is 1.4 per cent of the GDP, which amounts to ₹2,60,000 crore. India has many major ongoing initiatives to reduce air pollution."

Cold wave to continue in T-state, warns IMD

Adilabad records lowest temp of 5.7 degrees celsius

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

recorded at Adilabad, followed by 7.2 in Medak, and 10.4 in Hyderabad.

Going by the Telangana State Development Planning Society (TSDPS), which has a network of 1,044 automated weather stations across the state, the lowest minimum temperature was in Kohir in Sangareddy, followed by Arli and Ginnedari. They recorded 3.4 degrees Celsius, 3.6 and 3.9, respectively.

"The temperatures

would continue to be on the lower end for the next 24 hours and will be below normal for the next few days. There is an anti-cyclonic circulation, which is pushing cold winds from the northern parts to the peninsular parts of the country.

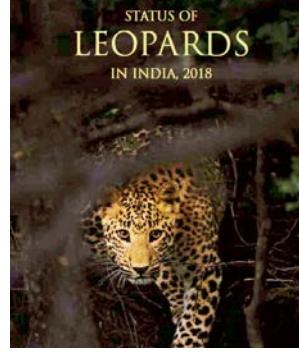
Once, that is done, we can see a rise in temperatures," K. Naga Ratna, director, IMD Hyderabad, told *Deccan Chronicle*.

Similarly, even experts from private weather

forecasting agencies like Skymet, said that the state would experience cold days.

"There has been snowfall in the northern parts and winds are now travelling up to the southern states. This is leading to a fall in temperatures. We predict that it would gradually rise and after that hot and humid winds from the eastern direction will take over," said Mahesh Palawat, a meteorologist with Skymet.

Leopard population rises in India, state

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Close on the heels of reports over the past few weeks of increasing tiger numbers, thanks to migrating big cats from Maharashtra into Telangana state, comes the news that the number of leopards in the state, too, has witnessed a rise.

According to the Status of Leopards in India 2018 report, Telangana state is estimated to have 334 leopards, with most of them concentrated in the two largest protected forests — the Amrabad and Kawal tiger reserves in the state spread over Mahabubnagar and Nalgonda districts, and united Adilabad district — and in the reserve forests of northern Telangana state in Karimnagar, Warangal, Khammam and Nizamabad districts.

Andhra Pradesh — has the highest number of leopards, but in fragmented forest patches. And just as there has been a stress on connecting forest corridors for tigers, there is a need for connecting corridors for leopards, habitat improvement that could result in reduced human-leopard interactions.

"With leopards venturing out into human habitations more often, developmental projects need appropriate mitigation measures and greener technology to sustain not only leopards, but also other carnivores and biodiversity in general," the report said.

It also said that the efforts towards increasing protection, along with habitat improvement in protected areas including village relocations, tiger and leopards have shown remarkable recovery. "We are at that juncture where socio-economic development and conservation are at a critical point. It is now important, more than ever, to incorporate and implement a model of adaptive management of Protected Areas which are still in poor condition and can be improved, and explore possible models for coexistence of large carnivores with humans," the report said.

The report said leopard populations have risen across the country, from 8,000 in 2014 to 12,852 in 2018.

Of these, 1,253 were found in the Shivalik-Gangetic plain zone, 8,071 in Central India and

Eastern Ghats landscape, 3,387 in Western Ghats, and 141 in North East Hills and Brahmaputra Flood Plains.

The rising number of leopards, the report cautioned, could result in increasing human-wildlife interactions and conflicts. The Central Indian Landscape — which includes Telangana state and

AP to resume screening process for air passengers

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 22

The State government may have to resume screening of air passengers at its four airports as a precautionary measure in the wake of the highly infectious strain of Coronavirus in the United Kingdom.

Though India has imposed a ban on arrival of flights from the UK from midnight on Tuesday, a flight which arrived at Delhi airport from London on Monday night, was found to have carried five passengers infected with Covid-19.

A FLIGHT which arrived at Delhi airport from London on Monday night, was found to have carried five passengers infected with Covid-19.

State health authorities maintain that it might have taken at least two months for the British government to confirm discovery of the new strain of the virus following observations of gradual spike in Covid-19 positive cases and resultant deaths in parts of the UK.

They say that those who visited the UK during the two months period and

travelled to other countries and finally intended to reach their home town in Andhra Pradesh, find a chance of carrying the virus or not and some of them may even be asymptomatic even if infected with the virus.

The authorities say that passengers flying in international flights and landing in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai airports and from there catching domestic flights and reaching Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Tirupati and Rajahmundry may become super-spreaders of the virus until they know their health status.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
OFFICE OF Principal Chief Materials Manager
Headquarters Office, Baroda House, New Delhi-110001
Mail ID : salenr365@gmail.com

No: 117/S/Auction Programme/Sale/2020-21 Date: 21.12.2020

Corrigendum in Auction Program of Northern Railway

Following extra/amended dates of the auction program for the month of December 2020 will be as under:

SNo.	Depots	Existing	Extra/amended date for e-auction
1.	DY.CMM/JUDW 01732-252388	28.12.2020	30.12.2020

All other auction dates advised earlier will remain same. For further details regarding e-auction please visit Railway website 'www.iamps.gov.in'.

(D.S. Ramu)

By CMM/S&P

2846/2020 For Principal Chief Materials Manager

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

POLICE HEADQUARTERS, CHHATTISGARH,
POLICE HEADQUARTERS, ATAL NAGAR, NAVA RAIPUR
Notice Inviting 2nd Tender

No. PHQ/Sec.-10/Prove-1/5661/2020 Raipur, Dated : 16/12/2020

Sealed tenders are being invited by the Director General of Police, Chhattisgarh on behalf of Governor of Chhattisgarh from original equipment manufacturers (OEM) or authorized by manufacturer for the following item.

Sl. No. Name of Item Qty EMID in Rs.

1 Network Analysis Tools 01 1,20,00/-

The tender offer in the prescribed tender form along with all the relevant documents sealed and completed in all the respect, must be submitted as per the schedule below -

SCHEDULE FOR TENDER

- Address for submission of Tender Document:- AIG of Police (P&P), Block No 03, Room No.309 Police Headquarters, Chhattisgarh, Sector 19, Nava Raipur.
 - Last Date and Time of Submission 18/01/2021 till 03.00 pm, Block No 03, Room No. 309 Police Headquarters, Chhattisgarh, Sector 19, Nava Raipur.
 - Place, Time and Date of opening Block No 03, Room No. 309 Police Headquarters, Chhattisgarh, Sector 19, Nava Raipur. 18/01/2021 at 4:00 pm
 - Place, Time and Date of opening Financial Bid:- Shall be intimated later.
 - Date till which the Bid to remain valid:- 120 days from the scheduled date of submission of the Bid.
- Note:-
- In case of tender opening date being declared as holiday, tenders will be opened on next working day.
 - Tender documents can be downloaded from our website www.cggpolice.gov.in and at the time of submission of document tender fee Rs. 3000/- will be paid in the form of DD of State Bank of India/ Scheduled Bank (other than Cooperative Bank) payable at Raipur in favour of Assistant Inspector General of Police (Accounts), Police Headquarters, Chhattisgarh, Atal Nagar Raipur Or State Govt. Challan of Rs. 3000/- be deposited in the Head of A/c- 0055-Police- 800/- other receipt. Tender fee is non refundable and can't be exempted in any condition.
 - Modification/ Amendments/ Corrigendum, if any shall not be advertised on the news paper but shall be published in the aforesaid web site only.
 - If any bidder sends tender documents through Courier/ Speed post, the tender documents will be accepted till 03.00 pm on 18/01/2021 at Block No. 03, Room No.309 Police Headquarters, Chhattisgarh, Sector 19, Nava Raipur only. Received tender documents in any other address at PHQ on stipulated date and time, will not be accepted.

Sd/- A.I.G of Police (P&P)
For - Director General of Police

G-85716/1

RPF Security Helpline 182

HYDERABAD METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY		Date: 21.12.2020
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER East Wing, 7th Floor, Swarna Jayanti Commercial Complex, Ameerpet, HYDERABAD-500082. Tele-Fax: 040 27014060		
e - Procurement Tender Notice		
NIT. No.: HMDA/DEV/SE-I/10/2020-21		
Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Tender Inviting Authority
1.	Providing Additional Sewage Diversion Pipe Line and Interception & Diversion structure for Pedda Cheruvu, Cherial(V), Keeram(M), Medchal-Malkajgiri (D)	Superintending Engineer-HMHA
2.	Providing Additional Sewage Diversions Pipe Line for Indiramma cheruvu, (Nacheni) village, Nirmal(Nagar), Kapra(M), Medchal-Malkajgiri(D)	Superintending Engineer-HMHA
3.	Providing balance work of Sewage Diversions Pipe Line and wet land ponding for Chinna Damera Kunta (Dundigal Lake), Dundigal(V), Medchal(M), Medchal-Malkajgiri (D)	Superintending Engineer-HMHA
4.	Providing wet land ponding and widening of weir for Kamuni Cheruvu, Shamshabad(M), Ranga Reddy(D)	Superintending Engineer-HMHA
5.	Providing wet land ponding for Tondapally Cheruvu, Tondapally (V), Shamshabad (M), Ranga Reddy(D)	Superintending Engineer-HMHA
6.	Providing water supply distribution pipe lines, drilling bore wells and electrical works for Tirukuyamalai cheruvu, Tirukuyamalai(V),Abdulapuram(M),Ranga Reddy(D)	Superintending Engineer-HMHA
7.	Providing Peripheral Pathways with Gravel including loosening and Compacting Original ground and Forming Embankment at OMC for the Sangareddy Reserved Forest block at Jinnaram(V),Jinnaram(M),Sangareddy(D)	Superintending Engineer-HMHA
8.	Providing Peripheral Pathways with Gravel including loosening and Compacting Original ground and Forming Embankment at OMC for the Parkinbanda Reserved Forest block at Parkinbanda (V),Manoharabadi(M),Medak(D)	Superintending Engineer-HMHA
9.	Providing Peripheral Pathways with Gravel including loosening and Compacting Original ground and Forming Embankment at OMC for the Sirigurupatti Reserved Forest block at Sirigurupatti (V),Maheshwaram (M),R.R.District	Executive Engineer PD, HMHA
10.	Providing Peripheral Pathways with Gravel including loosening and Compacting Original ground and Forming Embankment at OMC for the Sirigurupatti Reserved Forest block at Sirigurupatti (V),Maheshwaram (M),R.R.District	Executive Engineer PD, HMHA
11.	Providing Peripheral Pathways with Gravel including loosening and Compacting Original ground and Forming Embankment at OMC for the Bibinagar Reserved Forest block at Bibinagar (V),Bibinagar (M),Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri (D)	Executive Engineer PD, HMHA
12.	Providing Peripheral Pathways with Gravel including loosening and Compacting Original ground and Forming Embankment at OMC for the Palligadda Reserved Forest block at Palligadda (V),Maheshwaram (M),R.R.District	Executive Engineer PD, HMHA
13.	Providing Peripheral Pathways with Gravel including loosening and Compacting Original ground and Forming Embankment at OMC for the Kanachan Reserved Forest block at Kanachan (V),Faroopgarh(M),R.R.District	Executive Engineer PD, HMHA
14.	Providing Peripheral Pathways with Gravel including loosening and Compacting Original ground and Forming Embankment at OMC for the Jalalpur Reserved Forest block at Jalalpur (V),Poopatham(M),Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri (D)	Executive Engineer PD, HMHA
15.	Providing Peripheral Pathways with Gravel including loosening and Compacting Original ground and Forming Embankment at OMC for the Bacharam Reserved Forest block at Bacharam (V),Abdulapuram (M),R.R.District	Executive Engineer PD, HMHA
16.	Providing Peripheral Pathways with Gravel including loosening and Compacting Original ground and Forming Embankment at OMC for the Wadiyaram Reserved Forest Cluster at Wadiyaram (V),Medak (D)	Executive Engineer PD, HMHA
17.	Construction of Compound wall around the vacant land in Sy.No. 313 of Jawahar Nagar (V),Kapra(M), Medchal-Malkajgiri (D)	Executive Engineer S&S, HMHA

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA		R & B DEPARTMENT

<tbl_r cells="3" ix="4" maxcspan

DECCAN Chronicle

23 DECEMBER 2020

Act quickly to stave off new virus strain threat

The decision of the Union government to take pre-emptive steps against the spread of a mutated version of SARS-CoV-2 that plunged Britain into an unprecedented crisis and the rest of the world into the fear of another wave is welcome. The stoppage of the air traffic to and from Britain till December 31 and the strict conditions on those who travel to India after a visit to that country should be able to help India save itself from another devastating attack of the virus. Several other European nations, which are already into the second phase of national lockdown due to surge in the Covid numbers, are also taking early steps to keep the new virus off its limits by virtually stopping all contacts with the island nation.

India has of late been witnessing a steady decrease in the daily number of caseload though states such as Maharashtra and Kerala show no signs of a thaw. In fact, Maharashtra, which has the highest total caseload, has imposed night curfew and tightened some other controls. Kerala, which managed to contain the virus in the initial stages and has kept the fatality rate low even now, has already warned of a major spike in the coming days. The state government fears that the elections to the local bodies held last week could turn a super-spreader event. Delhi government has already imposed a slew of controls and augmented the healthcare facilities to successfully ward off a major outbreak. Fortunately, India looks like having averted a major outbreak which experts feared would visit us after the festival season.

The governments should not hesitate to impose restrictions on gatherings wherever necessary before it gets too late; political, social and religious events and festivals offer no excuse to be lax

It is in this background that the new threat has emerged. The mutant version, now referred to as VUI (Variant Under Investigation) 2020/01 or known as B.1.1.7, is not more dangerous than the original one but can spread faster, according to experts. Scientists are yet to decode the virus, first noticed in Southern England in December, whether the mutation makes it spread faster. According to Public Health England, the executive agency of the British department of health and social care, the mutations in the spike protein of the virus can change how the micro-organism interacts with human cells. Scientists insist that the vaccines, which have been given emergency authorisation, and those which are in the pipeline, will work against the new variant, too.

While science and scientists grapple with the pandemic and its causes, the non-medical measures come into the focus more than ever. Public health experts insist on the importance of Covid-appropriate protocols such as social distancing, wearing of masks and washing of hands to keep the virus away. The governments should not hesitate to impose restrictions on gatherings wherever necessary before it gets too late; political, social and religious events and festivals offer no excuse to be lax. The message the mutated virus would like to pass on to humanity is that no amount of caution is too much until such time when vaccines have been made available and a sufficient number of people are inoculated to attain herd immunity.

Tumble and roll

The reports of the emergence of a new highly-transmissible strain of coronavirus in the United Kingdom and a resultant suspension of air connectivity to London by several countries, including India, sent shockwaves across the global financial world. Being a part of the global financial system, India's key stock market indices — the Sensex and the Nifty — too suffered blowouts, wiping out over ₹6.5 lakh crore worth investor wealth in just one day.

For the general public, the market reaction may appear insane. Having grown phenomenally after the worst crash during the pandemic, one may wonder as to why should investors be so panicky. However, since the investors bet their money on the foreseeable future, the investors always react ahead of the curve. Similarly, the Monday mayhem in the stock markets too could be a premature panic-driven reaction to the new strain of coronavirus. They may return to the stock markets soon as reports suggest that the new strain may be highly transmissible, but it is not more virulent than the previous versions.

While the world's toughest lockdown had wiped out nearly a quarter of economic productivity in the April-June quarter, the economic growth showed a robust recovery in September. While full recovery of the Indian economy may take some more time, the green shoots have ended the talk of doomsday scenarios since the economy is largely driven by domestic consumption. While the developments in the UK may not have an immediate impact on India, full economic recovery, however, is predicated on the successful containment of coronavirus. Until normal economic activity remains unchecked in the country, external developments may not have a lasting impact on the economy. The government and people, therefore, must not lower their guard against the highly-transmissible pathogen.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax: 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & Patañata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-255284/255287; Telefax: 0866-2552234
Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P.), Ph: 0891-255233/255234; Fax: 0891-2755285
Rajahmundry: Venagiri, Dhalbaweswar Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208
Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904
Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433
Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burrampur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemmudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580
Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/4230525
Cochin: 77, Vivekananda Road, Rammangal, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255
Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/S/348/2006-08

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu

Centre spars with Mamata in bid to turn Bengal babus into stool pigeons

The battle for the West Bengal Assembly elections looms ahead but skirmishes have already started. After the attack on BJP president J.P. Nadda's convoy in the state, the Centre retaliated against the Trinamul government by recalling three IPS officers from the state on Central deputation. Further, to perhaps underline the "message", the ministry of home affairs summoned state chief secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay and director general of police Virendra to Delhi to explain the law and order situation in Bengal.

A defiant chief minister Mamata Banerjee refused to comply with the summons. Also, she declined the Centre's demand to send the three IPS officers — Bhola Nath Pandey, Rajeev Mishra and Praveen Kumar Tripathi — on deputation saying there was a dearth of good officers in the state, and the state could not spare the

three officers.

There is a precedent here. The then chief minister of Tamil Nadu J. Jayalalithaa had similarly denied the Centre in 1991 when the state police had conducted a raid on the house of former state chief minister and DMK leader M. Karunanidhi, her archrival. The Centre had asked the Tamil Nadu government to relieve the three officers involved for Central deputation. Like Mamata now, she had refused to spare those officers.

Apparently, there is little the Centre can do against civil service officers who are posted under the state government. For any action to be taken on an officer, the state and the Centre both need to agree.

REBELS FOR A CAUSE?

Outliers are far and few between in the civil service, which runs on obedience rather than resistance. But sometimes momentous events reveal "rebels" with a cause.

Punjab DIG (Prisons) Lakhminder Singh Jakhar has resigned from service in support of farmers who are in Delhi protesting against the three new farm laws. There are politicians, sports people, even ex-defence forces officers who have renounced their awards and medals in protest, but an IPS officer resigning from service for the farmers' cause is a first in the state.

Of course, IAS officer Kannan Gopinathan resigned from the service to protest against the restrictions imposed in Jammu & Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370. Similarly, Shah Faesal, the young IAS officer from J&K resigned from the service in 2019 to start a political party. And just a few months ago, the DGP of Bihar Gupteswar Pandey opting for VRS in a bid to contest the state Assembly poll (his position is still vacant), but that was not for a public cause.

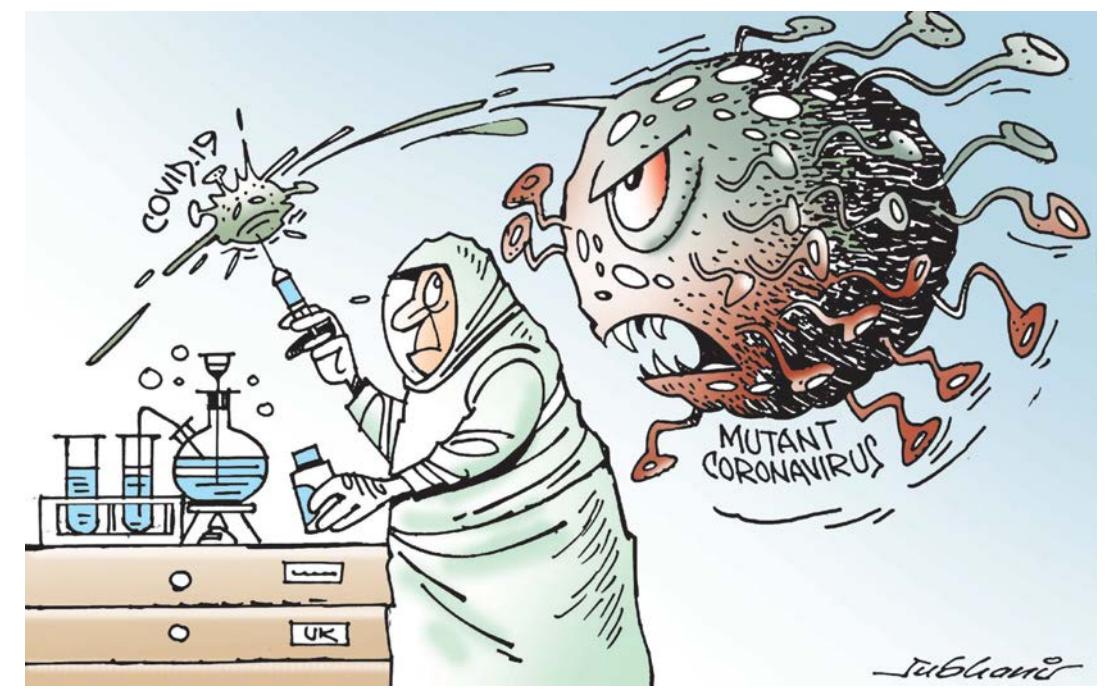
Meanwhile, Jakhar who had served the Army joined the IPS as a 1994-batch officer and was slated to superannuate in August 2022. Interestingly, he had been suspended in May earlier this year on alleged corruption charges but was reinstated within a month. Clearly, outliers defy easy definition!

TN WON'T LET GO OF CHIEF SECY

By seeking the extension of the tenure of Tamil Nadu chief secretary K. Shanmugam, the state government has stirred up a hornet's nest in the upper echelons of the administration. An extension of tenure for Shanmugam could mean that several senior Tamil Nadu cadre officers eligible to succeed him may find their chances fading.

According to sources, Shanmugam, a 1985-batch IAS officer, has already received two

Subhani



Bhoomi putra for Bengal: Has BJP made a mistake?



Shikha Mukerjee

The man for all election seasons, Amit Shah, Union home minister and the BJP's craftiest leader, came to West Bengal and radically revised the strategy for conquest. The state's saffronisation has been Mr Shah's goal for years.

With the acquisition of a "bhoomi putra" — an experienced, violence-hardened, mass leader with charismatic appeal in Suvendu Adhikari from Trinamul Congress, Mr Shah has found a face to challenge Mamata Banerjee. Bengali identity, Mr Shah has had to acknowledge, transcends all the different ways in which the BJP slices and splices Hindutva issues to produce electoral victories with remarkable regularity.

It's a belated realisation that neither the communal card, nor polarisation, nor verbal assaults against dynastic politics, would pose a serious threat to the fiery, feisty political war veteran Mamata Banerjee, who has charisma in loads and local knowledge that can outmatch the collective brains of the BJP machine. It's also an admission that lightweight Bengalis as proxies for Narendra Modi would be dismissed with contempt by a culturally and politically fanatically proud people.

From one visit to the next in the space of a month, Mr Shah has finally realised that he has to back away from two issues he had identified as bestsellers in the West Bengal election market.

The first is aggressively selling the Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens as a cleanup mechanism to weed out Muslim illegal aliens on the plea that it will be "considered" for action only after the Covid-19 vaccines are rolled out. The second is shooting down the idea that President's

Rule was being seriously considered before the West Bengal elections. Pulling no punches, Mr Shah seems to have told BJP state party chief Dilip Ghosh and West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankher to pipe down.

These are sure signs that Mr Shah is only now beginning to gauge that West Bengal is the most complex undertaking he has ever had to handle. There is no template in the BJP's playbook that can be copied and pasted over West Bengal.

To convince the voter that the BJP is not indeed an "outsider", Mr Shah had to roll out Mr Adhikari and set him to work, the day after Christmas. The speed with which Mr Shah and the home ministry approved "Z" category security for Mr Adhikari even before he was formally inducted into the party at the Midnapore rally is an indication that it has a lot of catching up to do.

If the BJP was too complacent that its formula of communal polarisation, identity politics, homogenisation and mainstreaming within the Hindutva fold would be enough to convert the Bengali into a loyalist and thus reliable voter, the Trinamul Congress was just as smug. Obviously Mamata Banerjee can read the pulse of the people better than the BJP, which has inadequate leaders in West Bengal and out of state bosses who are clueless about the fiercely proud Bengali.

If the BJP was too confident that its formula of communal polarisation, identity politics, homogenisation and mainstreaming within the Hindutva fold would be enough to convert the Bengali into a loyalist and thus reliable voter, the Trinamul Congress was just as smug. Obviously Mamata Banerjee can read the pulse of the people better than the BJP, which has inadequate leaders in West Bengal and out of state bosses who are clueless about the fiercely proud Bengali.

For both the TMC and the BJP, the defection of Suvendu Adhikari and nine other MLAs and MPs, as well as around 100 lesser functionaries, is a turning point. As a young leader who led the Nandigram movement against the CPI(M)-led Left Front's strategy for industrialising West Bengal, Mr Adhikari shot into the limelight. He became known for his capacity to

match violence with violence and for his capacity to mobilise, equip and deploy the small army of TMC loyalists. He was rewarded for his work and elevated as a youth leader, as part of the successor generation to be groomed for the party after Mamata Banerjee. So indispensable was he, that in the 2016 Assembly elections, when Mamata Banerjee needed a robust organisation to win her seats in Purulia, Bankura and Jhargram and she felt Mukul Roy, now with the BJP, would not be as effective, Mr Adhikari was given responsibility for 60-plus seats. It was also her way of placating Mr Adhikari after the induction of Abhishek Banerjee, her nephew. The move angered many, including Mr Roy, who saw it as heaping favours on the Adhikari clan. Regardless of how her preference annoyed others in the TMC, Ms Banerjee continued to pamper Suvendu with greater responsibilities, like observer for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls for crucial districts in Malda and Murshidabad, long considered Congress bastions.

The network that Mr Adhikari built across at least seven districts out of a total of 23 in West Bengal, and his popularity, made him an asset for the Trinamul Congress. The BJP's gain is thus the TMC's loss. To capitalise on this, Mr Shah has drastically revised the BJP's campaign content and strategy.

The plan is crude, and the BJP hopes it will be effective — luring Mamata Banerjee into a personal fight against Mr Adhikari, who she was wont to see as a loyalist turned disgruntled defector with an insider's knowledge of how the TMC government and organisation failed, its corruption, its dependence on a partisan bureaucracy and the people. It would challenge Mamata Banerjee's credibility and her legitimacy as a leader.

The other advantage of a Mamata Banerjee versus Adhikari fight would mean there would be two foes against the lone chief minister. It would serve to situate the BJP's best star campaigner, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, above the fray, with a solution to the problems of West Bengal by mainstreaming the marginalised, deviant locals.

The insider-outsider game set up by the BJP is theoretically neat. The question is — will it be effective? West Bengal has always seen itself as a leader in national politics. To sink to the ranks of laggard followers could be unsatisfactory.

The state's chief ministers have always punched way above their weight, as they were politically important national leaders to begin with. Even though Mamata Banerjee was not a member of the social elite to which all her predecessors in office belonged, she was still a national leader, the successful leader of a party that she had founded, when she became chief minister. In contrast, Mr Adhikari is a local, perhaps people.

The localisation of the BJP is far from complete. Adding a "bhoomi putra" is a design element and does not indicate a structural transformation. If localisation has indeed begun, it was difficult to find it, when Mr Shah's roadshow snaked through Bolpur, with a DJ managing the event, and dancers and bands preceding the leader as though it was a carnival, and not a political rally.

Suvendu Adhikari is a senior journalist based in Kolkata.

LETTERS PROPERTY TAX

GHMC bill collectors duping the civic body should make everyone alert (*Property in GHMC to be reassessed*, DC, Dec. 22). To end this corruption, property owners should pay taxes only at GHMC offices in their jurisdiction and insist on an official receipt. Manual collection and remittance of tax has to be done away with in a phased manner. The duties of Bill Collectors should be redefined while punishing the errant collectors.

N.R. Raghu Ram
Hyderabad

DEFLECTION JIHAD

It seems the BJP is trying Defection Jihad all over India whether in MP, Rajasthan or West Bengal (*Battleground Bengal: Didi faces huge test*, DC, Dec. 22). With full financial support they are encouraging defections from other parties. Like the law against 'Love Jihad' there should also be a law against Defection Jihad.

Dr Mohammed Abdul Mujeeb
Siddiqui
Hyderabad

CONGRESS FUTURE

Unless the Congress comes out of the protective Nehru-Gandhi umbrella, it will continue to face the criticism of being a family party. Though it is not possible overnight, a beginning can be made by appointing second rung leaders as working president. A new look is expedient for the party to take on BJP as a viable alternative. Also, instead of attacking the BJP with communal stick, it should focus on people's problems.

S. Nageswara Rao
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Da Vinci award for Concorde men

LONDON, Dec. 22.

The Concorde supersonic jetliner, now being flight tested in readiness for airline service at the end of 1973 had won an international award for its contribution to the development of civil aviation.

The Leonardo da Vinci prize awarded annually by the Italian Air Transport Development Centre, was presented in Rome on Monday to the builders of the Concorde — the British Aircraft Corporation (BAC) and Aerospatiale of France.



SHORT TAKES

DELAY IN FILING PLEAS: SC PULLS UP GOVT OFFICERS

New Delhi, Dec. 22: The Supreme Court has said it is an "irony" that despite its repeated observations deprecating the practice of government authorities filing appeals before it belatedly to complete a "mere formality", no action has ever been taken against officers who sit on file and do nothing.

The apex court, which dismissed the plea filed by Deputy Conservator of Forests against the Bombay High Court's February last year order on grounds of delay and imposed a cost of ₹15,000 on the petitioner for "wastage of judicial time", observed that it has repeatedly deprecated such a practice.

"The irony is that despite observations, no action was ever taken against officers who sit on the file and do nothing," a bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul said.

"The matter is further aggravated in the present case and even the present petition is filed with a delay of 462 days and once again the excuse is of change of counsel. We have repeatedly deprecated such attempts of the state governments to approach this court only to complete a mere formality," said the bench, also comprising justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Hrishikesh Roy.

MP UNIVERSITY STARTS COURSE ON RAMCHARITMANAS

RABINDRA NATH CHOURDURY | DC
BHOPAL, DEC. 22

Even as the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh is expected to commence on January 15, a university in Madhya Pradesh is all set to spread the story of 'Ram' across the globe through a short-term online and offline course.

The first of its kind initiative by an educational institution in India, Vikram University in Ujjain has launched a 6-month certificate science and culture course on Ramcharitmanas, the epic poem narrating the story of Lord Ram by the 16th century devotional poet Tulsidas, in the current academic session, the university vice-chancellor Dr A.K. Pandey told this newspaper on Tuesday.

"This is the first time a university in India is launching a certificate course on an ancient Indian epic. The objective behind introducing the course is to highlight the science behind the epic, which has hitherto been viewed as merely a work of literature", he added.

Ayodhya Research Institute in Uttar Pradesh has designed the syllabus of the course.

The course will be taught both online and offline and minimum educational qualification for admission into the course is 12th pass.

There is no age bar for admission into the course.

PAK ARMY SHELLS MORTARS ALONG LOC IN POONCH

Jammu, Dec. 22: Pakistani troops opened fire and shelled mortars at forward posts along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Tuesday, a defence spokesperson said.

There was no report of any damage on the Indian side, he said. "At about 09:30 hours today, Pakistan Army initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and intense shelling with mortars along LoC in Mankote sectors in Poonch district", the spokesperson said.

He said the Indian Army retaliated befittingly. On December 1, Pakistani troops restored to unprovoked ceasefire violation by shelling mortars at forward areas of Rajouri sector along the LoC, killing a BSF sub-inspector.

Two army jawans, Naik Prem Bahadur Khatri and rifleman Sukhbir Singh, were killed when Pakistan Army violated ceasefire in Sunderbani sector of Rajouri district on November 27.

On November 26, Subedar Swatantra Singh was killed and a civilian injured in Pakistani shelling along the LoC in Kirni and Qasba sectors of Poonch district.

An army havildar was killed at Laam sector in Rajouri district on November 21, while 11 people, including five security personnel, were killed after multiple ceasefire violations by Pakistani troops along the LoC in north Kashmir on November 13.



Farmers block the national highway at Delhi-UP Ghaziabad border in Ghaziabad on Tuesday, during their ongoing agitation against the Centre's new farm laws. - PTI

Farmers to send missive to Britain leaders to stop Boris' R-day visit

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

The farmers' leaders protesting against the Centre's three agriculture-related laws have decided to write to British political leaders and MPs to ask them to stop Prime Minister Boris Johnson - who has been invited to be the chief guest at next month's Republic Day celebrations - from travelling to India till their demands are met.

The UK Prime Minister is scheduled to visit India on January 26. We are writing to British MPs asking them to stop him from visiting India till the time the farmers' demands are not met by the Indian government," one of the farmers' leaders, Kulwant Singh Sandhu, said.

Mr Johnson has accepted India's invitation to be the chief guest. He will become the second British PM at the event, after John Major in 1993. Mr

Johnson has invited India to join the G-7 summit in Britain next year.

The agitating farmers have so far given a sense that they will not accept anything other than a complete rollback of the three laws. The farmers' leaders on Tuesday decided to take a call on the Centre's letter inviting them for another round of talks after a meeting on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, at the Singhu border, a group of farmers wrote a letter with their blood to the Prime Minister urging him to immediately repeal the new laws. The letter said: "Good morning Narendra Modi ji, we are writing this letter with our blood. You are the Prime Minister of our country, elected by our votes. By passing these three laws, the farmers have been betrayed. We request you to take back these laws." Besides the letter, some even wrote messages with their blood,

that read: "We reject black laws... take back black laws".

In a letter to 40 farmers' leaders on Sunday, agriculture ministry joint secretary Vivek Aggarwal had asked them to specify their concerns over the government's earlier proposal of amendments in the laws and to choose a convenient date for the next round of talks so that the ongoing agitation could end at the earliest.

Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar said the Centre was ready to continue talks with the protesting farmers, "clause by clause, with an open mind". Interacting with the foreign media, he said the agriculture sector was the backbone of India's economy and under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi the focus was on doubling farmers' income by 2022. The minister also said enacting the reform laws was not an overnight move but had been done

after more than two decades of deliberations, suggested by numerous experts and recommendations by various committees.

As the agitation entered the 27th day, a group of farmers showed black flags to Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar when his convoy was passing through Ambala city. Some farmers reportedly tried to block the CM's convoy, but the police managed to provide safe passage to Mr Khattar.

Mr Khattar had come to Ambala to address public meetings in support of the BJP's mayoral and ward candidates for the coming civic polls. The farmers waived black flags at the CM's convoy as it was crossing Agrasen Chowk. They also raised slogans against the government and said they would continue to protest till the three farm laws were not repealed. The farmers had also tried to block the Ambala-Hisar highway.

Shah to visit Bengal again on January 12

YOJNA GUSAI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

After his recent visit to the poll bound West Bengal when former TMC heavyweight Suvendu Adhikari along with more than a dozen of ruling party's MLAs joined the BJP, senior BJP leader and Union home minister Amit Shah is expected to visit the state again on January 12, which is Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary.

In West Bengal, where an aggressive BJP is countering TMC's poll plank of 'Bengali pride' with its vision of 'Asol poribortan', Shah is expected to address a public meeting and a 'yuva rally' in Howrah during his two day long visit when he will also deliberate poll strategies with the party leaders.

Shah is expected to visit the state again on January 23, when the state celebrates freedom fighter and 'Bengali icon' Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's birthday.

Aggressively campaigning against the TMC government's 'bad governance', deteriorating law and order situation, poor economic indicators, corruption, anti-incumbency and Covid-19 mismanagement, the BJP is confident of ousting Mamata Banerjee led TMC and even Shah had expressed confidence about his party's win in the assembly polls scheduled early next year.

While Shah will be visiting the state every month till the assembly polls, he would be spending almost a week in the poll bound state from February.

Since 2014, the BJP has significantly increased its vote share and organization base in the state. With the two other opposition parties - Left and the Congress - losing their political grip in West Bengal, the BJP has emerged as a credible contender against the ruling TMC, which

TMC is a company now, says Adhikari

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, DEC. 22

Calling the ruling Trinamul Congress a "company", new BJP leader Shubhendu Adhikari on Tuesday declared that he would not need an "MLA ticket" to defeat Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's party in the next year's Assembly election in West Bengal.

At his first BJP rally in Purbasthi of Burdwan East after his induction, Adhikari claimed, "TMC is no more a political party. It has become a company. When I spoke to Union home minister Amit Shah and senior party leaders Dilip Ghosh and Kailash Vijayvargiya before joining the BJP, I set no condition before them except to save Bengal from Tolabhai Bhai (Extortionist Nephew)."

He added, "Cattle and coal smuggling have been caught. Shah has made their (TMC) situation with the BSF. The sand-laden trucks in queues are also stuck on the road. Even after all these, if they win this time, only kidney-rackeeting will be left for their survival. They have to be immersed anyhow. I will do whatever is needed. I will tell my party there is no need to give me an MLA ticket. I will devote 16 out of 24 hours to ensure TMC's defeat."

Digging up Banerjee's past with the NDA to reply to the TMC's campaign of betrayal against him, Adhikari said, "Those who have

been branding me as a traitor and calling me 'Mirzafar' for the past three days, I want to ask them who were with the TMC, after its foundation in 1998, in the Assembly, Panchayat and Lok Sabha polls of that year and Lok Sabha polls in 1999? Had the then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani not offered shelter to the TMC, the party would have vanished before 2001. None can deny it."

He added, "When Chhoto Angaria killings took place, the NDA government at the Centre sent a team led by BJP leader Vijay Goel, the then Union minister also, to Garbeta and stopped the attackers. In 2004 Lok Sabha polls, I fought as a NDA candidate against Lakshman Seth of the CPI(M) carrying TMC and BJP flags. On March 14 in 2007, 14 farmers were gunned down by armed goons in Nandigram."

Lashing out at Banerjee, Adhikari, who was the face of Nandigram movement, recounted, "On March 16 Advani, the then leader of the opposition, and other BJP leaders like late Sushma Swaraj and Rajnath Singh, now defence minister, entered Sonachura via Khejuri and Heria. Stalling the parliament for 62 days, it was the BJP only which took the Nandigram issue to Delhi for a discussion. Today you are denying everything. Singh had fed you the juice at the site of fast during the Singur movement."

While Shah will be visiting the state every month till the assembly polls, he would be spending almost a week in the poll bound state from February.

The BJP claims that it has a significant presence at the 78,000 booths spread across the 294 assembly seats in the state.

US confers 'Legion of Merit' on Modi

PM conferred award for his steadfast leadership

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

Sending a strong signal to China, US President Donald Trump on Tuesday conferred the "Legion of Merit", America's highest military decoration, on three leaders of the "Quad" countries, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The other two were Australian PM Scott Morrison and Japan's former PM Shinzo Abe. Modi was conferred the award for his "steadfast leadership and vision for India's emergence as a global power, and exemplary contribution made by him for the advancement of the India-US strategic partnership."

The Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander, is a domed five-pointed American white star plaque of heraldic form bordered in purplish-red enamel 215/16 inches circumscribing diameter with 13 white stars on a blue field emerging from a circle of clouds.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Prior to that, the honour was last conferred by President-elect Joe Biden. It is a prestigious decoration bestowed by the President, mostly to heads of state or government.

This comes at a time when President Trump has just about a month left in office, after which he will be succeeded by President-elect Joe Biden. It is a prestigious decoration bestowed by the President, mostly to heads of state or government.

In a statement Tuesday,

the MEA said: "The President of the United States of America conferred the highest decoration, the Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander, to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 21 December 2020. The award is in recognition of the Prime Minister's steadfast leadership and vision for India's emergence as a global power, and exemplary contribution made by him for the advancement of the India-US strategic partnership."

The Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander, is a domed five-pointed American white star plaque of heraldic form bordered in purplish-red enamel 215/16 inches circumscribing diameter with 13 white stars on a blue field emerging from a circle of clouds.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Prior to that, the honour was last conferred by President-elect Joe Biden. It is a prestigious decoration bestowed by the President, mostly to heads of state or government.

This comes at a time when President Trump has just about a month left in office, after which he will be succeeded by President-elect Joe Biden. It is a prestigious decoration bestowed by the President, mostly to heads of state or government.

The award was received on the PM's behalf by India's ambassador to the US Tarunjit Singh Sandhu. Earlier, in September, it had been conferred on the Emir of Kuwait,

import, export and possession of beef.

A division bench of Justices V.M. Deshpande and A.S. Kilar passed the order on December 14 while hearing a petition filed by Shafiqullah Khan Ashfaqullah Khan seeking to quash a July 2018 case registered against him under provisions of the MAPA for alleged possession of 187 skins of cows in a van he was driving.

The FIR against Khan

was registered with the Shivaji Nagar police station in Buldhana district. Khan was booked under sections 5A (prohibition on transportation of cow, bull or bullock within the state for purpose of slaughter), 5B (prohibition on transportation of these animals outside the state for purpose of slaughter) and 5C (prohibition on possession of flesh of cow, bull or bullock).

— PTI

Our P.V. - Telangana's Pride



(1921 - 2004)

A Polyglot Of High Repute - A Person Of Great Integrity
A Statesman Of Highest Caliber - A Visionary For Nation Development
Telangana's Glowing Spirit - A Luminary Of Telugu Race
India's Treasure Of Knowledge - An Inspiration To Many Generations

**Former Prime Minister of India
Late P.V. Narasimha Rao's
16th Death Anniversary Commemoration Meeting**

State Government pays rich tributes to Telangana's Proud Son

Hyderabad
Venue: P.V. Gnana Bhoomi, Necklace Road, Hyderabad
Date: 23-12-2020 Time: 9 AM

New Delhi
Venue: Gurajada Conference Hall, Telangana Bhavan, New Delhi.
Date: 23-12-2020 Time: 10.30 AM

Issued By : Commissioner, I & PR Department, Government of Telangana.

SHORT TAKES

BOARD EXAMS ON HOLD TILL FEB. 2021: MINISTER

New Delhi, Dec. 22: Union minister of education Ramesh Pokhrani 'Nishank' on Tuesday ruled out conducting board examinations for classes 10 and 12 till February next year in view of the Covid-19 situation.

Usually, the practical exams are conducted in January and theory exams begin every year in February and conclude in March. The minister said a decision about when the exams will be conducted will be taken later after assessment of the situation and consultation with stakeholders.

"Keeping the current situation in mind, it has been decided that the board exams for classes 10 and 12 will not be conducted till February next year. CBSE is making necessary preparations for conducting the 2021 examinations. A decision on the exam schedule will be taken later after assessment of situation and more consultations with stakeholders," Nishank said in an online interaction with teachers.

With no clarity on the board exam dates yet, several schools have already conducted pre-board exams online to keep the students prepared. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) had earlier this month announced that board exams in 2021 will be conducted in written mode and not online.

Schools across the country were closed in March to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. They were partially reopened in some states from October 15.

However, a few states have decided to keep them closed in view of a spike in the number of infections. The board exams had to be postponed mid-way in March. They were later cancelled and the results announced on the basis of an alternative assessment scheme.

VIT STUDENTS GET 7,403 JOB OFFERS DESPITE COVID-19

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Though it is Coronavirus pandemic times, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) has emerged as the top educational institution in India getting 7,403 job offers at campus recruitments conducted by 382 companies. All campus recruitments at the institute's four locations have been conducted virtually and 4,503 students have received multiple offers.

IT majors Cognizant, Infosys, Wipro and TCS held their annual campus recruitments at VIT's four campuses in Vellore, Chennai, Amaravati and Bhopal. Results of the recruitments were announced by Dr. G. Viswanathan, chancellor of VIT. Other IT service companies like Virtusa, Hexaware, CapGemini and Mindtree also recruited in big numbers from VIT.

TCS and Wipro, like earlier, have recruited students with high CTCs ranging over ₹6.5 lakh to ₹10 lakh per annum. Microsoft has recruited several students with a highest CTC of ₹44 Lakhs per annum.

Wipro and VIT hold Limca Book of Records for highest number of Dream offers (278 offers from 2020 batch). Wipro and VIT broke their own record by having 419 offers from the 2021 graduating batch. VIT has already entered into Limca Book of Records 10 times for highest number of placements. VIT started its campus placements with post graduate (PG) internship and placements in May 2020. 144 companies have already completed their remote hiring process and have selected 1,028 PG students from 2-year M. Tech, MCA and M. Sc courses.

India must work for *Naya Bharat*, says PM

Modi claims nation is on a path today where everyone is assured of their constitutional rights

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

gion, was assured of their constitutional rights and their future, and where no community was left behind.

The government's schemes for the poor were reaching all sections of the people "without any religious bias", he claimed.

Addressing the Aligarh Muslim University's centenary celebrations via video conferencing, Modi said that the nation was on a path today where everyone, irrespective of reli-



WHATEVER RELIGION we are born in, it is important to see how to blend our aspirations with national goals. There can be ideological divides in society but when it comes to the nation's development, everything else is secondary. When it comes to the nation, there is no question of ideological differences.

— NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister

nation's development, everything else is secondary. When it comes to the nation, there is no question of ideological divides in society but when it comes to the

say this here because AMU produced many freedom fighters — they had their ideological differences but they set that aside for freedom. Like freedom united

them, we have to work on a common ground for '*Naya Bharat*'.

The PM said that "when our thoughts are focused on a new India foremost,

then such elements will have diminished space. Politics and society can wait, but the country's development cannot wait. In the last century, a lot of time has been lost over differences. There is no more time to lose".

The AMU, which was known as the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College initially, was renamed Aligarh Muslim University on December 1, 1920. However, it was formally inaugurated as a university on December 17 that year.

cent of Muslim daughters were forced to drop out. The government got toilets made in schools. The Muslim girls' dropout rate is now reduced to 30 per cent," he said.

The AMU, which was known as the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College initially, was renamed Aligarh Muslim University on December 1, 1920. However, it was formally inaugurated as a university on December 17 that year.

Japan backs India against stand-off with China

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 22

In a message to China, India and Japan on Tuesday strongly opposed any attempts to unilaterally change the status quo in the region by coercion or any activities that escalate tensions, during defence minister Rajnath Singh telephonic conversation with his Japanese counterpart Nobuo Kishi.

This is seen as a strong backing of India's position that China should restore status quo at the line of actual control (LAC) in Ladakh where both armies are involved in a military stand-off from last eight months.

In recent years there has been an increase in defence co-operation between India and Japan both of which are dealing with an aggressive China in the region. India and Japan are part of the Quad which Beijing sees as an anti-China alliance.

Indian and Japanese navies have been conducting exercise bilaterally and were also part of "Malabar Naval exercise" along with US and Australia.

During the conversation, Singh and Kishi shared their views on highlighting the importance of a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law, said a statement by Japanese defence ministry.

The two ministers also exchanged views on regional situations, including the East China Sea and the South China Sea, and reaffirmed their continued close cooperation. "In this context, the ministers affirmed their intention to continue

structure being developed along the China border is going to be unique and different as not only will it be extremely state-of-the-art but also would be underground so that these "assets and the security personnel using them can be well protected from enemy forces."

Considering the highly strategic nature of the entire project it is being kept as a closely guarded secret, specially the location of these bunkers, so that they cannot be targeted.

Even the implementation of the entire project is being monitored at the highest levels in the Government with senior officials from multiple security forces personally supervising it.

These all weather bunkers will also provide much needed respite to the troops who have to face harsh and adverse weather conditions, with temperature at times dropping to -30 degrees, in forward locations at high altitudes.

exchanging views in light of the current events occurring in the region and concurred in sending a clear message that they strongly oppose any attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by coercion or any activities that escalate tension," said the statement issued by Japanese defence ministry.

But the security infra-

Singh and Kishi affirmed that they would continue to vigorously promote defense cooperation and exchanges to uphold and reinforce the free and open Indo-Pacific while maintaining close communication between respective defense authorities, said Japanese defence ministry statement.

Kerala Gov. turns down spl session on farm Laws

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC. 22

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan has declined permission to convene special session of Assembly to discuss Centre's new farm laws.

The Governor rejected the Cabinet's recommendation saying that there is no urgency for convening a special session on December 23. The state government was planning to pass a resolution against the farm laws.

Earlier, the Governor asked the state government

to furnish reasons for convening the session at such a short notice. Even though the reasons were conveyed to him, the Governor reportedly denied permission for second time.

Agriculture minister V.S. Sunil Kumar said that the Governor's action was highly unexpected. He said the Punjab and Delhi governments had convened special sessions of Assembly to protest against the farm laws. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had even torn the copies of the bill on the floor of the House in protest.

The opposition Congress

led UDF has also criticised the Governor's decision to decline permission for the special session of Assembly.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan who was on a tour to Kollam and Pathanamthitta district, returned to Thiruvananthapuram in the evening. However, instead of insisting on the session, the ruling LDF is planning to fight the Governor's action politically.

Earlier, Speaker P. Sreeramakrishnan also sent a communication to the Governor listing out the reasons for convening the special session.

led UDF has also criticised the Governor's decision to decline permission for the special session of Assembly.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan who was on a tour to Kollam and Pathanamthitta district, returned to Thiruvananthapuram in the evening. However, instead of insisting on the session, the ruling LDF is planning to fight the Governor's action politically.

Earlier, Speaker P. Sreeramakrishnan also sent a communication to the Governor listing out the reasons for convening the special session.

The new SOPs say that all positive cases of incoming passengers have to be sent for genome sequencing, and if the report of the sequencing is consistent with the current SARS-CoV-2 virus

protocol will be given, the patient shall be tested on the 14th day, after having tested positive in the initial test. In case the sample is found positive on the 14th day, further samples may be taken until his two consecutive samples taken 24 hours apart are tested negative," the SOP said.

"While necessary treatment as per the existing

genome circulating in the country, the ongoing treatment protocol including home isolation, treatment at facility level as per case severity may be followed. However, if the genomic sequencing indicates the presence of a new variant of SARS-CoV-2 then the patient will continue to remain in a separate isolation unit.

The new SOPs say that all positive cases of incoming passengers have to be sent for genome sequencing, and if the report of the sequencing is consistent with the current SARS-CoV-2 virus

protocol will be given, the patient shall be tested on the 14th day, after having tested positive in the initial test. In case the sample is found positive on the 14th day, further samples may be taken until his two consecutive samples taken 24 hours apart are tested negative," the SOP said.

"While necessary treatment as per the existing

is an "adverse development" as it enhances the transmissibility or the spread of the Covid-19 virus by 70 per cent and acts as a super spreader, the mutated virus is of no immediate threat in terms of affecting the disease's severity or increasing deaths of Covid patients.

He added there was no need to panic as the mutated virus was yet to be traced in India.

POLL RESULTS

BJP won an election for first time from any seat in predominantly Muslim Valley

Gupkar alliance poised to win big in DDC polls

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, DEC. 22

The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), a conglomerate of J&K's mainstream regional Opposition parties and their allies from the national Left parties, is poised to win big in the Union Territory's first-ever District Development Council (DDC) elections.

However, its arch-rival, the BJP, has also performed well, mainly in the Jammu region. What is also spectacular for the BJP's tacit ally, has bagged seven seats and the

first time from any seat in the predominantly Muslim Kashmir Valley.

The PAGD led by former chief minister Farooq Abdullah won 70 of the 177 seats the results of which were declared till this report was filed and is leading in over 40 seats. A total of 48 seats have gone to the BJP, while its candidates have a comfortable lead over their rivals in over 30 seats.

The Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP), known in local political circles as the BJP's tacit ally, has bagged seven seats and the

Congress 14 seats. One seat has gone in favour of the National Panthers Party. The Independents — some known to be proxies of the BJP — and others too have made a mark by winning as many 38 seats so far.

Former chief minister Omar Abdullah termed the results an eye-opener for the BJP and its "proxy political party" (an obvious reference to JKAP), and said the people had rejected the Centre's move to strip J&K of its special status. The people have now spoken & it's for those who believe in democracy to pay heed to these voices."

Among the PAGD winners is Waheed Ur Rehman Parra, a youth leader of its constituent People's Democratic Party (PDP), who was arrested by the National Investigation Agency on

charges of helping separatist militants on November 25, a day after he filed his nomination papers from home district Pulwama.

Parra polled 1,323 votes, defeating his nearest BJP rival Sajad Ahmad Raina by a margin of 1,002 votes. PDP president and former CM Mehbooba Mufti tweeted: "Couldn't be prouder of PDP's parawahid who won his maiden election by a huge margin of votes. Despite being arrested on baseless charges right after filing his nomination people have shown their love &

trust for Waheed. Hope justice prevails."

The BJP's victors from the Valley are Ajaz Hussain (Khomoh-II seat in DDC Srinagar), Ajaz Ahmad Khan (Tulail seat in Bandipora district) and Minha Latief (Kakapora (Pulwama)).

After being declared winner, Hussain told reporters outside the counting centre: "This is a win for the BJP. The propaganda has been bust as people have shown their faith in the Prime Minister and his policies. This is a message that nationalists are prospering in Kashmir."

Maoists force Odia family to flee home

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, DEC. 22

A family of Totuguda village, part of Swabhimani Anchal in Odisha's Malkangiri district on Tuesday left their home after the Maoists threatened them to leave the village suspecting them to be police informers. According to reports, Maoists suspected Manu Galeri as a police informer and asked him to leave the village along with his wife and daughter in a panchayat court held on Monday.

The extremists alleged that Manu is passing information to the police about their move-

ment in the area. They also held him responsible for the encounter by the security personnel in the area on Nov. 26. The Left-Wing Extremists threatened him of death punishment against disobeying their decision. Following the development, Manu and his family took refuge in one of their relative's house. "The Maoists asked me about my role as a police informer. When I refused their allegation, they didn't pay any heed and threatened me of dire consequences if I didn't leave the village immediately. I had no other option but to leave my home," said Manu.



SHORT TAKES
PLANE CRASHES ALONG TEXAS ROAD, 1 KILLED

Grand Prairie, Dec. 22: At least one person was killed when a small plane crashed along a highway service road in North Texas shortly after taking off Monday afternoon, authorities said.

The Federal Aviation Administration said the single-engine Wheeler Express CT crashed about 1 miles (1.61 kilometres) west of the Grand Prairie Municipal Airport, located in the city just west of Dallas.

Grand Prairie Fire Chief Robert Fite said witnesses said the plane came down rapidly, hit a telephone pole and then struggled another 500 feet (152.40 metres) hitting the concrete multiple times before hitting a pickup truck traveling on the service road.

Fite said the person in the truck was slightly injured and was taken to the hospital.

RIVER SURGE HITS CANYON GROUP, 4 DEAD

Mexico City, Dec. 22: Rain unleashed a surge of water that swept away most of a 21-member group on a canyoning expedition in southern Mexico, killing at least four people and leaving three missing, authorities said Monday.

The civil defence office of Veracruz state said five more people were injured in the Rio Oro canyon, near the Gulf of Mexico. The accident occurred Sunday, and the office said searches continued Monday with police, volunteer rescue groups and firefighters participating.

The office did not release the names or nationalities of the victims, but such expeditions are popular among young Mexican tourists.

Canyoning involves hiking, climbing, rappelling and swimming through river canyons. The Rio Oro canyon includes waterfalls and relatively narrow rock passages.

CABINET RESHUFFLED IN INDONESIA

Jakarta, Dec. 22: Indonesia's president announced a Cabinet reshuffle Tuesday following the arrest of two of his ministers on corruption charges and his administration's lackluster pandemic response.

The Cabinet shake-up comes amid surging Coronavirus cases in the world's fourth most populous nation. Indonesia's economy has fallen into recession for the first time since the Asian financial crisis more than two decades ago as the country struggles to control the pandemic.

Four ministers lost their jobs, including Health Minister Terawan Agus Putranto, and two others were rotated to more important positions, ending weeks of speculation about the possible changes. President Joko Widodo chose the mayor of Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, to become the social affairs minister, replacing Juliari Batubara, who was detained by anti-corruption commission on December 6. Batubara was accused of taking bribes related to the government's COVID-19 aid distribution.

U.S. POST OFFICE NAMED AFTER SLAIN SIKH COP

Washington, Dec. 22: US President Donald Trump on Monday signed into law a legislation to name a Texas post office after slain Sikh police officer Sandeep Singh Dhaliwal, who was gunned down in the line of duty during a routine traffic stop in Houston a year ago.

Trump signed H.R. 5317, which designates the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 315 Addicks Howell Road in Houston, Texas, as the Deputy Sandeep Singh Dhaliwal Post Office Building, the White House said in a statement.

The post office named after Dhaliwal in Houston is only the second US post office to be named after an Indian American. The first one was named after the first Indian American Congressman Dalip Singh Saund in Southern California in 2006. The House of Representatives and the Senate had recently passed the legislation in this regard. In his remarks on the Senate floor, Texas Senator Ted Cruz had said that Dhaliwal was a hero and a trailblazer whose commitment to his faith will inspire generations of Sikhs and other religious minorities.

Vax may work on UK virus: Pharma

But CEO of BioNTech says further studies are needed to be completely certain

Berlin, Dec. 22: German pharmaceutical company BioNTech is confident that its Coronavirus vaccine works against the new UK variant, but further studies are needed to be completely sure, its chief executive said Tuesday. The variant, detected mainly in London and the southeast of England in recent weeks, has sparked concern worldwide because of signs that it may spread more easily. While there is no indication it causes more serious illness, numerous countries in Europe and beyond have restricted travel from the UK as a result.

"We don't know at the moment if our vaccine is also able to provide protection against this new variant," CEO Ugur Sahin told a news conference the day after the vaccine was approved for use in the European Union. "But scientifically, it is highly likely that the immune response by this vaccine also can deal with the new virus variants." Sahin said that the proteins on the UK variant are 99% the same as on the prevailing strains, and therefore BioNTech has "scientific confidence" that its vaccine will be effective.

"But we will know it only if the experiment is done and we will need about two weeks from now to get the data," he said. "The likelihood that our vaccine works ... is relatively high." Should the vaccine need to be adjusted for the new variant the company could do so in about 6 weeks. Sahin said, though regulators might have to approve the changes before the shots can be used.

Having to adjust the vaccine would be a blow for the rollout of immunisation campaigns and rein in the pandemic that has so far killed more than 1.7 million people worldwide. BioNTech's vaccine, which was developed together with US pharmaceutical company Pfizer, has been authorised for use in more than 45 countries, including Britain, the United States and the EU.

Hundreds of thousands of people have already received the shots. The companies submitted data to regulators showing the vaccine, which goes by the brand name COMIRNATY in Europe, is 95 per cent effective in preventing infection with Covid-19.

"All countries across the EU that have requested doses will receive them in the next five days, the very initial supply, and that will be followed up next week with further supplies," said Sean Marett, BioNTech's chief commercial officer. Several EU countries have said they plan to start vaccinating on Sunday.

Germany's health minister, Jens Spahn, said he expects the country to receive more than 1.3 million doses by the end of this year. Germany is among European countries that have banned flights from the UK because of the new variant there. —AP

We don't know at the moment if our vaccine is also able to provide protection against this new variant. But scientifically, it is highly likely that the immune response by this vaccine can deal with the new virus variants.

—UGUR SAHIN
BioNTech CEO



US President-elect Joe Biden receives a Covid-19 vaccination from Tabe Mase, Nurse Practitioner and Head of Employee Health Services, at the ChristianaCare campus in Newark, Delaware on Monday. — AFP

Probe finds Trump officials attacked CDC virus reports

● INVESTIGATORS HAVE found evidence of a "political pressure campaign" to "bully" professionals at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in what may have been an attempt to "cripple the nation's Coronavirus response" in a misguided effort to achieve herd immunity.

Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C., said his Coronavirus committee investigators have found evidence of a "political pressure campaign" to "bully" professionals at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in what may have been an attempt to "cripple the

nation's Coronavirus response" in a misguided effort to achieve herd immunity. Herd immunity is shorthand for a theory — rejected by most public health experts — that soci-

ety can be best protected by allowing younger people to get infected and develop natural immunity until vaccines are widely available.

According to Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield of stonewalling his investigation, Clyburn issued subpoenas compelling them to turn over reams of documents and emails by Dec. 30. The committee's findings were detailed in a letter to Azar and Redfield that centred on the actions of two political appointees earlier this year. — AP

Lawmakers tacked on a \$1.4 trillion catchall spending bill and thousands of pages of other end-of-session business in a massive bundle of bipartisan legislation as Capitol Hill prepared to close the books on the year. The bill approved Monday night went to President Donald Trump for his signature, which was expected in the coming days.

The relief package, unveiled Monday afternoon, sped through the House and Senate in a matter of hours. The Senate cleared the massive package by a 92-6 vote after the House approved the Covid-19 package by another lopsided vote, 359-53. The tallies were a bipartisan code to months of partisanship and politicking as lawmakers wrangled over the

Congress okays \$900 bn relief bill

Washington, Dec. 22: Congress passed a \$900 billion pandemic relief package that would finally deliver long-sought cash to businesses and individuals and resources to vaccinate a nation confronting a frightening surge in Covid-19 cases and deaths.

Lawmakers tacked on a \$1.4 trillion catchall spending bill and thousands of pages of other end-of-session business in a massive bundle of bipartisan legislation as Capitol Hill prepared to close the books on the year. The bill approved Monday night went to President Donald Trump for his signature, which was expected in the coming days.

The relief package, unveiled Monday afternoon, sped through the House and Senate in a matter of hours. The Senate cleared the massive package by a 92-6 vote after the House approved the Covid-19 package by another lopsided vote, 359-53. The tallies were a bipartisan code to months of partisanship and politicking as lawmakers wrangled over the

BIDEN PUBLICLY RECEIVES COVID VACCINE SHOT

Washington, Dec. 22: US President-elect Joe Biden on Monday publicly received the Covid-19 vaccine and said he was doing this to demonstrate that people should be ready to take the vaccine when it is available. Biden received the first course of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine at ChristianaCare Hospital.

"I am doing this to demonstrate that people should be prepared when it's available to take the vaccine. There's nothing to worry about," he said. Tabe Masa, Nurse Practitioner and Head of Employee Health Services at ChristianaCare Hospital, administered the vaccine. Dr Jill Biden, having already received the first course of the vaccine earlier in the day, was also present on the occasion.

"Today I received the Covid-19 vaccine. To the scientists and researchers who worked tirelessly to make this possible — thank you. We owe you an awful lot," Biden said in a tweet. "And to the American people — know there is nothing to worry about. When the vaccine is available, I urge you to take it," he said. "This is what leadership looks like," Vice President-elect Kamala Harris said in a tweet.

— PTI

INDO-AMERICAN PHYSICIANS TAKE COVID VACCINE

New York, Dec. 22: Several Indian-American physicians, in the frontline of the fight against the Coronavirus pandemic, are publicly taking the coronavirus vaccine and encouraging others to get the shots, emphasising that the vaccine is the "only saving grace" and a "scientific blessing" that will help the world win the battle against Covid-19.

The US began administering vaccines a week ago and has approved jabs developed by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna.

"We all should take the vaccine. It is very effective and we are seeing good results. The vaccine is the only saving grace we have right now and we have to take it," former President of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) Dr. Surendra Reddy said.

— PTI

Spain holds Christmas lottery

Madrid, Dec. 22: Children from Madrid's San Ildefonso school have begun calling out prize-winning numbers in Spain's bumper Christmas lottery known as "EL Gordo" (the fat one), which is being held on what may have been an attempt to "cripple the

nation's Coronavirus response" in a misguided effort to achieve herd immunity. Herd immunity is shorthand for a theory — rejected by most public health experts — that soci-

ety can be best protected by allowing younger people to get infected and develop natural immunity until vaccines are widely available.

Lawmakers tacked on a

\$1.4 trillion catchall spending bill and thousands of pages of other end-of-session business in a massive bundle of bipartisan legislation as Capitol Hill prepared to close the books on the year. The bill approved Monday night went to President Donald Trump for his signature, which was expected in the coming days.

The relief package, unveiled Monday afternoon, sped through the House and Senate in a matter of hours. The Senate cleared the massive package by a 92-6 vote after the House approved the Covid-19 package by another lopsided vote, 359-53. The tallies were a bipartisan code to months of partisanship and politicking as lawmakers wrangled over the

Scientists probe virus variant's spread in kids

London, Dec. 22: Scientists in the UK are investigating the impact of a new mutant variant of Coronavirus, named VUI-202012/01, on children and whether its faster transmission in parts of England is down to the younger segment of the population.

The government's New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVAG) is monitoring the data to analyse this arc of the variant, which has led over 40 countries, including India, to suspend travel to and from the UK in order to try and contain the more infectious mutation.

Earlier strains of Coronavirus found it harder to infect children than adults, with one explanation being that children have fewer of the doorways called the ACE2 receptor the virus uses to enter a human body's cells.

Professor Wendy Barclay,

from Nervag and Imperial College London, said the mutations to the virus appeared to be making it easier to breach those doorways. "Therefore children are equally susceptible, perhaps, to this virus as adults, and therefore given their mixing patterns, you would expect to see more children being infected," she explained.

Experts do not believe that the new version is any greater threat to children's health and the scientist behind the world's first approved vaccine against Covid-19 has said the

virus works is relatively high," said Ugur Sahin, chief executive of the German co-developer of the vaccine BioNTech.

Speaking on Bild TV in Germany, Sahin said his company would investigate the mutation in the coming days and that he viewed the matter with a

degree of soberness.

His message of some confidence comes as the UK reached the half a million milestone for vaccinations of the jabs, delivered to the elderly and most vulnerable sections of the country's population.

"The likelihood that our vaccine works is relatively high," said Ugur Sahin, chief executive of the German co-developer of the vaccine BioNTech.

"I can today announce that over half a million people, more than 500,000 people in the UK, have now received their first dose," Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced.

— PTI

Drop in kindergarten enrolment is 30% of total reduction across the 33 states

Covid-19: Enrolment in US public schools dips

Washington, Dec. 22: US President Donald Trump on Monday signed into law a legislation to name a Texas post office after slain Sikh police officer Sandeep Singh Dhaliwal, who was gunned down in the line of duty during a routine traffic stop in Houston a year ago.

Trump signed H.R. 5317, which designates the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 315 Addicks Howell Road in Houston, Texas, as the Deputy Sandeep Singh Dhaliwal Post Office Building, the White House said in a statement.

The post office named after Dhaliwal in Houston is only the second US post office to be named after an Indian American. The first one was named after the first Indian American Congressman Dalip Singh Saund in Southern California in 2006. The House of Representatives and the Senate had recently passed the legislation in this regard. In his remarks on the Senate floor, Texas Senator Ted Cruz had said that Dhaliwal was a hero and a trailblazer whose commitment to his faith will inspire generations of Sikhs and other religious minorities.

● AN ANALYSIS of data from 33 states obtained by Chalkbeat and The Associated Press shows that public K-12 enrollment this fall has dropped across those states by more than 500,000 students, or 2%, since the same time last year.

around half a percent in recent years. And the decline is only likely to become more pronounced, as several large states have yet to release information. Chalkbeat and AP surveyed all 50 states, but 17 have not released comparable enrollment numbers yet.

The data, which in many states is preliminary, offers the clearest picture yet of the pandemic's devastating toll on public school enrollment: a decline that could eventually have dire consequences for school budgets that are based on headcounts.

But even more alarming, educators say, is that some of the students who left may not be in school at all. I would like to hope that many of them are from homes where their parents have taken responsibility on their own to provide for their education, said Pedro Noguera, the dean of the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education, adding that affluent families will have an easier time doing that. My fear is that large numbers have simply gotten discouraged and given up. So far, many states have held off on making school budget cuts in the face of enrollment declines. But if enrollment doesn't rise, funding will be hit.

We've been trying to scream from the hilltops for quite some time that this is happening, Kirsten Baesler, North Dakota's schools superintendent, said of the enrollment declines. And it could be a national crisis if we don't put some elbow grease into it.

The declines are driven by a combination of factors brought on by the pandemic. Fewer parents enrol-

led their children in kindergarten, and some students left public schools for other learning environments. At the same time, students who are struggling to attend classes, as many are right now, may have been purged from public school rolls for missing many days in a row. That is a typical practice, though there is some more flexibility now.

The Chalkbeat/AP analysis shows that a drop in kindergarten enrollment accounts for 30% of the total reduction across the 33 states, making it one of the biggest drivers of the nationwide decline. Kindergarten is not required in over half of states.

— AP

4.6K FROM UK QUARANTINED IN TURKEY

Ankara, Dec. 22: Turkey has identified and quarantined 4,603 airline passengers who arrived from the United Kingdom on and after December 14, Turkish Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said Tuesday.

Flights from the UK, South Africa, Denmark and the Netherlands were suspended on Sunday evening in response to a new strain of Coronavirus said to be circulating there. Koca tweeted that 335 passengers flying from those countries at the time of Sunday's announcement were tested for the virus on arrival in Turkey and isolated.

— AP

SHORT TAKES
DINER LEAVES \$5,600 TIP AT OHIO EATERY

Washington, Dec. 22: An anonymous diner at a restaurant in the US state of Ohio has left a tip of \$5,600 for 28 servers as a Christmas gift, leaving the staffers in tears of joy, who say their year has otherwise been ordinary amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chef Moussa Salloukh, who owns Souk Mediterranean Kitchen in Toledo, narrated the December 12 incident when the generous customer left the tip for all his 28 employees, including the ones who were off duty.

In a Facebook, Salloukh wrote: "Be the reason someone believes in the goodness of people." "This really happened. Last night one of our guests left a \$5,600 tip to be given to all of our staff, whether they were working that shift or not. It meant each of our 28 staff members received a \$200 tip. What an amazing gesture of kindness to my employees."

PAN AM BLAST BOMBMAKER CHARGED

Washington, Dec. 22: The Justice Department announced new charges Monday against a Libyan bombmaker in the 1988 explosion of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, an attack that killed 259 people in the air and 11 on the ground.

The charges were revealed on the 32nd anniversary of the bombing and in the final news conference of Attorney General William Barr's tenure, underscoring his personal attachment to a case that unfolded during his first stint at the Justice Department.

He had announced an earlier set of charges against two other Libyan intelligence officials in his capacity as acting attorney general nearly 30 years ago, vowing that the investigation would continue. Though Barr had not appeared at a press conference in months, he led this one two days before his departure as a career bookend.

CHINA ROCKET LAUNCHES 5 SATELLITES

Beijing, Dec. 22: China's new medium-lift carrier rocket Long March-8 made its maiden flight on Tuesday, sending five satellites successfully into planned orbit, the country's space agency said. It was launched from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site, Hainan.

The five experimental satellites will carry out the in-orbit verification of microwave imaging and other technologies. They will conduct experiments in space science, remote sensing and communication technologies, official media reported. The Long March-8 rocket which has a total length of 50.3 meters and a take-off mass of 356 tonnes can carry a payload of at least 4.5 tonnes to a sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of 700 km, the China National Space Administration (CNSA) said.

The rocket fills the gap in China's launch capability to the sun-synchronous orbit from 3 tonnes to 4.5 tonnes, and is of great significance for accelerating the upgrading of launch vehicles, it said.

PDM RELEASES SCHEDULE OF PART 2 PROTEST

Islamabad, Dec. 22: Pakistan's Opposition alliance has announced the schedule of its second wave of protests to oust the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government.

The steering committee of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) — an 11-party Opposition alliance — met on Monday to decide the future course of the 'struggle' against the government. The News quoted PDM spokesman Mian Iftikhar Hussain in a report.

It will start with a public meeting in Mardan in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa on December 23 and another in Larkana in Sindh on December 27 on the eve of the death anniversary of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

The PDM steering committee has decided to expand public meetings in smaller cities as well. The meetings will be held in Bahawalpur on December 30, Malakand January 3, Bannu January 6, Khazdar January 9, Loralai January 13, Tharparkar January 16, Faisalabad January 18, Sargodha January 23 and Sialkot on January 27.



Afghan security personnel stand guard at the site of a roadside bomb attack in Kabul on Tuesday.

— AP

Road bomb kills 5 in Kabul

Four killed were docs; no one claims attack responsibility

Kabul, Dec. 22: A roadside bomb tore through a vehicle in the Afghan capital of Kabul Tuesday, killing at least five people, four of them doctors, police said.

The doctors worked at the Pul-i-Charkhi prison, Kabul's main penitentiary, and were killed as they were on the way to their office in the city's Doghbad neighbourhood.

It was not immediately clear if the doctors were targeted in the attack. The car, a white sedan, did not appear to have any markings on it that indicated

that its passengers were medical workers. The vehicle was almost completely destroyed in the blast.

Ferdaws Farhamarz, a spokesman for the Kabul police chief, said two others were wounded in the attack.

The identity of the fifth person killed was not immediately known.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, which damaged nearby buildings and shops.

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for multiple attacks in the capital of Kabul in recent months, including on educational institutions that killed 50 people, most of them students.

IS also claimed responsibility for Saturday's rocket attacks at the major US base in Afghanistan.

There were no casualties in that assault, according to NATO and provincial officials.

On Sunday at least nine people were killed and around 20 others including a member of the parliament were wounded in Kabul when the MP Khan

Mohammad Wardak's convoy was targeted by a car bomb, according to the Afghan Interior Ministry.

Violence in Afghanistan has spiked even as the Taliban and Afghan government negotiators hold talks in Qatar, trying to hammer out a peace deal that could put an end to decades of war.

At the same time, the Taliban have waged bitter battles against IS fighters, particularly in eastern Afghanistan, while continuing their insurgency against government forces.

— AP

BIDEN PICKS CARDONA AS EDUCATION SECY

Washington, Dec. 22: President-elect Joe Biden has chosen Miguel Cardona, the education commissioner for Connecticut and a former public school teacher, to serve as education secretary. Cardona was appointed to the top education post in Connecticut just months before the Covid-19 pandemic broke out in March.

When schools moved to remote learning, he hurried to deliver more than 100,000 laptops to students across the state. Since then, however, he has increasingly pressed schools to reopen, saying it's harmful to keep students at home. If confirmed, his first task will be to expand that effort across the nation.

— AP

Sudan was removed from the US state sponsors of terrorism blacklist a week ago, less than two months after the Arab nation pledged to normalise ties with Israel.

The move also promises aid, debt relief and investment to a country going through a rocky political transition and struggling under a severe economic crisis exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sudan will receive \$700 million in assistance funds and an additional \$120 million toward the repayment of its debt to the International Monetary Fund. As part of a deal, Sudan agreed to pay \$35 million to compensate survivors and victims' families from the 1998 al-Qaeda twin attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and

Tanzania, and a 2000 attack by the jihadist group on the USS Cole off Yemen's coast. Those attacks were carried out after dictator Omar al-Bashir had allowed then al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden sanctuary in Sudan.

The legislation will help Sudan "reenter the global economy... promote foreign investment and economic growth in the country, and support the civilian-led transition to democracy," said Senator Chris Coons before the bill was passed. Sudan recently warned that delays in its immunity could slow the application of the Israel deal.

— AFP

Reacting angrily to the

new legislation on Tibet, the Chinese Foreign Ministry called on US President Donald Trump not to sign it into law. "Tibet, Taiwan and Hong Kong affairs bear on China's sovereignty and territorial integrity," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said. — PTI

Trump plots futile effort to block Biden win

SENATOR: TREASURY DEPARTMENT EMAIL ACCOUNTS COMPROMISED IN HACK

Washington, Dec. 22: Dozens of email accounts at the Treasury Department were compromised in a massive breach of US government agencies being blamed on Russia, with hackers breaking into systems used by the department's highest-ranking officials, a senator said Monday after being briefed on the matter.

Sen Ron Wyden, D-Ore., provided new details of the hack following a briefing to the Senate Finance Committee by the IRS and

confirmed Biden's victory earlier this month, Trump is turning his attention to Jan. 6. That's when Congress participates in a count of the electoral votes, which Biden won 306-232.

The count, required by

Treasury Department. Wyden said that though there is no indication that taxpayer data was compromised, the hack "appears to be significant," including through the compromise of dozens of email accounts and access to the

— AP

the Constitution, is generally a formality. But members can use the event to object to a state's votes.

— AP

Rep Mo Brooks, R-Ala., said he organised Monday's session with about a dozen House Republicans who are willing to challenge the results. "President Trump is very supportive of our effort," Brooks said in an interview late Monday. With Democrats holding the House majority and several Republican senators now acknowledging Biden's victory, any effort to block congressional approval of the election appears sure to fail.

— AP

Pak nod to Islamabad's Hindu temple

Lahore/Islamabad, Dec. 22: Pakistan government has granted permission for the construction of a Hindu temple in Islamabad, nearly six months after the work at the site was stopped apparently because of the pressure from the radical Islamic groups.

The Capital Development Authority (CDA) issued a notification in Lahore on Monday, giving permission for the construction of the boundary wall for cremation ground for the Hindu community in sector H-9/2, Islamabad.

"Permission to construct the boundary wall around the cremation ground for the Hindu community in sector H-9/2, Islamabad is hereby accorded in accordance with clause 4.I.I of Islamabad Capital Territory Building Control Regulations 2020 ensuring that height of this boundary wall shall not exceed 7'-0," says the notification, a copy of which is available with the PTI.

It may either be a solid wall, or up to one foot it shall consist of solid masonry and remaining portion may be of light material such as fence etc.

The height of the enclosure shall not be less than 3'-0 in any case, it says.

Earlier, some hardline clerics had warned the government not to allow the construction of the temple in Islamabad.

The CDA in July stopped

construction of the boundary wall on the plot meant for the temple, citing legal reasons.

Religious Affairs Minister Pir Noorul Haq Qadri had forwarded the matter to the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) — Pakistan's state-run council of clerics — for its advice along with a summary for grant of Rs 100 million to the prime minister for construction of the building.

In October, the council,

which advises the government on religious issues, said that there are no constitutional or Sharia restrictions on the construction of a temple in Islamabad or any other part of the country.

The decision, signed by 14 CII members, added that Hindus, like all other religious groups in the country, have the constitutional right to a place for last rites according to their faith.

Lal Chand Malhi, a minor

ity lawmaker from the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), in a statement thanked Prime Minister Imran Khan, CII chief Dr Qiba Ayaz and others for granting permission to build the boundary wall.

He said that the minorities in the country enjoy equal rights as promised by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah while lauding the CII for clearing the way for the construction of a temple, a crea-

tum and community hall in Islamabad.

As per plans, the Krish-

na temple will come up in a 20,000 sq ft plot in the capital's H-9 administrative division.

The plot for the first Hi-

nду temple in Islamabad was allotted to the Hindu Panchayat by the CDA in 2017. However, the construction work was delayed due to some formalities, including the approval of the site map and documents from the CDA and other relevant authorities.

Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had allotted the land for the temple.

It will also have a crea-

tion site, apart from space for structures for other religious rites.

— PTI

If the government does

not pass a budget by mid-

night Tuesday, Israeli law stipulates that the Knesset dissolve and triggers snap elections in 90 days. Most avenues to evade that deadline have been closed off.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud and Defence Minister Benny Gantz's Blue and White party have been at loggerheads over the national budget issue since forming a unity govern-

ment in May.

Netanyahu and Gantz

had proposed pushing off

Tuesday's deadline by two

more weeks in an effort to

reach a compromise on

the 2020 budget.

— AP

Oli removed from chairman's post

NCP decides to take disciplinary action

Kathmandu, Dec. 22:

The ruling Nepal Communist Party's Central Committee faction led by Executive Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda on Tuesday removed Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli from the post of chairman and decided to take disciplinary action against him, virtually splitting the party more than two years after its formation.

The Central Committee unanimously nominated senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal as the party's second chairman in place of Oli. Prachanda is the first chairman of the party. "Now Dahal and Nepal will chair the meetings in turn as stated in the party statute," said Rekha Sharma, a central committee member.

"Oli has been expelled as the party chair for going against the party," Sharma was quoted as saying by the Kathmandu Post.

Former prime minister Jhalanath Khanal and former agriculture minister Ghanashyam Bhushal were among the senior leaders who attended the Central Committee meeting. The Prachanda-led faction has also decided to file a separate petition in the Supreme Court seeking reinstatement of the dissolved House of Representatives. Eleven writ petitions have already been filed in the apex court on Sunday and Monday demanding for reinstatement.

The party will also

ing of Prachanda-led faction.

Nearly two-thirds of the Central Committee members were present in the meeting. Out of 44 central committee members, 313 were present at the meeting organized by Prachanda-led faction.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Oli, one of the two chairmen of the ruling party, organised a separate meeting of the Central Committee leaders close to him at Baluwatar, the prime minister's official residence.

Oli announced a new 1,199-member committee to organise the party's general convention on November 18-23 in Kathmandu next year. Earlier the party's convention was scheduled from April 7 to 12, 2021. Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali, a Standing Committee member, was appointed as the new spokesperson of the party by the Oli-led faction.

Nepal on Sunday plunged into political crisis after Oli got the President to dissolve Parliament, a controversial move amidst a prolonged tussle for power between him and ex-premier Prachanda within the ruling dispensation.

— PTI

China imposes US visa limits

Beijing, Dec. 22:

China on Tuesday claimed to have "expelled" a US Navy destroyer which sailed through the disputed South China Sea challenging Beijing's claims over the area. "The Chinese People's Liberation Army Southern Theatre Command organised

naval and aerial forces, warned the US destroyer USS John S McCain for "trespassing into waters near Nansha Islands (Spratly Islands), without the authorisation of the Chinese government and expelled it," Senior Colonel Tian Junli, a spokesperson for the southern command, said.

The act directs the US government to issue economic and visa sanctions against any Chinese official who interferes with the Dalai Lama's succession. The bill also prohibits China from establishing any new consulates in the US until Washington is granted its own diplomatic outpost in Tibet.

Reacting angrily to the

new legislation on Tibet, the Chinese Foreign Ministry called on US President Donald Trump not to sign it into law. "Tibet, Taiwan and Hong Kong affairs bear on China's sovereignty and territorial integrity," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said. — PTI

— AP

Israel on cusp of 4th elections</

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	46006.69 0.99
Nifty 50	13466.30 1.03
S&P 500*	3,692.94 -0.05
Dollar (₹)	73.84 -0.05
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.31 -1.81
Euro (₹)	90.28 -0.48
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,936 ▼480 0.95
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	50.21 -0.70
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.951 -0.005
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.923 -0.018

*As of 9:30 PM IST

Trust AMC eyes ₹10,000 cr AUM in next 2 years

Trust Asset Management Company, the latest to enter the already cluttered ₹30-lakh-crore mutual fund industry with 44 payers, plans to launch its maiden fund within a couple of weeks and garner an AUM of around ₹10,000 crore in the first two years of operations, says a top official. The fund house, which had announced a soft launch earlier this month, is awaiting the Sebi nod for its maiden scheme.

Gold prices fall amid weakness in global mart



Gold prices fell ₹243 to ₹49,653 per 10 gram in Delhi on Tuesday, reflecting the weakness in global price of the precious metal. In the previous trade, the yellow metal had closed at ₹49,896 per 10 gram. Silver prices also declined Rs 216 to ₹67,177 per kg from ₹67,393 per kg in the previous trade. In the global market, gold and silver were trading lower at \$1,868 per ounce and \$25.70 per ounce, respectively.

Manappuram raises ₹400cr via issue of bonds

Manappuram Finance on Tuesday said it has raised ₹400 crore by issuing bonds on private placement basis. The Financial Resources and Management Committee of the board of directors of the company has approved the allotment of 4,000 rated, secured, redeemable non-convertible debentures aggregating to ₹400 crore, Manappuram Finance said in a regulatory filing.

Reliance Capital gets 10 more bids for subsidiaries

Reliance Capital Ltd, part of the debt-ridden ADAG Reliance Group, has received 10 more bids, including from SBI Life, for its subsidiaries, sources said. Earlier this month, the Committee of Debenture Holders had extended the last date for submission of expression of interest to December 17. Following this, 10 new bids have come in for Reliance Capital's assets, taking the total number of bids to 70.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press at Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. #563/9/D89/E, Behind Andhra Bank Pet Basheerbagh, Komally, Ranga Reddy Dist. Editor: T. Venkatram Reddy, RNI Reg No. APENG/2008/24282. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

Apple eyes car rollout by 2024

iPhone maker's self-driving car will have battery with better technology

POWER BATTERY

Central to Apple's self-driving car strategy is a new battery design that could radically reduce the cost of batteries and increase the vehicle's range.

The tech major plans to use a unique "monocell" design that bulks up the individual cells in the battery and frees up space inside the battery pack by eliminating pouches and modules that hold battery materials.

The company is also examining a chemistry for the battery called lithium iron phosphate, which is inherently less likely to overheat and is thus safer than other types of lithium-ion batteries.

Central to Apple's strategy is a new battery design that could "radically" reduce the cost of batteries and increase the vehicle's range, according to a third person who has seen Apple's battery design.

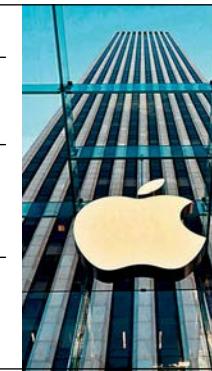
Apple declined to comment on its plans or future products.

Making a vehicle represents a supply chain challenge even for Apple, a company with deep pockets that makes hundreds of millions of electronics products each year with

parts from around the world, but has never made a car. It took Elon Musk's Tesla 17 years before it finally turned a sustained profit making cars.

"If there is one company on the planet that has the resources to do that, it's probably Apple. But at the same time, it's not a cell phone," said a person who worked on Project Titan.

It remains unclear who would assemble an Apple-branded car, but sources have said they expect the company to rely on a man-



ufacturing partner to build vehicles.

And there is still a chance Apple will decide to reduce the scope of its efforts to an autonomous driving system that would be integrated with a car made by a traditional automaker, rather than the iPhone maker selling an Apple-branded car, one of the people added.

Apple has decided to tap outside partners for elements of the system, including lidar sensors, which help self-driving

"It's next level," the person said of Apple's battery technology. "Like the first time you saw the iPhone," he said. — Reuters

Industry bodies to ask Centre to relook at new wage definition

New Delhi, Dec. 22: Representatives of industry bodies, including from CII and Ficci, will hold a meeting with the labour ministry top brass on Thursday to make a case for holding back implementation of new definition of wages, which would increase social security deductions and reduce take-home pay of workers.

The risk assessment needs to include identification of foreseeable threats, assessment of the likelihood and potential damage of these threats, and the sufficiency of controls to mitigate risks.

In a notice last week, the regulator has invited expression of interest (EoI) from solution providers to conduct risk assessment of IT infrastructure, prepare policy documents, standard operating procedures (SOPs), documentation of procedures and processes and other IT documents.

In addition, design specification document need to be prepared for all the selected processes for automation, the regulator added.

"Bidder is supposed to conduct risk assessment of IT infrastructure deployment at Sebi annually, calculate risk score accordingly, review controls and its impact on policies and SOPs and changes required in the reviewed policies and SOPs," the regulator said.

Sebi noted that IT risk assessment helps to determine the vulnerabilities in information systems and the broader IT environment, assess the likelihood that a risky event will occur, and rank risks based on the risk estimate combined with the level of impact that it would cause if it occurs.

It will also help in identifying controls and measures required to be included in IT policies and SOPs, it added. — PTI

Nevertheless, there is a cautious optimism among

wages which is likely to be implemented by April 1, 2021," an industry source said.

The source also said that lobbyists want the government to hold back the new definition and fear that this would result in major cut in take-home salaries

and also put additional burden on employers.

The new definition of wages is part of the Code on Wages, 2019 passed by Parliament last year. The rules to enforce the law was also firmed up last year. Now, its implementation is planned from April

1, 2021 along with other three codes on industrial relations, social security and occupational health safety & working conditions.

The new definition provides that the allowance of an employee cannot be more than 50 per cent of the total salary. This would increase the social security deductions like provident fund.

Presently, the employer and employee contribute 12 per cent each towards the social security schemes run by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation. — PTI

Firms step up hiring after Covid impact

New Delhi, Dec. 22: Adapting to the new hybrid normal of remote and office work, cautiously optimistic corporates are looking to hire more people and provide better appraisals in the new year as they step out of the pandemic-ravaged 2020.

The coronavirus pandemic emerged as the biggest inflection point for the Indian job landscape. For the corporates, work-from-home and remote workers became the new normal and for the professionals, online learning and digital skills took the centre-stage.

In 2020, most companies "deprioritised" their hiring plans amid uncertain economic outlook while industries like travel, hospitality, retail, aviation, real estate, construction and automobile were severely hit.

It will also help in identifying controls and measures required to be included in IT policies and SOPs, it added. — PTI

Nevertheless, there is a cautious optimism among

corporates and it is getting reflected in their recruitment plans for the new year. "Yes, the market is showing positive signs of recovery with almost all industries showing growth in hiring but with caution. Overall, the intent to hire recovered smartly from 11 per cent during the lockdown period to 18 per cent for HY (half year) and this number is growing," Deval Singh, business head, Mobilization (hiring) at TeamLease Services.

While there is caution in hiring, the market is displaying optimism.

He said there is a 50 per cent increase in employment opportunities from the lockdown days.

Pay cuts have been reversed since Diwali in most organisations and bonuses were issued in few. Some IT companies even declared early appraisals, he noted. — PTI

After the receipt of all regulatory approvals, Daimler AG will transform its IT operating model and infrastructure landscape across workplace services, service desk, data centre, networks and SAP Basis together with Infosys," said a joint statement issued by the two companies.

"The partnership will enable the company to deepen its focus on software engineering and to

Daimler AG picks Infosys to manage automotive IT infra

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD

MUMBAI, DEC. 22



German auto major Daimler AG and Infosys on Tuesday entered into a long-term strategic partnership to drive hybrid cloud-powered innovation and IT infrastructure transformation in the automotive sector. Daimler is the company that manufactures Mercedes-Benz cars.

"After the receipt of all regulatory approvals, Daimler AG will transform its IT operating model and infrastructure landscape across workplace services, service desk, data centre, networks and SAP Basis together with Infosys," said a joint statement issued by the two companies.

"The partnership will enable the company to deepen its focus on software engineering and to

establish a fully-scalable on-demand digital IT infrastructure and anytime-anywhere workplace. The collaboration will strengthen its IT capabilities, and Infosys, its automotive expertise."

"Daimler will work towards a model that ensures a robust IT infrastructure across its plants and regions, and supports consolidation of its data centers, scaling its IT operations, and bringing innovations to the fore," the joint statement said.

"As a part of this partnership, automotive IT

infrastructure experts based out of Germany, wider Europe, the US and the APAC region will transition from Daimler AG to Infosys. Infosys is well-placed to realise this transition as an expert having integrated more than 16,000 employees through other partnerships in recent years with a high acceptance, retention and satisfaction rate."

The transfer will also enable Infosys to bolster and grow its automotive business, while offering Daimler employees strong prospects for long-term career growth.

ICICI Bank to focus on MNCS

Mumbai, Dec. 22: With the increase in foreign direct investment into the country, ICICI Bank on Tuesday said it is upping its focus on serving the multinational companies.

The lender is looking at services beyond credit needs of such overseas corporates with an eye on the fee income possibilities, its executive director Vishakha Mulye told reporters.

It already serves about 1,500 MNCs out of an overall market of up to 5,000 companies, she said.

Mulye said factors like aversion to China, favourable demographics and an improvement in the ease of doing business is leading many MNCs to look at investing in India. — PTI

3.75 CR ITRs FILED FOR 2019-20 FISCAL

New Delhi, Dec. 22: As many as 3.75 crore taxpayers have already filed their Income-Tax returns for Assessment Year 2020-21 (fiscal year 2019-20) till December 21, the Income Tax department said on Tuesday.

"Do you know that 3.75 crore taxpayers have already filed their Income Tax Returns for AY 2020-21 till 21st December, 2020? Have you filed yours yet? If not, File NOW!" the Income Tax department tweeted.

This includes 2.17 crore taxpayers filing ITR-1, 79.82 lakh filing ITR-4, 43.18 lakh ITR-3 and 26.56 lakh filing ITR-2. The deadline to file I-T returns by individual taxpayers for 2019-20 fiscal (Assessment Year 2020-21) ends on December 31, 2020, while

Tech firms Glance and VerSe Innovation crossed \$1-billion valuation

Google backs two social media unicorns



can internet peers are steadily amping up their investment in India, latching onto the only other country with a billion-plus population after getting shut out of China. From Amazon.com Inc. to Facebook Inc., they're hoping to get in on the ground floor of what they envision as a smartphone

and online commerce boom that could eventually create a market to rival the world's No. 2 economy.

The online search leader has struck an alliance with Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd. to invest \$4.5 billion and cooperate on technology initiatives including the development of afford-

able mobile phones. But they're also teaming with smaller outfits to target more local audiences.

"In the last two years alone, 100 million new internet users have come online from rural India," Google vice-president Caesar Sengupta wrote in a blog post on Tuesday, announcing its investment in VerSe. "But many of these internet users continue to have trouble finding content to read or services they can use confidently in their own language."

Of the two, Bengaluru-headquartered Glance Digital Experience Pvt is the more nascent outfit. It's the second unicorn to emerge from the group that created InMobi, a

cloud marketing platform that became India's earliest tech startup to reach the milestone. That group was founded by 43-year-old Naveen Tewari, alumnus of the prestigious IIT and the holder of an MBA from Harvard Business School. On Tuesday, his 18-month-old firm announced it had scored \$145 of investment from Google and billionaire Peter Thiel's Mithril Capital.

Glance currently has 115 million daily active users who average 25 minutes on the app each day. The app operates only in the Android ecosystem and has partnered with leading device makers including Samsung Electronics, Xiaomi Corp., Oppo and Vivo. — Bloomberg

the same for taxpayers whose accounts require to be audited is January 31, 2021.

The due date has been extended from July 31 and October 31, 2020, respectively in view of the Covid pandemic.

At the close of deadline for filing ITR without payment of late fees for fiscal 2018-19 (assessment year 2019-20), over 5.65 crore returns were filed by tax-payers.

The deadline last year too was extended till August 31.

Giving a comparative analysis of the ITRs filed, the Income Tax department said 3.63 crore income-tax returns were filed till August 21, 2019, compared to 3.75 crore income-tax returns filed till December 31, 2020, while

SHORT TAKES

Chelsea hammer West Ham 3-0

London: Tammy Abraham hit a quickfire late double on Monday as Chelsea beat West Ham 3-0 to reignite their Premier League challenge after consecutive defeats.

The Hammers proved tricky opponents at an empty Stamford Bridge but lacked the firepower to hurt Frank Lampard's men, who led early through Thiago Silva's bullet header. Chelsea enjoyed a strong start to the season before losses to Everton and Wolves checked their progress but the victory at the London Stadium lifts them into fifth spot. Liverpool have opened up a five-point gap at the top of the table but behind them, just seven points separate second-placed Leicester from 11th-placed Wolves. "It was nice to see that at the end because we had a period at 1-0 where it was tough, we dealt with that well," Lampard said. — AFP

Don's Test cap sells for \$340k

Sydney: An Australian businessman has purchased Donald Bradman's first baggy green Test cap for 450,000 Australian dollars (\$340,000) at auction, the second-highest price paid for a piece of cricket memorabilia.

Peter Freedman, the founder of Rode Microphones who earlier this year paid 9 million Australian dollars (\$6.8 million) at an auction for a guitar used by Nirvana front man Kurt Cobain, plans to tour Bradman's Test debut cap around Australia.

"The price for Bradman's 1928 Australia cap sits behind the 1,007,500 (\$760,000) paid at auction for Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne's Test cap earlier this year the world-record price for an item of cricket memorabilia," auction officials said. — AP

Cole's goal settles point for Odisha

Goa: It could have been another defeat but Odisha FC clawed back a point despite taking the lead early against NorthEast United, drawing 2-2 in a Indian Super League game at the GMC Stadium, here on Tuesday.

Odisha took the lead through Diego Mauricio (26') before Benjamin Lambot (45+1') drew parity. Kwesi Appiah (65') then converted a penalty to put the Highlanders ahead but soon saw his goal cancelled out by Cole Alexander (67').

Odisha named an unchanged eleven from the side that lost to Bengaluru FC while NorthEast coach Gerard Nus rang in four changes with Federico Gallego handed a start. The first half saw a cagey contest with both sides heading into the break level after creating plenty of chances.

The first big chance of the game arrived during the 10th minute but Odisha keeper Arshdeep Singh produced a fine save to deny an opener for the Highlanders. — PTI

Pakistan win third T20 in NZ

Napier, New Zealand: New Test captain Mohammad Rizwan showed his leadership quality in a bold innings of 89 which steered Pakistan to a four-wicket win over New Zealand in the third Twenty20 on Tuesday. Rizwan will lead Pakistan in the two-match Test series against New Zealand starting on Sunday in place of Babar Azam, who is injured.

With Rizwan's leadership, Pakistan surpassed New Zealand's moderate total of 173-7 with two balls to spare. Rizwan batted his team within sight of victory when he was out in the final over at 171-6. — AP

Brief scores: New Zealand 173/7 (Conway 63, Asraf 3-20) lost to Pakistan 177/6 (Rizwan 89, Southee 2-25).

Live on TV

CRICKET

Big Bash League: Brisbane Heat vs Adelaide Strikers from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

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

Italian League: Verona vs Inter Milan from 11 pm; AC Milan vs Lazio from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2; Napoli vs Torino from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1; Roma vs Cagliari from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Six, HD

WWE

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

KOHLI SIGNS OFF

After pep talk, Virat leaves Australian shores for India

Adelaide, Dec. 22: Indian captain Virat Kohli left Australian shores on Tuesday after a pep talk with his beleaguered teammates, handing over the mantle of leading the side to Ajinkya Rahane in the remaining three Tests.

Kohli is coming back to India for the birth of his first child in January. Before boarding his flight back home, the star batsman met his teammates and encouraged them to give their all in the remainder of the series, which the visitors trail 0-1 after the heavy defeat in the opening Test.

Long before setting foot on Australia, Rahane had been entrusted with the responsibility of leading in the team in Kohli's absence after the star had approached the BCCI for paternity leave.

The idea behind organising the pep talk was to boost the confidence of the players and keep them in a positive frame of mind heading into the crucial Boxing Day Test in Melbourne.

India lost the lung-opener here inside three days after crumbling to their lowest Test score of 36.

The second Test is scheduled to be held at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) from December 26-30.

Kohli, who has been leading the Test team since 2014, urged his players to show intent and express themselves on the field without any inhibition.

While Kohli has departed for India, his white-ball deputy Rohit Sharma is quarantining in Sydney.

Kohli was India's best performer with the bat in the series opener, top-scoring with a sedate 74 in their first innings before being run out following a misunderstanding with Rahane. — PTI

Before boarding his flight back home, Virat Kohli met his teammates and encouraged them to give their all in the remainder of the series



Australia's Steve Smith (left) and Virat Kohli during the first Test in Adelaide. — AFP

Virat deserves respect: Smith

Adelaide, Dec. 22: Australian batsman Steve Smith on Tuesday said Virat Kohli deserves credit for prioritising the birth of his child over cricket as "there would have been a lot of pressure" on the India skipper to stay for the entire duration of the ongoing Test series.

India are 0-1 down in the four-match rubber after losing the opening Test by eight wickets during which they also collapsed to their lowest Test score.

Kohli will head home on

Tuesday. "Obviously, it's a big loss for India, not having him for the rest of the series. We just have to look at the way he played in the first innings. That was a pretty class display against some good bowling on a wicket that was doing a bit," Smith said during a virtual press conference.

"I just fist-pumped him at the end (of first Test) and said 'Mate safe travels, hope everything goes well with the baby, and pass on my best to your wife.' That was about it,"

Smith said.

"I'm sure there would have been a lot of pressure for him to stay but to stand up and want to go home for the birth of his first child, it's a credit for him. It's a milestone that he certainly wouldn't want to miss."

Kohli's 74 was the highest score by any batsman on either side in the first innings of the pink-ball day/night Test while Smith was out for 1.

"But I think overall, I'd like to personally play red ball cricket a lot," Smith said. — PTI

ENGLAND TOUR STILL ON DESPITE NEW COVID WAVE

Colombo, Dec. 22: The new strain of Covid-19 that has hit the United Kingdom will not jeopardise England's upcoming tour of Sri Lanka even though the development is a cause of concern, the country's cricket board (SLC) said on Tuesday.

Sri Lanka Cricket's (SLC) medical team feels that the tour starting January 14 is on schedule but additional Covid-19 protocols might be enforced for the visitors either before leaving their country or after arriving here.

SLC's medical team is expected to hold discussions with their English counterparts on Tuesday on the matter.

"I don't think we should (look at the new strain as something that jeopardises the

tour)," said SL team's doctor Daminda Atanayake.

"We might have to take extra precautions, but we don't need to stop the tour."

As per the itinerary, the England squad is scheduled to fly to SL on a chartered flight on January 2.

After their arrival here, the tourists would be required to undergo a three-day isolated quarantine, and will only begin their training after testing negative.

The English players will mingle with their Sri Lankan counterparts only after 10 days.

"When they come in they will not be in contact with my local people or the local providers, and they will be in quarantine. I don't see why we need to restrict them completely."

— PTI

Waugh sees 'no hope' of India bouncing back

Melbourne, Dec. 22: The Indian cricket team has "no hope" of making a comeback after the humiliation in Adelaide and will suffer a 4-0 whitewash in the four-match Test series against Australia, feels former batsman Mark Waugh.

India were bundled out for their lowest-ever Test score of 36 in their second innings as Australia claimed an eight-wicket win in the pink-ball Test to take a 1-0 lead in the series.

Asked if India could bounce back after losing the first Test, Waugh said: "No hope, no hope."

"I thought Adelaide was the Test that they could win on paper and with Virat Kohli here for just the one Test. I thought the conditions would suit them."

"Just can't see how they can bounce back (after) Australia whitewashed them on the third day. So

no' is the answer four-nil to Australia," he said on Fox Cricket.

CA SAYS SMITH NOT ONLY CAPTAINCY CANDIDATE

Batting mainstay Steve Smith's reappointment as Australia's Test captain is far from certain as the sport's governing body in the country feels there are



Mark Waugh

some "great young leaders" coming through the system.

Smith was removed from captaincy due to his involvement in the 2018 ball-tampering scandal, with Cricket Australia (CA) appointing Tim Paine to the top job.

However, there have been speculations recently that Smith could be reinstated as skipper.

Asked about the board's view, CA chairman Earl Eddings told ESPNcricinfo: "First of all we've got three great captains in Meg, Aaron and Tim. We've got some great young leaders coming through. So it's not just about should Steve take over, it's about what's best overall."

"Steve's a great young man and he was a good captain when he was there. Like any succession there's planning in place." — PTI

Kakatiya crack whip

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

Sidhu and Sidharth clinched the Man of the Match awards on the inaugural day of the Telangana Cricket Association Kakatiya Cup T20 tournament on Tuesday.

Sent in to bat, Kakatiya Kings put up decent 156 for 8 on board, which was too much for the Shatavahana Warriors, who replied with a paltry 78 for 7. Kakatiya's Sidhu shone both with the bat (23 runs) and ball (2 for 6).

In another match, Mulugu Masters wreaked havoc on Singareni Blasters. Batting first Mulugu made 197 for 9 riding on Sameer's 45 and Sidharth's

steady 38. In reply, the Singareni side failed to put up any resistance and were all out for a mere 112.

As many as 20 teams combined with players from 32 districts have been divided into four groups in the tournament which is being played on a knockout basis.

Brief scores:

- Kakatiya Kings 156/8 in 20 overs (D. Vamsi Krishna 27, Sidhu 23, Srikanth 2/20) bt Shatavahana Warriors 78/7 in 20 overs (A. Vijay Kumar 14, Sai Kumar 2/5, Sidhu 2/6).
- Mulugu Masters 197/9 in 20 overs (Sameer 45, Sidharth 38, Manoj Kandula 4/29) bt Singareni Blasters 112 in 20 overs (Sameer 34, Sagar 3/19).

Regd. No. H/SD/509/2018-20
Printed and Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press situated at Plot No. 9 Alwal Village, Vallabh Nagar Taluk, Medchal Malkajgiri Dist. Telangana and Published at 36, S.D. Road, Secunderabad-3.

RNI Registration No. 3081/1957. Editor: Kaushik Mitter

Charan, Akshath, Prudhvi, Nilesh hit tons
Vamshi, Prashant, Abhishek, Shashank, Aamir, Tanay top bowlers

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 22

A clutch of performances dominated the Hyderabad Cricket Association's A-1 Division three-day league matches here on Tuesday.

The day infused with centuries saw some great knocks from MSR Charan (127) and Akshath Reddy (105) of Income Tax followed by a superb innings of 125 by M. Prudhvi of R. Dayanand. Pabba Nilesh (103) of Balaji CC was the other centurion.

On the bowling side, a wave of fifers swept through. Evergreen's Vamshi Krishna (5 for 22), Rohit XI's Prashant Raj (5 for 31), Sportive CC's Abhishek Murgan (5 for 32),

Harshavardhan (52), Praneeth Kumar (31 n.o.), Vidyandan Reddy (4/72) and Deccan Chronicle's R. Dayanand (31 in 81 overs) were among the top performers.

Geeta Krishna (97, Arvind Swamy 37, Parai 34, Md Abrar Mooinuddin 37/4, Abinav 36/8) vs Jai Bhagat (23 for no loss in 7 overs).

Central Excise (196 in 59.3 overs (T. P. Anirudh 69, Rithik Yadav 4/43) vs Sporting XI/II in 21 overs Ankur Tiwari 46 batting, Himalay Agarwal 59 batting)

Concorde CC (217 in 58.1 overs (M. Pratyush 39, Mohd Asaduddin 40, Sahendra Mallu 72, Neel Charkarvarthy 4/43, Vishal 3/69) vs Zinda CC 141/5 in 29.3 overs (Kaushik Reddy 44, Sal Supriti 49) vs Sporting XI/II in 21 overs Ankur Tiwari 46 batting, Himalay Agarwal 59 batting)

AOC (355/8 in 75 overs (Nakul Varma 87, Shivam Tiwari 37, Amit Pacheria 30, Rahul Singh 4/44, Divesh Pathania 55, Sachin Shinde 69, Atul Vyas 4/78) vs Ensource)

Sri Chakra (286 in 88.2 overs (Sai Siddhartha 31, D. Suresh 31, Somasekhar M. 77, Jafar 32 n.o., Azmath Khan 3/35) vs Mahmood CC.

Charniar CC 127/2 in 41 overs (N. Rakesh 42, Sathwik Reddy 30, Khalsa 38). EMC (286 in 88.2 overs (Sai Siddhartha 31, D. Suresh 31, Somasekhar M. 77, Jafar 32 n.o., Azmath Khan 3/35) vs Mahmood CC.

Charniar CC 127/2 in 41 overs (N. Rakesh 42, Sathwik Reddy 30, Khalsa 38). EMC vs Jai Hanuman (Day 1 called off without a ball being bowled).

MUMBAI NIGHTCLUB | RAID

Raina sorry for code violation



Suresh Raina

Susanne Khan were arrested after a raid at a posh club near the Mumbai airport on Tuesday for violating social distancing norms.

According to the police, those arrested in the raid at the Dragonfly Experience included seven staffers of the club.

The 13 women, who were arrested, were allowed to leave after being served notices. The men were shown as arrested and granted bail later.

Police said the raid was conducted after the club remained open beyond the permissible time limit and violated Covid-19 norms.

Raina, who has played 18 Tests, 226 ODIs and 78 T20s, announced retirement from international cricket in August earlier this year. — PTI



P.V. Sindhu