

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | WEDNESDAY | 16 DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER

Max: 31.0°C
Min: 19.0°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: NIL

Forecast: Mostly Clear.
Max/Min temp.
31/19 °C

COVID-19

CASES (+25,901)
DEATHS (+365)
99,32,364
1,44,110
covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+491) (+3)
TS: 2,78,215 1,499
(+500) (+5)
AP: 8,76,336 7,064

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

7,35,16,121
DEATHS 16,34,749
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 218
worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Margasira Shuddha Vidya till 4.59 pm
Star: Purvashada till 8.08 pm
Varjyam: Shesha Varjyam till 8.05 am; 3.51 am to 5.24 am (Thursday)
Durmuhurtam: 11.49 am to 12.33 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Akhri 30, 1442 AH
PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)
Fajar: 5.30 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 4.15 pm
Maghrib: 5.38 pm
Isha: 8.30 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.25 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.32 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 7.55 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 8.18 PM

COUNTER POINT

We are lucky to be blessed with unadulterated grass!

IN BRIEF

Covid tally rises in IIT-Madras

Chennai: Seventy nine more people have tested positive for coronavirus on the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras campus here, taking the tally in the institution to 183, a senior health official said on Tuesday. Out of the 978 samples lifted from the IIT-M since December 1, a total of 183 people have tested positive till date and results for 25 specimens alone were yet to be

North India in grip of cold wave

New Delhi: Cold conditions intensified in parts of north India on Tuesday and dense fog engulfed many states as Delhi registered its lowest minimum temperature of the season so far while night temperatures in Kashmir dipped below the freezing point.

SC suggests docs be given break

New Delhi: The Supreme Court asked the Centre on Tuesday to consider granting a break to doctors engaged in Covid duty for the last eight months. The top court said that continuous work might be affecting mental health of doctors. A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, R.S. Reddy and M.R. Shah, which is hearing a *suo motu* case.

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Didi dares Centre to impose Prez rule

WORLD | 5

Time to turn the page, says Biden after EC win

SPORTS | 8

Kohli climbs to second in Test rankings



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AP wants Centre notification for relocation of High Court

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday met Union home minister Amit Shah and will be meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other ministers on Wednesday. The AP CM is in Delhi to pursue various matters pertaining to the state with different Union ministers and the Prime Minister.

The Chief Minister broached the Polavaram issue and submitted a memorandum to Amit Shah. He requested for approval of ₹55,656 crore for Polavaram project as per Second Revised Cost Estimate and sought direc-



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy calls on Union home minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on Tuesday. —DC

tions to Central water and finance ministries in this regard. He further wanted reimbursement of land acquisition costs and rehabilitation works as per the

2013 Land Acquisition Act for Polavaram project. He stated that the Centre is yet to reimburse ₹1,779 crore spent by the AP in construction of dam.

Jagan stated that bills from December 2018 are pending and any delay in construction of the project will further increase the project cost.

CM Jagan said, “We have planned to decentralise the capital as part of integrated development of AP state. We have enacted legislation in August making Visakhapatnam the executive capital, Amaravati the legislative capital and Kurnool the judicial capital.”

The CM thus wanted the centre to start the process of relocating the High Court to Kurnool and issue of notification for the same.

■ Page 2: Jagan seeks adequate flood relief

Free for all in Karnataka council



BJP and Congress leaders clash over the chairman post during the Karnataka Legislative Council in Bengaluru on Tuesday. Congress MLCs heckled and pushed deputy chairman of the Legislative Council, S.L. Dharme Gowda, from his seat. — PTI

Maheshwari to be shifted, Goswami new CJ

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

Andhra Pradesh Chief Justice J.K. Maheshwari is likely to be shifted to Sikkim High Court.

The new Chief Justice will be appointed by the President in a few days. According to sources, Sikkim High Court Chief Justice Arup Kumar Goswami was actively considered for the AP High Court while Madhya

Pradesh High Court acting Chief Justice Sanjay Yadav's name also cropped up.

The transfer of Justice Maheshwari came a month after Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy complained to the Centre against the former and a few other judges besides writing a letter to Supreme Court Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and releasing the same to media.



Justice Arup Kumar Goswami

Sources said the Supreme Court Collegium which met on Monday

decided to transfer the incumbent and the top leadership at the Centre informed the Chief Minister of the developments following which he rushed to New Delhi to meet Union home minister Amit Shah.

The judiciary and executive in the state were on a collision path in the last one year. It all started with a few judgments given by the Chief Justice and other judges including the

removal of YSR Congress flag colours on village secretariat buildings and scrapping of state order making English medium mandatory in government schools.

The High Court had also set aside the appointment of new State Election Commissioner in place of N. Ramesh Kumar and reinstated the latter.

■ Page 2: Tussle reached flashpoint in Amaravati case

Lorry mows down 5 on way to church

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL DEC. 15

In a tragic incident, five people, including four children, were killed and eleven others sustained injuries when a mini lorry mowed them down on National Highway-40 at Yerraguntla village near Sirivelu in Nandyal division.

Around 20 to 30 persons were going to attend a candle service at a church at 5 am on Tuesday. Police said the deceased were U. Jhansi, 15, Dasari Sushmita, 14, Saigalla Vamsi, 12, Dasari Harsha Vardhan, 8 and Thota Suvarna, 42.

The injured were rushed to the government hospitals in Nandyal and Kurnool.

■ Page 2: Second wave palpable, says AP

■ Page 2: Three people died on the spot

■ Page 2: Advent joy shortlived

JOY OF SINGING CAROLS CRUSHED BY SUDDEN DEATH

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL DEC. 15

The joy of singing carols was short-lived in the macabre mishap in the sleepy Yerraguntla village near Sirivelu on Tuesday. The residents of SC Colony have been observing early morning service from 4 am for the past one week for the second coming of the Saviour. The small community of local church were resolutely praying for liberation from Coronavirus.

■ Page 2: Second wave palpable, says AP

■ Page 2: Three people died on the spot

■ Page 2: Advent joy shortlived

Farmers' leaders to block Delhi-Noida border

PM sees conspiracy behind farmers' stir

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 15

With no end in sight to the deadlock between the agitating farmers and the Centre even after multiple rounds of talks, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday that a “big conspiracy” was going on around Delhi to confuse the protesters and that his government was always committed to farmers' welfare and will keep addressing their concerns.

Attacking the Opposition and other activists protesting against the new agriculture-related laws, Mr Modi said: “They also wanted these reforms but they couldn't (pass them) when they were in power. But now that we have managed to do it, they are misleading the farmers.”

Speaking at the inauguration of mega energy projects in Kutch, Mr Modi said: “A conspiracy is going on around Delhi to confuse the farmers. They are being scared that after the new agricultural reforms, the land of the farmers will be occupied by others. Tell me, if a dairy has a contract of collecting milk from you, do they take away your cattle too?”

At the Singhu border between Delhi and Haryana, the farmers' leaders said that the fight over the new farm laws had reached a stage where they are “determined to win it, no matter what”. They have also threatened to completely block the Delhi-Noida border crossings on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, continuing his tirade against the Centre for not repealing the new farm laws, Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal said his former ally BJP was the real “tukde tukde gang” which was trying to push patriotic Punjab into communal flames. He



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the foundation stone laying ceremony of projects in Kutch. — PTI

Winter Session of Parl scrapped

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 15

The Winter Session of Parliament that usually begins in the last week of November won't take place this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the government will convene the Budget Session in January 2021, parliamentary affairs minister Prahlad Joshi said in a letter to Congress' Lok Sabha leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

“The winter months are very crucial for managing the pandemic because of a recent spurt in cases dur-

ing this period, particularly in Delhi. We are in the middle of December and a Covid vaccine is expected very soon,” Mr Joshi said.

Attacking the government over the issue, the Congress said Tuesday the “decimation of parliamentary democracy is complete” and asked why, if election campaigning can be done amid the pandemic, the session could not be held. Senior party leader and Rajya Sabha chief whip Jairam Ramesh also said Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad wasn't consulted.

continue talks but won't take back the laws.

Union minister Kailash Choudhary said the Centre will soon call the farmers' leaders for the next round of talks to end the deadlock over the farm laws. The protests against the new laws is likely to intensify further as more farmers are expected to join the agitation at Delhi's borders. Over 2,000 women from the families of those protesting at the Singhu border are likely to join the demonstration in the coming days.

BORIS TO BE CHIEF GUEST ON REPUBLIC DAY

London, Dec. 15: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has accepted his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi's invitation to be the chief guest at the Republic Day parade on January 26, Downing Street said here on Tuesday, marking his first major bilateral visit since taking office last year and the first since Britain's exit from the European Union.

“I am delighted to be visiting India at the start of an exciting year for UK, and look forward to delivering the quantum leap in our bilateral relationship that Prime Minister Modi and I have pledged to achieve,” said Johnson. “As a key player in the Indo-Pacific region, India is an increasingly indispensable partner for the UK as we work to boost jobs,” he said. — PTI

RAJA CHARI TO LEAD SPACEX TEAM TO ISS

Washington, Dec. 15: NASA and European Space Agency (ESA) have selected three astronauts, including Indian-American Raja Chari, as crew members for SpaceX mission to the International Space Station, which is expected to launch in the autumn of 2021. — Agencies

SHORT TAKES

AP POLICE BAGS 2ND RANK IN ICJS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

The Andhra Pradesh Police has been ranked second in the implementation and utilisation of the Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS). Maharashtra ranked first in ICJS implementation and usage and Telangana was ranked third in the awards announced by the Central government on Tuesday.

DGP Gautam Sawang received the award in a virtual mode from minister of state for home affairs G. Kishan Reddy.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and AP home minister Mekathoti Sucharita expressed their delight over the AP Police winning the prestigious national award and congratulated the personnel for their services.

In a separate programme, Sawang launched a week-long "Anti-Drug Drive" at the DGP office on Tuesday. The "Anti-Drug Drive" banner was unveiled.

Speaking on the occasion, the DGP said that various awareness programmes under which rallies and enforcement works will be carried during the week-long drive. He appreciated the Visakhapatnam rural SP and Srikakulam SP who destroyed the banned Ganja tactfully during the recent past. He asked all the other SPs in the state to take measures to curb the ganja menace.

THREE DIED ON THE SPOT, 2 SUCCUMB IN HOSPITAL

FROM PAGE 1

While three people died on the spot, two others succumbed in the hospital, said Sirivella sub Inspector Chandrababu. A case of death due to negligence has been registered.

Allagadda DSP Rajendra said that an Eicher vehicle was coming from Hyderabad to Mydukuru. The vehicle's headlights were not working and the driver was in a sleepy condition, he said. The vehicle rammed through the people who were waiting on the left side of the road.

Kurnool SP Kagineeli Fakkeerapa visited the spot and also called on the victims in the hospital.

ADVENT JOY SHORTLIVED IN YERRAGUNTALA

FROM PAGE 1

The Church of South India Nandyal Diocese Vice-President Yesuratnam said that children were enthusiastically taking part in the Advent service.

"This is Advent, season of promise. The crushing down of four children who were joyfully taking part in Advent service has shaken the faithful," he said.

A villager of Yerraguntla said, "we go around the village with candles in hand in a pre-dawn service singing Andhra Christava Songs, particularly 228, 229 and 104 during the season. Braving the chill and coldness of December, children joined this service. We are now left in a sea of darkness."

PADAYATRA SEEKS CANCELLATION OF DECISION ON THREE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

Amaravati Praja Padayatra has demanded that the YSR Congress government withdraw its decision of having three capitals for the state and continue Amaravati as the sole capital of AP.

Pro-Amaravati leaders and activists in large numbers joined padayatra conducted in Vijayawada city on Tuesday evening. Addressing the gathering, former minister and TD senior leader Devineni Umamaheswara Rao said continuation of pro-Amaravati capital movement for the past one year reflects the support of people to Amaravati as the lone capital of AP. He asserted that agitations in Amaravati will continue till the decision of having three capitals is cancelled.

TD MLA Gadde Rammohan lamented that when nearly 30,000 farmers had given up their farmlands for a world class capital at Amaravati,

Farmers in dire straits as rabi season beckons

Govt urged to incorporate details of all affected farmers in e-Karshak app

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

Many farmers are crest-fallen having lost their kharif crops because of continuous rainfall and cyclone 'Nivar'.

Adding to their woes is their rabi season is hit due to shortage of farm labourers. The only saving grace has been in the form of input subsidy and supply of subsidised seed by the state government.

As per a preliminary report about crop Nivar destroyed 6.62 lakh hectares causing production a loss of 12.99 lakh metric tonnes worth of ₹2,831.68 crore.

The biggest worry the farmers are facing at present is shortage of farm

- Total area sown is 36.49 lakh hectares as against normal area of 37.42 lakh hectares during kharif 2020.

- Total area sown during rabi 2020-21 is 7.38 lakh hectares so far as against normal area of 22.75 lakh hectares.

- Crops have been damaged in 5.05 lakh hectares due to Nivar affecting 7.5 lakh farmers with input subsidy estimated at ₹657 cr.

- Horticulture crops damaged in 24,833 hectares affecting 47,932 farmers with input subsidy estimated at ₹4,196 cr.

labourers, who have returned to their native villages following Covid-19. Farmers complain that the available workers, taking advantage of the situation, are demanding ₹600

to ₹800 per day. Moreover, harvesting machines are also unable to harvest the lodged crops, forcing a section of farmers to plough the land even with the saved crop, to be prepared

for rabi season. Farmers complain that owners of harvesting machines are charging ₹8,000 to ₹11,000 per acre against the earlier price of ₹2,500-3,500.

A farmer from Veliveru village of Tsundur mandal in Guntur district P. Subba Rao said framing has ceased to be productive.

AP Farmers Federation president Y. Nagendra Nath said, "seeing the pathetic situation, we appeal to the state government to help farmers raise crops again."

Farmers urged the state government to incorporate details of all affected farmers in e-Karshak app by taking up extensive survey as benefits are reaching select few farmers.



Minister for endowments Velampalli Srinivasa Rao garlands the statue of Potti Sriramulu during a programme held on his death anniversary at One Town in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

— DC

Jagan pays rich tributes to Sriramulu, Vallabhbhai

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy paid rich tributes to Amarajeivi Potti Sreeramulu and first deputy prime minister and Union home minister Sardar Vallabhai Patel on their death anniversary at the camp office here on Tuesday.

The Chief Minister offered floral tributes to the portraits of Potti Sreeramulu and Sardar Vallabhai Patel. Ministers Kurasala Kannababu, Chellaboina Venugopala Krihnsa, AP Agri Mission Vice-Chairman M.V.S. Nagi Reddy and others were present.

In a separate programme at Vijayawada, minister for endowments Velampalli Srinivasa paid floral tributes to the statue of Potti Sreeramulu at Samarangam Chowk. The minister alleged that Chandrababu Naidu

insulted Amarajeivi Sriramulu by conducting Nava Nirmana Deekshas ignoring the great leader who sacrificed his life for AP formation. He said that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy honouring the sacrifice of Amarajeivi and appealed to the youth to remember the sacrifice of the great leader which led to the formation of separate AP.

Naidu asks people for sacrifices in agitations against YSRC regime

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu called upon all sections of AP people to follow the footsteps of Potti Sriramulu and prepare to make any sacrifice in the agitation against the atrocious and lawless Jagan Mohan Reddy regime in the state.

He paid rich tributes to Potti Sriramulu and recalled how Amarajeivi fought courageously against injustice and disrespect meted out to the Telugu people prior to the formation of separate Andhra state. While Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel united the whole of India, it was Potti Sriramulu who laid down his life for uniting all the Telugu-speaking people, Naidu said.

Addressing a meeting held to mark the death anniversary of Potti Sriramulu, the TD chief asserted that the Amaravati Capital City project was taken to con-

nect the entire AP and create huge potential for future economic growth of all the 13 districts in the state. He claimed that it was with the inspiration provided by Sriramulu that Amaravati was visualised as an effective income-generating growth engine for all the people of the state. He alleged that Jagan Mohan Reddy was following a mad Tughlaq policy to ruin the capital and the future opportunities for the people.

Alleging that the oppressive Pulivendula settlements were destroying the state, Naidu said that the top YSRC leaders were indulging in wholesale corruption while their party lower-level leaders were resorting to retail corruption. Unfortunately, even the police force became sycophants, Naidu said.

He alleged that the police stations turned into venues for birthday parties and Christmas events.

COUNTER | ATTACK

Govt chief whip says Jagan Mohan Reddy is keen to develop all the three regions

Naidu is anti-Seema, North Andhra, says Srikanth

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

In a vitriolic attack on Chandrababu Naidu for encouraging Amaravati agitations, government chief whip Gadikota Srikanth Reddy said that the Opposition leader is indeed taking up anti-Rayalaseema, anti-North Andhra and anti-Amaravati development agitations.

Speaking to the media here on Tuesday, Srikanth Reddy said that Naidu had spent ₹2,000 crore for building a temporary Assembly during his government while Parliament is

now being constructed at a cost of ₹850 crore.

Recalling the statement of Naidu about his Amaravati design was copied by Union government for Parliament new buildings, he challenged Naidu to write a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying that Parliament design is being copied from his Amaravati designs.

Srikanth Reddy said that Naidu has been crying foul to safeguard his ill-gotten properties through Amaravati farmers' protest.

He said that Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government is farmer-friendly but

GREATER RAYALASEEMA MOVEMENT PICKS UP

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, DEC. 15

Disillusioned with Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government, a sub-regional group is front loading the aspirations of Rayalaseema with the promise of a "Greater Rayalaseema" state. It now conceptualises by including Nellore and

never cheat on them. He further said that Naidu, who announced to take part in padayatra for Amaravati protests, is actually protesting against the



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy arrives at Delhi Airport on Tuesday.

— D. Kamraj

Jagan seeks adequate flood relief

FROM PAGE 1

CM Jagan also sought adequate flood relief for families affected by the Cyclone Nivar.

Explaining the manner in which poor people are being assisted through various schemes during the most critical period of Covid-19, CM Jagan underlined that the state government is ready in all respects for distributing Corona vaccine in order of priority as soon as it became available. The state is ready for setting up and maintaining the most crucial cold chains in supply of the vaccine.

The Chief Minister reiterated AP's demand for granting it a special category status, which will enable the state in achieving self-sufficiency. He also sought immediate release of GST arrears amounting to Rs. 4308.46 crore to the state from April to September 2020.

CM Jagan wanted release of the 14th Finance Commission grants of Rs. 1,111.53 crore with immediate effect and further release 15th Finance Commission grants of Rs. 1,954.5 crore due to local bodies. He asked for release Rs. 3,801.98 crore pending

funds of NREGS.

He explained to the centre that the state government has decided to set up 16 new medical colleges to strengthen healthcare system in AP and sought immediate approval of the new medical colleges.

The Chief Minister also asked the Union home minister to complete the process for immediate approval of Disha bill. He sought completion of the process for getting the President's approval for the AP Land Titling Authority Bill, which would enable comprehensive land survey from December 21.

Crop insurance without paying premium

FROM PAGE 1

The CM said he had introduced a free crop insurance scheme without levying any burden of premium on farmers.

Reddy said, "Earlier for availing insurance scheme, farmers had to pay his share, while both State and Central governments would pay an even share of premium amount. However, neither the State nor the Centre used to pursue the insurance claims resulting in the farmers either receiving the maturity amount after a long time or end up losing the insurance. In order to resolve this, the government has taken up the issue to benefit farmers and process the claims in a fast-track mode, besides paying the entire premium on behalf of farmers."

The Chief Minister stated that between 2016 and 2019, the previous government had spent an average of ₹393 crore per annum towards insurance premium, while the farmers had paid about ₹290 crore. He further stated that while "only about 20 lakh farmers were enrolled for insurance cover during the Telugu Desam regime, now about 49.80 lakh farmers have been brought under insurance cover, where the State government is paying ₹971 crore towards premium during 2019-20."

He elaborated "In 2016-17, only 17.79 lakh farmers had insurance cover. In 2017-18, 18.22 lakh farmers and in 2018-19, around 24.83 lakh farmers were brought under it. During our tenure,

about 49.80 lakh farmers were brought under insurance cover, under which 45.96 lakh hectares of land was covered with insurance. Following the Nivar Cyclone, crop loss enumeration was done and the details will be displayed at Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) along with village secretariats and compensation would be paid by December 31."

The Chief Minister said that the government has been working to safeguard the interests of the farmers and thus established 10641 RBKs along with village secretariats to benefit the farmers. Taking transparency in governance to the next level, the state government brought e-cropping, where all details of the crops will be uploaded to the e-crop database, including the crop loss data. All these details, compensation for the crop loss will be displayed at RBKs for social audit and those missing out from the list can get enrolled at RBK itself. Not just from seeds to marketing but RBKs also addresses crop loss, he said.

"Crop loss during 2020 will be paid in April after the Planning Department submits the report. The government is also purchasing germinated and decoloured crops at a graded MSP to ensure that no farmer suffers financially."

Ministers K Kannaababu, Chelluboina Venugopala Krishna, AP Agri Mission Vice-Chairman MVS Nagi Reddy and officials participated in the meeting.

TUSSLE REACHED FLASHPOINT IN AMARAVATI CASE

FROM PAGE 1

The government took exception to the Chief Justice making certain comments on shifting of capital and stalling the process besides ordering CBI probe in a case involving Dr Sudhakar, who created a ruckus in Visakhapatnam in an inebriated condition after he was suspended from service.

The tussle reached a flashpoint with Justice Maheshwari suspending probe into Amaravati land scam and issuing gag order on media to not report case details involving former Advocate-General Dammalapati Srinivas.

ARRANGEMENTS UNDER PROGRESS FOR CM'S VISIT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

Arrangements are under progress for the launch of YSR Jagananna Saswatha Bhu Hakku-Bhu Raksha Scheme at Takkellapadu in Jaggayapeta mandal to conduct survey of lands in Andhra Pradesh state. Minister for transport Perni Venkataramaiah alias Nani has reviewed arrangements of the programme with various officials and legislators on Tuesday.

Nani said that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will launch the programme on December 21 under which resurvey of lands will be commenced and said that this resurvey is going to be conducted after a gap of 100 years.

ty and is going against the development.

Srikanth Reddy said that the Chief Minister on Tuesday had directly credited ₹1,252 crore into the accounts of farmers under crop insurance for 2019 and proved again that his government is biased towards farmers.

While the government has mooted to distribute 54,000 house site pattas in Amaravati, Naidu has turned jealous and has instigated litigants to file a PIL in the High Court, further stating that the distribution leads to demographic imbalance in

Amaravati region.

Srikanth Reddy stated that the effort of the Chief Minister is to develop all the three regions equally and to include all sections of people. He claimed that it was Naidu who has treated the Dalits very badly by burning their crops and attacking them. He stated that unlike the TD government, Dalits, SC, ST, BC and minorities are extremely happy in the current government. He stated that Naidu has been staying in an illegal structure even as an Opposition leader and mostly visiting the state as a tourist.

SHORT TAKES

JAN. TO OCT.: AP
AIR QUALITY
FOUND GOODDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board (APPCB) stated that the ambient air quality in 20 cities and towns from January to October, 2020, was found to be between good and satisfactory.

The APPCB monitored the ambient air quality at Pydibheemavaram, Sriakulam, Bobbili, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry, Eluru, Vijayawada, Guntur, Ongole, Nellore, Kurnool, Anantapur, Chittoor, Yerraguntla, Kadapa, Kakinada, Tirupathi, Thirumala and Amaravati. Accordingly, the air quality index values were found to be in satisfactory range during January, February and March while from April to September, the AQI values found to be in a good category in majority number of locations following the promulgation of lockdown to curb the spread of Covid-19 and also due to heavy monsoon.

However, the AQI values were found to be in a satisfactory category in most of the locations in the state during October as the monsoon season started to recede.

The state's average AQI values were found to be 68 indicating satisfactory in January, 64-satisfactory in February, 59-satisfactory in March, 38-good in April, 48-good in May, 45-good in June, 45-good in July, 44-good in August, 48-good in September and 53-satisfactory in October.

RESEARCH
ASSERTED IN
FLUID DYNAMICSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

The students were told to conduct research fluid dynamics which has a wide range of applications giving a lot of opportunities for exploration.

The VIT-AP University Amaravati conducted a three-day online international conference in the area of Applications of Fluid Dynamics ICAFD-2020, which concluded on Tuesday.

The conference is the result of a long collaborative efforts between the School of Mechanical Engineering, VIT-AP University and the Department of Mechanical Engineering Science, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Vice-Chancellor Dr S.V. Kota Reddy stated that this type of conference would play an important role in the intellectual growth of an individual, followed by the importance of applications and aspects of fluid dynamics influencing our daily life.

The conference inaugural address was given by Dr R. Paneer Selvam, University of Arkansas, USA.

He highlighted the important challenges a fluid dynamics researcher has to work in the near future for the advancement of this area.

Explaining lots of chances for exploration in fluid dynamics, he asked the students to give priority for research and new applications to serve the needy better.

POLICE TEAMS
RESCUE GIRL
KIDNAPPEDDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 15

The police search teams found the 13-year-old girl who was kidnapped at Sanipallilanka village of Ayinavilli mandal and brought the girl and also five accused in the case to Ambajipeta police station for interrogation.

According to sources, the girl was kidnapped on Monday by the miscreants who took away her in a car. The police search teams found that they have stayed in a lodge in Vijayawada and the teams contacted the Vijayawada police and took them into custody. It is found that the girl's mother and other four persons have abducted the girl.

The mother and the father of the girl are living separately and the girl wants to stay with her father. The mother wants the girl to stay with her.

Ayinavilli police registered a case.

● The girl was kidnapped by her mother. The parents of the girl were living separately. The girl wants to stay with her father but her mother wants the girl with her.

Faith floats



Devotees release Diyas in River Krishna during the conclusion of Karthika Masam in Vijayawada on Tuesday.
— C. NARAYANA RAO

State reduces Covid
test rate in pvt labs

Referred by state reduced to ₹475 per each sample

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

The state government revised the rates for conducting the Covid-19 tests in private NABL and ICMR approved labs by issuing an order on Tuesday.

Accordingly, the total cost of the Covid-19 test, for the samples referred by the state government, has been reduced to ₹475 per each sample from ₹800. Similarly, the cost of the Covid-19 test for the individuals approaching the ICMR approved NABL labs has been reduced to ₹499 per sample (Test cost, VTM and PPE) from ₹1,000.

AP records 500 Covid cases, 5 deaths

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

Andhra Pradesh registered 500 new Covid-19 cases and five deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities released Covid-19 bulletin on Tuesday reporting that out of 61,452 samples tested, 500 were found to be Covid-19 positive. Out of a total number of

1,09,37,377 samples tested so far, 8,76,336 persons were found to be Covid-19 positive, 8,64,612 patients were recovered while 4,660 patients were found to be active with the virus.

Among the daily cases of Covid-19, Chittoor registered the highest number of 88 followed by 77 in Krishna, 63 in West Godavari, 55 in Guntur, 47 in East Godavari, 34 in

Kadapa, 26 in Prakasam, 22 in Nellore, 21 in Srikakulam, 20 in Visakhapatnam, 19 each in Vizianagaram and Anantapur and nine in Kurnool.

Krishna topped the state for having the highest number of cumulative active cases of 857 followed by 784 in Guntur, 604 in Nellore, 533 in East Godavari, 474 in Chittoor.

The state government has reduced the testing rates due to the

increased availability of kits in the market and also due to more firms

involved in manufacturing RNA extraction kits, RT-PCR kits.

RICH TRIBUTES
PAID TO POTTI
SRIRAMULUDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 15

Several Government institutions paid rich tributes to Amarajeevi Potti Sriramulu on his 68th death anniversary on Tuesday in East and West Godavari districts. The East Godavari district collector D.Muralidhar Reddy, Kakinada MLA Chandrasekhara Reddy, Kakinada mayor S.Pavani, joint collector Keerthi Chekuri, Kakinada Municipal commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar, the DRO Ch.Sathibabu and others garlanded the statue of Amarajeevi Potti Sriramulu.

Mr Muralidhar Reddy said that Potti Sriramulu fought for a separate state for Telugu people and observed indefinite fast for 58 days and sacrificed his life. The joint collector G.Lakshminsha paid rich tributes to Amarajeevi in the Collector's office by garlanding the photo of Amarajeevi.

In West Godavari, the joint collector Himanshu Sukla garlanded the photo of Amarajeevi and paid rich tributes to him in the collector's office at Eluru. He said that Amarajeevi got inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi.

12 GAMBLERS
ARRESTED,
CASH SEIZEDDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 16

Ganapavaram police of West Godavari District arrested 12 gamblers and seized ₹2.61 lakh cash on the charges of playing cards in a building. A person namely Ramakrishnam Raju landed the people for playing cards and organised the gambling den in his building at the village, said Ganapavaram Sub-Inspector M.Veerababu. Ganapavaram police registered a case.

50,000 to get
houses in VizagDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 15

Tourism and culture minister Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao reviewed the distribution of houses and house sites along with local MLAs at the collector office in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. Collector V. Vinay Chand and other senior revenue officials were also present.

The minister said in the first phase 1,16,357 pattas would be distributed in the rural district sector and 50,000 houses under the the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority (VMRDA) limits.

The distribution will begin from December 25 and the process will be

completed by January 7. Beneficiaries would be from all the Assembly constituencies. He said if names of genuine beneficiaries were not included in the list, they could contact tahsildars of their areas.

In the rural areas, the layouts would have all the basic infrastructure like drainage system, electricity and drinking water facilities.

The collector said 900 layouts have been created for the distribution of house sites. He said in the first phase 1,16,357 pattas and 26,438 Tidco houses would be given. He said in the GVMC limits due to the court cases filed against land pooling schemes, houses would be given in place of sites.

UAPA CASE AGAINST WOMAN ACTIVIST

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 15

The rural police picked woman activist and lawyer A. Annappurna from her residence in Arilova in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

A case under UAPA has been filed against her in Munchingput police station in Visakhapatnam agency. The police alleged that Annappurna has been

aiding the outlawed Maoists.

Her husband Srinivasa Rao said the police came to his house in the early hours and took away Annappurna when she was giving milk to the children.

Sources said after picking her up from her home, she was immediately taken to Munchingput police station for questioning.

LAST DATE FOR
HEALTH VARSITY
APPLICATIONDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 15

NTR university of health sciences has extended the last date for submission of online application forms for admission into MBBS/BDS courses under management quota seats by two more days from 8 am on Dec. 16 to 8 am on Dec. 18.

In a release from Dr NTR university of health sciences here on Tuesday, the registrar said that last date for submission of online application forms under management quota seats in private, unaided, non-minority/minority medical and dental colleges affiliated to Dr NTR university of health sciences and also for NRI seats in Sri Padmavathi Medical College for Women, Tirupati for the academic year 2020-21.

WEEKLY OFF
TO POLICE
PERSONNELDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC 15

East Godavari District Superintendent of Police Adnan Naveem Asmi said that weekly offs will be given to the police personnel from now.

The Police Officers Association President Mr Satyamurthy said that though the weekly offs were given before lockdown, the police personnel have attended duties during the Covid-19 and lockdown period. He said that the SP has restored their weekly offs again and he thanked Mr Asmi.

1 more day for teachers
for web options: SureshDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, DEC. 15

Education minister Dr Adimulapu Suresh criticised Telugu Desam for instigating the teachers in the ongoing transfers process while pointing to TD outcry on blocking the vacancies.

He claimed that there is nothing new about blocking some vacancies but the entire exercise is transparent during YSRC regime unlike during TD rule where there were apprehensions over the transfers.

“Our intention in blocking some vacancies especially in 4th category is to ensure full strength of teachers in rural areas,” Mr Suresh

asserted. Speaking to media persons at Yarragondapalem in Prakasam district on Tuesday, the minister said 16,008 vacancies in 4 categories have been blocked and there are 32,889 vacancies available for options.

Referring to 44,561 web options received from the teachers till 12 noon on Tuesday, the last day for transfer applications, Mr Suresh offered time till Wednesday evening to the teachers to change their web options.

He said web counselling is very useful in view of problems faced in manual counselling.

He hinted that they

would conduct one more round of transfers to fill the 16,000 blocked vacancies whenever they go for fresh recruitment of teachers.

He maintained that they had discussions with teachers associations several times on the transfers subject and they are ready to take their suggestions even now.

Meanwhile Mr Suresh along with home minister Mekathoti Sucharita inaugurated a new fire station at Yarragondapalem on Tuesday evening apart from an Anganwadi Centre at Endrapalli village. The ministers will also take part in Christmas celebrations later.

TTD PERFORMS YAGAM TO OVERCOME FINANCIAL PLIGHT

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 15

To overcome the financial plight caused to the entire humanity across the globe due to Covid-19 pandemic, Dhanaprada Sri Maha Vishnu Yagam was held by TTD in the yagashala of S.V. Vedic

Varsity here on Tuesday. TTD EO Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy, who took part in the special yagam along with additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy said, due to Covid-19 impact, even Tirumala temple remained closed for nearly three months and

faced financial issues on par with the state and the country in its capacity. To overcome this financial crisis, existing at present in TTD, state and across the nation, we have observed the Dhanaprada Sri Maha Vishnu Yagam, he added.

NEW | FIND All statues were perfect and without any damage

Statues found near river bank

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, DEC. 15

Three rare statues were found on Chitravati river bank near Chilamakur village in Yellanur mandal. According to archaeology experts the statues were of Lord Chennakesava Swamy, Goddess Mahalakshmi and Lord Hanuman of Vijayanagar Empire.

The water was flowing in the river enroute to Chitravati Balancing Reservoir when the villagers from Chilamakur spotted them. Historian and former top official of archaeology Dr Vijay Kumar told DC that the Chenna Kesava Swamy

and Goddess Mahalakshmi statues were around 3 feet in height while that of Lord Hanuman was about five feet and belonged to the Vijayanagar Empire.

Archaeology department officials visited the spot following information about the discovery. The Hanuman statue is carved on granite stone while the other two are on black stone.

“All statues were perfect and without any damage”, Dr. Vijayakumar said and added the statues might have been in a Lord Vishnu temple.

A large crowd rushed to the spot to see the three statues.



Statues found on the banks of Chitravati river near Chilamakur village

CHINTALAPUDI LIS
TO BENEFIT TWO
DISTRICTSDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 15

Chintalapudi Lift Irrigation Scheme will provide drinking water to 24 lakhs people and irrigated water to 4.8 lakh acres in West Godavari and Krishna Districts, the West Godavari Joint Collector K.Venkata Ramana Reddy.

He explained about the LIS to the committee members, appointed by National Green Tribunal, on Tuesday. He said that the scheme would make the two districts with greenery and the farmers of upland area will be greatly benefitted. However, the forest department has to give clearance to 16 acres of forest land for the scheme.

He said that Godavari flood waters will be stored and the waters will be used to the drinking and irrigation purposes. He said that nobody raised objections to the scheme so far and also Polavaram Project water would not be utilised for the scheme. Pulichintala LIS SE J.Ramesh Babu explained about the scheme through powerpoint presentation.

AP Pollution Control Board joint Chief, Environment Engineer T. Rajendar Reddy, Visakhapatnam Andhra University Professor P. Jagannadha Rao, Polavaram SE Mr Nagireddy, Eluru DFO Ms.Yashoda Bai, Eluru RDO Ms. Panabaka Rachana, Jangareddygudem RDO and others were present.

Farmers get insurance
with just ₹1 premiumDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 15

Three farmers belonging to a family at Pedapudi village of East Godavari district are over the moon, as they received an amount of ₹1.69 lakh as crop insurance for last year's crop loss. Each one of them paid only ₹1 as premium, and the amount was paid as compensation for the crop loss of last year.

Expressing his joy, the farmer Kala Veerajulu, head of the family with 15 acres of land, said that they feel that Sankranti has arrived in their family one month before. He expressed his view with the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy who conducted a video conference of crop insurance scheme on Tuesday. The farmer said that he used to pay a higher amount of insurance for their crop, but he was not sure of getting the insurance amount. He said that last year, he was enrolled in YSR Free Insurance scheme and now he got the amount.

Not only Veerajulu, but nearly 13,822 farmers also got ₹18.31 crore of crop insurance for their crop loss with an extent of 9,837 hectares out of which Pedapudi mandal in Anaparthi Assembly constituency got more than ₹5 crore. He also said that their crops incurred great

● Nearly 13,822 farmers also got ₹18.31 crore of crop insurance for their crop loss out of which Pedapudi mandal in Anaparthi constituency got more than ₹5 crore.

losses if any disaster attacked in the area. He also said that the officials are creating awareness among the farmers to go for a short duration variety of crops because of the ongoing Polavaram project works. He requested the Chief Minister to develop roads to their agriculture fields to bring their crop to their houses after harvesting. CM Jagan has instructed the officials to take up the works immediately.

The East Godavari district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy said that the crop insurance amount was being credited to directly their bank accounts of the farmers. He said that the crop loss occurred in 26 mandals in the district.

Kakinada MP Vanga Gita, MLC Pandula Ravindra Babu, joint collector G. Lakshminsha, Kakinada MLA Dwarampudi Chandrasekhara Reddy, agriculture deputy director D.T. Rama Rao, the district revenue officer Ch. Sathibabu and others were present.

Automobile dealers
sensitise driversDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, DEC. 15

The Transport Department entrusted awareness drive on New Motor Vehicle laws for two-wheeler and four-wheeler vehicle owners and drivers. These automobile dealers who are selling the vehicles without agriculture-related vehicles will create awareness on new laws twice in a week in the main junctions in their respective towns and cities.

As per the New Motor Vehicles Act, the vehicle drivers have to be imposed fines with heavy amounts, and the department felt that it is need of creating awareness among the people on the new laws. The deputy transport commissioner of West Godavari Ms Siri Anand has launched the drive in Eluru on Tuesday. The staff of the automobile dealer shops have campaigned at the Fire Office Junction by holding placards with rules and regulations of new motor vehicle laws and also they have given chocolates to the bike riders who wore helmets for giving an appreciation to them. Ms Siri said that the automobile dealers would carry the awareness campaign twice in a week to educate the people, and it will help to reduce the accident rate. She said that from

January to November 2020 there were 1,010 road accidents took place and 397 deaths as against 999 accidents and 550 deaths in 2019. She said that according to the central government norms, every district should conduct Road Safety Meeting once in a quarter, but in West Godavari, the district collector Revu Muthyala Raju is conducting the meetings every third Tuesday. It is helping to take speedy steps to reduce road accidents. She said that there were 120 black-spots have been identified in the district out of which 25 have been rectified.

The district collector, Mr Revu Muthyala Raju, said that the officials should identify the trauma centres across the highways and R&B Roads and the particulars should be given to 108 ambulance staff and National Highways. He said that medical officials should save the lives of injured persons without making any delay in providing treatment. The R&B, Police, Panchayat Raj and Transport Department officials should take immediate steps not to occur accidents by identifying the reasons for the accidents. He reviewed taking the time of occurring the accident and taking the victims to the hospital.

SHORT TAKES

UK FOREIGN SECY
HOLDS TALKS
WITH JAISHANKAR

SRIDHAR
KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 15

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab held discussions with his Indian counterpart External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on five broad themes — connecting people, trade, defence and security, climate and health including the cooperation on the Covid-19 vaccines while both nations “agreed on key elements of a 10 year India-UK roadmap”.

Raab mentioned Britain’s “Indo-Pacific tilt” while Jaishankar said, “It is a matter of satisfaction that there is a growing recognition and acceptance of the idea of an Indo-Pacific. We welcome greater interest and attention which the UK is devoting to the Indo-Pacific.” Both countries also focused on taking ties to a new level. Observers look at Britain’s focus on the Indo-Pacific region as significant, given the growing differences between Britain and China on the Hong Kong issue. Apart from this, the situation in Afghanistan was also discussed between the two foreign ministers. In a veiled reference to Pakistan without naming it, EAM Jaishankar said both ministers felt the challenges posed by terrorism and radicalism are a “shared concern”.

Raab spoke about the need to “deepen the economic relationship” and said Britain is “committed to build a stronger defence and security partnership with our Indian friends” including on shared issues like combating terrorism and maritime security including the menace of piracy.

ACTRESS CHITRA’S
HUSBAND HELD FOR
ABETTING SUICIDE

Chennai, Dec. 15: The husband of television actress Chitra has been arrested and remanded to judicial custody for ‘abetting’ her suicide, police said on Tuesday.

Investigation by a police team revealed that 32-year-old Hemnath ‘abetted’ her suicide and hence he was arrested on Monday night, they said.

An enquiry was also held by the Revenue Divisional Officer. An argument ensued between Chitra and Hemnath and it was followed by her suicide in the early hours of December 9, police said in an official release.

Hemnath was produced before a court here, which remanded him to judicial custody.

While police had days ago said Hemnath was her ‘fiance’, they clarified that ‘they registered their marriage’ two months ago and the duo had plans for a traditional wedding ceremony in January 2021.

The 29-year-old actress, well known among television audience in Tamil Nadu was found dead in a suburban hotel room and it was confirmed later that she died by suicide.

VARAVARA RAO FIT
TO GO BACK TO
JAIL: NIA TO HC

Mumbai, Dec. 15: Poet-activist Varavara Rao, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoists links case, is fit enough to be sent back to Talaja jail in Navi Mumbai from a private hospital in Mumbai where he is currently admitted, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) told the Bombay High Court on Tuesday.

Rao, however, will continue to stay in Nanavati Hospital at least till Monday, the next date of hearing on his bail plea on the medical grounds and the plea filed by his wife Hemlatha alleging breach of Rao’s fundamental rights due to “continued incarceration without adequate healthcare”.

The submission was made by Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Anil Singh, who appeared for the NIA, before a bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and M.S. Karnik.

During the day’s hearing, senior counsels Indira Jaising and Anand Grover urged the high court to grant bail to Rao. Grover said the 81-year-old poet was suffering from inherent medical issues since the time of his arrest in 2018.

He said authorities at Talaja prison in Navi Mumbai, where Rao was lodged as an undertrial, did not have the expertise or medical infrastructure to treat him. Grover further said it would be most suitable for Rao’s health if he was granted bail and permitted to go back to his home in Hyderabad. Rao would not flee if granted bail, Grover added.

HC restrains nurses from continuing strike



Members of AIIMS Nurses Union raise slogans in New Delhi on Tuesday during their indefinite strike over their long-pending demands, including those concerning the Sixth Central Pay Commission and against contractual appointments. The Delhi High Court on Tuesday restrained the nurses union from continuing with their indefinite strike. Justice Navin Chawla passed the order on a plea moved by AIIMS against the strike by the nurses who went on the agitation from December 14.

— PTI

Mamata dares Centre
to impose Prez’s rule

Alleges Centre interfering in her govt by summoning officials

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, DEC. 15

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday dared the Narendra Modi government to impose President’s Rule in the poll-bound state after accusing the Centre of interfering in her government by summoning its bureaucrats over her party workers’ alleged violent attack on BJP president J.P. Nadda’s convoy in South 24 Parganas.

Banerjee also claimed her party had “no intention” to target Nadda, while warning the BJP that she would “retaliate heavily” if she was “hit”. Speaking at a TMC rally in Jalpaiguri, North Bengal, she said: “They think they can bring the Central forces here and transfer the state government’s officers to scare them. The state police is under the state government. Still, they were summoned. None of us had any intention to hit him (Nadda). When a VIP travels, he has his own convoy according to protocol.”

She wondered: “But why did 50 cars trail his convoy? Why did 50 goons trail those cars? Why did a convict, out of jail, be among them? Why were those who vandalised Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar’s bust there? The entire country cannot speak up (due to) fear. There is a bid to scare us too. What else can they do here? President’s Rule? Let them impose it if they can. Let’s see. It will be great (sic)! At least my workload will reduce to a great extent. I will then address rallies everywhere and take away your (BJP) votes also.”

Union home minister Amit Shah is also scheduled to visit the state later this week. Citing deteriorating law and order situation, political bias of the state government employees and discrepancies in the draft voters list, the party said unless the election body deploys central forces and imposes MCC early, campaigning in the state will be “very difficult, resulting in widespread violence.”

BJP urges ECI to impose
MCC, deploy Central forces

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 15

Days after BJP president J.P. Nadda and other senior leaders’ convoy in West Bengal came under attack allegedly by ruling TMC cadre, the BJP on Tuesday urged the Election Commission for early deployment of central forces and imposition of Model Code of Conduct for the coming crucial Assembly polls in the state.

Union home minister Amit Shah is also scheduled to visit the state later this week. Citing deteriorating law and order situation, political bias of the state government employees and discrepancies in the draft voters list, the party said unless the election body deploys central forces and imposes MCC early, campaigning in the state will be “very difficult, resulting in widespread violence.”

A BJP delegation met the EC officials and submitted a letter in this regard and said they were assured that their complaint will be looked into and that free and fair elections take place.

you hit me, I will retaliate so heavily that you will not be able to tackle my retaliation even after bringing crores of goons.”

On BJP MP Subramanian Swamy’s call for a change in the national anthem, the TMC chief alleged: “Their object is to change *Jana Gana Mana* penned by Rabindranath Tagore. We also know very well how to revert a change later.”

To get back the Gorkha vote bank from the BJP in North Bengal, she said:

“After getting Bimal Gurung (GJM top gun) on its side six years ago, they promised a ‘Gorkhaland’. Whenever an election is there, they talk about it. How many Gorkhaland(s) have happened so far? They won in the 2014 polls and another later with the same promise each time. I did not win because I did not talk about it. But it does not matter to me. I thank my brothers and sisters of Darjeeling for realising the BJP’s drama and nailing its lies.”

Asked of any political discussion with Adhikari, Vijayvargiya said, “There was no political talk between us. I only greeted him on his birthday and conveyed my best wishes to him for his good health and prosperity.”

Attacking the TMC, Adhikari told a rally “The mass movement of Nandigram belonged to neither any individual nor any party. It was a people’s movement.”

ADHIKARI TO
DEFECT TO BJP
THIS WEEK

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, DEC. 15

Giving a call on his birthday for the restoration of democracy in West Bengal, rebel Trinamul Congress MLA of Nandigram Shubendu Adhikari is all set to defect to the BJP later this week as the Centre has decided to provide it’s Z-plus category security cover by the central reserve police force jawans including commandos and a bullet proof car to him due to a threat on his life.

The former state minister will fly to New Delhi on December 17 and is likely to meet Union home minister Amit Shah before changing his colour from green to saffron officially. On December 19 when Shah will arrive in the state on a two-day visit, Adhikari is expected to be with him. On Tuesday BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya called up the TMC MLA and spoke to him for four minutes.

Asked of any political discussion with Adhikari, Vijayvargiya said, “There was no political talk between us. I only greeted him on his birthday and conveyed my best wishes to him for his good health and prosperity.”

Attacking the TMC, Adhikari told a rally “The mass movement of Nandigram belonged to neither any individual nor any party. It was a people’s movement.”

High drama
ensues during
K’taka Council

Bengaluru, Dec. 15: The Karnataka Legislative Council witnessed high drama on Tuesday with BJP-JD(S) and Congress members hurling abuses and pushing each other and the deputy chairman being pulled down from the Chairman’s seat, over a row pertaining to the no-confidence motion.

Amid the pandemonium and chaos which many senior members termed as a “black mark” and “unprecedented” in the Council’s over a century old history, it was adjourned sine die within minutes after it met for the day. The ball now seems to be in the Governor Vajubhai Vala’s court with both BJP and JD(S) jointly petitioning him and seeking his intervention to enable taking up of the no-confidence motion.

After it was adjourned sine die on December 10, the House was convened for a day on Tuesday by the government which had even petitioned the Governor accusing the Chairman K. Pratapachandra Shetty of “abruptly” adjourning the session, without taking up the no-confidence motion against him. The motion moved by BJP members did not find mention in the Council’s agenda for Tuesday, as Shetty had rejected it citing procedural lapses and pointing out that no specific charges were made against him.

Following this, BJP and JD(S) members too rushed towards the Chair in his defence. This resulted in heated exchange, and pushing and pulling between members from both sides. Even as this was happening, a few Congress members including Naseer Ahmed were seen trying to forcefully open the door through which the Chairman enters the house, accusing the ruling side of shutting it with an intention not to allow Chairman Shetty inside. Congress members accused the government of trying to start the proceedings with the help of the deputy chairman, even before the Chairman could arrive, with an intention to take up the motion against Shetty, which had been rejected by him.

— PTI

Counting of votes
in Kerala today

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
DEC. 15

All is set for counting of votes in local body polls in Kerala on Wednesday which in many ways would chart the future course of politics in the state in the run up to Assembly elections in 2021.

State election commissioner V. Bhaskaran said counting of votes will take place in 244 centers complying strictly with Covid-19 safety guidelines. The postal ballots will be counted right in the beginning followed by EVMs.

He said the results of all local bodies are expected to be declared by noon. The people would be able to obtain information on counting through “Trends” website. Bhaskaran said the

swearing in of the newly elected office bearers of local bodies will take place on December 21.

The results of local body polls are crucial as the people’s verdict would give a hint about what is in store for the mainstream parties — ruling CPM, opposition Congress and BJP. The leaders of the three fronts are keeping their fingers crossed on the outcome of the polls in view of the high voter turnout witnessed in all the three phases.

While Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan claimed that the ruling LDF was poised for a historic win, opposition leader and Congress veteran Ramesh Chennithala said the massive turnout of voters indicated a clear mandate against gold smuggling involving a senior official of the CM’s office.

Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination delayed Hindutva
supremacy by two generations, says Vinay Sitapati

SRIRAM KARRI | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

It took the Hindutva ideology nearly a century to create the election-winning argument personified by Narendra Modi, argues political scientist and author Vinay Sitapati in this exclusive interview with Deccan Chronicle.

Analysing historical insights, debating counterfactuals, refuting possible misinterpretations, young political scientist and professor with chubby cheeks and curly hair, round spectacles and an impish smile, is bustling with energy as he discusses his work, which promises to become a watermark in understanding Hindutva. It is a biography of a relationship, chronicling and analysing the entangled lives of BJP’s founding duo, the *jugalbandi* of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani.

There is no definitive book on Hinduism, but hopefully this is the definitive work on Hindutva, he says teasingly. It might well be. A worthy successor to his bestselling debut, a biography on former prime minister P.V.



Vinay Sitapati

Narasimha Rao, *Half Lion*, this book too has his trademark traits, all boxes checked. It consolidates his image as a new superstar in India’s non-fiction genre combining recent and contemporary history and politics — diligent and exonerating research, intrepid in making a set of speculative counterfactuals, combining a vast narrative argument befitting his academic vocation and inclination. Sitapati teaches at Ashoka University, has a PhD from Princeton University and other degrees from Harvard University and National

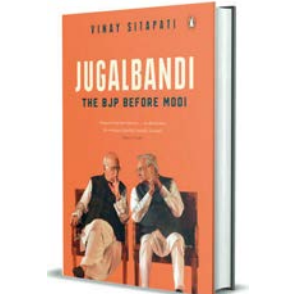
Law School, Bengaluru. He combines this with racy writing and a nearly salacious storytelling, sometimes bordering on sharing off-the-record gossip and anecdotes to match his former journalistic career.

The book though is neither a tale of a historical plot to create Modi nor a century-old history of the *Sangh Parivar*. Though both are ingredients on this structured canvas, it is focussed on something more ambitious — telling the story of two fascinating men, whose relationship shaped Hindutva, the BJP and India.

Excerpts and part 1 of a three-part story.

Before discussing the *jugalbandi* between Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L.K. Advani, I wish to have you throw light on another *jugalbandi* before them, between two atheists — M.A. Jinnah and Veer Damodar Savarkar. In a way, have they perhaps influenced the political outcome and future of the Indian sub-continent more successfully, with greater

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
PART - 1



Title: Jugalbandi: The BJP Before Modi
Author: Vinay Sitapati
Category: Non-fiction narrative, Indian politics
Publisher: Penguin
Viking
Pages: Hardback / 424
Price: ₹799

influence and a higher impact than Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar? In 2047, would we end up being closer, after a century after Independence, to Jinnah and Savarkar’s ideas of nationhood?

I must strongly push back on this suggestion; there was no *jugalbandi* between them. The Hindu nationalist project of

Savarkar, which is now a century old, is at its heart democratic in the sense of being founded on the acceptance of universal adult franchise and ‘one person, one vote’. As the British rule in India was making way for elections in the early 20th century, Savarkar and other Hindu nationalists welcomed elections, because their Hindu community was a social majority in India... Equal voting suited them because they were a majority.

On the other hand, the Muslim leadership, represented then by the landlords in the United Province, were sensing a loss of power and privilege. They realised that elections would doom them to a perpetual ‘minority’. So, their entire politics was against one-person-one-vote. By the time Jinnah joins the Muslim League, he is firmly anti-democratic, in the sense he is anti one-person-one-vote. And he also opportunistically uses Islamic metaphors of a caliphate when pushing for Pakistan.

Savarkar’s Hindu rashtra, unlike Jinnah’s Pakistan, was not a theo-

racy because it was not based on religion at all. It was not about Hindu religion for him. The extremely logical Savarkar argued, in a radical breakaway from conventional political thought, that Indian nationhood was built on race, not culture or religion. This is a deeply modern idea. Savarkar was never a liberal; he was a majoritarian. But unlike Jinnah, he was always a democrat.

He was even broadly in agreement on most issues with the Congress, except for his pet grouse that Gandhi was appealing the Muslim League.

Both Savarkar and Jinnah were, however, similar in the sense that both advocated and modelled their politics based on the sole interest of their own community.

Why did the project of creating Narendra Modi take nearly a century to fructify? Why not earlier?

The RSS had lost two generations of a chance at power because they were operating under the shadow of suspicion for being responsible for the assassi-

nation of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi was India’s greatest Hindu leader. Even though the RSS as an institution did not play any role in Gandhi’s murder, the taint has proved very costly to them.

Are you saying a Hindu rashtra is politically, intellectually, and even arithmetically, inevitable in future?

The mistake in this line of thinking is to somehow think that a Hindu rashtra lies ahead of us. It is actually already here. The India we live in is in many ways already the Hindu rashtra Savarkar or Golwalkar dreamt of. This is because a Hindu rashtra is not a Hindu ‘state’. It is a Hindu national community or Hindu ‘vote-bank’ that is able to control the state through one-person-one-vote. The Hindu rashtra is not a theocracy or a dictatorship, but a unified Hindu society flexing its majority muscle within a democratic structure.

Tomorrow: Part 2
Ambedkar was opposed to both Islamic and Hindu bigotry

SHORT TAKES

FIRE AT RUSSIAN RETIREMENT HOME KILLS 11

Moscow, Dec. 15: A fire in a retirement home in Russia's southern Urals killed 11 people while three more were hospitalised with injuries, local officials said on Tuesday.

The fire broke out in the early hours in a wooden, one-story building of a private retirement home in a village in the Bashkiria region.

A total of 16 people were in the building. It wasn't immediately clear what caused the fire. Emergency officials said seven men and four women were killed in the incident. According to Russian media reports, they were bed-ridden residents of the retirement home. A criminal probe into the incident has been launched and the head of the facility has been detained.

'TWITTER KILLER' SENTENCED TO DEATH IN JAPAN

Tokyo, Dec. 15: A Japanese court on Tuesday sentenced a man to death for killing and dismembering nine people, most of whom had posted suicidal thoughts on social media, in a case that shocked the country.

The Tachikawa branch of the Tokyo District Court found Takahiro Shiraishi, known as the "Twitter killer," guilty of killing, dismembering and storing the bodies of the victims in his apartment in Zama, near Tokyo.

Shiraishi, 30, pleaded guilty and said he would not appeal his death sentence. Police arrested Shiraishi in 2017 after finding the bodies of eight females and one male in cold-storage cases in his apartment.

Investigators said Shiraishi approached the victims via Twitter, offering to assist them with their suicidal wishes. He killed the women, including teenagers, after raping them, and also killed a boyfriend of one of the women to silence him, investigators said.

OFFICIALS: BOMBS, SHOOTING ATTACK KILLS 4 IN KABUL

Kabul, Dec. 15: A bombing and a shooting attack in Kabul killed at least three people, including a deputy provincial governor, while a deputy provincial council chief was killed in western Afghanistan on Tuesday, officials said.

The attacks are the latest in relentless violence in Afghanistan 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. According to Tariq Arian, an Afghan interior ministry spokesman, a sticky bomb attached to the armored vehicle belonging to Kabul's deputy provincial governor killed two people, and wounded two others.

The deputy provincial governor and the apparent target of the attack, Mahbobullah Mohibi, was killed alongside his secretary while two of his bodyguards were wounded, Arian said.

NIGERIA: BOKO HARAM CLAIMS MASS ABDUCTION

Lagos (Nigeria), Dec. 15: Nigeria's Boko Haram jihadist rebels have claimed responsibility for the abduction of hundreds of students in an attack on a boys school in northern Katsina State, a Nigerian online newspaper says.

More than 330 students are missing from the Government Science Secondary School in Kankara after gunmen with assault rifles attacked their school on Friday night. The Daily Nigerian said it received an audio message from Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau saying that his group abducted the schoolboys because Western education is against the tenets of Islam.

"What happened in Katsina was done to promote Islam and discourage un-Islamic practices as Western education is not the type of education permitted by Allah and his Holy Prophet," the paper quoted Shekau as saying.

There has been no independent verification of the audio message but Shekau has in the past released video and audio messages on Boko Haram's behalf. Nigerian presidential spokesman Garba Shehu said in a statement on Monday that "the kidnappers had made contact and discussions were already on, pertaining to the safety and return" of the children to their homes.

'Time to turn the page', says Biden after EC confirms win

Joe lashes out at Trump saying he refused to respect the will of people

Washington, Dec. 15: US President-elect Joe Biden has told election-weary Americans that it is time to "turn the page", after the Electoral College affirmed his triumph over President Donald Trump, who has refused to concede and filed a litany of legal challenges to overturn the poll results.

The 538-member Electoral College on Monday pushed Biden past the 270-vote threshold to win the bitterly-contested race for the White House. It was one of the crucial steps required for the 78-year-old Democrat to take office on January 20 as the 46th US President.

Under the US system, voters actually cast their ballots for electors, who in turn, formally vote for candidates weeks after the presidential election. Biden won the November 3 election with 306 electoral college votes to incumbent Republican President Trump's 232.

The Electoral College votes will now be sent to Congress to be counted formally next month. Though some House Republicans have indicated they will object to the results in key states, they can do little more than delay the process during a joint session of Congress on January 6.

In a speech from his hometown of Wilmington, Delaware after the announcement of his victory in the election, Biden said the US democracy had been "pushed, tested and threatened" and "proved to be resilient, true and strong".

He criticised President Trump's attempts to overturn the result and said the "will of the people prevailed". "The rule of law, our Constitution and the will of the people prevailed" over Trump's efforts to undo the results of the election, the former US vice president said.

"The flame of democracy was lit in this nation a long time ago. And we now know nothing, not even a pandemic or an abuse of power, can extinguish that flame," Biden said.

"In this battle for the soul of America, democracy prevailed. We the people voted. Faith in our institutions held. The integrity of our elections remains intact. And so, now it is time to turn the page. To unite. To heal," he said.

Biden said the election outcome should be celebrated, not attacked, that more than 81 million votes were cast for him and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. This too is a record



Former President Bill Clinton and other members of New York state's Electoral College help Electoral member George K. Gresham who fell while voting for President and Vice President in the Assembly Chamber at the state Capitol in Albany, New York. — AFP

GOP leader McConnell wishes Biden

Washington, Dec. 15: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell congratulated Democrat Joe Biden as president-elect on Tuesday, saying the Electoral College "has spoken."

The Republican leader's statement, delivered in a speech on the Senate floor, ends weeks of silence over President Donald Trump's defeat. It came a day after electors met and officially affirmed Biden's election win. "I want to congratulate President-elect Joe Biden," McConnell said.

"Many of us had hoped the presidential election would yield a different result," he said. "But our system of government has the processes to determine who will be sworn in on January 20. The Electoral College has spoken."

McConnell called Biden someone "who has devoted himself to public service for many years." He also congratulated Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, saying "all Americans can take pride that our nation has a female vice president-elect for the very first time." McConnell prefaced his remarks with sweeping praise for what he characterised as Trump's "end-

less" accomplishments during four years in office. He said Trump and Vice President Mike Pence "deserve our thanks."

For the first time, a groundswell of leading Republicans have said that Democrat Joe Biden is the winner of the presidential election, essentially abandoning President Donald Trump's assault on the outcome as the Electoral College certified the vote.

With states affirming the results, the Republicans faced a pivotal choice to declare Biden the president-elect, as the tally showed, or keep standing

silently by as Trump wages a potentially damaging campaign to overturn the election.

Number of senators said the time has come to move on. "At some point you have to face the music," said Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, the second-ranking GOP leader. "Once the Electoral College settles the issue today, it's time for everybody to move on." Sen. Roy Blunt of Missouri, the chairman of the inaugural committee, said the panel will now "deal with Vice President Biden as the president-elect." — AP

US attorney general Barr resigns

Washington, Dec. 15: US Attorney General William Barr, who of late had publicly differed with President Donald Trump on allegations of voter fraud in the November 3 presidential elections, has resigned.

Trump has appointed his deputy Jeff Rosen as the Acting Attorney General. "Just had a very nice meeting with Attorney General Bill Barr at the White House. Our relationship has been a very good one, he has done an outstanding job! As per letter, Bill will be leaving

just before Christmas to spend the holidays with his family..." Trump announced on twitter Monday night.

"Deputy Attorney General Jeff Rosen, an outstanding person, will become Acting Attorney General. Highly respected Richard Donoghue will be taking over the duties of Deputy Attorney General. Thank you to all!" Trump said as he tweeted the two-page resignation letter of Barr. Barr, in his letter, said, "As discussed, I will spend the next week wrapping up a few remaining

matters important to the administration, and depart on December 23."

"I am greatly honored that you called on me to serve your administration and the American people once again as Attorney General. I am proud to have played a role in the many successes and unprecedented achievements you have delivered for the American people. Your record is all the more historic because you accomplished it in the face of relentless implacable resistance," he added. — PTI

PDM leaders booked as they ask PM Khan to quit

Lahore, Dec. 15: Pakistan Democratic Movement's top leaders, including PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz, were booked on Tuesday for causing irreparable damage to a national asset after its Minar-e-Pakistan rally here, as the 11-party opposition alliance set January 31 deadline for Prime Minister Imran Khan to step down or face long march on Islamabad.

The opposition alliance

held its final anti-government rally in Lahore on Sunday despite a ban on the gathering of more than 300 people owing to an increase in Covid-19 cases across the country.

The PDM has been holding massive rallies since its inception in September to seek Khan's ouster and press the powerful military to stop interfering in politics. Lahore police booked Pakistan Muslim League-

Nawaz (PML-N) vice president Maryam Nawaz, former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, former National Assembly speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, former railways minister Saad Rafique and 125 others under different sections of the Pakistan Penal Code for breaking the locks of Minar-e-Pakistan gates, damaging the official property and violating the Covid-19 guidelines. — PTI

US federal agency homing in on social media firms' data collection

Washington, Dec. 15: Federal regulators are ordering Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, TikTok's parent and five other social media companies to provide detailed information on how they collect and use consumers' personal data and how their practices affect children and teens.

The Federal Trade Commission's action announced on Monday goes to the heart of the tech industry's lucrative busi-

ness model: harvesting data from platform users and making it available to advertisers so they can pinpoint specific consumers to target. The agency plans to use the information, due in 45 days, for a comprehensive study.

The other five companies are Reddit, Snap, Discord, WhatsApp, which is owned by Facebook, and Google's YouTube. Regulators and lawmakers are increasingly weaving into their inves-

Raja Chari to lead SpaceX mission to ISS

Washington, Dec. 15: The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and European Space Agency (ESA) have selected three astronauts to serve as crew members for Nasa's SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the International Space Station, which is expected to launch in the fall of 2021.

According to the Nasa, the trio will consist astronauts Raja Chari, an Indian-American US Air Force colonel, and Tom Marshburn, who will serve as commander and pilot, respectively, and ESA astronaut Matthias Maurer, who will serve as a mission specialist. A fourth crew member will be added at a later date, following a review by NASA and its international partners.

This will be the first spaceflight for Chari, who became a NASA astronaut in 2017. He was born in Milwaukee, but considers Cedar Falls, Iowa, his hometown. He is a colonel in the US Air Force and joins the mission with extensive experience as a

test pilot. He has accumulated more than 2,500 hours of flight time in his career. Chari was selected earlier this month as a member of the Artemis Team and is now eligible for assignment to a future lunar mission.

Marshburn is a Statesville, North Carolina, native who became an astronaut in 2004. Prior to serving in the astronaut corps, the medical doctor served as flight surgeon at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston and later became medical operations lead for the International Space Station.

"The Crew-3 mission will be his third visit to the space station and his second long-duration mission. Marshburn previously served as a crew member of STS-127 in 2009 and Expedition 34/35, which concluded in 2013," the NASA said.

Maurer comes from Sankt Wendel, in the German state of Saarland. Like Chari, Maurer will be making his first trip to space with the Crew-3 mission. — Agencies

Vaccinate Joe, Harris, Trump, Pence: Fauci

Washington, Dec. 15: Top US infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci says President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris should be vaccinated for Covid-19 as soon as possible.

Speaking to ABC's "Good Morning America" on Tuesday, Fauci said, "For security reasons, I really feel strongly that we should get them vaccinated as soon as we possibly can." He adds he'd like to see Biden "fully protected as he enters into

the presidency in January." Fauci says that while President Donald Trump probably still has antibodies to the virus that will protect him for at least several months, he should get the vaccine as well to be "doubly sure."

Trump was hospitalised with Covid-19 in early October. Fauci says Vice President Mike Pence should get vaccinated, too. He says, "You still want to protect people who are very important to our country right now." — AP

LONDON ON HIGHEST ALERT AFTER NEW COVID-19 VARIANT IDENTIFIED

Geneva, Dec. 15: The World Health Organisation is aware of reports that a new variant of Covid-19 has been identified in the United Kingdom, although there is no evidence to suggest that the mutation will impact the effectiveness of vaccines against the disease, WHO Health Emergencies Programme executive director Mike Ryan said on Monday.

UK health secretary Matt Hancock earlier in the day announced that a new variant of Covid-19 had been identified in the south of England, and

was responsible for roughly 1,000 cases.

"We are aware of this genetic variant I think reported in about 1,000 individuals in England, and the authorities in the UK under Matt Hancock's leadership are obviously looking at the significance of this," Ryan said at a WHO virtual press briefing.

According to the WHO official, there was no evidence to suggest that the new variant of the disease would transmit more easily or undermine vaccines against Covid-19 that are being rolled out. — Agencies

LEGAL ORDER

\$100mn case was filed on September 19, 2019, challenging the Indian Parliament's decision on J&K

US Court terminates lawsuit against Modi, Shah

Washington, Dec. 15: A US court has dismissed a \$100-million lawsuit filed against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah after the litigants - a separatist Kashmiri Khalistan outfit and two associates - failed to appear before it at two scheduled hearings.

The suit was filed on September 19, 2019, days before Modi's historic "Howdy, Modi!" event in Houston, Texas. It challenged the Indian Parliament's decision on Jammu and Kashmir that

abrogated the special privileges of the state and carved out two union territories and sought a compensation of \$100 million from Modi, Shah and Lt. Gen. Kanwal Jeet Singh Dhillon.

Dhillon is currently serving as the Director-General Defence Intelligence Agency and Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff under the Chief of Defence Staff.

"Other than that attempted service," Kashmiri Khalistan Referendum Front "have



Narendra Modi

done nothing to prosecute this case", and have now failed to appear at two duly set Scheduling



Amit Shah

Conferences, US District Court Southern District of Texas Judge Frances H. Stacy said in his order

dated October 6 and recommended that the case be dismissed.

The case was terminated by Judge Andrew S Hanen of the US District Court in Texas on October 22. Apart from the Kashmiri Khalistan Referendum Front, the other two complainants have not been identified, other than the acronyms "TFK" and "SMS".

The suing party was represented by separatist lawyer Gurbatwint Singh Pannun. The Indian Parliament passed legisla-

tion last year changing the status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, modifying provisions that have been an obstacle to economic development and promoted a sense of separatism.

Prime Minister Modi, accompanied by US President Donald Trump, had addressed a crowd of over 50,000 Indian-Americans at the "Howdy, Modi!" event in Houston on September 22, 2019.

As per court records, Kashmiri Khalistan Referendum Front was

able to serve the summons to Modi, Shah and Dhillon at the Indian Consulate in Houston on February 18, 2020.

A conference was set by the court for August 2. A second conference was scheduled on October 6. Judge Stacy said that representatives of the Kashmiri Khalistan Referendum Front failed to appear for the conference as such he recommended that the lawsuit be dismissed. Two weeks later, Judge Hanen terminated the case. — PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

16 DECEMBER 2020

Biden affirmation is a win for US democracy

The Electoral College's formal affirmation of Joe Biden's victory was only a ritual. If it assumes the contours of a milestone in US election history, the blame should go to the outgoing President Donald Trump's attempts to subvert the democratic process. "It is the rule of law, the Constitution and the will of the people" that prevails, as the victor, Mr Biden, put it in a gracious speech in which he said realistically, "Now it is time to turn the page."

The proof of the durability of the US political system, which is an important template for democracies, represents a significant moment for all of the free world. In the six weeks since November 3 in which Mr Trump and his supporters tried every bizarre trick in their subversive playbook to overturn a clear popular verdict in which Mr Biden not only got 306 of 538 Electoral College votes but also trounced Mr Trump — one of five Presidents to win the White House without a popular mandate — by over seven million votes.

The members of the Electoral College were only upholding the brief given to them in a democratic process but what the Supreme Court did in throwing out every challenge to the election is truly heroic. As many as 86 judges, many of them either nominees of Mr Trump or the Republican Party, displayed scorn or contempt for lawsuits that were part of legal manoeuvres backed by as many as 17 attorneys-general of states and 126 members of Congress.

The court made legal history in its unanimity after having seen through the subterfuge of trying to throw out 20 million legitimately cast ballots. This is a grand lesson in how the integrity of a justice system can be preserved only by the honesty of judges who resist the temptation to reflect any gratitude they may feel towards those who nominated them, or their own ideological leanings. Their firm rulings helped sustain the reputation of a great institution.

The catastrophic Trump presidency may not have fulfilled the worst scenarios of a crazed authoritarian let loose in the White House but the visible damage it has caused to a precious democratic process like free and fair elections will take a long time to mend. What Mr Trump did in repeatedly questioning the legitimacy of the presidential polls, considered the fairest in many quadrennials, is to corrode social trust in a vibrant democracy. In exploiting political divisions, Mr Trump had split a nation with his web of lies whose reach became phenomenal in the age of social media that can be so easily manipulated.

The strength of institutions was sorely tested in four years but so many of them came through with flying colours. Mr Trump's animus against migrants as reflected in his stopping the DACA programme was stayed by the courts, so too his manipulation of visas and green cards. The media exposed his cruel separation of children from their parents. His own administration pooh-poohed his disinformation campaign on the coronavirus which, ironically, did not spare him either. The top court ridiculed his skewed election petitions and, finally, the people rejected his presidency. His legacy, apart from damage to public trust in government, is bits and pieces of a Mexican Wall. A divided nation must pick up the pieces now.

'Reckless' Kamal Haasan

In the electoral marketplace, do good intentions alone sell? This is a mind boggling question that crops up when actor Kamal Haasan, launching his campaign for the Tamil Nadu state Assembly elections of 2021, reels out a list of public inconveniences that governments hardly bother to address. He also raises serious questions. Like, what's the need for a new Parliament building?

But he also seems to get carried away by the crowds that turn up for his meetings. 'Gangs come together for money but it's a revolution when people congregate for an ideal,' he exulted on Twitter presuming that the throngs at Madurai and Usilampatti were there to join him in his mission to eliminate corruption. Of course, it is not just from Central rulers that he demands answers but also from those holding the reins in the state. Aptly underlining the hypocrisy of a ruling party top honcho's suggestion for alternating power between a man and a woman in a single term, he pointed out that the party does not have even a single woman as a district secretary. He even pledges to make ministers out of at least 20 women when the mantle falls on him. Things that sound really nice. Haasan even boasts of growing up on the lap of M.G. Ramachandran, the former chief minister popularly known as MGR who remained invincible in politics during his time. But does that privilege make him the inheritor of MGR's political legacy or do people see in him a modern MGR? Whatever people see in him, when Mr Haasan cocks a snook at popular sentiments, he diminishes his prospects.

By promising to hand over TASMACH shops to private retailers or plumping for the commonly contentious NEEET or openly supporting the vice-chancellor of Anna University, who is seen as most parties in the state as an intruder imposed on them, one cannot garner votes in Tamil Nadu, even if as MGR himself.

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KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUBHAKAR
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 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234

Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Roadway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P.), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285

Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208

Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904

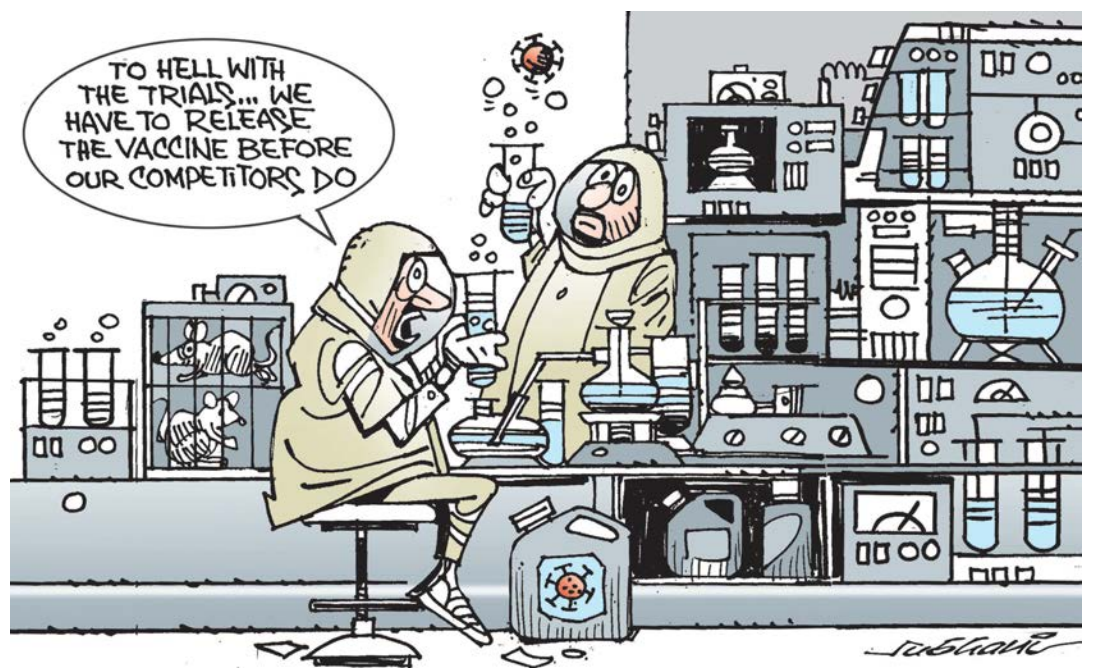
Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilalpally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433

Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chennudugunta 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: 22254765/22254766/42305325

Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255
Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. HSD-348/2006-08

Subhani



Language row led to a new nation 49 yrs ago



Abhijit Bhattacharyya

The world knows that Bangladesh is South Asia's youngest nation state, but few people — and particularly those born well after the cataclysmic events surrounding its birth, who are now in their 20s, 30s and 40s — are fully aware of the torturous processes over a long period of time that led to the creation of arguably one of the few linguistic nation states through blood, sweat, toil and tears? The experience of living through the tumultuous 24 years (1947-1971), between when India attained freedom from British rule and the December day 49 years ago when Dhaka (then Dacca) became "the free capital of a free country" — in Indira Gandhi's ringing phrase in the Lok Sabha — are hard to fathom for those who didn't personally experience those momentous times. East Bengal, of course, had known the agony and humiliation of separation even before 1947 when undivided Bengal was partitioned into two halves, but nothing quite prepared it for the experience of those 24 years as the eastern enclave of the nation called Pakistan — and being treated as a vassal province.

The beauty and reality of history is that it is usually written, rewritten or unwritten by the victors, or deliberately distorted for the sake of the polity. When British India was split into two with the independence of two nations in 1947, it also created a geopolitical impossibility: two wings of the new nation of Pakistan separated by the mother state with a 1,000-mile crater. It was an unbridgeable disconnect making a mockery of a unified Pakistan, ostensibly founded on a common religious identity. Its two wings were a political reality, but remained a geographical and cultural disconnect

since birth.

Just ask any 74-year-old (or older) Bangladeshi (born in 1946 or earlier) about his or her life journey. One is likely to hear the agonising experience he/she underwent, changing his/her nationality. Ceasing to be Indian in August 1947. Being a Pakistani for 24 years, being treated as an inferior and a second-class citizen, discriminated against, till December 1971, and then attaining his/her present identity as a free, independent Bengali-speaking Bangladeshi.

The worst humiliation for the Bengali-speaking citizens of what became East Pakistan was the insensitive linguistic policy forcibly imposed by an insolent, dictatorial governor-general, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the country's founding father, who contemptuously treated them as inferior creatures in contrast to the full-fledged citizens of West Pakistan.

Jinnah's toxic temper, mixed with arrogance, sowed the seeds of irreversible Bengali nationalism in the world's most fertile soil, and ploughing their mind with confrontational ideas. Bengalis sullenly, but silently, bore this up to a point. Till Jinnah left Dhaka, on his sole (and last) visit to East Pakistan, which helped to create a "distinct Bengali nation within an indistinct and intolerant Pakistani state".

On March 21, 1948, Jinnah met a delegation of the Scheduled Castes; and on March 22 received another delegation of upper-caste Hindu members of the East Bengal Legislative Assembly. However, what happened on March 21 at a public gathering, addressed by Jinnah, was a bombshell. "Let me make it clear to you that the state language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language," he declared. "Anyone who tries to mis-

lead you is really the enemy of Pakistan... Every Mussalman should come under the banner of the Muslim League, which is the true custodian of Pakistan". It was a warning-cum-threat to the Bengali language of "united" Pakistan. Jinnah misread the mood on the ground — and the fact that Bengali-speaking people across the world usually define themselves by their language, despite the significant role that religion may play in their lives.

Thus, while already nurturing a genuine feeling of deprivation, discrimination and humiliation, it didn't take long for East Bengalis to fall back upon their linguistic pride. Rabinranath Tagore and Nazrul Islam were always dearer to the Bengali head and heart than the divisive, hate-filled politics of violence and murder of the rest of South Asia. Little wonder Rabinranath Tagore's eternal rhythmic words and sonorous lyrics were wholeheartedly embraced and adopted as Bangladesh's national anthem in 1971. It spontaneously took to the 1905 composed lines of arguably the greatest philosopher poet to have blossomed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries east of Suez.

"Amar shonar Bangla, ami tomay bhalobashi; Chirodin tomar akash, tomar batash, amar prane bajay bashi" (My golden Bengal, I love you. Forever thy skies, thy air set my heart in tune as if it were a flute).

Jinnah was to face some of his worst moments in Dhaka before he returned to Karachi, which was then Pakistan's capital. His

What, however, remains an abiding mystery is how Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in Washington and Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai in Beijing so misread the signs on the ground and tried their best — unsuccessfully — to abort the birth of an independent Bangladesh

speech at Dacca University's convocation March 24, 1948 had a kinetic effect. "There can be only one state language... and that language in my opinion can only be Urdu". Dhaka was instantly rocked by student agitations: the pent-up feelings and suppressed grievances of Bengalis didn't take long to crystallise and burst. People fell back on the facts to disprove Jinnah's views as absurd and unacceptable to Bengali-speaking East Pakistanis, who were a majority of the population.

Jinnah had ignored the fact that Urdu was the mother tongue of only four per cent of Pakistanis, while 55 per cent considered Bengali their mother tongue. Only the Muslims of northern and northwestern India, from where most of the Muslim League's leadership came from, would benefit from Urdu as the state language, along with some Punjabis and Pashtuns working for the state. The choice of Urdu as state language also meant a total absence of Bengali-speaking Pakistanis from state affairs.

What happened later, in 1971, is of course part of the folklore of the proud new nation. History will surely judge Prime Minister Indira Gandhi as an outstanding leader of geopolitical vision who, ably supported by the Indian armed forces under General (later Field-Marshal) Sam Manekshaw, managed the shatter the myth of invincibility around Jinnah's creation — and ensured the surrender of Pakistan's entire military in the eastern sector to the Indian Army at Dhaka's Ramna Maidan on December 16, 1971. What, however, remains an abiding mystery is how Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in Washington and Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai in Beijing so misread the signs on the ground and tried their best — unsuccessfully — to abort the birth of an independent Bangladesh.

The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College. The views expressed are personal.

LETTERS

CMs' SPAT

At a time when farmers have escalated their agitation, the spat and blame game between the CMs of Delhi and Punjab is unfortunate (*Farmers intensify stir over Centre's agri laws, DC, Dec. 15*). Since agriculture is also a state subject, they must pay attention to resolve the crisis than promote political interests.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

BJP IN BENGAL

Mamata's adversary now in West Bengal is a behemoth, unassailable with a gigantic wherewithal and resources (*BJP in Bengal: Bruised, battered... still upbeat?, DC, Dec. 15*). She needs a gargantuan strategy that seems to be sapping due to dwindling cadre and comrades.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

COWS FOR TEMPLES

I congratulate M. Venu Gopala Rao, the Darsi legislator for donating 108 cows to different temples under the one cow for one temple scheme launched by the TTD. It shows his religious feelings, respect and devotion to cows..

Voore Prasada Rao
Angole

VACCINATION

None of us know when the vaccine will reach hospitals for mass use. Governments are vying with one another to supply them for free to all. Even the outgoing US president assured that all Americans will get vaccine shots freely. The priority for vaccination has already been spelt out.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Signals flashed to earth

MOSCOW, Dec. 15. The Soviet Union's unmanned Venus-7 space vehicle reached Venus today after a flight of 120 days, the Soviet news agency Tass reported. The spacecraft started sending messages back for 35 minutes from the planet's atmosphere, it added. Nothing about any landing on the blazing hot surface of the planet was said. When the spacecraft entered the atmosphere of Venus, the descent craft was separated, and parachute opened.

Douglas Murray



The world has to make China pay for what it did in 2020

It's time we started to talk about reparations. The Chinese need to pay the world's citizens for what it did to us all this year.

In Britain, the economy is due to contract by more than 11 per cent this year. In the best-case scenario, the UK will not go back to pre-Covid economic output until the fourth quarter of next year. Anyone tempted to say that this is only because of the actions of the British government should look almost anywhere else. In America, the country's GDP has suffered its worst ever fall-off while government debt has soared to over \$27 trillion. In Australia, the state of Queensland alone is expected to rack up debt of more than \$130 billion in the next couple of years. Everywhere, the world's economies are experiencing an unprecedented slump in GDP and a rocketing of government borrowing.

Happily, there is one major economy where this is not the case. Guess which one it is? China is expected to see growth of 1.8 per cent this year. The only country where that is the case. As as one

financial journal put it earlier this week: "China driving global recovery".

I suppose you could put it that way. Personally, I feel (and perhaps this is just the spirit of Christmas arriving early) a certain amount of vengeance when I read such stories. A vengeance which is always in too short a supply at this time of the year. But speaking personally, I resent the prospect of China walking away from 2020 spinning headlines about the positive economic message its economic boom sends to the rest of the world.

First, it is worth getting the historical record right. We still do not know whether the Wuhan lab was the source of the virus or whether the bat-eating story is true. Both are plausible. And both leave the question of whether the Communist Party of China allowed the virus to come out deliberately or accidentally.

If this sounds vague, then it is by CPC design. Because the CPC spent much of 2019-20 ensuring that we do not, and cannot, know. When Australia called for an independent international inquiry into the

sources of the virus earlier this year, the CPC responded by threatening sanctions against Australia. This week Chinese government accounts posted doctored photos of an Australian soldier "murdering" an Afghan child. Funnily enough, the Communists don't seem to play by the same rules as everyone else.

What is clear is that the CPC will do anything in order to ensure we do not linger on the WMD it released this year. It wants the rest of the world not to know and has done everything it can to keep us ignorant or distracted. It has disappeared the experts and scientists who might have informed us of what happened, and the chances of getting to the bottom of these facts while the CPC remains in power are remote. What we do know is that the Chinese knew about the virus and the dangers of it while keeping the rest of the world in the dark. They allowed people to continue to leave China and fly abroad long after the authorities locked down flights within their own country. Perhaps the CPC did just let off a global pandemic for the third time in a decade. Or perhaps

the CPC knew how lethal and infectious the virus was but allowed it to go out and spread across the globe anyway.

Is it a conspiracy theory to believe this could have been deliberate? I wouldn't have said so, and nor do many people in the intelligence world. In 2020 China achieved one of the greatest coups in financial history. The effects of the Trump administration's trade wars against China were beginning to be felt, and by accident or design the CPC found itself in the lucky position of their main competitor's economy (like the rest of the world) having to shut down completely. As a bonus, President Donald Trump, who appeared to be the only person in the world willing to take on the CPC, was taken out in the election which followed. Now, as the American public survey a political and financial mess of gigantic proportions, China is happily sailing into 2021 with increased growth.

The kick is that China now finds itself in a buyer's market. The rest of the globe is going to have to find a way out of this financial slump and possible depression. From

Africa, to central Europe, to Brexit Britain there is one obvious way out: Chinese investment. So long as China is the country "driving global recovery", the temptation will be there. Long ago the CPC bought up our universities very cheaply indeed. Not to mention a nuclear power station and more. Currently they are able to act like a property developer who has destroyed the area all around your house and now offers to buy your undesirable property at a dirt-cheap price. With certain strings attached. Even if one country resists the temptation to use Chinese investment to get out of this problem, it is unlikely that everyone will show the same restraint.

So I have a different suggestion. Countries of the world, unite. The CPC destroyed the world's economies in 2020. And we would like reparations. I am open to suggestions on how we do this — sanctions, gunboats — nothing should be off the table. China gave us 2020. We need to make them pay for it.

By arrangement with the Spectator

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	46,263.17	0.02
Nifty 50	13,567.85	0.07
S&P 500*	3,673.03	0.70
Dollar (₹)	73.64	-0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.08	0.57
Euro (₹)	89.53	-0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,847*514	1.05
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	50.69	0.40
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.941	-0.005
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.906	0.015

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Exports dip 8.7%, imports 13% in November

Exports contracted for the second consecutive month in November after recording positive growth for a month in September, as the second wave of the pandemic hit consumer demand in some of the largest markets. Exports fell 8.7 per cent while imports contracted 13.3 per cent, resulting in a trade deficit of \$9.9 billion. Exports of petroleum products were down 59.7 per cent while pharma were up 11.1 per cent.

DakPay app for India Post, payments bank



Customers of the Department of Post (India Post) and the India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) can now operate their banking service through an app DakPay, which was unveiled by communications and IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. DakPay will facilitate services such as sending money, scanning QR code and making payment for services and merchants digitally. It will also provide interoperable banking services.

MSN gets USFDA nod for asenapine sublingual tablets

MSN Group said its marketing partner, Breckenridge Pharmaceutical, has received final approval for its ANDA for asenapine sublingual tablets, in 2.5 mg and 10 mg strengths, a generic for Saphris, with the US FDA. Additionally, the 5mg strength received tentative approval. This product, for schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, was developed with Breckenridge Pharmaceutical for the US market.

EeVe India rolls out Atreo, Ahava e-scooters

EeVe India, the Odisha-based electric two-wheeler startup, introduced two new electric scooters called Ahava and Atreo priced at Rs 55,900 and Rs 64,900 at Delhi showroom, respectively. With this, the brand now sells six models in India. The Ahava electric scooter is claimed to have a range of 60-70km while the Atreo claims 90-100km. The two electric scooters have a running cost of 15 paise per km.



Delinquencies spike post-moratorium Loan disbursements by MFIs up in Q2

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 15

Though micro-loan disbursements have witnessed a five-fold growth in the September quarter over the previous quarter, delinquencies have spiked after the moratorium on loan repayments ended on August 31.

Micro-loan disbursements have, after a steep fall in the June quarter, made considerable recovery in the September quarter. In the September quarter loan disbursements by micro-lenders went up to Rs 31,261 crore against Rs 6,186 crore in the June quarter—a steep five-times increase in a quarter.

However, on the flip side, the disbursements have not even recovered to half of the March quarter levels. In the March quarter, the lenders had disbursed Rs 71,090 crore. In fact, in the lockdown-hit June quarter, disbursements had fallen 91 per cent.

The number of loans disbursed had fallen from 192 lakh in the March quarter to 21 lakh in the June quarter but has recovered to 88 lakh in the September quarter. A four-fold quarterly growth in the number of loan accounts in the September quarter has only helped a 45 per cent recovery to the March quarter levels.

However, the average loan size has made a smarter recovery. It has returned to Rs 35,652 in the September quarter from Rs 29,480 and Rs



36,940 in the previous two quarters.

However, delinquencies have soared post-moratorium. Portfolio at Risk (PAR) for 30 days or the outstanding balance of loans in arrears—has shown a sharp increase once the moratorium ended. PAR-30 stood around 1.5 per cent till the June quarter but has sharply moved up to 4.39 per cent in the September quarter, as per the data from MFPI India, a micro-financiers association.

Banks have seen the highest increase in delinquencies; from a sub-1 per cent level in the June quarter, PAR-30 went up to 5.97 per cent. NBFC-MFIs saw it moving up from 1 per cent to 4.17 per cent and small finance banks witnessed a rise from near 1 per cent levels to 2.75 per cent. However, NBFCs saw the PAR-30 days' delin-

quency coming down.

According to Manoj Nambiar, chairperson of MFPI India, the livelihood of all the borrowers has not come back to normal. Some are making part payments and some full payments. "Collection efficiencies are improving month-on-month. Earlier, we had thought that efficiencies would return to pre-Covid levels by December. But, it would probably take one or two months more," he said.

The total loan outstanding of all the micro lenders recovered to Rs 2,31,778 crore—closer to the March quarter gross loan portfolio (GLP) of Rs 2,31,788 crore—after coming down to Rs 2,27,727 crore in the June quarter. However, the September quarter saw 14.89 per cent growth in GLP against the same quarter in the previous year.

High inflows threaten RBI's tight grip on rupee

SUBHADIP SIRCAR & ANIRBAN NAG DEC. 15

A relentless torrent of funds rushing into India's markets may tip the central bank's delicate balancing act in 2021.

For most of this year, the Reserve Bank of India has capped currency gains as global investors poured around \$50 billion into stocks and stakes in companies. This has boosted rupee liquidity in a banking system that's already flush with cash from the RBI's stimulus measures.

There's growing consensus among traders and fund managers that the mounting pressures—particularly the liquidity glut distorting money markets—may spur the central bank to consider a range of changes, from relaxing its grip on Asia's worst-performing currency to curtailing bond purchases.

A modest gain in the rupee over the past month could mean that policy makers are already dialling intervention down a touch, or that inflows are starting to get the better of them.

"We believe that the RBI is facing a tough task of

liquidity management while juggling FX inflows, secondary bond market purchases to keep long-term borrowing costs low and ensuring money-market rates are aligned to the policy rate," said Kanika Pasricha, an economist at Standard Chartered Plc in Mumbai. Steps must be taken to realign money-market rates with policy rates, she said.

While most currencies in Asia have benefited from a weaker dollar, the rupee is down 3 per cent this year.

Traders point to how the RBI has bought \$58 billion of dollars in the first nine months of the year as signs of its intervention.

Governor Shaktikanta Das has only commented very broadly on the matter, writing in the most recent policy statement that the central bank acts to damp forex volatility and keep the rupee in sync with underlying domestic fundamentals.

Inflows into India's equity markets have grown to more than \$19 billion this

FPIs invest nearly ₹42K crore this month

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 15

It's another fortnight of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pumping money in the Indian equity market, encouraged by favourable macro economic data, sharp fall in fresh daily Covid cases and weaker dollar. Till December 15, in the first half of the month, Rs 41,898 crore have been invested in equities by the FPIs after over Rs 60,000 crore net

inflows in November, according to national depository NSDL's data.

So far in the calendar year 2020 FPIs investment in equities stands at Rs 1,50,144 crore, of which close to Rs 1 lakh crore has come after the US Presidential elections.

On Tuesday, too, FPIs were net investors in Indian equities by Rs 2,484.09 crore, as per the provisional exchange data.

"Value erosion in dollar

Personal loan-book growth flat this year

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 15

The pandemic has halted the growth of the personal loan-book and the delinquencies are growing. After growing 26 per cent in FY20 and 40 per cent in the previous two years, personal loan-book remained flat between April and August this year. However, delinquencies have risen in the five-month period.

As of August 2020, the personal loan-book stood at Rs 5,07,684 crore, having grown by only 0.57 per cent over Rs 5,04,792 crore in March 2020 due to Covid-19 disruptions. In the year-ended March 2020, the loan-book had grown by 26.4 per cent, but was lower than the 40 per cent rate of growth in the previous two years, as per data from CRIF High Mark, a Mumbai-based credit bureau.

As of March 2020 active loans had grown by



around 60 per cent, much faster compared to previous years. However, Covid-19 has impacted the originations in the five months of this fiscal year, with a minor de-growth of 1.5 per cent in the active loans.

The personal loan-book in metro cities felt a greater impact of the pandemic, owing to stricter lockdown rules

and near nil economic activity through most of the five-month period in FY21. Originations in metros have witnessed a 42 per cent de-growth compared to the same period in the previous year, as against 27 per cent in tier III and beyond cities.

The average ticket size has been reducing continuously over the last two years. In March 2020, it had shrunk by 18 per cent to 2,22,000. However, the average ticket size increased by 5 per cent to Rs 230,000 by August over March.

The amount of delinquencies for 31-180 days past due and 91-180 days past due have increased by 44 basis points and 26 bps, respectively. Loan delinquencies for 91-180 dpd had increased by 2X in the last two years from 0.91 per cent in March 2018 to 2.59 per cent March 2020. It further moved up to 2.64 per cent in August.

NPS, Atal Pension assets grow 35%

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 15

Asset under management (AUM) of the National Pension System and Atal Pension Yojana grew over 35 per cent year-on-year at the end of November to more than Rs 5.32 lakh crore.

The total number of subscribers grew 21.35 per cent year-on-year to over 3.88 lakh crore, said a release issued by

Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority.

As on November 30, 2020, total pension assets under management stood at Rs 5,32,378 crore showing a year-on-year growth of 35.76 per cent from Rs 3,92,467 crore in November 2019.

The number of subscribers in various schemes under the National Pension System (NPS) rose to over 3.88

crore by end-November 2020 from over 3.20 crore in November 2019, showing a year-on-year increase of 21.35 per cent.

Growing awareness about the tax saving benefits of the NPS led to maximum subscriber growth in all citizen sector by 33.38 per cent and assets under management for this category of subscribers also grew by maximum 51.11 per cent.

Automotive industry lost ₹2,300 cr per day during lockdown: House panel

New Delhi, Dec. 15: In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns, the automotive industry suffered a loss of Rs 2,300 crore per day and the estimated job loss in the sector was about 3.45 lakh, according to a parliamentary panel report submitted to Rajya Sabha chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu on Tuesday.

The parliamentary standing committee on commerce, chaired by Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) MP Keshav Rao, has suggested a slew of measures for attracting investment in the automotive sector, including overhauling of prevalent land and labour laws.

"The committee was informed by the auto industry associations that all the major original equipment manufacturers (OEM) have cut down their production by 18-20 per cent due to low demand and decline in sales of vehicles. As a result, the employment scenario in the automobile sector has been affect-

ed and the an estimated job loss in the auto sector at 3.45 lakh," the panel said in its report.

Hiring of manpower has been stopped in the auto industry sector. Besides that, 286 auto dealers have been closed. Further, production cuts in the automobile sector have a percolating negative impact on the component industry adversely affecting the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in the automobile spare parts manufacturing, the report said.

"As informed by the automobile industry associations, the production stoppage at the automotive OEM and component supplier due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns led to a loss of approximately Rs 2,300 crore per day to the automotive sector," it said.

The standing committee further said the actual magnitude of the impact depends on the duration of lockdown period, the intensity and extent of spread of the Covid-19 outbreak.

SAVING | MOTHER EARTH

Rice cultivation uses 30-40% of the world's freshwater

Drip irrigation to make rice eco-friendly

ARI RABINOVITCH JERUSALEM, DEC. 15

An Israeli company has developed a drip irrigation system for growing rice to replace the flooded paddies that have supplied the world with rice for generations but cause a surprising level of damage to the environment.

Rice is the staple food for more than half the global population, but its cultivation uses 30-40 per cent of the world's freshwater and is responsible for 10 per cent of man-made emissions of greenhouse gas methane, according to the UN-backed Sustainable Rice Platform.

Netafim, a company that pioneered drip irri-



gation decades ago to grow produce like potatoes and melons across Israel's challenging arid landscape, has just finished a pilot scheme using its technology on 1,000 hectares (2,470 acres) of rice fields in locations from Europe to southern Asia.

At one such location, at La Fagiana farm in north-east Italy, two fields, side-

by-side, grow a high quality rice for risotto. One is flooded, covered entirely by up to 15 cm of water to maintain temperatures and keep away weeds.

The other is crisscrossed with perforated pipes delivering to the roots precise amounts of water amounting to less than half the quantity used on the flooded field.

"We want to increase

the production without increasing water use or lowering quality," said Michele Conte, whose family has managed La Fagiana for decades and who has adopted the Netafim system on some of his land.

For three years the drip irrigation has yielded rice on par and at times even better quality than the flooded paddies, he said. It also allows them to rotate crops throughout the year.

Netafim said it had to learn from scratch how to achieve the same yield as flooding and it took a decade to create a new protocol for watering, fertilizing and planting rice with drip irrigation.

The growing conditions

switch to aerobic from anaerobic, which means methane emission "goes to zero," said CEO Gaby Miodownik.

Conte said the schedule for treating the rice still needs some fine tuning but that it has become a selling point for environmentally concerned customers.

The initial investment in pipes, pumps and filters could be expensive for farmers whose profit margins are, for the most part, already thin.

But the shift away from flooding is expected to gain traction and companies like India's Jain Irrigation are developing drip irrigation packages for rice as well.

— Reuters

SHORT TAKES

Yuvraj named in Punjab probables

New Delhi: World Cup winning former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh is set to come out of retirement and play domestic cricket again after being named in Punjab's 30-strong list of probables for next month's Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament. Yuvraj had announced his retirement last June but he decided to resume playing for his home state after being approached by Punjab Cricket Association secretary. The 39-year-old left-handed batsman, who has played 304 ODIs, 40 Tests and 58 T20Is for India, has been training at the PCA stadium in Mohali and also posted a video of his preparations on social media.

RAINA ALL SET FOR UP

Former India batsman Suresh Raina is all set to represent his home state of Uttar Pradesh. Raina announced his retirement from international cricket in August this year, but will continue to play domestic cricket for his native state and in the Indian Premier League.

SREESANTH IN KERALA LIST

Former India fast bowler S. Sreesanth on Tuesday moved closer to a return to competitive cricket after being named in a 26-strong probables list. The 37-year-old was banned by the BCCI over his alleged involvement in spot-fixing in the IPL. — *Agencies*

Hyderabad ride on Santana brace

Vasco: Aridane Santana struck twice in less than a minute to script Hyderabad FC's thrilling 3-2 win over SC East Bengal in an Indian Super League match here on Tuesday. Santana's twin burst came in the 56th minute after SC East Bengal scored their first ever ISL goal through Jacques Maghoma in the 26th minute. There was no looking back for Hyderabad after that as they struck a third goal in the 68th minute with Liston Colaco making a terrific run to set it up for Halicharan Narzary to find the back of the net. But there was more drama in store as Maghoma too completed a brace from Anthony Pilkington's freekick to reduce the margin in the 81st minute. East Bengal thus suffered their fourth defeat from five matches to remain at the bottom of the table with one point. Hyderabad FC, on the other hand, remained unbeaten from five matches (nine points) to be placed at fifth place in the 11-team standings. — *PTI*

Grealish banned from driving

London: Aston Villa captain Jack Grealish was given a nine-month driving ban on Tuesday after crashing his Range Rover during the coronavirus lockdown in March. Grealish was sentenced at Birmingham Magistrates' Court after previously pleading guilty to two charges. The 25-year-old's vehicle hit two parked vehicles in Dickens Heath, Solihull, West Midlands. As well as the driving ban, England midfielder Grealish was also fined £82,499 (\$110,271). A judge was told that a witness said Grealish smelled of "intoxicating liquor" and was slurring his words immediately after the crash on March 29. Grealish was involved in the incident less than 24 hours after issuing a Twitter video message urging people to stay at home to save lives and protect the NHS. — *AFP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

Big Bash League: Perth Scorchers vs Melbourne Stars from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

Lanka Premier League: Final from 7.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Mohun Bagan vs FC Goa from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

English Premier League: Arsenal vs Southampton from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1; Leicester vs Everton from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 2; Leeds United vs Newcastle from 11.30 pm; Fulham vs Brighton from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Star Sports 3; Liverpool vs Tottenham Hotspur from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Star Sports Select 1; West Ham vs Crystal Palace from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Star Sports Select 2

Italian League: Juventus vs Atalanta from 11 pm on Sony Ten 2; Genoa vs AC Milan from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1; Inter Milan vs Napoli from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2

WWE

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

BATTLE READY

Australia have plans in place for Kohli & Co.

Adelaide, Dec. 15: Australia coach Justin Langer on Tuesday asserted that his team will "have plans in place" for Indian talisman Virat Kohli as cricket's heavyweights renew one of the sport's greatest rivalries with the opening day-night Test here from Thursday.

The four-match series opener at Adelaide Oval will be the only time India captain Kohli will play Test cricket Down Under this summer as he will return home after the game to attend the birth of his first child.

Langer, however, is determined to stop Kohli from setting the tone for the series.

"He is a great player and an equally great leader. I have got so much respect for him but we are going to be really well planned for him because we know how important he is for India as a leader and as a batsman. So, we will have our plans in place.

"The next trick is to execute them, hopefully, keep him out of the game with his runs. At the end of the day, that's where he is going to have the biggest impact. We've seen a lot of him now, and he has seen a lot of us too," Langer said during a virtual media interaction. Langer also made it clear that his team will focus more on the skill part and look for ways to get Kohli out instead of needlessly engaging with him.

"What we talk about is how to get Virat out. He is such a great player, we don't talk about whether we taunt him or not. That's rubbish... We play on the skill, not on emotions, at least we try to."

"There is obviously emotion in the game, no doubt about that, we are going to control our emotions."

Australia may have played more day-night Tests compared to India's one but according to Langer, his team would have no advantage heading into the opening pink ball match.

"I have always said that the best players and best teams adapt regardless of the big game or the colour of the ball, so whether it is the red ball or the white ball or the pink ball, the best players and teams adapt to it.

"So, what has happened in the past, it is nice to replay. India have just come off a day-night practice game, we have done a bit of practice under lights."

— *PTI*



India captain Virat Kohli at a training session in Adelaide on Tuesday, ahead of the first Test against Australia.

— *AFP*

Gavaskar bats for Pant, Gill

New Delhi, Dec. 15: The legendary Sunil Gavaskar feels the Indian team management should prefer an aggressive Rishabh Pant over a technically sound Wriddhiman Saha for the wicket-keeper's role in the four-match Test series against Australia, starting Thursday.

Gavaskar, the fastest to reach 10,000 Test runs, said that with a blistering 73-ball 103-run knock in the second warm-up game under his belt, Pant will give India more flexibility in the first Test, the only day-night game, to be played in Adelaide.

"It is going to be a tough one for the four selection committee because Rishabh played in all the 4 Test matches four years ago. He also got a hundred and seemed he got under the skin of the Australian players with his chirping behind the stumps."

"...When you just came off a hundred few days earlier, he would be the

RAHANE KEEPS CARDS CLOSE TO HIS CHEST

Adelaide, Dec. 15: India vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane on Tuesday conceded that pacer Ishant Sharma's absence is a "big miss" but side-stepped queries on his team's possible first XI combination for the opening Day/Night Test against Australia starting on Thursday.

Rahane, who is expected to lead in the last three Tests after regular skipper Virat Kohli goes on paternity leave, also spoke about how pink ball's increased pace off the pitch during the 40-

minutes of the twilight session, will be the biggest challenge for any batsman. "I think, we do really have a strong attack but yes we will definitely miss Ishant, being the senior fast bowler," he said.

Ishant is recovering from a rib injury sustained during the IPL.

Rahane, however, is confident that despite Ishant's absence, the pace attack comprising Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami will step it up for the Australians. — *PTI*

Both Gavaskar and Border batted for Shubman Gill over Prithvi Shaw to open along side Mayank Agarwal in the series.

"...India is a little bit shaky at the top of the order. They don't know who they are going to go with. Mayank Agarwal is of course a certainty. But who's the other opener — Shubman Gill or Prithvi Shaw?" said Gavaskar.

"So with uncertainty at the top, they would like to strengthen their batting and so Pant will play. I am hoping he (Rishabh) plays at 6 because then that will allow you to pick 5 bowlers to try and get 20 Australian wickets."

— *PTI*

Gavaskar said he pre-

ferred Pant over a more-accomplished keeper in Saha, as Australian pitches are not so demanding when it comes to keeping wickets.

Both Gavaskar and Border batted for Shubman Gill over Prithvi Shaw to open along side Mayank Agarwal in the series.

"...India is a little bit shaky at the top of the order. They don't know who they are going to go with. Mayank Agarwal is of course a certainty. But who's the other opener — Shubman Gill or Prithvi Shaw?" said Gavaskar.

"So with uncertainty at the top, they would like to strengthen their batting and so Pant will play. I am hoping he (Rishabh) plays at 6 because then that will allow you to pick 5 bowlers to try and get 20 Australian wickets."

— *PTI*

Virat second best in Test rankings

Dubai, Dec. 15: India captain Virat Kohli on Tuesday jumped one place to second in the ICC Test ranking for batsmen, which also features Chesteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane at the seventh and 10th positions respectively.

Kohli is the leading Indian batsman in the chart with 886 rating points behind Australia's Steve Smith (911 points).

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson dropped a rung to the third spot. He is followed by young Australian batting sensation Marnus Labuschagne, Pakistan's Babar Azam and injured David Warner.

Pujara is seventh in the chart with 766 points, followed by Ben Stokes (760), Joe Root (738) and India Test vice-captain Rahane (726) to complete the top-10 list.

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah (779) and veteran off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (756) are the two Indians to find a place in the ICC Test rankings for bowlers at eighth and 10th spots respectively.

The list is being headed by Australia's Pat Cummins (904), followed by England's Stuart Broad and New Zealand's Neil Wagner.

Two other Indians — Ravindra Jadeja and Ashwin — also feature in the top-10 list for ICC Test rankings for all-rounders, which is being topped by Stokes.

While Jadeja is placed third in the chart with 397

● **Kohli is the leading Indian batsman in the chart with 886 rating points behind Australia's Steve Smith (911 points). Chesteshwar Pujara is seventh on the list with 766 points, followed by Ben Stokes (760), Joe Root (738) and India Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane (726) to complete the top-10 list.**

rating points behind West Indies' Jason Holder, Ashwin is at sixth with 281 points.

In the ICC Test rankings for teams, India are currently placed third after New Zealand jumped to the second spot following their recent 2-0 series win over the West Indies.

India have 114 rating points, two points behind New Zealand and table-toppers Australia, who both have 116 points but the Aussies are ahead on decimal points.

England are placed fourth ahead of Sri Lanka, South Africa, Pakistan, West Indies, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.

But India have a chance to move up the ranking ladder as they take on Australia in the four-match Test series, starting Thursday in Adelaide.

— *PTI*



Members of the Valluvar Nagar Football Club pose with the trophy after defeating CFA in the final.

VN Nagar grab football trophy

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

Valluvar Nagar Football Club defeated Champions Football Academy (CFA, Yousufguda) to win the Inaugural Cup hosted by Hyderabad Football Association and coordinated by Sports Village, at the Eagles Arena in Tarnaka, Hyderabad.

Samuel scored the all-important goal for the winners in the championship match. He got able support from teammates Pavan, Samson, Mahaveer, Issac,

Yogesh, Aaron and Venu, much to the delight of coaches Emmanuel and Shiva Kumar.

Earlier in the semifinals, VN Nagar defeated Hyderabad Clusters 1-0 with Justin scoring the lone goal.

In the group stages, VN Nagar beat Abbas Union 1-0 via Yogesh's strike before blasting past Bewin FC 3-0 as Akash, Yogesh and Venu got on to the scoresheet.

Justin and Akash were adjudged Best Defenders, Likith grabbed the prize for the Best Goalkeeper.

Pranitha, Snehit are TT champions

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

G. Pranitha and SFR Snehit won the girls and boys championships respectively in the Youth category of the 7th Telangana State District & State Table Tennis Championship held at Anandnagar Welfare and sports Association in Khairatabad, Hyderabad.

Both Pranitha and Snehit came up with dominating performances to beat all their opponents and keep their slates clean in the Superleague to capture the trophies. Pranitha, who is doing her B Tech final year from Keshav Memorial College, was all guns blazing. She first defeated Varuni Jaiswal of GSM 4-11, 18-16, 11-9, 11-8; then blocked Bhavitha (GSM) 11-9, 9-11, 11-2, 8-11, 11-7; rallied past Ragha Nivedita (MLR) 4-11, 11-7, 11-5, 11-7; hemmed in Hanifa Khatoon (VPG) 11-6, 11-8, 11-6 and silenced V. Saasya (AWA) 11-8, 11-7, 8-11, 11-6 to emerge champion.

Snehit, a final year student of St Joseph's Degree and PG College, Koti, was equally good on the table. He first beat B. Vatsin 11-8, 11-8, 11-2; made light work of Mohd Ali 11-9, 9-11, 11-6, 11-2; walloped B. Vrishin 11-8, 11-5, 11-6;



G. Pranitha (above) won the Youth Girls Superleague. SFR Snehit (right) poses with his trophy and certificate at the TSTTA championship at AWA in Hyderabad.

THE RESULTS

Youth Girls Superleague

■ G. Pranitha (HVS) bt Varuni Jaiswal (GSM) 4-11, 18-16, 11-9, 11-8; bt Bhavitha (GSM) 11-9, 9-11, 11-2, 8-11, 11-7; bt Ragha Nivedita (MLR) 4-11, 11-6, 11-8, 11-9; bt V. Saasya (AWA) 11-5, 11-8, 8-11, 11-9; bt Vinichitra Yadav (MLR) 11-4, 11-6, 11-7; and was victorious against B. Varun Shanker (MLR) 11-6, 11-3, 12-10 for the title.

Varuni Jaiswal (GSM), V. Laasya (AWA) and N. Bhavitha (GSM) finished second, third and fourth among girls while Mohammed Ali (LBS), B. Varun Shanker (MLR) and Sainath Reddy (MLR) took the second, third and fourth spots in the boys section.

Other results

■ G. Pranitha (HVS) bt Varuni Jaiswal (GSM) 6-11, 18-16, 11-9, 11-8; bt V. Saasya (AWA) 11-7, 11-3, 7-11, 11-5; bt Vinichitra Yadav (MLR) 11-9, 11-9, 5-11, 11-4; bt R. Niveditha (MLR) 6-11, 11-9, 11-8,

(GSM) 7-11, 11-5, 11-9, 16-14. ■ R. Niveditha (MLR) bt Varuni Jaiswal (GSM) 8-11, 11-7, 11-6, 11-8; bt Hanifa Khatoon (VPG) 12-10, 11-2, 11-7; bt Vinichitra Yadav (MLR) 11-7, 11-13, 13-14, 11-8; bt V. Saasya (AWA) 11-8, 7-11, 12-10, 11-9. ■ V. Saasya (AWA) bt Vinichitra (MLR) 12-10, 6-11, 11-7, 10-12, 11-7; bt Hanifa Khatoon (VPG) 11-9, 11-4, 11-4. ■ Vinichitra (MLR) bt Hanifa Khatoon (VPG) 8-11, 11-3, 11-6, 12-10.

Youth Boys Superleague

■ SFR Snehit (MLR) bt B. Vatsin 11-8, 11-8, 11-2; bt Mohammed Ali 11-9, 9-11, 11-6, 11-2; bt B. Vrishin 11-8, 11-5, 11-6; bt Saroj Siril (AWA) 11-4, 11-7, 11-8; bt Sainath Reddy (MLR) 11-9, 11-8, 11-8; bt Kesavan Kannan (MLR) 11-4, 11-6, 11-7; bt B. Varun Shanker (MLR) 11-6, 11-3, 12-10. ■ Mohammed Ali (LBS) bt B. Vrishin 11-5, 11-8, 12-10; bt Sainath Reddy (MLR) 11-7, 11-4, 12-10; bt B. Varun Shanker (MLR) 11-6, 4-11, 15-13, 11-8; bt B. Vatsin 11-2, 11-6, 11-6; bt Saroj Siril (AWA) 11-4, 11-7, 11-7; bt Kesavan Kannan (MLR) 11-1, 11-9, 4-11, 11-5. ■ B. Varun Shanker (MLR) bt Saroj Siril (AWA) 11-5, 11-7, 13-11; bt Kesavan Kannan (MLR) 11-9, 11-4, 7-11, 12-10; bt B.Vrishin 11-3, 9-11, 11-7, 11-7; bt Sainath Reddy (MLR) 11-5, 11-9, 11-5; bt B. Vatsin 11-8, 11-3, 11-8. ■ Sainath Reddy (MLR) bt Kesavan Kannan (MLR) 11-8, 11-7, 11-9; bt B.Vrishin 5-11, 14-12, 11-9, 11-8; bt B. Vatsin 11-4, 9-11, 11-9, 7-11, 11-6; bt Saroj Siril (AWA) 9-11, 13-11, 11-7, 4-11, 11-7. ■ Saroj Siril (AWA) bt B. Vatsin 11-5, 11-11, 11-9, 11-8; bt Kesavan Kannan (MLR) 12-10, 11-4, 11-4, 11-7; bt B.Vrishin 11-4, 11-5, 11-4. ■ Kesavan Kannan (MLR) bt B. Vatsin 6-11, 7-11, 11-7, 11-6, 11-8; bt B.Vrishin 11-9, 11-9, 11-9. ■ B. Vatsin bt B. Vrishin 11-7, 11-9, 9-11, 11-5.

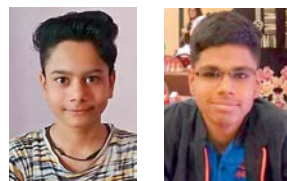
DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, DEC. 15

Vrashank Chouhan and Kartavya Anadkat bagged the top honours at the 175th Brilliant Trophy chess tournament that was conducted online due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Vrashank of Vidya Bhavan Public School in Udaipur, Rajasthan, won the Juniors category by scoring 11.5 points out of 12 rounds. Nihal Swarna secured the second place with 10.5 points while Neev Dange was third aggregating 9.5 points.

In the Open category, Kartavya of Ahmedabad, Gujarat, won the event by scoring 10.5 points leaving Ayush Jain (10 points) in second place. Shreyas Sheshadri finished third with 9.5 points to his credit.



Vrashank

Kartavya

THE STANDINGS

■ **Open category:** 1. Kartavya Anadkat, 2. Ayush Jain, 3. Shreyas Seshadri Nalluri, 4. Mathiyazhagan, 5. Shaik Sumer Arsh, 6. VSN Murthy, 7. Ritobroto Sen, 8. D. Lakshmana Rao, 9. V. U. Diwakar, 10. Pavan Karthikya Varma. ■ **U-15 boys:** 1. Pradyumn Avadhani, 2. Indraneel Reddy, 3. Swaralakshmi S. Nair, 2. Naannya. ■ **U-13 boys:** 1. Neev Dange, 2. Hemant. ■ **Girls:** 1. Hyma Kumari, 2. Shybi Binoj. ■ **U-11 boys:** 1. Nihal Swarna, 2. Y. V. Avinash Reddy, 3. Harshitha Agarwal, 4. Shriya Mahesh. ■ **U-9 boys:** 1. Shreyan Bag, 2. Vihaan Sai Krishna, 3. Giris. ■ **U-7 boys:** 1. Balanandran Ayyappan, 2. Havish Kovich, 3. Aaditri Abhishek, 2. M. Pranavi.

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