


WEATHER



Max: 29.7°C  
Min: 22.0°C  
RH: 61%  
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: clear.  
Max/Min  
temp. 29/21 °C

COVID-19  
COUNT


CASES	DEATHS
(+18,712)	(+248)
1,02,07,065	1,47,907

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS


(+472)	(+2)
TS: 2,84,863	1,531
(+349)	(+2)
AP: 8,81,061	7,094

CASES AROUND THE WORLD




8,09,26,235

DEATHS



17,68,844

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES




218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana  
Tithi: Margasira Shuddha  
Chaturdasi full day  
Star: Rohini till 3.35 pm  
Varjyam: 6.49 am to 8.34 am;  
9.38 pm to 11.21 pm  
Durmuhurtam: 12.39 pm to  
1.23 pm; 2.51 pm to 3.54 pm  
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am  
HIJRI CALENDAR  
Jamadi-ul-Awwal 12, 1442 AH  
PRAYERS  
(SHAHI MASJID)  
Fajar: 5.16 am  
Zohar: 12.11 pm  
Asar: 4.13 pm  
Maghrib: 5.49 pm  
Isha: 7.05 pm  
SUNSET TODAY 5.50 PM  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.33 AM  
MOONRISE TODAY 4.23 PM  
MOONSET TOMORROW 5.40 AM

COUNTER POINT



Shh! They are political infiltrators!


SHORT TAKES

GST CASH RULE  
WON'T HIT SMALL  
BIZ, SAYS FINMIN

New Delhi: Small businesses and dealers will not be impacted by the new government rule of paying at least one per cent of GST liability in cash as only entities with annual turnover of ₹6 crore and above are required to follow the new rule, sources in the finance ministry said. After unearthing use of fake invoices to evade GST, the CBIC had last week amended rules to make it mandatory for businesses with monthly turnover of over ₹50 lakh to pay at least one per cent of their GST liability in cash.


NATION | 5

Rahul away for few weeks abroad: Cong




WORLD | 7

Biden warns against delay in aid package



SPORTS | 8

India ride on captain Ajinkya's century



## Merit twist: AP students enter Gandhi Local students deprived chance to join top-ranked institutes

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 27

Several students from Andhra Pradesh have secured admission in government medical colleges in Telangana state, including the prestigious Gandhi and Osmania, allegedly in violation of rules, thereby depriving local students of an opportunity to join these top-ranked institutions.

The allotment process adopted by the Kaloji Narayana Rao University of Health Sciences (KNRUHS) in Phase 2 counselling resulted in at least 40 students from AP, making it to govt colleges in TS

● THE ALLOTMENT process adopted by the Kaloji Narayana Rao University of Health Sciences (KNRUHS) in Phase 2 counselling resulted in at least 40 students from AP, making it to govt colleges in TS

erwise ineligible, making it to the government colleges in Telangana state and locals losing an equal number of seats.

The process also virtually converted the "unreserved category", in which meritorious students compete for the seat irrespective of their local status, caste or religion, into a

"reserved" category for non-local students.

All the students in Gandhi and Osmania medical colleges who got admission in the unreserved category in the Phase 2 counselling belong to either Andhra University or Sri Venkateswara University regions and same is the case with many other government colleges in TS.

Significantly, the NTR University of Health Sciences (NTRUHS), AP, which initially followed the same procedure as KNRUHS, cancelled allotments of Phase-2 counselling stating that it was faulty. It claimed to have rectified the error and

made fresh allotments in a different procedure.

What is intriguing is that the Kaloji University also cancelled Phase 2 counselling citing technical reasons. Except for including two students in Phase 2 counselling following High Court orders, it stuck to the old procedure.

"Both universities cannot be right because the procedures they followed are completely opposite," said Dr Ala Venkateswarlu of Guntur, who complained against the faulty procedure in AP and got it rectified.

■ Page 2: Kaloji varsity failed to follow sliding rule

## All set for trial run

Officials making arrangements for Covid-19 vaccination dry run at New Government General Hospital premises in Vijayawada on Sunday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

## Vaccine dry run to start in Krishna from today

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 27

With the Covid-19 dry run programme scheduled for Monday, Krishna district collector A. Md Imtiaz inspected the arrangements at the government general hospital (GGH) on Sunday. Imtiaz said that the two-day corona vaccination dry run will take off in five centres in the district, including the GGH, Prakashnagar urban

primary healthcare centre, Poorna Heart Institute (private hospital) at Vijayawada, government school at Tadigadapa and Uppulur PHC.

He said that Krishna district was selected as a pilot project for the dry run because of the official machinery's proven efficiency. He said that three rooms were set up for the purpose at each centre. The registration process will be in the first room,

vaccination in the second and observation in the third room. He mentioned that a ten-bed separate room is kept handy for emergencies and medical professionals are available for emergencies.

Imtiaz said each centre has five vaccination officers and 25 medical staff for whom the required training has been completed. He said they would not administer any vaccine during the programme.

## Court orders saving video of search

New Delhi, Dec. 27: A court here on Sunday directed police to preserve the video footage of the search conducted at the premises of advocate Mehmood Pracha, a lawyer representing some of the accused in northeast Delhi riot cases.

Duty Magistrate Udhav Kumar Jain, however, did not pass any order on whether to hand over a copy of the video to Pracha. The court directed

its staff to preserve the entire video footage of the search with its seal and place it before the court concerned for necessary orders. The judge said that at this stage, only directions for preserving the video footage is "deemed necessary and the concerned court can take a call on supplying the video footage to the applicant Pracha".

The court has listed the matter for January 5

before the court concerned. The video footage was submitted by the investigating officer (IO) in response to an earlier court order. The court is hearing an application by Pracha in which he has said that he was threatened by the IO that a false case will be registered against him. Pracha had submitted that a search was conducted at his office from December 24 noon till around 3 am on

December 25, and according to law, the IO should have intimidated forthwith the search and the seized articles to the magistrate concerned. He submitted that, however, the same was not done and therefore, he filed an application in that regard. The advocate further submitted that the entire search was videographed as per a court order and that he was entitled to a copy of the video footage. —PTI

## Nitish gives JD(U) chief post to aide

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, DEC. 27

Amid strains with alliance partner BJP, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar resigned from the post of JD(U) national president on Sunday and handed over charge to one of his closest aides and a member of the Rajya Sabha, R.C.P. Singh.

The decision was taken during the national executive meeting of the JD(U). Mr Singh's elevation was on

expected lines since he was actively involved in most of the party's policy decisions including advising Mr Kumar during Bihar Assembly elections.

Mr Singh will now look after the party's affairs, including its dealings with the BJP.

His appointment to the party's top post is also crucial from the perspective of upcoming Assembly elections in West Bengal and Assam.

## Home ministry likely to suggest EC to deploy 1.35 lakh CRPF personnel in state Centre may start WB poll work in January

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC 27

The Union home ministry could approach the Election Commission as early as January for a discussion regarding the security arrangements and deployment of Central para-military forces for West Bengal Assembly election. The election in the state is likely to be held in April next year.

Sources claim the home ministry feels that there

could be large-scale violence during the Bengal polls this time for which "unprecedented security arrangements are required." With the BJP making aggressive inroads into Bengal before the crucial elections, it is largely believed that there could be intense violence in the run-up to the Assembly polls for which adequate security deployment would have to be done.

Already Bengal has witnessed clashes between the

● SOURCES CLAIM the home ministry feels that there could be large-scale violence during the Bengal polls this time for which "unprecedented security arrangements are required."

BJP and the Trinamul Congress workers, with the latest incident of violence being the attack on the convoy of BJP president J.P. Nadda on the outskirts of Kolkata a few days

ago. Even though formal discussions are yet to begin between the home ministry and the EC for the security deployment, the Centre has already started making advance preparation for the same. Sources claim that according to the initial assessment, anything between 800 to 1000 companies of central paramilitary forces could be deployed during the Bengal elections.

Each company of central forces comprises 100 to 135

personnel. This makes one of the deployments for Bengal elections by security forces, one of the biggest in recent time for any state elections. For the recently concluded Bihar Assembly elections, nearly 50,000 central security forces personnel were deployed.

Sources claimed that Home Ministry could also request the Election Commission to divide the Bengal elections into more phases with some gap, as this would help facilitate

quick and easy movement of security forces from one part of the State to the other. "The idea is to ensure free and fair elections in a violence-free atmosphere. And with Bengal election are showing keen interest by all major political parties and even the common people out job becomes even more tough and responsible. So we need to ensure adequate availability and deployment during the elections," an official added.

## CM to give house site pattas today

### Jagan to address public meet

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, DEC. 27

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will distribute house site pattas for eligible beneficiaries under the 'Pedalandariki Illu' scheme at Urundur village in Srikalahasti constituency on Monday.

According to officials, after distributing house site pattas to a few women beneficiaries, the Chief Minister will address a public meeting. Prior to that, he will interact with beneficiaries and inaugurate a pylon and a model house built under the scheme.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister K. Narayan Swamy, along with Panchayat Raj Minister Peddiredy Ramachandra Reddy, advisor of CM visit Thalaseela Raghuram, Chittoor MP Reddeppa and MLAs B. Madhusudhan Reddy and Nawaz Basha and Collector Narayan Bharat Gupta visited the public meeting venue

to oversee the arrangements on Sunday.

The ministers also held a review meeting with officials from police, health, electricity, rural water supply, roads and buildings, MEPMA, transport, panchayat and other line departments on the arrangements for the CM's visit. They directed officials to make foolproof arrangements for the people and ensuring drinking water supply and good sanitation facilities.

District Collector Narayan Bharata Gupta informed that around 3,760.37 acres of land, including 1,903.90 acres of government land and 1,856.47 acres of DKT/patta land, was procured across to form 1,267 housing layouts under YSR free house sites distribution scheme. A total of 2.46 lakh people will benefit from the scheme. Elaborate security arrangements were in place at the venue by the urban police wing led by SP Avula Ramesh Reddy.

## Motor vehicle papers will remain valid till March 31

New Delhi, Dec. 27: The Union transport ministry on Sunday extended the validity of motor vehicle documents like driving licence (DL), registration certificate (RC) and permits till March 31, 2021, in view of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The ministry of road transport and highways (MoRTH) had earlier issued advisories dated





March 30, 2020, June 9, 2020 and August 24, 2020 in connection with extension of validity of documents related to Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989. "The Union ministry of road transport and highways has extended the validity of vehicular documents like DLs, RCs, permits etc till March 31, 2021 in the light of need to pre-

vent spread of Covid. Ministry has today issued a directory to the states and Union Territory administrations in the regard," a MoRTH statement said.

Earlier through various notifications, it was advised that the validity of fitness, permit, licence, registration or any other concerned document(s) may be treated to be valid till December 31. —PTI

## Revelry beats caution

People, not adhering to social distancing norms, visit Juhu Chowpatty amid the coronavirus pandemic, in Mumbai, Sunday. — PTI



GP

CMYK



## SHORT TAKES

LAND GRABBING  
ROW BETWEEN TD,  
YSRC HEATS UPDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 27

High drama prevailed at the well-known Saibaba Temple on Beach Road in Visakhapatnam on Sunday morning when Anakapalle MLA Gudivada Amarnath and a large number of YSRC workers waited for TD MLA Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu to swear on Baba and announce that he never grabbed an inch of government land.

After waiting for an hour, Amarnath and his followers left the temple premises declaring that by not presenting himself, the TD MLA has accepted his guilt of grabbing government land.

Allegations and counter allegations have been exchanged after revenue and GVMC personnel got vacated the 290 square yard government land at a prime locality near Rushikonda and 40 acres of land in Mudasarlova, opposite to Central Jail and abutting BRTS road.

The day Rushikonda land was freed, Rajya Sabha member V. Vijay Sai Reddy released a list of government lands grabbed by TD MLA Velagapudi Ramakrishna and named his benamis. Reacting to this list, Velagapudi said he was ready to swear on God that he did not grab any government land and challenged Vijay Sai Reddy to do same.

“Vijay Sai Reddy is too big a man for Velagapudi. Hence, we have come to Saibaba Temple and waited for him for hours with all evidence of his land grabbing,” Mr Amarnath told reporters. He maintained that government has enough evidence to nail the TD Urban MLA. The SIT report would further strengthen the case against Velagapudi, sufficient enough for sending him to jail.

“Velagapudi will go to jail. It is a certainty,” Anakapalle MLA declared before reporters.

Earlier, a huge rally was taken out from YSR statue at Park Hotel junction to Saibaba Temple in East Point Colony led by Amarnath. Ruling party workers raised slogans against Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu.

Police personnel were deployed to prevent any untoward incident.

PATRUDU: JAGAN  
IS BETRAYING  
PENSIONERSDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 27

Senior Telugu Desam leader Ch. Ayyana Patrudu on Sunday wondered how the YSR Congress government could claim credit over people's welfare when it could not fulfil its avowed ₹3,000 pension promise.

He accused Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy of betraying even grannies and granddads by not increasing their pensions, which was an electoral promise he had made last year. He pointed out that the Chief Minister made the people believe in his promises by saying that they were as sacred as the Bible, Quran, and Bhagavad Gita.

YSRC CHEATING  
FARMERS, SAYS  
BJP AP CHIEFDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 27

BJP AP president Somu Veeraj, who has been addressing meetings in support of the three farm laws passed by the Centre, said many people are turning to agriculture and are taking up organic farming.

Addressing a Farmers' Empowerment Meet organised by the BJP at Pedavallapudi in Guntur district on Sunday in support of the new agricultural laws, Mr Veeraj maintained that both YSRC and TD had supported these legislations but have now joined hands with Congress and Communists against the laws.

The BJP state chief pointed out that the central Act clearly mentions that there will be agreements with farmers on crops to be grown and harvested. While the farmer's land will remain safe, payments will be made as per the agreement, which will be helpful for the farming community. He said the debate over these laws had been going on for two decades. Only after many discussions and exchange of ideas, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has brought in these laws. He suggested that farmers should make themselves aware about organic farming practices.

## God promise



Anakapalle MLA Gudivada Amarnath along with YSRC leaders and party activists offer prayers at East Point Shirdi Sai Baba Temple while they protest against Vizag-east MLA Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu at East Point Colony in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. — K. MURALIKRISHNA

Revamped AP state schools  
pose a threat to pvt schools

Jagan saw first-hand the sorry plight of students studying in govt schools

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 27

The year 2020 was boon for government schools across all in 13 districts in the State as they were able to get a vibrant new-look.

There was a near-complete revamp of schools with all necessary infrastructure and ambience put in place and making them on par or even better than private institutions.

In the first phase, 15,715 government schools were refurbished with all basic amenities like fans, blackboards, water purifiers, cupboards and other infrastructure under Mana Badi Nadu-Nedu. Further, converting anganwadis into English medium pre-primary 1 and 2 will strengthen government education segment.

Rolling out welfare schemes has been part of the quest for a better tomorrow to the people and their children.

Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, during his walkathon, saw first-hand the sorry plight of students studying in government schools and the inability of parents to send their wards to private institutions resulting in a yawning gap in standards and outlook of students vis-a-vis schools they go to.

Bringing in a new order, the Chief Minister has initiated a slew of measures and 'Mana Badi-Nadu Nedu' is aimed at revamping and rebuilding government education institutions and anganwadi centres.

The conventional assumption that government schools lack of basic amenities underwent a sea-change in 2020, thanks

to Mana Badi Nadu-Nedu programme. The determined approach saw schools boasting of toilets with running water facility, electricity with fans and lights, drinking water, furniture for teachers and students, painting of buildings, major/minor repairs, green boards, English labs, compound walls and kitchen sheds.

For instance, the 82-year-old primary government school at Kolavennu in Kankipadu mandal was totally neglected for decades. Now it has been transformed into an iconic school under Mana Badi Nadu Nedu programme and is drawing the attention of parents, who are keen on enrolling their children.

In the first phase, 15,715 government schools were renovated and they bear the appearance of corporate schools. The remaining 31,073 will be taken up for revamp in the second and third phases and schools will be decked up by March 2022. Anganwadi centres doubling up as pre-primary 1 and 2 will also get a facelift.

Two parents D. Syam and T. Sudarshan said that corona had thrown life asunder by creating a huge financial crisis. They said that they were worried about the expenditure they had to incur on their children due to corona impact but modernisation of government schools has come as a ray of hope and now they were enthusiastic about sending their wards to a government school as they were assured of quality education free of cost.

Minister for education, Audimulapu Suresh said

2020, a shot in the arm  
for education, welfareDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 27

The academic year in 2020 was impacted adversely by corona, but that did not stop rolling out education-related welfare schemes as originally scheduled.

Introducing English medium right from the primary level has been overwhelmingly welcomed by parents' committees putting to shade the disgruntled elements. This step will provide a level-playing field for students across the spectrum.

Under 'Jagananna Vidya Kanuka', school kits were provided to children up to Class X. The kits containing uniforms, books, shoes, socks, belt and a school bag were given to 42.3 lakh students at a cost of ₹650 crore.

As education is the only asset that can be offered to lakhs of students from downtrodden families, Jagananna Vidya Deevena was launched so that the total fees reimbursement move would benefit 14 lakh college-going students and overall ₹4,000 crore was credited into the bank accounts of the students' mothers besides ₹1,880 crore towards pending dues.

“Jagananna Vasathi

• The one-year reading fluency campaign takes place in four phases, preparatory, foundation, advanced and valedictory, to develop the reading habits of children from Standard three to nine.

Deevena” takes care of hostel and mess charges payable up to ₹20,000 per student annually. The scheme costs ₹2,300 crore and benefits 11 lakh students, approximately.

Under Jagananna Gorumudda, nutritious food will be given to 40 lakh students in 45,484 government and aided schools. Wages for those cooking and providing midday meals were increased from ₹1,000 to ₹3,000 to garnish the meal for a spiced up taste.

The State is to start 30 skill development centres along with a high-end IT Skill University in Visakhapatnam. Each parliamentary constituency will have one such centre and four units will be set up in collaboration with the four IIITs while one will be attached to Pulivendula JNTU.

The IT Skill University will cater to Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics

and other modern courses with a thrust on job-orientation. With regard to developing and designing the curriculum, the State government has partnered four international institutes-Singapore Polytechnic, Van Hall Larenstein (University of Applied Studies), GIZ and Department for International Development-for setting up lab infrastructure in skill development in all centres.

Towards this end, 23 reputed organisations, including Dell, Tata, HP, IBM and Biocron, have come forward for signing MoUs with the government and discussions are on with 35 other companies.

On multiple occasions, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has emphasised on stress-free education and focus on building a healthy learning environment. He also laid focus on inculcating the habit of reading towards which a 'We Love Reading' campaign was launched.

The one-year reading fluency campaign takes place in four phases, preparatory, foundation, advanced and valedictory, to develop the reading habits of children from Standard three to nine.

that the government is providing amenities and modern equipment in the State schools that are on

par with private schools. He said that all government schools would be converted into ultra-mod-

ern centres of excellence once they are through with the three phases of Nadu-Nedu.

Kaloji university  
failed to follow  
sliding rule

FROM PAGE 1

“The only difference between the two procedures is that local students of Telangana state were deprived of seats because of the Kaloji University procedure,” he added.

Earlier, he filed a public interest litigation (PIL) and succeeded in getting in the AP government to implement the rule of reservation in sliding as per Supreme Court judgments.

As per the admission rules, 15 per cent seats in each college are declared “unreserved” and the remaining 85 per cent are reserved exclusively for local students. The Phase 1 counselling was held strictly by this procedure in both states.

But, when a vacancy arises in the “unreserved” quota during Phase 2 counselling, a student who has already got a seat in Telangana state under the “local quota” should be pushed up into the “unreserved” quota if she is more meritorious than the student from AU or SVU regions. In such case, there will be a vacancy in the “local quota” which can be filled with another Telangana state student.

But, the KNRUHS authorities retained the

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TS local student in the local category and filled the vacancy in the “unreserved” category with non-local students. As a result, not only could ineligible non-local students secure admission in the “unreserved” quota but also local students were deprived of the seats.

When contacted, KNRUHS registrar Dr Praveen initially tried to justify the decision saying that students from other states did not join and hence those vacancies would be filled by local students in the Phase 3 counselling. Asked what if they did join the college, he said that the admission committee members would be able to better explain the procedure followed by the university. He assured this reporter that a member of the admission committee would call and clarify but none approached till the report was filed.

Eamcet allotment  
results on January 3

FROM PAGE 1

In addition, candidates, who have not attended counselling earlier under special category, can attend certificates' verification programme being organised on December 29 only at Government Polytechnic, Vijayawada.

Eamcet rank holders from 1 to 60,000 can avail option entry on December 28 and 29. Rank holders from 60,001 to last rank can register their options on December 30 and 31. Exercising of fresh options / change of options from rank 1 to last rank will be allowed on January 1. Allotment of seats will be displayed on the website after 6 pm on January 3.

Certificate verification of candidates, who have paid processing fee, but were not eligible / obtained ranks recently but not verified online, candidates whose data is incomplete, will be held on December 29 for special category (PH, NCC, CAP, Sports and Games) from rank 1 to the last rank only at Government Polytechnic, Vijayawada.

Verification of certificates belonging to candidates of general category from rank 1 to last rank will be held at all helpline centres from December 28 to 31, except Government Polytechnic, Vijayawada. For any help, such as change in mobile number, non-receipt of login ID, registration number or any other corrections, candidates are requested to approach the nearest helpline centre with valid proof.

Candidates can change their option already exercised on January 1, with options being frozen at 6 p.m. on the same day. Allotments will be placed on the website on January 3 after 6 p.m. In case of One-Time Password (OTP) problems, candidates can change their mobile numbers by visiting the nearest helpline centre by producing proof of their identity. After changing the mobile number, candidates can exercise options as per schedule. Detailed instructions for options entry – Instructions to Candidates – are available on <https://apeamcet.nic.in>.

List of Helpline Centres include:

1. Government Polytechnic, Srikakulam
2. MRAGR Government Polytechnic, Vizianagaram
3. Government Polytechnic, Parvathipuram, Vizianagaram district
4. Government Polytechnic, Kancharapalem, Visakhapatnam
5. Government Institute of Chemical Engineering, Visakhapatnam
6. Government Model Residential Polytechnic, Paderu, Visakhapatnam
7. Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Kakinada

Helpline numbers: 8106876345, 8106575234, 7995865456, 7995681678.

Commissioner  
suspended for  
garbage actDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 27

The state government on Sunday suspended Vuyyuru municipal commissioner N. Prakash Rao following the incident of dumping garbage in front of four banks in the town on December 24.

The suspension orders were issued by commissioner and director (Municipal Administration) G. Vijay Kumar. The order held Prakash Rao responsible for dumping of garbage in front of banks to protest against indifferent attitude of bankers in sanc-

tioning loans under various schemes.

It mentioned that after careful consideration of available material and having due regard to circumstances of the case, it has been felt that it is necessary to place Prakash Rao under suspension with immediate effect.

T.V. Ranga Rao, assistant commissioner, Gudivada municipality, will with immediate effect hold full additional charge of the post of municipal commissioner, Vuyyuru Nagara Panchayat, until further orders.

TRUST | DEFICIT 99% of the plants do not have any certification from authorities

## Untested water being sold in Kadapa

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, DEC. 27

Water is an important part of our life. But with water pollution rising, it is difficult to trust the water available for drinking today.

With rising health awareness among people, most choose only filtered water, which is supplied by water plants. But they don't know how safe it is. There are more than 1,600 water purifying plants in Kadapa district. In Kadapa town itself, there are 150 to 200 plants supplying drinking water to its 4.10 lakh population.

Interestingly there is no supervision of these plants and 99 per cent of these plants do not have

any certification from authorised agencies.

As per BIS standards, packaged drinking water means packaged water derived from any source of potable water, which may be subjected to treatments, such as, decantation, filtration, combination of filtrations, aeration, filtration with membrane filter, depth filter, cartridge filter, activated carbon filtration, water demineralisation, re-mineralisation, reverse osmosis or any other method that meets the prescribed standards. However, most of the water plants in Kadapa district do not have required machinery for filtration.

Nearly 99 per cent of water plant operators do

not follow any regulations. Water taken from boreholes is being supplied to the people without filtering it. Owners of water plants in Kadapa charge ₹10 for a 25-litre can.

During the Telugu Desam regime, it had been decided to provide free filtered water to people under the NTR Sujala Sravanti scheme. For the purpose, permission was given to start plants everywhere. Several water plants got started under the name of various foundations. Most of these plants operated without any filtering equipment. Interestingly, even the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) officials do not bother about quality maintenance at these water plants.

Homeo Hospital at old RIMS in Kadapa has a water testing laboratory. Water plant owners are expected to get their water tested in this laboratory and keep that certificate with them. The laboratory personnel do not have the authority to certify that the water is fit for drinking purposes. But owners of water plants “manage” to get eligibility certificates from the lab to prove that they are supplying government-certified drinking water.

State-run food control officials told DC that they only issue permits to those who store and sell water in packets or sealed bottles. An official said that as per

the BIS regulations, they can only give permission for maintenance of plants, which are licensed with them. Kadapa Corporation health department officials say inspection of water plants is not within their purview. They only check whether or not the owner concerned is paying taxes, as the business is going on within the corporation area.

One of the water plant owners, speaking to DC said if they have to get ISI or BIS certification, they will have to sell a can of water for ₹30. Otherwise, they would not be able to run their plant, he said.

However, there is clearly no supervisory authority that checks these water plants.





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### NEW RETURN FLIGHTS FROM

HYDERABAD TO GOA, VISAKHAPATNAM, DARBHANGA, NASHIK, SHIRDI AND JHARSUGUDA.

FLIGHTS*	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	EFFECTIVE DATES
Hyderabad - Goa	20:20	21:40	Daily	Operational
Hyderabad - Visakhapatnam	10:50	12:30	Daily	Operational
Hyderabad - Darbhanga	07:35	09:40	Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri & Sun	18 <sup>th</sup> Jan, 2021
Hyderabad - Nashik	09:20	11:00	Mon, Sat & Sun	Operational
Hyderabad - Shirdi	14:40	16:20	Daily	Operational
Hyderabad - Jharsuguda	15:25	17:10	Daily	Operational

### ALSO CONVENIENTLY CONNECTING TO

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## OTHER STORIES

MOTHER, 2 GIRLS  
ATTEMPT SUICIDE  
OVER DISPUTESDC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, DEC. 27

A 30-year-old woman and mother of two daughters reportedly attempted to end life in pact with both the daughters by consuming pesticide. The incident took place at Marrimanu street in Kuppam of Chittoor district on Sunday.

According to police, the woman's husband Peddanna had minor disputes with one of his relatives Chengappa. Against this backdrop, Peddanna and his wife Yashoda had recently shifted to a rented house in Marrimanu street in Kuppam town along with their daughters aged 7 and 9 years.

On Sunday, an argument took place between them, following which the Yashoda and her two daughters attempted to end their lives by consuming pesticide. On learning about this, neighbours rushed all the three to a private hospital. While the daughters are out of danger, Yashoda is stable and undergoing treatment.

₹60 LAKH ATM  
CASH MISUSED,  
TWO ARRESTEDDC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, DEC. 27

Kadapa district Badvel police, on Sunday, arrested two persons, Ella Jabir and Syed Ahmed, for laundering about ₹60,95,000 cash to be deposited at SBI ATMs. Another accused Chinna Venkata Subbaiah recently committed suicide.

Police seized ₹10 lakh cash, a motorbike and share bonds worth ₹7 lakh from the arrested.

Mydukuru DSP Vijayakumar disclosed the details of the case at a press conference held in Badvelu on Sunday. Writers Business Service, a private company, dispenses cash at 12 ATMs of SBI in Nellore and Kadapa districts. Jabir, Syed Ahmed and Chinna Venkata Subbaiah from Badvelu used ₹60 lakh 95 thousand to own during the corona lockdown. A

NEW CHARIOT  
GETS READY FOR  
ANTARVEDIDC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, DEC. 27

The new chariot for Lord Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple at Antarvedi of East Godavari district got ready. The old chariot was gutted in September month. The government has taken steps for making new chariots for the temple.

BC welfare minister Chelluboyina Venugopalakrishna, Razole MLA Rapaka Vara Prasada Rao and the district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy visited the temple on Sunday. Mr Venugopalakrishna said that the old chariot was gutted on September 5.

The government ordered a CBI probe on the incident and sanctioned ₹90 lakh for making a new chariot for the temple. He said that the Endowment Department has announced that the new chariot will be ready by December 30, but the Department got the chariot ready before the date. He said that the new chariot would be used on the auspicious of Bhishma Ekadasi in February.

No new strain found  
in UK returnees so far

Sample of Covid positive returnee sent for further tests

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, DEC. 27

A returnee from UK to Nellore tested positive only in RT-PCR test and more tests are under way, district collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu has clarified. The same sample has been sent for further investigation to ascertain whether any new strain is involved as was reported in the UK and some other countries.

"The symptoms of the patient are no different from those of general Covid patients, the collector said, quoting the senior medical officers treating him at the GGH in Nellore.

Only the mother of the 35-year-old infected man was tested positive while the other family members tested negative.

"The woman is also asymptomatic and there is no cause for worry," the collector said.

He said 55 persons returned to Nellore district from UK in the last 14 days and RT-PCR tests were conducted on all these. Tests are in progress for the 244 primary and secondary contacts of these returnees. Among them, only a 35-year-old man was tested positive so far and he was kept under observation at GGH in Nellore though he was asymptomatic.

Meanwhile, Nellore district administration has arranged a 24-hour help desk to screen and guide the passengers bound for Andhra Pradesh from the UK, at the International Airport in Chennai from

349 new Corona cases, new  
strain reports not yet receivedDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 27

As many as 349 new Covid-19 positive cases in the past 24 hours registered on Sunday in AP state. Only two deaths, one each Guntur and Krishna districts registered and the total deaths increased to 7,095 in AP.

Total Corona cases increased to 8,81,061 and 422 patients were recovered from the disease on Sunday which increased the total number of recoveries to 8,70,342.

As many as 46,386 samples were tested in the past 24 hours and total samples reached 1,16,20,503 in the State.

The Chittoor district reported the highest single-day tally of infections

● AS MANY as 1,162 UK returnees are in quarantine.

● THE TEST results from NIV Pune and CCMB not yet received to verify if new strain or not.

among districts with 105 new infections. It was followed by 67 new Corona positive cases in Krishna district, 34 in Guntur, 31 in Anantapur, 28 in Visakhapatnam, 27 in East Godavari, 17 in Kadapa, 11 in Nellore, 8 each in Prakasam and Srikakulam, 3 in West Godavari and no new positive cases were registered on Sunday in Vizianagaram district.

The Covid-19 positivity rate is 7.58 per cent in AP and 2,17,612 Corona tests were conducted in the State per million.

Meanwhile, regarding the UK returnees, the officials informed that total returnees are 1,216 till date in which traced returnees were 1,187 and 29 yet to be traced.

As many as six UK returnees were positive in which one each belongs to East Godavari, Krishna, Anantapur and Nellore districts and two belong to Guntur district.

As many as 1,162 UK returnees are in quarantine.

The test results from NIV Pune and CCMB not yet received to verify if new strain or not.

Chennai," he said.

Returnees from the UK are being told to remain in home quarantine for two weeks even if they are tested negative and their address details are forwarded to the respective districts for field surveillance.

All flights from UK to India were cancelled two days back. Yet the help desk is operational since some passengers from the UK had landed in other airports and coming to Chennai through domestic flights to reach their hometowns in AP.

Crimes reduced by 12%  
in Vijayawada in 2020DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 27

In a significant development the crime rate in Vijayawada decreased by 12 per cent in 2020. Crime cases decreased to 15 per cent compared with 2018 and by 12 per cent against 2019 while crime against women decreased by 11.9 per cent.

Vijayawada Police Commissioner B. Srinivasulu presented the annual crime report of Vijayawada city on Sunday.

Later, addressing media persons, the commissioner said that 2020 passed without any major law and order incidents and also on the property front. He said that the major issue that the public encountered in the year was Covid-19 and Vijayawada City Police have done a commendable job in coordination with the front-line warriors.

Mr Srinivasulu said that regarding reported cases, when compared with 2019, at 766 it is 12.05 per cent lower. He

said that during 2020, the percentage of detection of property crime is 69.7 per cent under which the total property lost is valued at ₹12,16,93,226 while the recovery was ₹9,58,62,724, which is 78.77 per cent.

In cybercrime, cash worth ₹3,48,04,295 was lost and ₹1,26,85,901 was recovered which is 36.45 per cent.

In crime against women, the percentage of reduction of cases when compared to 2019 was 11.97 per cent.

Mr Srinivasulu said that the first-of-its-kind Court Monitoring System (CMS) was established in Vijayawada City Police Commissionerate in 2004. After the introduction of the system, there was a quantum jump in the quality of police performance, which resulted in the overall improvement in conviction percentage. In 2019, the conviction percentage was 50 per cent while it was 55 per cent this year.

Meanwhile, the gang wars culture that van-

ished decades back, made a comeback in 2020. As many as 10 rowdy-sheets were excommunicated from the city during 2020. Further 79 new rowdy sheets, six DC sheets, 26 KD sheets and 233 suspect sheets were opened in the year, he said.

On the ganja cases front, 75 cases were booked, 4,135 kgs of ganja and 44 vehicles were seized and 166 persons were arrested and NDPS Act cases were filed against the accused. The total worth of the banned substance that was seized was ₹1.60 crore. A total of 160 gutka cases were booked, 226 persons arrested, cash to the tune of ₹6.30 lakh was seized apart from 19 vehicles. The overall worth of the seized material was put at ₹2.08 crore. 1,231 cases were booked for liquor smuggling, 2,435 accused were arrested and 1,02,957 liquor bottles worth ₹4.35 crore the first-of-its-kind.

Road accidents killed 264 in 2020.



TTD additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy offers laminated portrait of Sri Venkateshwara and prasadam to SC Judge, Justice V. Ramasubramanian inside Tirumala temple on Sunday. — DC

SC judge and CJ of AP HC  
offer prayers at TirumalaDC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, DEC. 27

Supreme Court Judge, Justice V. Ramasubramanian and Chief Justice of AP High Court, Justice Jitendra Kumar Maheswari along with their family members had darshan of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala temple on Sunday.

The Supreme court Judge and AP High Court CJ arrived at the temple sepa-

ately. On their arrival at the temple at two different timings, TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy and additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy received both the dignitaries and took them for Srivari darshan.

After the darshan, the Supreme Court Judge and Chief Justice of AP HC were rendered with Vedasirvachanam by a team of TTD Vedic pundits inside Ranganayakula

mandapam. The Additional EO offered theertha prasadam and portrait of Sri Venkateshwara to both the dignitaries.

Meanwhile, Chief Justice of Telangana HC Justice Raghavendra Chauhan on Sunday called on TTD chairman YV Subba Reddy at Tirumala. The TTD chairman, who extended a warm welcome to the Chief Justice, felicitated him with shawl.

TTD CHAIRMAN  
LAUDS CONSTABLE  
ARSHADDC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, DEC. 27

TTD trust board chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy lauded the police constable, Sheikh Arshad of YSR Kadapa special branch, for his humanitarian gesture of carrying the 60-year-old devotee Nageswaramma of Nandalur for 6 km on his shoulders up to Tirumala hills.

The constable was a member of the special security team of former MLA Akepati Amarnath Reddy, who came to Tirumala on padayatra on December 23 through the Annamaiah Margam amidst Seshachala forests.

It has gone viral about the constable's humanitarian gesture of carrying an aged woman who fell sick on the forest track. TTD chairman personally called Sheikh Arshad and appreciated his services and indicated that he would refer it to the DGP of AP for suitable rewards. Humbly the constable responded that whatever he did was due to stamina and strength given by Lord Venkateshwara.

Two days ago, AP Genco MD Sridhar had also fallen sick on Alipiri footpath and was rescued on a war footing.

In the backdrop of two incidents of sick devotees on footpaths, the chairman directed officials to make arrangements for emergency medical facilities on footpaths leading to Tirumala.

Addressing a meeting of senior officials here on Sunday, the chairman reviewed PHCs, staff, medicines etc. available on footpaths.

Raja Singh ups the  
ante against MLADC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL DEC. 27

Srisailem temple issue continued to simmer with Goshamahal MLA, Raja Singh, stepping up allegations against Silpa Chakrapani Reddy by charging that around 300 cows from the goshala were killed.

Razaq, the contractor, in the eye of the storm, says they are human beings and have the right to stay in Srisailem. BJP Atmakur leader Budda Rajasekhara Reddy said Chakrapani Reddy has been controlling shops and other commercial

places in Srisailem with his henchmen.

Srisailem Bhramaramba Mallikarjuna Swami temple executive officer K.S. Rama Rao said 11 temple employees have been shifted to other departments to assuage the feelings of Hindus.

Sai Kumari, in-charge of the goshala, has been transferred to the donations procurement wing.

Raja Singh alleged that her husband Razaq has cornered major revenue-generating activities in the temple town and she was helping her husband in his nefarious activities.

PM appreciates Vizag  
man in Man Ki BaatDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 27

Prime Minister Narendra Modi appreciated Visakhapatnam based person in his 72 edition of Man Ki Baat held on Sunday.

While speaking about Atma Nirabhar and the necessity of use of Indian goods, he mentioned Venkata Murali Prasad of Visakhapatnam who had listed about the things made in India he would use in future. He said Venkata Murali Prasad has listed out things he would be using for daily necessity and decided to use only goods manufac-

tured in India in future.

"The best in the world must be manufactured in India. For this, our entrepreneurs and startups must come forward," he said. "This is the opportune moment to work with the ethos of 'Zero Effect, Zero Defect'," the PM said.

PM Modi appealed to Indians to make a list of goods for daily use and analyse, which imported articles have unconsciously become part of our lives. "Let us find out their Indian alternatives and resolve to use products produced by the hard work of Indians," he said.

JNTUK TO ORGANISE INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON COMPUTERS VISIONDC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, DEC. 27

The Department of Computer Science and Engineering of the University College of Engineering Kakinada (UCEK) and the Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Kakinada (JNTUK) will organise International Conference on computer vision, high performance computing, smart devices and networks for two days from December 28 to 29.

JNTUK registrar Ch. Satyanarayana said that the APSCHE chairman K. Hemachandra Reddy,

Rayalaseema University Vice-Chancellor A. Ananda Rao, former JNTUK Vice-Chancellor Allam Appa Rao, the JNTUK Vice-Chancellor M. Ramalinga Raju, the JNTUK Rector G.V.R. Prasada Raju, the ECE Professor of JNTU-Hyderabad L. Prathap Reddy, the CSE Professor of IIT-Guwahati Prof S.V. Rao, the UCEK Principal B. Balakrishna, the former Commissioner of Higher Education (Us) Dr Raghu B. Korrapati, Venkat Yerubandi and others would participate in the conference and it will help the students for their bright career.

## NATURE'S | HAVOC

People living close to water bodies routinely face the wrath of nature's fury

## Effective laws must to check flood havoc: US expert

PATHRI  
RAJASEKHAR | DC  
NELLORE, DEC. 27

Introduction of effective laws to check flooding of cities by storm-water, similar to the laws in Chicago, is necessary for India, proposed US-based expert in water conservation and management, Dr Prakasam Tata.

Expressing concern over the plight of residents during the recent floods in Hyderabad as also cities in Andhra Pradesh, Dr Prakasam told *Deccan Chronicle* that similar situations existed in Chicago and other US cities in the past, but these have been overcome with new laws and effective steps.

Dr Prakasam said, "Acute flooding and water-logging during monsoon are annual occurrences in metros and other cities across India. Governmental intervention can help change the grim scenario. Years of careful planning



Dr Prakasam Tata.

● People living close to water bodies and low-lying areas routinely face the wrath of nature's fury during monsoons in metropolitan cities, corporations, municipalities and even villages in India.

● In 1885, the city of Chicago in the US saw 90,000 deaths involving one out of eight residents,

following the outbreak of cholera. This was due to the consumption of contaminated water drawn from Lake Michigan, the primary drinking water source to Chicago.

● Chicago subsequently reversed the flow of Chicago river that drained sewage into Lake Michigan. Seven sewage treatment plants were set up and a massive storm-water control programme undertaken. This included the implementation of the 'tunnel and reservoir plan' costing billions of dollars. It helped reduce the storm-water discharges and the sewer overflows to Lake Michigan.

place to live now."

Referring to his 30-year-long service with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRDGC), Dr

Steps to reduce greenhouse  
gases key to checking floodsDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, DEC. 27

Among the important steps to reduce flood havoc is a reduction in greenhouse gases that would limit the adverse effects of climate change, a main contributor to floods.

This was stated here by Dr Catherine O'Connor, director of engineering at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of

Prakasam said a proper storm water drainage system and relevant infrastructure to keep ground water free from pollution by floodwaters are a must.

"The scenario in Chicago improved over time since the 1950s. The passing of a storm-water con-

Greater Chicago and her colleague Khaza Moinuddin.

This, they said, should be in addition to implementation of a well-designed infrastructure consisting of a sewerage network connected to the plants for treatment of sewage, stormwater and combined sewage overflows, apart from implementation of the best storm-water management practices.

trol law 2004 helped improve things more. Several of its elements can be emulated and implemented by cities like Hyderabad," he said, and offered to undertake free consultancy in this respect for any such project in India. Dr Prakasam's former

According to them, it may not be possible to accurately predict the time when heavy storms would occur resulting in heavy flooding of an area.

Effective steps for people's safety should be formulated by governments and regulatory agencies and these be made available for implementation when flooding occurs after heavy rains, they proposed.

colleagues in the Greater Chicago agency Dr Catherine O'Connor and director of engineering there Khaza Moinuddin, who has his roots in Hyderabad, also shared their views with the daily on facing the flood threat to urban areas.

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## SHORT TAKES

## SHOPIAN FAKE ENCOUNTER: CASE ON ARMY OFFICER

**Srinagar, Dec 27:** Police have filed a chargesheet against three men, including an Army officer, in the Shopian “fake” encounter case of three civilians in July, officials said on Sunday.

The 1,400-page chargesheet was filed in the court of principal district and sessions judge, Shopian on Saturday by the head of the Special Investigation Team (SIT), the officials said. Captain Bhupinder of the Army’s 62 Rashtriya Rifles, Bilal Ahmed Lone and Tabish Nazir were named as accused in the chargesheet for their role in the alleged fake encounter killing of the three men hailing from Rajouri District, they added.

A police spokesperson said the court has issued an order, giving an option to the Army under the relevant sections of law for a trial of Captain Bhupinder alias Major Basheer Khan in a criminal court of ordinary jurisdiction or court martial. The spokesperson said during investigation, it came to light that a conspiracy was hatched by the accused captain and civilians Nazir and Lone to abduct the three civilians and stage the encounter.

“They deliberately and purposefully chose not to follow SOPs, planted illegally-acquired weapons and material on their bodies after stripping them of their identities and tagged them as hardcore terrorists in possession of war-like stores, deliberately providing false information to colleagues and seniors,” he said.

The information obtained from the accused led the SIT to recreate the scenes of the crime, including the routes used after meeting the victims and the place where they were killed, the spokesperson said.

## FALL IN LINE OR LEAVE, AIADMK TELLS BJP, ALLIES

**A. ARUL PALANI | DC CHENNAI, DEC. 27**

The leaders and cadre of ruling party AIADMK rallied behind Chief Minister Edappadi K Palanisamy as the CM candidate for the forthcoming Assembly election of 2021.

In a veiled attack on the BJP at its maiden election rally in the city on Sunday, the party’s deputy coordinator K. P. Munusamy said, “The government will be led by the AIADMK. There is no necessity for a coalition government. If any political party comes forward for an alliance arrangement with an idea of a coalition government, let them please think about it again.” This was tantamount to telling the BJP to fall in line or rework its poll options for Tamil Nadu.

The demise of AIADMK supremo J Jayalalithaa and DMK’s M Karunanidhi, who opposed her, may have emboldened “many national parties” to try and make a political entry into Tamil Nadu. Boldly terming them as “opportunists and betrayers” who were blaming the Dravidian outfits in alleging that they had ruined Tamil Nadu in their five-decade rule, Munusamy wondered how accusations of inefficiency could be hurled against the AIADMK government when the Centre had given so many awards to Tamil Nadu for its meritorious performance in many sectors. The State had superior infrastructure and facilities, be it education or health care amenities, he pointed out.



Women and children shout slogans as they take part farmers ongoing agitation over new farm laws, at Tikri border in New Delhi on Sunday

— PTI

## Pick ‘Made in India’ goods, urges PM

Farmers beat thalis, raise slogans against farm laws during Modi’s Mann Ki Baat radio address

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 27**

In his last Mann Ki Baat radio broadcast of the year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged people to substitute foreign-made products they use with items produced in India, and said they should make this resolution for the country in the new year.

During his address, the Prime Minister touched on various issues, including wildlife conservation, ridding the country of single-use plastic, and paid tributes to several revered Sikh personalities, including sons of Guru Gobind Singh. He, however, did not mention farmers’ protest.

But at the three major spots of protests — Singhu border, Faridkot in Punjab and Rohtak in BJP-ruled Haryana — farmers clanged thalis and raised slogans against the Centre’s new farm laws during the Prime Minister’s monthly radio address on Sunday morning.

“The ‘thali bajao (clang plates)’ protest was decided upon by the farmers last week.

Making the announcement, Swaraj India chief Yogendra Yadav had said that “on December 27 when the Prime Minister gives his Mann Ki Baat radio address, farmers will say, ‘We are tired of listening to your Mann Ki Baat, when will you listen to our Mann Ki Baat?’ So we will bang utensils so that the noise of his Mann Ki Baat doesn’t reach us”.

The idea of clanging plates and clapping was floated by the Prime Minister earlier this year to felicitate frontline workers battling coronavirus at the lockdown started. In Sunday’s Mann Ki Baat, PM Modi referred to it.

Citing letters written to him by people as the year moves to a close, Mr Modi said, “In most of the letters people have commended the country’s capabilities and the collective strength of the countrymen. When a novel experiment such as ‘Janata cur-

## Nadda shares Rahul video Attempt to mislead farmers will not succeed: Rajnath

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 27**

Sharing an old video of Rahul Gandhi’s speech in Lok Sabha in which he seems to be advocating the need for farmers to get rid of middlemen and sell their produce directly to industry, BJP president J.P. Nadda on Sunday accused the Congress leader of playing politics over the ongoing farmers’ protest.

“What is this magic happening, Rahulji? You are opposing now what you had advocated earlier. You have nothing to do with the country’s or farmers’ interests. You have to play politics only. But this is your bad luck that your hypocrisy will not work. People of the country and farmers have recognised your double standards,” the BJP president tweeted in Hindi along with the video clip.

● **FARMER UNIONS** are alleging that these laws will weaken the existing government’s support for the farm sector which has been vehemently denied by the Centre.

● **MR GANDHI** charged that farmers and labourers of Amethi and 10-12 districts of Uttar Pradesh have been fighting for a food park, which the government had denied saying the park never had land.

The Congress and some other Opposition parties are backing the protest against the three agriculture-marketing laws which give cultivators an option to sell their produce directly to private players.

Farmer unions are alleging that these laws will weaken the existing government’s support for the

farm sector which has been vehemently denied by the Centre.

In the video, Mr Gandhi, then an MP representing Amethi parliamentary seat in Uttar Pradesh, can be heard saying that a farmer in UP had asked him to explain the “magic” behind a packet of potato chips costing ₹10 while farmers sell potato for ₹2 per kg. When he asked what they thought was the reason for this, the farmer said factories are located very far from them and if they could sell their produce directly there, they will get all the money without middlemen earning any cut.

Mr Gandhi charged that farmers and labourers of Amethi and 10-12 districts of Uttar Pradesh have been fighting for a food park, which the government had denied saying the park never had land.

**SHIMLA,** Dec. 27: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Sunday said that attempts to “mislead” farmers on the recent agriculture laws will not succeed.

Addressing a state-level function to mark the third anniversary of the Jai Ram Thakur-led BJP government in Himachal Pradesh, he said the new laws will raise the income of farmers, but the Congress was misleading them.

Whenever a reform is effected it takes a few years before it starts showing positive results, Singh said in his virtual address.

Be it the 1991 economic reforms brought in by the then finance minister Manmohan Singh or other ones enacted during the

Vajpayee government, it took four-five years to see their positive results, he added.

“Similarly, if we can’t wait for four-five years, we can wait for at least two years to witness positive results of the agriculture reforms carried out by the Narendra Modi government,” the defence minister added.

Thousands of farmers have been protesting at different border points of Delhi against the three laws enacted in September.

They have been claiming that new legislations will destroy the mandi system and end the Minimum Support Price mechanism, apprehensions the government has insisted are misplaced.

— PTI

## INDIA RECORDS LOWEST COVID CASES IN SIX MONTHS

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 27**

India on Sunday recorded the lowest daily rise in the Covid-19 cases in the last six months as fresh detections dropped to 18,732. The last time fresh cases were around this figure was on July 1. The active cases too have slipped to 2.78 lakh after 170 days. The total active cases were 2.76 lakh on July 10. India’s present active caseload consists of 2.74 per cent of the country’s total positive cases.

Union health ministry said the country has reported a trend of sustained decrease in the number of active cases and there has been a sharp rise in recoveries, taking the Recovery rate to 95.82 per cent. Officials said 72.37 per cent of the new recovered cases are observed to be concentrated in 10 states and union territories. Kerala has reported the maximum number of single day recoveries with 3,782 newly recovered cases followed by West Bengal (1,861) and Chhattisgarh (1,764).

India’s Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5. It went past 50 lakh on September 16, 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11 and crossed 80 lakh on October 29 and 90 lakh on November 20.

Among the new cases 76.52 per cent are concentrated in 10 states and UTs. Kerala reported the highest daily new cases at 3,527, followed by Maharashtra (2,854), Delhi, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana that were reporting a very high number of daily cases are now witnessing a low tide with a sharp drop in Covid-19 daily cases.

## RAHUL GOES ON FOREIGN TOUR FOR SHORT PERSONAL VISIT

**New Delhi, Dec. 27:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi left for abroad on Sunday for a short personal visit, the party said.

Though the Congress did not disclose Gandhi’s destination, the chief spokesperson of the party, Randeep Surjewala, confirmed that he will be away for a few days.

“Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has left for abroad for a short personal visit and will be away for a few days,” he told PTI.

Asked where was the former Congress chief headed, Surjewala did not disclose the details. Sources said Gandhi left for Milan in Italy on a Qatar Airways flight in the morning.

His grandmother stays in Italy and he visited her earlier too.

Gandhi’s travel abroad comes a day ahead of the Congress’s 136th Foundation Day celebrations on Monday. The flag of the party will be hoisted at the All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters on the occasion.

— PTI

## Lawyer from Punjab commits suicide

**Jhajjar (Haryana), Dec. 27:** A lawyer from Punjab allegedly committed suicide by consuming poison on Sunday a few kilometres from the site of a farmers’ protest at Tikri border.

Amarjit Singh from Jalalabad in Punjab’s Fazilka district was taken to the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS) in Rohtak where doctors declared him dead on arrival, police said.

In a purported suicide note, Singh said he was sacrificing his life in support of the farmers’ agitation against the Centre’s new farm laws so that the

government is compelled to listen to the voice of the people.

Singh wrote that the common people like farmers and labourers are feeling “defrauded” due to the three “black” agriculture laws and “the worst life is inevitable”.

The police said they are verifying the authenticity of the suicide note, dated December 18.

“We have informed the relatives of the deceased and once they reach here their statements will be recorded and further proceedings will be conducted,” a police officer from Haryana’s Jhajjar district

said, adding that they were informed about the suicide by the hospital authorities.

Earlier, at least two suicides have been linked to the farmers’ stir, underway at various border points of Delhi for over a month now.

A Sikh preacher, Sant Ram Singh, allegedly committing suicide near the Singhu border protest site earlier this month claiming that he was “unable to bear the pain of the farmers”.

A 22-year-old farmer had allegedly committed suicide in Punjab’s Bathinda after returning from a

protest site near the Delhi border.

A week ago, a 65-year-old farmer from Punjab had attempted suicide by consuming some poisonous substance near the Singhu border.

Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and some other states have been protesting at various border points of Delhi against the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, and

the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act.

Enacted in September, the three farm laws have been projected by the central government as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove the middlemen and allow farmers to sell anywhere in the country.

However, the protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of Minimum Support Price and do away with the mandi system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates.

— PTI

few’ became an inspiration for the whole world, when the country felicitated our corona warrior

unitedly with thali-taali, the applause and the reverberating chime of plates... people have sent in remi-

niscences of that too.”

The “Delhi Chalo” protest by farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana,

has been continuing for more than a month. Thousands of farmers have been camping at the

borders of Delhi, demanding that the farm laws, passed in September, be scrapped.

## Yadav accuses govt of hurting democracy

**Lucknow, Dec 27:** Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday accused the BJP-led state government of hurting the foundation of democracy by dissolving village panchayats without conducting elections for them.

Yadav’s allegation prompted a rebuttal from UP BJP vice-president and party’s in-charge of panchayat elections Vijay Bahadur Pathak who said Yadav had been the state’s chief minister and should know that the panchayat elections could not have been held amid the Covid-19. Pathak also expressed the UP government’s commitment to holding the panchayat elections within six months.

“The BJP government in UP has dissolved the village panchayats without conducting the fresh elections for them. Major elections are being conducted, but the government has been finding itself unable to hold elections of the smallest units of public representation. How will this government run Uttar Pradesh?” Yadav said in a tweet in Hindi on Sunday.

“The BJP must not hurt the foundation of democracy,” the former UP chief minister added in his tweet. Rebutting Yadav’s claims, Pathak told PTI, Akhilesh Yadav had been the chief minister of UP. He should know that elections should have been conducted at the stipulated time.

—PTI

## BIG HURDLES Disparity in income limits for open category, tribal category biggest hurdle

## Tribal girl struggles to get overseas scholarship

**SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, DEC. 27**

A 21-year-old tribal girl Annie Atram, who wants to pursue higher education abroad through a government scholarship scheme, namely ‘National Overseas Scholarship for higher studies’, is running from pillar to post of Maharashtra’s secretariat (Mantralaya) to prove her eligibility for the scheme from last three months.

According to her father, who is a senior official in Mantralaya, the disparity between the income limits of open category and trib-

al category is the biggest hurdle for getting the benefit of the scheme for tribal community. State agriculture minister Dada Bhuse has recommended her name to the tribal minister for the scheme in October 2020, but even that has not helped her.

As per the government resolution (GR) issued by the tribal development department, the income of the candidate’s family should be less than ₹6,00,000 (Rupees six lakhs) for the overseas education. But as per the GR issued by the higher and technical education

department, the income limit for open category is ₹20 lakh (₹ 20 Lakh). The disparity between the income limits for open category and tribal community caused a hurdle for the tribal girl in pursuing of higher education in abroad. The girl’s family hails from Gadchiroli district and earns more than ₹6 lakh per year.

Ms Atram wrote a letter to K.C. Padavi, minister of tribal development department urging him to treat her case as a special case her family can’t afford the expense of her education abroad.

*Deccan Chronicle* is in possession of her letter in which she has stated, “I have fulfilled the main criteria of the said GR but the income criteria is the hurdle in my overseas education. My family is native from Gadchiroli district which is a remote and naxal affected area. I have completed my BTech (four years of Bachelor of Technology) in Textile. I have applied to North Carolina State University (NCTU) for Master of Science in Textile. This university is a public school, has QS world ranking of 295, and is well known for Master

of Science in Textile, and this field comes under Engineering (STEM—Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). The University has approved my admission for fall 2021 (August 2021) in Master of Science in Textile.”

“Since I come under ST category, there is a National Overseas Scholarship, in which I am interested. For this, I have appeared for GRE and TOFEL. I have secured a preliminary offer of admission, and I have passed my BTech with first class distinction, which makes me an exemplary student. But

I am an independent student and I can’t afford the expenditure in the said university. With all due respect, my father too cannot afford the expenditure state by NCSU for a year is approximately \$ 50,000 USD,” she said in the letter.

The student also requested the tribal development minister to remove the barrier of income and consider her for this scholarship on basis merit.

Ms Atram also questioned the rationality behind the different yardstick of income for overseas studies for students of open categories and ST categories.



DECCAN  
Chronicle

28 DECEMBER 2020

# Challenge to Vodafone ill-advised, withdraw it

Just a day after India lost its case against the UK-based oil major Cairn Energy Plc at an arbitration court at The Hague over nearly ₹9,000 crore in past taxes, the Indian government announced its decision to challenge the tribunal's verdict in nearly ₹22,000-crore worth retrospective tax case against Vodafone Plc.

In both cases, the central government's tax demands emerge from an amendment introduced by then finance minister Pranab Mukherjee to the Income Tax Act. The legislation was aimed at plugging a loophole in the Income Tax Act, which allowed Hutchison Whampoa to avoid paying ₹ 7,990 crore in capital gains tax while transferring its Indian telecom business to Vodafone in May 2007.

Months later, the government held Vodafone liable for its failure to deduct tax at source from the payment that it had made to Hutchison. The Bombay high court favoured the government, while the Supreme Court upheld Vodafone's

interpretation. However, the United Progressive Alliance government amended the law, empowering officials to levy tax with retrospective effect on any foreign transaction that resulted in direct or indirect transfer of an asset located in India.

The result of the amendment was that Vodafone had overnight become of one of the biggest tax defaulters in the country. The legislation attracted harsh criticism inside and outside the country. The Bharatiya Janata Party, the prime Opposition of the day, was the harshest critic of the retrospective taxation, though it did not vote against the amendment in Parliament.

In 2018, Arun Jaitley, the finance minister of the day, categorised the retrospective taxation as an erroneous decision.

Given Jaitley's official stand, it was expected that the BJP government would graciously accept the awards of the arbitration court and consider the matter to be closed. However, the government — despite its claims of being investor-friendly — continued to keep the issue alive by opting for an appeal, which does no good for the country's image.

A stable and predictable policy framework is the bedrock of a good investment climate. While it was obvious that Hutchison and Vodafone had attempted to avoid paying tax by effecting their deal in a foreign country, the government must recognise the difference between tax avoidance and tax evasion. Tax avoidance using loopholes in the law is legal, while tax evasion is not.

The Vodafone case is clearly an issue of tax avoidance that emerged from poor drafting of the income tax law 50 years ago. The country should, therefore, not seek to penalise investors for the follies of our past administrators. As a country that is governed by the law, India cannot be seen overriding the judgement of its own apex court, regardless of the reason and provocation. More importantly, India should stop living in the past and look ahead to the future, especially when the country is seeking to position itself as the world's factory.

## A step forward, two back

Two young women, both second year degree students, represent two faces of Kerala today. Arya Rajendran, the 21-year-old daughter of an electrician and an LIC agent, will be anointed the mayor of the capital city today. Her election is a foregone conclusion as the CPI(M), her party which leads the Left Democratic Front, has a comfortable majority in the council. She is all set to become the youngest mayor in the country. It's not for want of others that the LDF chose a student; the LDF has 25 other women councillors there. In so doing, the party was acknowledging the role of the youth brigade that it fielded in the local bodies' election in weathering the anti-incumbency factor and the impact of the incessant, and often one-sided, media scrutiny. Ms Rajendran is a dyed-in-the-wool Communist, having joined Balasamgham, the children's organisation of the CPI(M), at five. At present, she heads it, and is sure to bring that experience to address the issues that plague the city.

Contrast her experience with that of Haritha, wife of Aneesh. Aneesh was hacked to death by Haritha's father and uncle on Friday. Unable to stand the "horror" of their daughter becoming the wife of a man whose caste and economic status came a notch below theirs, the patriarchs, in their early forties, did away with the young man even before his marriage had lasted 90 days. It is not the first time that honour killing had claimed the life of a young person in the state: it was in 2018 that a dalit boy, Kevin, was killed by his wife's relatives for similar reasons.

Kerala has a history of more than a century of fighting social and economic oppression. The young mayor represents its success and the young widow the work left unfinished. The state must take it forward aggressively now, lest it slips back into the madhouse that it once was.

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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 Ropeway, 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, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433  
**Nellore:** Survey No.527/2, Burrampur 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  
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Subhani



# Kashmir looks ahead at a winter of discontent



A.S. Dulat

**Dr Farooq Abdullah remains the key to peace in Kashmir. The Sphinx must solve his own riddle.**

James Baldwin once wrote: "It comes as a great shock to discover that the country which is your birthplace and to which you owe your life and identity has not in its whole system of reality evolved any place for you."

Such is the plight the Kashmiri considers himself in.

Kashmir has been frozen for some time and desperately needs thawing. Chillai Kalan, the harshest part of winter, has just begun, but Kashmir has been freezing since late November. An old friend who called from Srinagar a month ago said Kashmir was frozen not only on the ground but emotionally as well. Kashmiris, he said, were in deep contemplation but no one knew, or no one could tell, what they were thinking. Sounding defeated, he said Kashmir may now remain in perpetual winter bereft of its seasons.

Another Kashmiri friend, a liberal businessman who spends more time out of the Valley than in Srinagar, said in frustration the Kashmiris could not easily get over the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution.

The recently concluded District Development Council elections may provide a silver lining. Kashmir can always change overnight. Election results rarely, if ever, satisfy everybody in J&K; such is its arithmetic, but the recent results have been almost, perfect providing an opportunity for peace, reconciliation, and resolution. Predictably, the BJP dominated Jammu, and the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration

(PAGD) the Kashmir Valley. The BJP's three seats in the Valley are significant, but the PAGD's 35 in Jammu even more so. The National Conference again demonstrated that it was the only party with a significant following in both the Jammu and Kashmir divisions of the erstwhile state. The polarisation of Jammu and Kashmir on a religious basis was dangerous as the scholarly Balraj Puri had warned in his relentless pleading for regional autonomy.

Democracy has, in a sense, as Union home minister Amit Shah said, "been revived in J&K", but democracy can only flourish, as Mufti Mohammed Sayeed was wont to say, with a level playing field, without buying and selling, bullying and locking up. The leprechaun cannot easily replace the towering Sher-e-Kashmir in the Kashmiri psyche. New Delhi must demonstrate accommodation, grab the opportunity, and break the lockjam in Kashmir.

Notwithstanding the political rhetoric across the board, Article 370 is not the issue, done and dusted on August 5, 2019, and left only for the Supreme Court to sanctify its burial. It was, in any event, a hollow provision at best, a fig leaf to assuage Kashmiri pride whose erosion had begun as far back as August 9, 1953 with the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah. Sheikh Sahib, who had steadfastly stood for peace and reconciliation, had himself endorsed the mainstreaming of Kashmir with the 1975 Accord. When the Hurriyat Conference leaders agreed for talks with then deputy prime min-

ister Lal Krishna Advani, in early 2004, it was virtually the beginning of the end of separatism. What Kashmir needs is peace, justice, honour and dignity.

Former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, whose birth anniversary was celebrated last Friday, believed that we needed to move forward in Kashmir and end the permanent confrontation with Pakistan.

Force has never worked in Kashmir, nor has our muscular policy since the abrogation of Article 370. Terrorism has increased; almost 200 local boys mainly from South Kashmir have joined militancy in the last one year, not for *azaadi* or Pakistan but in the name of Allah. These figures are higher than any time since 2007. Pakistan too is back fishing once again in the troubled waters of Kashmir.

The security forces have suffered substantial losses. Suicide and fratricide among the forces, particularly the CRPF, who are in the thick of the anti-terror war, has grown due to stress, duress and trauma due to long-term duties in unfamiliar surroundings.

There is no other way but dialogue and a revival of the political process. Getting the mainstream political parties on board is the primary requirement for achieving peace in J&K today. The establishment of the PAGD makes political sense for Kashmir and also provides an opening for the Centre. How long the three main parties — National Conference, People's Democratic Party and People's Conference — stick together, only time will tell. Kashmiris normally do not, and a crack

or two are already visible. However, it is in New Delhi's interest that they do to further the political and democratic process.

Togetherness would have virtually been impossible without the initiative and resoluteness of the "Big Man". Sadly, New Delhi has never tried to understand Dr Farooq Abdullah, nor does he make it easy for anyone to do so. Earlier, it was his openness which puzzled Delhi, now it is his determination. As a senior colleague in the PAGD said: "Doctor Sahib in his new avatar is like a man possessed, in whose sincerity no one can doubt." Recently, when the Enforcement Directorate threatened to attach his properties, Dr Abdullah, echoing James Baldwin, said, "I will not bow; I will do what I have to." Yet, when he was released from detention on March 14, people who spoke to him would vouch that Farooq bore no ill will and was gracious enough to admit that his meeting with the Prime Minister a couple of days before August 5, 2019 went unbelievably well. Dr Farooq Abdullah has always stood by India, dedicating himself as a bridge between Srinagar and New Delhi but during his last visit to Delhi, somewhat disillusioned, Farooq said: "What is there to talk now, they call me a thief?"

Yet Dr Farooq Abdullah remains the key to peace in Kashmir. The Sphinx must solve his own riddle. There is no one half his stature in the political spectrum in J&K. Statehood assured to the people in Parliament needs to be restored, rather than a carrot kept dangling. And then, hopefully, as in 1996, Assembly elections in October-November next year may pave the way for peace.

**Amarjit Singh Dulat** is a former chief of the *Research and Analysis Wing*, India's external intelligence agency

### LETTERS

#### JANA SENA'S FATE

The Jana Sena is likely to meet the fate of Praja Rajyam in the next elections with the BJP. The Praja Rajyam at least got some seats of some reckoning which may not be true with the Jana Sena. The enticement of Pawan Kalyan becoming the prospective CM is only a bait to grab his vote bank who will finally be left in the lurch.

D.S.P. Rao  
Kakinada

#### JUDGES AT TEMPLES

Nowadays, it has become a status symbol to have a darshan of Lord Venkateswara and get a group photo with the temple in the background. Even honorable judges are encouraging this. With due respect to judges, one expects that they keep away from personal publicity. It is hoped the judicial community will take this suggestion in the right spirit.

P. Ramakrishna  
Rajahmundry

#### FARMERS' PROTEST

Finally, the farmers' body agreed to meet the Centre on December 29 after they receiving a conciliatory letter, ready to discuss threadbare all contentious issues. But the very first point for the agenda is: modalities to repeal the 3 Farm Laws and three more points. Let's hope this shall end the impasse and the people revert to their business at their home.

K. Nehru Patnaik  
Visakhapatnam

### 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

#### LS dissolved, polls in Lower House

NEW DELHI, DEC. 27.

The fourth Lok Sabha has been dissolved. The nation will elect a new House early in March in all probability. The President, Mr. V.V. Giri, signed the momentous order dissolving the House a year ahead of schedule.

He signed the order around 9 tonight accepting the advice tendered by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

Faizan  
Mustafa



## By not letting Assembly meet, did Arif fulfil governor's role?

Historically speaking, the governor's office has been there in India since antiquity. Though loyalists were always appointed as governors, still most governors in ancient and medieval times, in fact, revolted against the Centre and declared themselves as independent. British governors were the most loyal servants of the imperial government and governors of free India preferred to follow the path of their immediate predecessors. Arif Mohammad Khan, just like other governors of the Indian republic, seems to care more for the interests of central government than the Constitution, though under Article 159 of the Constitution he has taken the oath to preserve, protect and defend it. Be refusing to convene the Kerala Assembly session, he has yet again crossed the *lakhman-rekha*. Subsequently, like a true statesman, in an extremely polite letter, he has clarified that since there is nothing like an emergency session, he had to decline the request. He has also emphasized the importance of 15 days' notice. Such technicalities do not deserve much importance as the governor's acting on the advice of government is a constitutional mandate. Last

month itself, he himself assented to a controversial ordinance without even exercising his right to seek reconsideration. Clearly, he was more concerned about the possibility of the Assembly passing a resolution against central farm laws rather than people's rights.

The Constitution gives no discretion to the governors in the matter of convening the session of the Assembly. Parliamentary democracy being the basic structure of our Constitution, this is the prerogative of the Cabinet though Article 174 does say that the governor from time to time summon the Assembly to meet at such time and place 'he thinks fit'. A few months back, Rajasthan governor Kalraj Mishra, too, behaved in a similar way and delayed the convening of the Assembly session as was recommended by the Ashok Gehlot government. Here, the governor doubted the 'purpose' of convening the session. The governor was strangely coming in the way of the chief minister proving his majority.

Even in the context of the state of Kerala's filing of petition challenging the constitutionality of Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, Khan had asserted that he is not a rubber stamp and was unhappy

that he was not kept in loop before filing the case. A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court in *Nabam Rebia* (2016) had explicitly observed that the governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Rajkhowa, who had advanced the session of Assembly without the advice of chief minister, had exceeded his jurisdiction as he had no discretion in convening the Assembly session.

Article 163(1) does permit governor to act 'in discretion' wherever constitution requires him to act in his discretion. According to Edward Cook, "discretion" is a science or understanding to discern between falsity and truth, between right and wrong, and not to do according to will and private affection. Justice Douglas in *United States v. Wenderlick* (1951) said that absolute discretion is a ruthless master. It is in fact constitutional blasphemy and is more destructive for freedom than any of man's inventions.

The Kerala governor is certainly aware that there are established rules for the exercise of discretion. First, discretion should always be exercised with caution and in a reasonable manner. Second, discretion cannot be exercised under dictation. Thus, in convening

Assembly sessions, the Kerala governor should have ignored it if at all any directive came from Delhi. The Kerala governor has not acted as an independent and impartial constitutional functionary. Third, discretion is to be exercised after proper application of mind. It cannot be exercised for an improper purpose or with bad faith or by taking into account irrelevant considerations. Fourth, discretion cannot be exercised in an arbitrary or whimsical manner. Any action of governor is arbitrary if he has acted on the basis of prejudice or preference rather than on reason or fact. As per the constitution bench judgment in *Nabam Rebia* (2016), the expression "as he thinks fit" in Article 174(1) gives no "discretion" to the governor in convening the Assembly session.

The moot question is why our governors behave like this. The worst thing which happened to this office is that the governor is the only constitutional authority who has no security of tenure like the President, judges, CAG, chairman, UPSC, Election Commissioner, CIC, etc. He is worse than an IAS officer who under Article 311 is entitled to a proper inquiry and cannot be terminated without a def-

inite finding of 'misconduct'. But the governor remains in office only so long he enjoys the "pleasure of the President" which, in reality, means the pleasure of the political dispensation in Delhi and he can be removed on the whims and fancies of Prime Minister.

This is in spite of the Supreme Court's decision in *Hargovind Pant v. Raghukul Tilak* (1979) where the court held that governor is not an "employee of the central government". He is neither under its control nor accountable to it and is "an independent constitutional office".

Mr Khan is clearly aware that the Kerala Assembly resolution against the controversial farm laws would be far more serious than the resolution against CAA as unlike citizenship on which the Parliament has exclusive jurisdiction, agricultural market is state subject in respect of which Parliament lacks legislative competence. One hopes better sense will prevail and the governor would accept a fresh request for the session.

*The writer is a constitutional law expert and currently vice-chancellor of NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad*



## SHORT TAKES

## TURKEY HIT BY 5.5 MAGNITUDE EARTHQUAKE

**Istanbul, Dec. 27:** A 5.5 magnitude earthquake struck eastern Turkey on Sunday, the US Geological Survey said, with initial reports indicating no immediate casualties.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu said there were no reports of material damage or casualties so far.

The USGS said the quake was registered in the Sivrice district in Elazig province at 0637 GMT and struck at a depth of 10 kilometres.

The Turkish government's disaster agency AFAD reported a lower magnitude of 5.3 for the quake.

Turkey is situated in one of the world's most active earthquake zones.

A magnitude 6.8 quake hit Elazig in January, killing more than 40 people.

## EIGHT KILLED IN AVALANCHES NORTH OF TEHRAN

**Tehran, Dec. 27:** Eight climbers have died and at least seven others are missing after a blizzard and avalanches hit the mountains north of Tehran, Iranian media reported on Saturday.

"The bodies of eight missing climbers were recovered in the mountains above Tehran thanks to the efforts of Red Crescent rescue teams and operations," said Iranian Red Crescent deputy head, Mohammad Baqer Mohammadi, according to the official IRNA news agency.

A group of mountaineers had gone missing on Friday due to avalanches and a blizzard in the mountains north of Tehran, IRNA reported.

State TV reported seven climbers were missing.

It broadcast footage of a helicopter rescue operation on the Tochal and Kolakchal peaks of the Alborz mountain chain overlooking Tehran showing Red Crescent personnel carrying a body on a stretcher along a snowy mountainside.

## THREE KILLED, 3 WOUNDED IN ILLINOIS SHOOTING

**Washington, Dec. 27:** Three people were killed and another three wounded on Saturday in the US state of Illinois when a shooter opened fire at a bowling alley, police said.

A suspect in his 30s was in police custody.

Rockford city police urged people on Twitter to stay away from the area near the Don Carter Lanes bowling alley, as it was an "active situation" and officers were clearing the site.

The force posted on Twitter shortly after midnight: "37-year-old white male suspect is in custody. There are no others being sought at this time." It's still an ongoing investigation. We do have three individuals that are confirmed deceased," police chief Dan O'Shea earlier told a press conference near the scene of the shooting.

He said three other people had been wounded from the gunfire and were being treated at local hospitals.

He did not specify whether the shooter had a motive.

Don Carter Lanes posted a simple message on Facebook after the shooting asking people to "pray please."

## 2 WOMEN, 3 GIRLS FOUND DEAD IN ARKANSAS HOME

**Atkins (US), Dec. 27:** Two women and three girls have been found dead in a home in northwest Arkansas in what authorities said are being investigated as suspected homicides.

Deputies responded to a call around 5 pm on Friday and found the five people dead in a home in Atkins, a city about 65 miles (105 kilometers) northwest of Little Rock, Pope County Sheriff Shane Jones said in a statement.

The dead were between 8 and 50 years old and are all believed to have been related, he said. Jones said during a short news conference Saturday that authorities did not immediately have a suspect and that at least some of the people were shot. He did not provide further details. "At this time, we believe this to be an isolated incident, and do not feel that there is any continued danger to the local public," he said. "We do believe that this is domestic related, possibly." Deputies are investigating the deaths with the help of the Arkansas State Police. A spokesman for the sheriff's office did not immediately respond to questions.

## EU nations roll out vaccine campaign

Europeans unwilling to take vaccine, could impede its effectiveness as it takes months to vaccinate all

**Paris, Dec. 27:** EU countries on Sunday embarked on a vaccination campaign to defeat the "nightmare" of Covid-19, as the growing spread of a new Coronavirus variant intensified fears the pandemic could wreak further devastation.

The jab is a glimmer of hope for a continent yearning for a return to normal from a pandemic that has killed 1.76 million people worldwide since emerging in China late last year and caused at least 80 million confirmed cases, according to an AFP tally.

But polls have shown many Europeans are unwilling to take the vaccine, which could impede its effectiveness in beating the virus, while it will take months for large chunks of the population to be immunised.

"It is with deep pride and a deep sense of responsibility that I got the vaccine today. A small gesture but a fundamental gesture for all of us," said Claudia Alivernini, 29, an Italian nurse who was the first in her country to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech jab Sunday morning.

EU commission chief Ursula von der Leyen hailed the campaign start as a "touching moment of unity and a European success story", even if some European states started a day early on Saturday.

Countries are also showing different strategies in their vaccination targeting, with Italy focusing on health workers, France the elderly and in the Czech Republic the prime minister himself at the front of the queue.

In a sign of impatience, some EU countries began vaccinating on Saturday, a day before the official start, with a 101-year-old woman in a care home becoming the first person in Germany to be inoculated and Hungary and Slovakia also handing out their first shots.

Araceli Rosario Hidalgo Sanchez, a 96-year-old living in a care home in central Spain became the first person in the country to be vaccinated on Sunday, in an event broadcast by national television. She said smilingly she felt "nothing" from the shot.

France began its campaign in care homes for the elderly in the Paris suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis, a low-income area hard hit by Covid-19, with a 78-year-old woman named Mauriceette the first to receive the jab to applause from staff. — AFP

## LEBANON SEIZES 8 FOR BURNING REFUGEE CAMP

**Beirut, Dec. 27:** Lebanon's army said Sunday it had arrested eight people after a dispute led a group of Lebanese nationals to set fire to an informal refugee settlement in the country's north.

The army said it "arrested two Lebanese nationals and six Syrians over a personal dispute... between a number of Lebanese men and Syrian workers," according to a statement.

"The Lebanese men fired bullets in the air and torched the tents of Syrian refugees," it added, without elaborating on the cause of the altercation.

The fire on Saturday night tore through the tented shelters of some 75 families near the town of Bhanine in the north Lebanon Miniyeh region, leaving only a charred wasteland.

The camp's more than 370 residents were forced to flee, according to the United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, and at least four people were taken to hospital for injuries.

On Sunday, dozens of refugees returned to the remains of the camp to try to salvage anything that might have survived the blaze.

"I came back to check on belongings inside our small tent only to discover that we no longer own anything," said Amira Issa, a 45-year-old mother of five who fled Syria eight years ago. — AFP



84-year-old Karin Sievers becomes the first to be inoculated with a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19, virus vaccine by Doctor Dirk Heinrich at the 'Hospital zum Heiligen Geist' retirement home in the northern German city of Hamburg, on Sunday. — AFP

## CANADA DETECTS FIRST COVID-19 VARIANT CASES

**Montreal, Dec. 27:** The first two cases of a particularly infectious Coronavirus variant that recently emerged in Britain have been confirmed in Canada, health authorities said on Saturday. "The cases are a couple from Durham with no known travel history, exposure or high-risk contacts," Barbara Yaffe, acting chief medical officer for Ontario, said in a statement.

The couple have been placed in isolation, according to the statement, the same day that Ontario reimposed a lockdown for several weeks due to a spike in Covid-19 cases in the province since early December. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Wednesday his country would prolong its suspension of passenger flights from the UK until January 6 in light of the Coronavirus strain sweeping Britain.

The discovery of two cases in Ontario "further reinforces the need for Ontarians to stay home as much as possible and continue to follow all public health advice, including the province-wide shutdown measures beginning today," said Yaffe. — AFP

## Investigators search home in Nashville bomb probe

**Washington, Dec. 27:** Authorities searched a house in the Nashville area on Saturday as they probed the large blast that ripped through the downtown of the southern US city on Christmas morning, injuring several people and damaging dozens of buildings.

The operation in Antioch came as US media reports said a 63-year-old "person of interest" had been identified in connection with the explosion, which came from a parked motorhome that blared a warning minutes before it blew up.

Some US media outlets reported Saturday evening that the bomber may have been killed in the blast, but authorities have not officially confirmed anything.

Friday's explosion in historic downtown Nashville, the United States' country music capital, damaged about 40 buildings and injured at least three people, with the streets largely abandoned at that hour.

Authorities were examining tissue found at the blast site that they believe could be human remains. Police say the blast was

an "intentional act" but the motive remained unclear, and FBI behavioral analysts were involved in the investigation.

"The damage is shocking and it is a miracle that no residents were killed," Tennessee Governor Bill Lee said on Twitter on Saturday.

Media reports said neighbors had previously spotted a motorhome outside the residence that was being searched Saturday by authorities, and that it appeared to be similar to the one that exploded in Nashville. — AFP

## ANCIENT TASTES

## Discovery in Pompeii buried under lava when volcano erupted in 79 AD 2,000-year-old fast food shop unearthed

**Rome, Dec. 27:** A 2,000-year-old fast food stall unearthed from the ash of Pompeii has given researchers new clues about the snacking habits of the ancient Romans.

The ornate snack bar counter, decorated with polychrome patterns and frozen by volcanic ash, was partially exhumed last year but archaeologists extended work on the site to reveal it in its full glory.

Pompeii was buried in a sea of boiling lava when the volcano on nearby Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD, killing between 2,000 and 15,000 people.

Archaeologists continue to make discoveries there. The thermopolium —

from the Greek "thermos" for hot and "poleo" to sell — at what was a busy intersection of Silver Wedding Street and Alley of Balconies, was the Roman era equivalent of a fast-food snack stall.

The team found duck bone fragments as well as the remains of pigs, goats, fish and snails in earthenware pots. Some of the ingredients had been cooked together like a Roman *eva paella*.

Crushed fava beans, used to modify the taste of wine, were found at the bottom of one jar.

The counter appears to have been closed in a hurry and abandoned by its owners — perhaps as

the first rumblings of the eruption were felt — Massimo Osanna, director general at the Archaeological Park of Pompeii, told *Ansa* news agency.

Amphorae, a water tower and a fountain were found alongside human remains, including those of a man believed to have been aged around 50 and discovered near a child's bed.

"It is possible that someone, perhaps the oldest man, stayed behind and perished during the first phase of the eruption," Osanna told *Ansa* news agency.

In the latest stage of their work, archaeologists uncovered a number of still life scenes. — AFP



Archaeologists uncovered a number of still life scenes, including depictions of animals believed to have been on the menu, notably mallard ducks and also a rooster, for serving with wine or hot beverages. — AFP

## Biden warns over 'devastating' delay in aid package

**Washington, Dec. 27:** US President-elect Joe Biden warned on Saturday of "devastating consequences" if President Donald Trump continues to delay signing a Covid-19 economic relief bill passed by Congress.

Biden spoke out as millions of Americans saw their jobless benefits expire after Trump threw a long-awaited pandemic aid package into doubt -- demanding lawmakers more than triple the \$600 direct payments to US taxpayers.

"This abdication of responsibility has devastating consequences. Today, about 10 million Americans will lose unemployment insurance benefits," Biden said in a statement.

The stimulus measure is wrapped up with a \$1.4 trillion funding bill, without which the government will be forced to shut down at midnight Monday.

"In just a few days, government funding will expire, putting vital serv-

ices and paychecks for military personnel at risk," Biden added.

"In less than a week, a moratorium on evictions expires, putting millions at risk of being forced from their homes over the holidays."

In a video late Tuesday, Trump, who is due to leave office in less than a month, called the \$900 million bill "a disgrace" — despite it being passed Monday with a large bipartisan majority after months of negotiation.

The legislation was designed to throw a lifeline to businesses and people struggling to keep their heads above water. — AFP

## Israel braces for 3rd virus lockdown

**Jerusalem, Dec. 27:** Israel was set on Sunday to begin its third Coronavirus lockdown, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu voiced optimism that a "world record" vaccination drive will restore a degree of normality within weeks.

After a sharp rebound in detected infections, Netanyahu's government announced three days ago that it would re-impose the strict measures that had previously helped limit transmission.

From 5:00pm (1500 GMT) on Sunday, most people will be forced to stay within 1,000 metres of their home. There are a range of exceptions, including seeking medical care, attending legal proceedings or exercising.

A key difference in

Israel's third lockdown compared to previous versions relates to schools, with more students able to attend classes.

Instead of near total closures, Israel is keeping schools open for children under six, as well as grades one to four and teenagers finishing secondary school in grades 11 and 12.

Israel's National Council for the Child criticised the decision to close grades five through 10.

"The decision to ignore this age bracket means the abandonment of hundreds of thousands of children, only because in theory they can be left at home alone while (their parents) go to work," NCC head Vered Windman was quoted as saying by the Ma'ariv newspaper. — AFP



## SHORT TAKES

### GM Harikrishna holds Carlsen

**Chennai:** Indian Grandmaster P. Harikrishna held world number one and world champion Magnus Carlsen in the fourth round of the preliminary stage of the Champions Chess Tour Airthings Masters online chess championship. Both Harikrishna and Carlsen drew all their four games on the opening day of the tournament as matches ended late on Saturday. The game between Harikrishna and the Norwegian ended in 24 moves after the players repeated the moves. India number two and former world champion Viswanathan Anand had earlier drawn his games with Maxim Vachier-Lagrave, Daniil Dubov and Spaniard David Anton Guijarro. He is in eighth place with two points. Harikrishna will take on Dutch GM Anish Giri in the fifth round followed by games against Alexander Grischuk, Hikaru Nakamura, Ian Nepomniachtchi, Lev Aronian, Wesley So and Teimour Radjabov subsequently. — *PTI*

### SA batsmen fight back on Day Two

**Centurion, South Africa:** South Africa's batsmen scored freely against a depleted Sri Lankan bowling attack as the host nation fought back on the second day of the first Test on Sunday. South Africa were 317 for four at the close in reply to Sri Lanka's first innings total of 396. Dean Elgar (95) and Aiden Markram (68) put on 141 for the first wicket, while former captain Faf du Plessis (55 not out) and Temba Bavuma (41 not out) added an unbeaten 97 for the fifth wicket as the hosts scored at better than four runs an over. Sri Lanka went into the match without leading fast bowler Suranga Lakmal because of a hamstring strain and suffered a major blow when opening bowler Kasun Rajitha limped off the field with what appeared to be a groin injury after bowling one ball in his third over. — *AFP*  
**Brief scores: Sri Lanka 396** (Chandimal 85, Shanaka 66\*, Sipamla 4-76) **vs South Africa 317/4** (Elgar 95, Markram 68, du Plessis 55 batting).

### Sydney Test is a 50-50 bet

**Melbourne:** The possibility of Sydney hosting the third Test against India has now come down to 50 per cent in the wake of fresh outbreak of Covid-19 cases there and a final decision will be arrived at in two days. Melbourne Cricket Club's chief executive officer Stuart Fox on Sunday said though he wants Sydney to retain the hosting rights of the third Test, the situation is "extremely complicated". "He (Hockley) is working feverishly with the Department of Health in NSW and I believe it is extremely complicated. Everything he is telling me is it's really a 50-50 situation," Fox was quoted as saying by *Sydney Morning Herald*. — *PTI*

### Kerala grab first win of season

**Goa:** Kerala Blasters dished out a complete performance as they edged Hyderabad 2-0 to secure their first win of the Indian Super League season here on Sunday. Abdul Hakku's header (29') put Kerala ahead in the first half before Jordan Murray (88') sealed three points for Kibu Vicuna's side. Vicuna rang in five changes to the side that drew against SC East Bengal while Hyderabad made two changes with Liston Colaco returning to the starting eleven. Both sides created chances in the first half but it was Kerala who headed into the break with a lead.

## Live on TV

CRICKET	
<b>India vs Australia:</b> Second Test — Day 3 from 5 am on Sony Ten 1, 3, Sony Six, HD	
<b>Sri Lanka vs South Africa:</b> First Test — Day 3 from 1.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD	
FOOTBALL	
<b>English Premier League:</b> Crystal Palace vs Leicester City from 8.30 pm, Chelsea vs Aston Villa from 11 pm on Star Sports Select 1, HD	
<b>Indian Super League:</b> Bengaluru FC vs Jamshedpur FC from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3	

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# JINKLE BELLS!

## Ajinkya punches ton, India land second blow in Boxing Day Test

**Melbourne, Dec. 27:** Ajinkya Rahane played a captain's knock, a workmanlike century that steered India into a dominant position and took the sting out of Australia's potent bowling attack in the second Test here on Sunday.

Trailing 0-1 in the four-match series, India ended the second day at 277 for five for a handy 82-run lead after bowling out Australia for 195.

At stumps, which was brought early owing to rain, Rahane was going strong on 104 and giving him company was Ravindra Jadeja on 40, the two having added what might prove to be a game-changing 104-run partnership for the sixth wicket.

This was Rahane's 12th Test hundred and his second at the iconic venue, after a fine 147 during the 2014 tour.

A day after earning rich praise for his tactical acumen while marshalling the bowlers, Rahane shone bright with the bat and was spot on with his reading of match situations during his stay in the middle.

Rahane got a life when Steve Smith dropped him on 73 at second slip in Australia's first over with the second new ball, the unlucky bowler being Mitchell Starc, who was taken off the attack after just two overs with the shining red cherry.

That particular phase was crucial from both the team's point of view and by not losing a wicket to the second new ball, India ensured they finished the day ahead of Australia, in terms of runs as well as psychologically.

Rahane got another reprieve when substitute fielder Travis Head put one down after diving forward from gully, but that was after he had got to the three-figure mark.

To start with, Rahane was more watchful that he had ever been but as the day progressed, he went on to play some sumptuous shots and one of his day's best was the classic off-drive against Pat Cummins.

Earlier, Rishabh Pant (29) and Hanuma Vihari (21) frittered away promising starts after doing all the hard work, but Jadeja was determined not to do anything of that sort.

— *PTI*

## SCORECARD

**Australia 1st Innings: 195**  
**India 1st Innings (Overnight 36/1):** Mayank Agarwal lbw b Starc 0, Shubman Gill c Paine b Cummins 45, Cheteshwar Pujara c Paine b Cummins 17, Ajinkya Rahane (batting) 104, Hanuma Vihari c Smith b Lyon 21, Rishabh Pant c Paine b Starc 29, Ravindra Jadeja (batting) 40. Extras (b-12, lb-6, nb-2, wd-1) 21. **Total (for 5 wickets in 91.3 overs) 277.**  
**FOW:** 1-0, 2-61, 3-64, 4-116, 5-173.  
**Bowling:** Mitchell Starc 18.3-3-61-2, Pat Cummins 22-7-71-2, Josh Hazlewood 21-6-44-0, Nathan Lyon 18-2-52-1, Cameron Green 12-1-31-0.



Indian captain Ajinkya Rahane celebrates after scoring a century as teammate Ravindra Jadeja applauds during the second day of the second Test against Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday.

— *AP*

# Starc rues missed chances for Oz

**Melbourne, Dec. 27:** Australian speedster Mitchell Starc rued the chances his team squandered on the second day of the Boxing Day Test but also praised rival skipper Ajinkya Rahane for his pressure-absorbing century.

A dogged unbeaten 104 by Rahane put India in the driver's seat after the second day as they were comfortably poised at 277 for five.

The fielders spilled a few chances offered by Rahane as India took a 82-run lead by the day end.

"It (the knock by Rahane) was pretty good. He absorbed some pressure there and sort of steadied the ship for them, at (a time) when they were still behind our score," Starc said at the virtual press conference. "He (Rahane) has batted

## WARNER NOT SURE OF PLAYING THIRD TEST

**Melbourne, Dec. 27:** Star Australian opener David Warner is still struggling with his groin injury, coach Justin Langer said on Sunday, rendering him doubtful for the third Test against India starting January 7. He had missed the last ODI, three T20Is and the first two Tests against India due to the injury that he sustained during the second ODI.

Warner, whose absence was felt by Australia as they folded for 195 on the opening day of the ongoing Boxing day Test, will hit the MCG nets on Sunday.

"We saw him bat the day before the game, he's batting again this afternoon at the MCG, so in terms of his batting he's flying, it's just trying to ... he's still having some trouble with his groin and we know how dynamic he is," Langer told Ricky Ponting during an interview on *Seven*.

— *PTI*

really well there, he took his chances and we probably could have got him out three or four or maybe five times before he got a

hundred, but he's run his luck there and scored a good hundred. Well done to him, added the left-arm pacer, who had figures of

2/61.

Starc admitted Australia endured a tough day.

"Pretty much that (frustrating day for the bowlers). The last ball pretty much summed up the day, so again not our best day, not our worst, we created a fair few chances and unfortunately could not hang onto to those half ones or those changes we created," he said.

"So Jinx (Rahane) batted pretty well throughout the day, (there were a) couple of really good partnerships. I thought there was really good stuff from us as well, we couldn't capitalise on some of the chances we created, to finish in a better position. So, just got to back up tomorrow and take five wickets as quick as we can," added Starc, summing up the day's play.

— *PTI*

# Furious Bedi attacks DDCA

## ■ Demands removal of his name from Kotla stand

**New Delhi, Dec. 27:** Spin legend Bishan Singh Bedi has threatened to take legal action against the DDCA if his name is not removed from a spectators' stand at the Feroz Shah Kotla ground with immediate effect.

On Wednesday, Bedi had shot a letter to the Delhi and District Cricket Association, lambasting it for installing a statue of its late former president Arun Jaitley at the Kotla.

In the absence of any response from DDCA, Bedi wrote another letter to the cricket body on Saturday.

"It's been a few days since I wrote to you ... While within minutes of my letter going public I had an overwhelming support of the cricket fraternity across the globe. But I'm sad there's been no reaction from you," Bedi wrote in his letter addressed to DDCA President Rohan Jaitley.

"... I hope in our country people still have a right to decide as individuals what they wish to be associated with & where their name plates can hang with dignity. Please don't push me to take a legal recourse."

Bedi had also decided to renounce his membership of the DDCA.

In his scathing letter, Bedi questioned the DDCA president's "ill advised" and "inexplicable" silence.

"Your seemingly ill advised silence to my letter that has triggered a public debate about perpetuating politicians at sporting venues exposes your naivety," he wrote.

# MSD is ODI team of decade captain

**Dubai, Dec. 27:** The legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni was on Sunday named captain of ICC's ODI and T20 International teams of the decade while Virat Kohli stamped his pre-eminence in world cricket after being voted the skipper of the Test team.

Indians dominated the limited-over teams by having three and four players in the ODI and T20I respectively while England have maximum number of players — four — in the Test side.

The 39-year-old Dhoni, who retired from international cricket earlier this year, was one of the three Indians in the ODI team of the decade, the others being Rohit Sharma and skipper Virat Kohli.

Dhoni has three other compatriots in the T20I team — Rohit, Kohli and Jasprit Bumrah.

Besides being named captain of Test team, Kohli is the only player in the world to have been voted in the teams of the decade in all formats.

The teams of the decades were announced by the ICC ahead of the Awards of the Decade ceremony, to be held in virtual mode on Monday.

The top awards, includ-

● **On Wednesday, Bishan Singh Bedi had shot a letter to the Delhi and District Cricket Association, lambasting it for installing a statue of its late former president Arun Jaitley at the Kotla.**

"Your inexplicable silence also underlines guilt of occupying a position of power solely because of your family name, which, you obviously wish to promote, come what may.

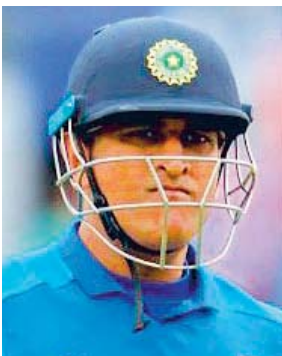
"Finally, I hope you will have the basic courtesy to reply to a former cricketer who is not asking for a favour, but wants his cricketing integrity not to be bartered away."

The statue of Jaitley will be unveiled by BCCI president Sourav Ganguly at Kotla on Monday in the presence of union home minister Amit Shah and former BCCI chief Anurag Thakur, among others.

Bedi said he did not wish to be associated with the cricket stadium which has a statue of the late politician, who was a minister in the BJP-led NDA government and died last year owing to multiple health issues.

"I've been around long to know DDCA has a tradition of ignoring cricketers' voice, hence this reminder. There's a reason for my urgent request," the 74-year-old said.

— *PTI*



**Mahendra Singh Dhoni**

ing ICC male cricketer as well as female cricketer of the decade, men's Test, ODI and T20I cricketers of the decade, women's ODI and T20I cricketers of the decade, will also be announced on Monday.

Kohli is also in the running for four awards — ICC male cricketer of the decade, men's Test cricketer, men's ODI cricketer and men's T20I cricketer of the decade.

In the Test team of the decade, senior spinner Ravichandran Ashwin is the other Indian while the four Englishmen are Alastair Cook, Ben Stokes, Stuart Broad and James Anderson. Australia are represented by Steve Smith and David Warner.

— *PTI*

# Rahane has regained his mojo after a century at MCG



### Hemant Kenkre Silly Point

**W**hen Ajinkya Rahane dabbled a ball from Mitchell Starc for a boundary through the slips, in the 66th over of their first innings, he made a statement. On a day that was peppered with dodgy weather, not too many Indian fans had expected their team to go past the Australian total. And they did thanks to a gritty performance by their batsmen who defied the relentless Australian bowling and the 'four seasons in a day' kind of climes that Melbourne is known for.

Notwithstanding the efforts by debutant Shubhman Gill and Cheteshwar Pujara who weathered the Aussie attack in tough conditions with a 61 run partnership, the lead coming off skipper Rahane's blade was apt for the situation.

Coming in after a bad loss at Adelaide wasn't going to be easy. With two senior players out (including captain, and batting

warlord, Virat Kohli) and two debutants (Mohammed Siraj being the second) not too many fans could put a punt on the Indians to stand up and

take the game to the hosts.

Rahane's effort of marshalling his resources to skittle out the Australians under the 200 run mark drew praises from senior cricketers who were impressed by his acumen. The smart usage leg-side attacking fielding positions — leg slip, gully and forward short leg — a rarity in modern day cricket saw the demise of the three main thorns in the Indian flesh.

Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith and skipper Tim Paine perished to a strategy used predominantly in the pre-80s era of the game.

There have been many thoughts and opinions about Rahane's calmness as a cricketer. Comparisons with Kohli, in terms of their individual approaches towards the game, are trending on social media with fans of

both players putting forth their points of view with the kind of passion usually exhibited by armchair experts. Legend Sunil Gavaskar, after day one, said Rahane has got a great sense of where the fielders should be kept and preferred to praise India's performance as a team effort rather than only Rahane's captaincy.

Effectively he took the focus back to the DNA of Mumbai, India's premier cricket city of the recent past, where coaches and seniors always gave importance to team efforts rather than individual performances.

Having watched Rahane break through to the top from his Under-19 days, one has always wondered why his classical approach hasn't given him the dividends he deserved. His average of 42.45 has belied

his ability for reasons that don't really have an explanation.

When he cut Pat Cummins past point to record his 12th Test century, the first of the series by either teams, Rahane took us back to 2014 when he had notched three tons at Wellington, Lord's and Melbourne. No matter what the expert's say, to me this ton was very special for it singled a certain intent that Rahane (and team India) have put the bad 36-run episode behind them as they slowly try and climb their way into the Border-Gavaskar series. More importantly, Rahane has regained his mojo, which augurs well for India as they go ahead in this series without Kohli.

Ending the second day with a lead of 82 runs with five wickets in hand, India

have given their fans two days of good cricket and plenty of hope of squaring the series. The team, with cameos coming from Hanuma Vihari and Rishab Pant and a brave unbeaten knock by Ravindra Jadeja, are looking at putting a good distance between them and the hosts as they go into the third day at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). Adding valuable runs is going to be India's main task as they will look at chasing as less runs as possible considering they will be batting last.

There will be many opinions and arguments about Rahane's captaincy (irrespective of the result of the ongoing Test) after this game and comparisons with the leadership style of Kohli will be expected. Debates about 'calmness

vs aggression' will continue to happen as fans play their fantasy games pitting one captain against the other. For now, team India has gained brownie points in two days of play at the MCG. The bowlers are bang on target, the team is combining very well, looks balanced irrespective of the absence of key players.

As far as the question of captaincy in the immediate future of Indian Test cricket is concerned, Indian fans could do well to refrain from daydreaming and accept the reality. No matter what India does in the series going forward, Rahane is a 'stand-in' captain who will happily hand over the baton to main leader, Kohli. The best thing fans could do would be to accept this fact and leave all theories in the realm of fantasy.

