

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | SATURDAY | 12 DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER

Max: 32.0°C
Min: 18.0°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: NIL

Forecast: Mostly Clear.
Max/Min temp.
32/18 °C

COVID-19
COUNT

CASES
(+30,435)
98,26,031

DEATHS
(+404)
1,42,618

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+612)
TS: 2,76,516
(+520)
AP: 8,74,515

(+3)
1,485
(+2)
7,049

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

7,11,22,215
DEATHS
15,95,564

COUNTRIES,
AREAS WITH
CASES
218

worldometers.info/
coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Bahula Dwadasi till
7.01 am; then Trayodashi
till 3.52am (Sunday)
Star: Vishakha till 4.03 am
(Sunday)
Varjyam: 11.31 am to 12.57 pm
Durmuhurtam: 6.40 am to 8.08 am
Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am
HIJRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Akhir 26, 1442 AH
PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)
Fajar: 5.30 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 4.15 pm
Maghrib: 5.38 pm
Isha: 8.30 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.23 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.30 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 2.38 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 4.20 PM

COUNTER POINT

Our stand is very clear...
we support farmers in
the day and corporates
at night!

IN BRIEF

Embarrassing kid
in public an
offence in Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram:
Embarrassing a child in public or in the school assembly is a gross violation of child rights and should be treated as an offence, the Kerala State Child Rights Commission has said. The order was issued on Thursday on a complaint filed against a school in Wayanad district for allegedly humiliating a nine-year-old boy in front of the school assembly for sporting a particular hairstyle.



Singh: Must revisit Seventh Schedule of Constitution

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UK, EU prepare for 'no-deal' Brexit

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Rohit Sharma clears fitness test, set for Oz series



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Mercury residue found in raw rice by NIN in Eluru

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA/KAKINADA, DEC. 11

Residues of mercury in raw rice and herbicide in raw tomato was found by the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) after analysing samples of food, for the mystery illness at Eluru in West Godavari. This was revealed during the review held by the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy virtually from his Camp Office here on Friday.

AIIMS and IICT ruled out virus and bacteria in the water collected from suspected sources of contamination.

However, they did not rule out the presence of pesticide in the water as they got dissolved in the course of metabolism in the body.

AIIMS noticed the presence of lead and nickel in the fresh consignment of blood samples of affected persons as it had earlier observed the same in the blood samples.

Meanwhile, animal husbandry authorities maintained that the blood samples of 10 buffaloes sent for analysis at Veterinary Biological Research

Institute, Vijayawada did not have any heavy metals after analysis while five milk samples also did not have any concentration of heavy metals. Five grass samples collected from grazing lands were found to be phosphine negative.

Analysis of fresh water fish samples were sent to JNTU, Kakinada and APPCB, Visakhapatnam, and results are expected to be out by Saturday. Test results of soil samples collected by NEERI are expected to be out by Friday and CCMB will come up with its report on Wed-nedday.

As several Central agencies were coming up with different findings in independent investigation and causing confusion about the illness, the CM reportedly asked them to coordinate with one another and arrive at a conclusion.

The Chief Minister directed the setting up a 21-member high power committee headed by Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney to investigate the cause of unknown convulsions at Eluru.

■ Page 2: Families start moving out of Eluru

Farmers challenge agri laws in SC

Claim laws will lead to commercialisation, put them at corporate's mercy

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

As the deadlock between the Centre and agitating farmers drags on over the repeal of three farm laws, a farmers' union has challenged the new agriculture laws in the Supreme Court. The Bhartiya Kisan Union moved a petition in the apex court on Thursday claiming that the new laws will lead to commercialisation and throw farmers at the mercy of corporates. The petition also said that a "rail roko" agitation would begin soon.

While both sides are adamant on their position, Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Friday asked the farmers to stop their agitation in the "interest of the common people" and take the path of discussion. He said that the Central government has sent their proposal to the farmers' unions, adding that they have not yet responded.

The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, however, said that the government is "falsely claiming that the farmers' organisations have gone back on talks and should not have intensified their agitation at a time when talks are on." In a statement, the AIKSCC



Farmers gather in large numbers at Singhu border during their Delhi Chalo protest march against the Centres new farm laws, in New Delhi on Friday.

— PTI

said the farmers' organisations are always ready for talks and have responded each time the government has called them. "It is the government which is adamant on not repealing the three Acts," they said.

After rejecting the Centre's draft proposal offering amendments to the three laws, the farmer leaders said on Thursday that they would soon announce a date for blocking railway tracks across the country. The protesting farmers have planned

to intensify their agitation over the next few days by blocking highways leading to Delhi, gheraoing BJP leaders and offices and taking out another "Delhi Chalo" march on Monday.

Farmers leaders have also been requesting more and more supporters to join the protests to increase pressure on the Centre for the withdrawal of the new laws. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has already decided to join the protests. In a statement on Friday, the party said, "In

solidarity with the call given by farmers, AAP would lay siege to district headquarters across Punjab on December 14 against the new agrarian laws introduced by the Modi government at the Centre."

Ahead of the roadblocks planned by the farmer unions to further intensify their agitation, authorities are keeping a close watch on villages along the Rajasthan and Haryana borders. There are reports that members of the Kisan

Mazdoor Sangarsh Committee have begun their journey from Amritsar to join the protesters at Delhi borders. "About 700 tractor trolleys are moving towards Delhi's Kundli border," committee leader S.S. Pandher said.

Support for farmers' has been coming from different quarters. Many villagers along the highways and gurdwaras are serving langar (community kitchen) to the protesting farmers. An Amritsar-based eatery is providing meals at the Ghazipur border. A free medical camp has been set up at the Singhu border due to the prevailing coronavirus pandemic.

Farmers from various states have been camping at Delhi's Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur and Chilla (Delhi-Noida) border points for over two weeks, demanding a repeal of the farm laws enacted in September. One of the key reasons behind the continuing surge in the number of protesters lies in the fact that sowing of wheat is over and farmers are free for about a month till the first irrigation of the crop is to begin.

After the initial silence, Bollywood is finally beginning to show its support for protesters.

SEC WRITES TO CS FOR HELP TO HOLD ELECTIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 11

State election commissioner (SEC) Nimma-gadda Ramesh Kumar has written another letter to chief secretary Nilam Sawhney on Friday seeking the state government's support for conducting the gram panchayat polls in February, 2021.

In his letter, the SEC referred to a petition filed by the state government in High Court seeking a stay order on conduct of gram panchayat polls.

The High Court had stated that it could not issue any such stay order.

In this regard, the State Election Commissioner suggested to the state government that it complete the summary revision of electoral rolls by January 2021.

It may be mentioned that the SEC has been writing a series of letters to the state government on multiple issues like release of funds, extension of support for conduct of gram panchayat polls, and referring to directions of both the AP High Court and also the Supreme Court.

■ Page 2: AP unwilling to let SEC hold polls

Ease loans for weaker section, urges Jagan

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 11

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy sought bankers' cooperation for the implementation of government welfare schemes to empower weaker sections of society.

He was addressing the 213 State Level Bankers Committee meeting here on Friday.

The Chief Minister expressed dissatisfaction over the disbursement of loans to leased farmers.

Welcoming the achievement of 7.6 per cent growth in the past three months Jagan Mohan Reddy rooted for doubling of farmers' income.

Expressing dissatisfaction over poor coverage of tenant farmers, he urged bankers to come forward and provide loans to tenant farmers as they have been given Crop Cultivated Right Cards (CCRC).

He said bankers should support MSMEs as they play a key role in the financial sector and the banks should assist

in restructuring of loans for MSMEs. He stated that the Government has paid ₹1,100 crore subsidy amount pending to industries from 2014 and also fixed electricity charges during Covid were waived.

The Chief Minister said, "The Self-Help Groups have deposited ₹7,500 crore in their accounts for 2020-21. However, the interest paid by banks is only 3 per cent, but the same banks have been charging an interest of around 11 per cent and 13 per cent." He asked the bankers to consider the fact that the government itself has been paying interest on timely paid loans.

He told bankers to inspire and motivate women through their programmes.

The Chief Minister said the state government has been implementing Jagananna Thodu scheme through which ₹10,000 was provided as interest free loan to street vendors.

■ Page 2: Street vendors given ID cards

Anantapur stares at Eluru like hazard

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, DEC. 11

'Ganga snanam'- Tunga Panam' (a holy bath in river Ganges and drinking of Tunga water) is an indication of the reverence for Tungabhadra River water for drinking purposes.

However, as things stand, the flows from the western part of Anantapur pose a serious threat due to heavy water contamination, added to which is the impact of unauthorised water purifying plants. This is a pointer to a repeat of the situation in Eluru because of lapses by the civic authorities.

Lack of a sewage plant, sewage used by more than three lakh people for growing vegetables and green leaves on the outskirts are posing a threat to the people. Only 30 percent of the lower income group consumes water distributed by AMC (Anantapur Municipal Corporation) while the middle and higher class depend on water being sold by unauthorised plants. Shockingly, most of the bore wells are contaminated because of residues of sewage in the absence of underground drainage systems. The natural streams are converted into drainage canals and up to 80 percent of water bodies are polluted. Groundwater accounts for 90 percent of the drinking water require-



Sewage on outskirts of Anantapur being used for agricultural purposes.

— DC

ments in rural parts and nearly 50 percent in urban areas due to excessive extraction.

"The authorities have to test all the overhead tanks in the district. A strict sanitation drive should be ordered by the government to improve water quality and hygiene", AP Science Vedika pointed out.

Drinking water for Anantapur is drawn from Tungabhadra high-level main canal, which starts from the reservoir in Bellary district and enters

Anantapur district. After entering Anantapur district through the open canal, the water is filtered at Muddalapuram filter bed. The water is pumped to two distribution centers in Anantapur through a pipeline from Muddalapuram.

"There are no community toilets in slums. Sulabh complexes are in a terrible shape leading to serious health problems, there are safety concerns, especially for young girls and old women", Dr. Suresh, presi-

dent of Science Vedika from Vidyuth Nagar in Anantapur, observed and added that water samples drawn from several water plants establish presence of toxic substances and heavy metals like lead and cadmium. Sources said the unauthorised water plants, with a court order from Tamil Nadu, were selling poor quality borewell water after filtering it. A can is being sold at ₹12 and civic authorities have failed to initiate any action despite the deplorable quality.

HEALTH | WARNING

Virologists say diseases supplement each other

Dengue poses Covid challenge

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 11

Covid-19 cases are seeing a decline for the past few days and giving some respite to public as well as the over-burdened health authorities.

However, increasing dengue cases have been posing a new challenges.

The latest data from the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme shows that AP has reported 527 dengue cases till September 30. The number looks very meagre

when compared to the cases reported in the last few years, yet health authorities who are bogged down with the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic are having a tough time taking preventive measures.

According to the data, the state had reported 5,286 dengue cases last year, the highest ever in the past six years. In 2015, about 3,159 cases and two deaths related to dengue were reported in the state, followed by 3,417 cases and two deaths in 2016, 4,925 in 2017 and 4,011 in 2018. Till

September 30 this year, only 527 cases were reported in the state.

Though the data shows a massive decline in the number of dengue cases, the authorities and the people are still worried because the Covid-19 and the mosquito-borne disease have overlapping symptoms. Both Covid-19 and dengue have symptoms such as high fever, headache and body pain. Virologists warn that dengue in this season may aggravate the Covid situation as both viruses may

supplement each other.

Health experts, however, say that there is no cause for worry if the disease is treated in the early stages. However, if the treatment gets delayed, the platelet count for an infected patient would come down, eventually causing immunity deficiency and also respiratory problems in some cases. To allay such fears, the authorities are conducting health campaigns and doing flu tests.

■ Page 2: Malaria dept takes up vector control ops

Pound falls on Boris' no-deal Brexit signal

London, Dec. 11: Sterling skidded lower on Friday and implied volatility surged as markets increasingly priced the risk of Britain breaking away from the European Union at the end of the month without a trade agreement.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Friday that Britain was likely to complete its exit from the EU without a trade deal. Current arrangements will end on Dec. 31 when Britain's Brexit transition period concludes.

The British currency fell more than one per cent

against the dollar to a low of \$1.3135, its weakest since November 13, before recovering to \$1.3230 after Germany's foreign minister said negotiations may continue beyond a Sunday deadline.

Friday's fall puts the pound on course for a 1.5 per cent drop this week, the worst performance since September.

It briefly hit a three-month low against the euro before recovering some of its losses and was last trading at 91.65 pence, down 0.3 per cent on the day.

— Reuters

Race for bases to increase in IOR

New Delhi, Dec. 11: Over 120 warships of "extra-regional forces" are currently deployed in the Indian Ocean and a "race" for strategic bases in the region is only going to gain momentum in times to come in view of rising global interest in the area, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat said on Friday.

In an address at the Global Dialogue Security Forum, he underlined the need for India to put greater focus on having stronger bilateral, trilateral and multilateral arrange-

ments with like-minded countries to maximise its strategic leverage in the region.

Gen Rawat's comments came in the midst of China's growing military muscle flexing in the Indian Ocean as well as the Indo Pacific that has triggered renewed global concerns and apprehensions. Referring to India's aspirations to become a major global power, he said the country will have to achieve while living in a "tough neighbourhood" and in an "increasingly contested" region. — PTI

OTHER STORIES

SRILAKSHMI
TO JOIN AP
SERVICES SOONDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 11

Senior IAS officer Y. Srilakshmi to join the Andhra Pradesh government service shortly.

The Telangana government has relieved her from its service, and she will join the AP service on deputation, and she is awaiting for the issue of posting orders.

Earlier, she was embroiled in the illegal mining controversy of Obulapuram Mining Company in 2011-12.

However, she was acquitted of the charges of graft subsequently. She met Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at his Camp Office earlier to seek his favour to serve in AP government on deputation. She even tried to go for Central service earlier.

HC FINDS FAULT
WITH STATE FOR
SELLING ASSETSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 11

AP High Court asked the state government whether there was any financial emergency declared in the country referring to the state government's move to sell its assets to mobilise funds.

The HC held a hearing on Friday on a petition filed by social activist Thota Suresh Babu seeking a stay order on state's move to sell its assets under Mission Build AP programme.

The court, in a sarcastic manner, commented that the guzzlers who purchased liquor at a high rate during the Covid-19 times have to be thanked for their contribution with a good income to the state for its welfare.

However, the government counsel informed the court that the state government had been initiating a series of welfare schemes benefitting a large number of people in the state.

Later, the court directed the government to file a counter affidavit on the petitions filed on the issue and adjourned the case for next hearing on December 17.

MALARIA DEPT
TAKES UP VECTOR
CONTROL OPS

FROM PAGE 1

The malaria department took up vector control operations like anti-larva and anti-adult, besides conducting SERO surveys.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, district malaria officer B. Venugopal said that the special cleanliness drives taken up by authorities are helping for the massive drop in the numbers of patients reporting with seasonal diseases. He said, the campaign of 'Friday as dry day' and educating people on mosquito breeding sources and measures to eradicate it, also helped in the decline.

"The state government has recently introduced a mosquito control app, using which the ANMs can capture mosquito breeding sources and upload them in the app. Subsequently, village/ward health secretaries concerned will address the issue and upload a photo in the same app, which has to be approved by the ANM if satisfied. This application yielded better results in controlling sources for the vector borne diseases," he noted.

RAYALASEEMA
MOVEMENT NEVER
STOPPED: MYSOORADC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 11

Senior politician and former minister M.V. Mysooru Reddy on Friday said that the separate Rayalaseema movement has never ever stopped.

While launching the book Greater Rayalaseema written by former member of Rajya Sabha Gangula Pratap Reddy, he appealed to youngsters of the Rayalaseema region to agitate for a separate Rayalaseema taking inspiration from the separate Telangana movement.

He hoped that the people of Rayalaseema will certainly fight for their right in the near future. Pratap Reddy said that voices from the "broken land" are being depicted in his book.

He said that the Telangana people are the inspiration for the separate Rayalaseema state movement.

Need to find root cause
of mysterious illness: CM

Officials instructed to take action on sellers of banned pesticides

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 11

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy felt the need to find out the root cause of mystery illness and called for initiating requisite measures to avoid recurrence of such illness.

The CM held a virtual review meeting with several central agencies from his Camp Office on Friday. Referring to the findings of several Central agencies based on test reports of various samples, he emphasised the need to take up in-depth investigation into considering all the factors to explore the reason for such illness.

The CM directed the officials to take all requisite measures to control the usage of pesticides and asked them to encourage the farmers to use organic pesticides or manure to raise the crops. He instructed the officials to take stern action against those who sell banned pesticides and chemicals.

He asked the officials to bring about awareness among the farmers on methods of natural farming. He directed them to keep all requisite tools and implements in the purview of Rythu Bharosa Kendras to promote such farming in a big way.

NERI informed that it had collected groundwater samples and analysing them to find out the presence of any harmful chemicals.

AP municipal administration authorities informed that out of 100 samples of drinking water collected and tested, they found no presence of heavy metals, organochlorine and organophosphorus.

- The Chief Minister asked the officials to bring about awareness among the farmers on methods of natural farming

AP UNWILLING TO
LET SEC HOLD
POLLS

From page 1

However, the state government is unwilling to allow the State Election Commissioner to go ahead with the gram panchayat polls, claiming that the AP has been witnessing instances Covid-19. The government has been maintaining that the entire administration is preoccupied in taking steps to curb the spread of virus and provide medical treatment to affected persons.

However, the SEC, who is going to retire from service in March, 2021, is quite keen on conducting gram panchayat polls despite facing stiff resistance from the state government.

TULASI: DON'T
LINK WITH CASTE
FOR SCHEMESDC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, DEC. 10

Congress working president Dr N. Tulasi Reddy said that the non-distribution of sheep and goats to the Upper Caste poor under the Jagananna Jeevakranthi Scheme was atrocious.

He spoke to reporters on Friday in Vempalle, Kadapa district. He questioned why it was not distributed to the upper caste poor like Kapu, Telaga, Balija, Ontari, Reddy, Kamma, Velama, Brahmin, Vaishya, Kshatriya etc. He said that financial assistance was not being provided to the upper caste poor women under the Cheyuta scheme.

Mr Reddy said that under the Amul-AP milking scheme, cattle were not even distributed to them. He also explained that the YSR wedding gift scheme and farmer assurance were not available to the top tenant farmers.

Families begin to
move out of Eluru

from Page 1

With several Central agencies coming up with their findings declaring concentrations of heavy metals, pesticide, herbicide, mercury in water, milk and food items, the local people are getting terrified to consuming such items fearing health problems.

On the other hand, with just two fresh cases of mystery illness were reported at Eluru government hospital on Friday. The total number of patients in government hospitals at Eluru, Vijayawada and Guntur are 14 at present.

Director of health Dr T. Geeta Prasadini said, "It is time that all agencies involved in investigation of the mystery illness come together and arrive at a conclusion on the route cause of the illness as independent findings are found to be causing confusion and panic among the people."

Meanwhile, Commissioner of health and family welfare K. Bhaskar advised the people not to worry about consuming the drinking water being supplied by the Eluru municipal corporation as it is safe.

He said that several Central agencies were coming up with their reports after analysing the samples of water, milk, food, blood, urine of affected patients and also animals on mystery illness and added that they were awaiting some more reports to find out the reason for the illness. He said that so far the illness was not identified and named. He also said that medical camps were to be continued in the town.

Eluru MP Kotagiri Sridhar complimented the medical and health department for doing a good job by attending to the affected patients and providing them health care.

Deputy CM and minister for health Allu Krishna Srinivas stated that the state government would come up with an action plan after getting test reports from all the agencies involved in finding out the reason for mystery illness, in order to curb its recurrence and spread to other parts in the state.

Meanwhile, it was noticed that some families started moving out of Eluru town fearing that they might fall victim to the mystery illness. However, the Dy CM advised the people not to believe rumours on the illness.

Rajamahendravaram MP Margani Bharat instructed the Municipal Corporation Officials to collect water samples and send quality tests, in the aftermath of registering mysterious illness cases at Eluru. He said that the samples should be sent to the Central Water Commission and Krishna Godavari Basin labs as a precautionary measure.

He also suggested the several departments like Rural Water Supply, Irrigation, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Drug Control and other officials to take samples from their respective departmental functions and make tests. He said that if any residues are found, immediately, they should alert the state government immediately.

Jagan to launch mega lands
resurvey programme on Dec. 21DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 11

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to launch the mega lands re-survey programme in Takkellapadu of Jaggayapeta mandal on December 21.

Minister for revenue Dharamana Krishna Das launched the workshop on lands re-surveying here on Friday.

The minister said that the mega land re-surveying is a historical programme which is being done after 100 years and affirmed that the government is taking all measures for the flawless re-survey hence conducting workshops to the officials and staff.

Mr Das said that the State Survey Department had issued a notification to re-survey lands in the state and following this, the district collectors will give notification in the villages where the re-survey will take place.

He stated that the date

- MINISTER FOR revenue Dharamana Krishna Das launched the workshop on lands resurveying here on Friday.

- VILLAGE SABHAS (meetings) would be held from December 14 to 19 to educate the locals on land re-survey.

on which the the survey will be conducted in a particular village would be announced before date. He further stated that the CM would launch the programme formally on December 21 in Takkellapadu. He said that notifications would be issued immediately in selected districts and villages under the first phase re-surveying programme where land records clearance has been completed.

Mr Das said that the survey numbers would be increased in the re-surveying as this was noticed in the experimental re-

GVMC SENDS
WATER SAMPLES
TO APPCB, LABDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 11

The water supply department of Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation put its personnel on high alert after the Eluru episode and began sending water samples to AP Pollution Control Board and Regional Public Health Laboratory for chemical and biological tests. "We normally test water samples every day before supplying to the homes and after the Eluru incident we started sending samples from all the reservoirs to AP Pollution Control Board and Regional Public Health Laboratory from Friday onwards," said chief engineer of water supply Moutupalle Venkateswara Rao.

Talking to this correspondent on Friday, the chief engineer said biological tests have come out clean but chemical tests were not conducted so far.

The CE said the corporation has stopped using PVC and lead pipes long ago and using high-density polyethylene (HDPE) since 2009 for which JNNURM funds were used for laying pipeline networks.

He said scour valves were being cleaned now to ensure safe drinking water was supplied to the domestic sector.

The city having a population of 20 lakh in the GVMC limits needs 120 MGD of water daily but the present supply is only 67.31 MGD. The corporation spends ₹48 crore annually for cleaning, pumping and supply of water. GVMC sources said the water supply covers only 85 per cent of the population and has 11 supply sources, 10 treatment plants, 251 pilot water supply schemes.

survey which was carried out in Takkellapadu village of Jaggayapeta mandal in Krishna district. He stated that drones would be used for land re-survey with the technical assistance of CARS technology. He said that base stations had been set up in Vijayawada, Pedana, Jaggayapeta, Thiruvuru and Pedavegi (West Godavari district). He further said that the department aims to set up about 70 base stations across the state by the 15 January 2021.

Minister Das said that Village sabhas (meetings) would be held from December 14 to 19 to educate the locals on land re-survey. He stated that 2,000 panchayat secretaries, 4,500 VROs and 9,500 village surveyors would participate in the programme. He further stated that 650 mobile magistrate teams would be formed in the state to resolve the problems during the re-survey.

POLITICAL CLASHES

Chandrababu Naidu demands an explanation from the Chief Minister

TD leaders claim they were attacked by YSRC men

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, DEC. 11

A tense situation prevailed at Angallu village in Kurabalakota mandal of Chittoor district, following an altercation between the YSR Congress and Telugu Desam activists, on Friday.

The TD leaders claimed that the vehicles carrying Nallari Kishore Kumar Reddy, brother of former CM N. Kiran Kumar Reddy, Rajampeta Lok Sabha in-charge of TD Srinivasulu Reddy, former TD MLA Shankar Yadav and party spokesperson Ratakonda Madhu Babu and other leaders came under attack by alleged activists of YSRC.

In the incident, the party

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 11

Telugu Desam party chief N. Chandrababu Naidu, on Friday, demanded the arrest of the culprits responsible for the attack on the TD leaders in Angallu village in Kurabalakota mandal in Chittoor district. He con-

spokesperson Madhu Babu suffered head injuries, while the other leaders had a narrow escape. Nallari Kishore Kumar Reddy and Shankar Yadav alleged that nearly 200 YSRC

demned the incident in which TD leaders Nallari Kishore Kumar Reddy, Madhu Babu and three others were seriously injured. He lamented that it was unfortunate that the TD leaders came under the ghastly attack when they were proceeding to call on the family members of the party's

attackers had blocked the road at Angallu village when they were proceeding to call on the family members of the party's deceased activists at B. Kothakota.

He said the TD convoy of

Bankers meet



RBI Regional Director K. Nikhila offers a bouquet to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the 213th statewide Bankers meeting at the camp office on Friday, NABARD CGM Sudheer Kumar Jannawar is also seen.

— DC

Street vendors given ID cards

FROM PAGE 1

The street vendors identified through Village/Ward Secretariats are provided with ID cards and their work profiles are recorded. The government will pay the interest of the loans taken by the vendors from banks; he said and urged the bankers to come forward to support the street vendors. The Chief Minister said the state government has been working for the completion of the construction of TIDCO houses at earliest and asked the bankers for their support.

The Chief Minister said the Government has signed MoUs with the reputed companies like Amul, Allana, ITC, Procter & Gamble, HUL, and Reliance to collabo-

rate and empower women beneficiaries of Cheyutha and Asara. He said committees were set up at village and ward level to support them. The State government has prepared a schedule for the distribution of cows, buffaloes, sheep and goats which already started.

The Chief Minister asked the bankers to prepare an action plan as per that schedule to provide assistance to women. He directed the officials to liaise with the bankers to ensure that the distribution takes place as per the schedule.

Meanwhile, speaking at the conference, G Rajkiran Rai, SLBC President and MD of Union Bank of India hailed the State government initiatives and said the activities of

banks and the financial assistance provided have reached the timely targets. He said the banks have given Rs 2,80,519 crore as loans in Primary sector as on September this year and it's 64.60 per cent of total loans. Loans to the agricultural sector stood at Rs 1,85,075 crore and this is 42.61 percent of the total loans, he said.

Ministers Botsa Satyanarayana, Kurasala Kannababu and Mekapati Goutham Reddy, Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney, NABARD CGM Sudhir Kumar Jannawar, SLBC Convenor V Bramhananda Reddy and RBI Regional Director K Nikhila were present at the meeting. UBI GM Lal Singh, UBI MD, CEO Raj Kiran Rai joined through the video conference.

YSRC slams Opposition
TD for spreading liesDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 11

Minister for agriculture Kursala Kannababu slammed opposition Telugu Desam Party for spreading lies about flagship farmers' welfare schemes implemented by the YSR Congress government.

Addressing a press meet here on Friday, he said TD MLC Nara Lokesh and Leader of Opposition in AP Legislative Council Yanamala Ramakrishnudu spreading lies about crop insurance and compensations. He claimed that the GO: 15 giving compensation to crops which were damaged 33 per cent to the extent was issued during the TDP government on 4 December 2015 by Chandrababu Naidu but Lokesh, without proper knowledge, has been levelling baseless allegations against the government.

Mr Kannababu refuted the allegations of TDP about quid pro quo in the Jagananna Jeeva Kranthi scheme and showed the video clip of CM Jagan about the scheme. He said that as the TD is continuously spreading lies to defame their government levelling baseless allegations and corruption charges in its friendly media, and the state government primarily decided to file defamation petition against the fake news. Mr Kannababu said that CM Jagan has turned into a farmer-friendly CM which is worrying the TDP leaders, over the distraction of farmers from TDP and has started spreading lies on crop insurance and compensations.

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 11

Minister for transport Perni Venkataramaiah alias Nani refuted the prediction of Opposition Telugu Desam about decrease of five per cent voting to YSRC if the elections would be held in the state in the present situation. Addressing a press meet on Friday, he said that despite the Covid-19 crisis and further financial troubles Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy never stopped the welfare schemes implementation, which further increased support to YSRC govern-

RULING YSRC REFUTED CLAIMS OF
TD OVER UPPER PENNA PROJECTDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 11

Ruling YSR Congress refuted claims of opposition Telugu Desam Party about starting Upper Penna project and defended that the then chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy originally initiated the project. YSRC MLA Thopudurthi Prakash Reddy slammed TDP leaders for politicising the Upper Penna project naming after YSR, who originally

initiated the project. Addressing a press conference here on Friday, the MLA said that opposition TDP leaders are intentionally drawing controversies over the Upper Penna project and making false propaganda through their favoured media houses.

He said that Dr Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy had started the Handri Neeva project in 2005, which is after the death of Paritala Ravindra.

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SHORT TAKES

Special train to Kirandol via Araku

Visakhapatnam: East Coast Railway decided to run special trains between Visakhapatnam-Kirandul via Araku Valley from December 18, a release said on Friday. The Visakhapatnam-Kirandul special express will leave Visakhapatnam daily at 6.45 pm with effect from December 18 which will reach Kirandol on the same day at 8.45 pm. In return direction the train will leave Kirandol daily at 6 am with effect from December 19 which will reach Visakhapatnam on the same day at 8.20 pm. The train in both directions will have stoppages in Simhachalam, Kottavalasa, Araku, Koraput, Jeyapore, Jagdalpur, Dantewara, Bachel between Visakhapatnam and Kirandul.

4 held for extortion from realtor

Visakhapatnam: The Duvvada police in Visakhapatnam arrested four persons for extorting money from a realtor on Friday. The police recovered ₹60,000, a toy pistol and a sharp knife from them. All were produced in the court and sent to judicial remand for 15 days. Circle inspector of Duvvada K. Lakhami said P.S.N. Raju of Duvvada and working in the steel plant has been doing real estate business in the name of his wife. Local goons P. Santosh and M. Lovaraju have been demanding money from him threatening to kill him. They collected ₹9.5 lakh in phases and still wanted more. Two days ago, they held him captive in a four-storied building and demanded huge amounts of money.

COAST GUARD SEIZES 9 KGS OF GOLD BARS

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, DEC. 11

In a joint anti-smuggling operation, the Indian Coast Guard and officials from the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence seized approximately nine kg of gold in the form of bars in Gulf of Mannar, off Tamil Nadu coast. The gold bars worth ₹4.5 crore were recovered from a fishing boat named 'Sailor'. The two-day joint operation took place after DRI sources received a tip-off that gold was being smuggled into India through the sea route from Sri Lanka. Based on actionable intelligence provided by DRI officials, a well-coordinated operation was launched by Coast Guard Station Mandapam resulting in apprehension of five fishermen along with fishing boats.

3 HELD, 45 STOLEN TWO-WHEELERS RECOVERED

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, DEC. 11

Alipiri Police on Friday arrested three habitual offenders in connection with motor-cycle lifting cases and recovered 45 bikes from their possession.

According to Tirupati Urban SP Avula Ramesh Reddy, the accused Darla Mohan, 30, K. Pawan, 20 and C. Royal Tharun, 23, hailing from Mangalagiri village under Nindra mandal, were addicted to various vices and to meet their lavish needs, they used to theft motorcycles.

The Tirupati urban police have laid a special focus on motor-cycle thieves and a special team was formed headed by East DSP T. Murali Krishna to crack such cases. The team successfully managed to nab the trio, who have stolen seven two-wheelers in Tirupati urban limits and 38 from Tamil Nadu.

Alipiri Circle Inspector B. Devendra and the special team members have arrested the accused near the science centre in Tirupati on Friday and recovered the stolen two-wheelers. The SP appreciated the special team for their efforts in arresting the accused.

● The Tirupati urban police have laid a special focus on motor-cycle thieves and a special team was formed headed by East DSP T. Murali Krishna to crack such cases. The team successfully managed to nab the trio, who have stolen seven two-wheelers in Tirupati urban limits

More than 50 rice mills to be closed in W. Godavari

In the absence of this machinery, the mills can't do 'custom milling of rice'

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, DEC. 11

More than 50 rice mills in West Godavari District are going to close due to lack of Sortex machinery which makes the rice 'thin'. In the absence of this machinery, the mills can't do 'custom milling of rice' for the government.

After the Centre lifted 'levy policy' five years back, the government purchases paddy and gives it to the rice millers for 'custom milling of rice' and pays the mills. However, the state government has decided to supply 'fine rice' to peo-

ple through the Public Distribution System by imposing several specifications on the quality. There are nearly 340 rice mills in West Godavari district out of which 270 mills got the "sortex" machinery. However, the remaining mills do not have the capacity to purchase the machinery as it costs nearly ₹70 lakh to ₹80 lakh.

"We can't invest such huge amount to convert machinery into sortex. If the machinery is fixed, we need to appoint additional driver and staff. Besides, the power tariff will also be changed. The rice mills

● If the rice miller goes for sortex machines, he has to fix 150 HP motor and the minimum power tariff goes to nearly ₹30,000.

have work for two months in khariff season and two months for Rabi season. For the remaining period, we have to pay minimum power tariff to the AP Transco," said a rice miller from West Godavari District.

He said that at present they are paying ₹10,000 to ₹12,000 per month for their 100 HP motor.

However, if the rice miller goes for sortex machines, he has to fix 150 HP motor and the minimum power tariff goes to nearly ₹30,000. He said that after thoroughly assessing the income and expenditure, some of the rice millers decided to shutdown. He said that they issued notices to labourers for not coming after one month. He said that if they allow the labourers to come by not issuing notices, the rice millers have to pay salaries even if there is no work for them in the mill.

The West Godavari Rice Millers Association

President S. Srirama Raju said that the state government fixed a policy for the benefit of the people and the rice millers have to follow it. He said that sortex machinery is a part of the mill and the rice millers can get 'second hand machines' from ₹12 lakh. He said that the rice millers also should update their technology to changing circumstances or be left out in growth and business. He said that nearly 270 rice millers got the machines and another 60 to 70 rice millers want to go for the machinery in coming six months.

Doctors' protest



Members of Visakhapatnam branch of Indian Medical Association along with government doctors staged a dharna in King George Hospital premises on Friday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

Doctors observe bandh

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, DEC. 11:

The doctors led by Indian Medical Association (IMA) observed bandh in East Godavari District, demanding the Union Government should abolish the anti-people laws regarding medical education and health. The doctors did not open their clinics from 6 am to 6 pm on Friday. The IMA Rajamahendravaram Branch President S. Ramaraju said that the allopathic doctors would honour the Ayurvedic medicine which is a traditional medical and health treatment, but, the IMA was opposing giving permissions to Ayurvedic doctors for performing surgeries. He said that many developmental

● How the Ayurvedic doctors perform surgeries without an anaesthetist. He said that there were different medical treatment methods

changes were coming into the medical field and the need for anaesthetist is compulsory if surgery is performed.

He questioned how the Ayurvedic doctors perform surgeries without an anaesthetist. He said that there were different medical treatment methods like Ayurveda, allopathy and others and the experts in their respective fields can do the treatment to the patients, but the IMA would not accept performing surgeries by the Ayurvedic field.

The IMA Rajamahendravaram branch secretary Pidugu Vijaya Bhaskar said that the central and state government should appoint doctors and staff in rural areas for making available the treatment to the people. But, the governments did not do that, and they are bringing anti-people medical treatment laws. He said if the governments provide proper facilities like medical equipment, staff and others, the doctors are getting ready to serve the people. Dr B. Suresh Kumar said that the government issued orders for allowing the Ayurvedic doctors performing skin grafting, eye operations, root-canal treatments and others. They submitted a memorandum to the Sub-Collector.

2 fishing groups fight over usage of nets in Chirala

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, DEC. 11

A quarrel broke out between two groups of fishermen in Vodarevu village of Chirala mandal in Prakasam district on Friday and about eight fishermen have sustained injuries in the incident.

According to the reports reaching here, fishermen from Katarivaripalem have raised objection over the usage of Balla Walalu (a type of fishing net) by the fishermen of Vodarevu village. A scuf-

fle broke out between the two groups two days ago when the Katarivaripalem fishermen captured the nets and boats of the Vodarevu fishermen.

Following this, the joint director of fisheries Chandrasekhar Reddy and Chirala police have gone to Katarivaripalem village to settle the matter. The Vodarevu fishermen, however, didn't attend the meeting and the enraged opposition again captured 10 fishermen and a boat of the Vodarevu group.

In a counter attack, the Vodarevu villagers also captured some fishermen of the Katarivaripalem group and a boat. This led the two groups to engage into physical attacks on each other and both of them have pelted stones on each other. In the incident eight fishermen sustained injuries.

The situation came under control with the arrival of extra police force at the village. A case has been registered and police have arrested those who were involved in the attacks.

Suspended judge arrested for forgery

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, DEC. 11

Suspended Chittoor-based junior civil judge S. Ramakrishna was on Friday arrested by the Madanapalle sub-division police in connection with a forgery and cheating case filed against him by a bank, police said.

Madanapalle DSP Ravi Manoharachari said that on December 6, Canara Bank manager Kiran Kumar had lodged a complaint with the Two Town police against Ramakrishna for misusing bank cheques that

belonged to his deceased aunt Sucharitha.

"In his complaint, the bank manager stated that they have learnt about the issuance of cheques in the name of the deceased recently and enquired into the matter. In their inquiry, they found that the suspended judge Ramakrishna had misused his aunt's signed cheques and gave them to five of his debtors," the DSP said.

"Based on the complaint lodged by the bank manager, Two Town police have started an investigation into the matter and

collected forensic reports and death certificate of Sucharitha, who died at the age of 65—on June 6, 2019—before arresting Ramakrishna. He was taken into custody on Friday night and further investigation is on," the DSP added.

It may be recalled that Ramakrishna had earlier filed a petition in the AP High Court along with a call record of his alleged telephonic conversation with Justice Eswaraiah. He stated in his petition that Justice Eswaraiah made derogatory and abusive comments against

sitting judges of the Supreme Court and the AP High Court in the telephonic conversation. The High Court eventually ordered a probe into the matter by a retired SC judge.

The suspended judge also made startling allegations against minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy and his brother and MLA Peddireddy Dwarakanath Reddy.

He alleged that he was physically assaulted by the YSR Congress workers at the behest of the minister.

ICAR told to recruit staff for floriculture

DC CORRESPONDENT RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM, DEC. 11

The Rajamahendravaram MP M. Bharat requested the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Director to recruit scientists and staff in Floriculture Regional Research Institute in Vemagiri of Rajamahendravaram Rural Mandal. He submitted a representation to the Director, on Friday, that though the ICAR-Director laid the foundation stone for the centre in January 2019, there is no staff yet for the functioning of the institute.

According to sources, the nursery enterprise was extended in 11,500 hectares in Kadiyam, Atreyapuram, Alamuru and Mandapeta mandals in East Godavari and nearly 300 varieties of ornamental flowers and plants are being produced and 50,000 people including nursery farmers and workers are directly and indirectly involved in the nursery activities. All those people are dependent on these nurseries for their livelihood and this nursery enterprise has 100 years of history and is maintained by families and their successors with their limited knowledge. So far there is no holistic scientific or technical support received from knowledgeable scientists. Given the demand of Kadiyam nursery farmers,

● Bharat submitted a representation to the Director, on Friday, that though the ICAR-Director laid the foundation stone for the centre in January 2019, there is no staff yet for the functioning of the institute.

the central government has sanctioned the Floriculture Regional Research Institute under the control of ICAR-Directorate of Floriculture Research, Pune to cater to the needs of nursery farmers.

In response to the Central Government, the state government has transformed 10,77 acres of land at Vemagiri village in Kadiam mandal on 5 November 2015. The Regional station sanctioned to focus on the development of new varieties improved production technologies and plant protection measures in the nursery segment of floriculture.

However, ICAR has not recruited any scientist or staff for the regional centre. The farming community is vexed with the promises of the establishment and improper functioning of the regional research station, alleged Mr Bharat. He also said that the officials had not been taken any initiative towards establishing and strengthening of this Floriculture Regional station despite several representations from the nursery farmers.

TD stages stir against hike in property tax

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, DEC. 11

Telugu Desam leaders and activists staged dharnas in front of Municipal Corporation Offices at Rajamahendravaram and Kakinada on Friday, demanding the government should withdraw the hike in property tax bills.

The TD activists led by the former Kakinada Urban MLA Vanamadi Venkateswara Rao (Kondababu) raised slogans against the YSRC government. Mr Kondababu said that when the people were facing great

hardships economically due to lack of revenues and income and work for the last eight months, the government imposed several taxes like sewerage tax and hike in taxes on property, drinking water and others. He said that it will make additional burden on the people and they are not able to bear the additional burden. He said that after YSRC assumed power, all resources like water, air and others were polluted.

In Rajamahendravaram, the TD activists staged a dharna in front of the Municipal Corporation.

KMC fails to check building plan violations

DC CORRESPONDENT KURNOOL, DEC. 11

Illegal constructions abound in Kurnool city as the municipal corporation failed to take steps in granting building permissions. Scores of commercial complexes in the central business district have no parking places. Cellars are being used to run businesses. The planning wing of Kurnool Municipal Corporation (KMC), with hardly any staff, has made mockery of town planning and became a bane to orderly development of city infrastructure.

Footpaths occupied by shops have been let out to hawkers as a step-down subsidiary. Despite road widening near General Hospital two years back, it has been of no use to ease traffic. In Venkat Ramana colony, footpaths are occupied by mobile tiffin centres. The stretch from Congress office to old traffic signals, shops have come up on footpaths.

It is estimated that more than one-third of the capacity of the main roads in the city is depleted due to indiscriminate parking. Business areas such as Abdullakhan estate, Gayatri estate, RMK plaza, Bhupal complex, Central plaza, Allankar plaza, Nehru road, Park road, Pula bazaar, RTC bus station circle, Krishna Nagar main road, Nandyal road and State Bank circle and residential areas such as Old town, Ammarvarisala road and Minchin bazaar are the worst-affected, say commuters. Most roads are left with width that allows one or two vehicles to pass, thanks to the parked vehicles. On ZP Road, Park road, Pula bazaar road, Nehru road and Krishna Nagar main road, for instance, traffic jams have always been common during peak hours., Prahalad, a commuter said.

● In Venkat Ramana colony, footpaths are occupied by mobile tiffin centres. The stretch from Congress office to old traffic signals, shops have come up on footpaths.

Most commercial complexes do not provide parking space in the Kurnool city. The AP Building Rules mandate that complexes must provide parking space of 25 to 30 per cent of the total built-up area, but an overwhelming number of complexes violate this rule with impunity. Complexes are granted permissions by the municipal corporation even when they violate clear cut rules on the provision of parking spaces, open cellar and foot path roots. The relaxation in these rules is purportedly in the 'interests of the public.'

As prices of open sites and plots shot up, construction has become expensive, and complex owners are mushrooming in every locality irrespective of whether they are needed or not. The Municipal Corporation should conduct surveys and then call for applications to construct complexes based on need.

Town Planning experts blame lack of enforcement of building bye-laws as the main cause for parking problems. Any building should have an area measuring more than 50 square meters for a parking lot. In public buildings, 10 per cent of the area should be reserved for parking. These norms are supposed to be enforced during the approval of building plans, which is evidently not happening. The basement area in many buildings house shopping complexes, and in residential areas, a portion of many houses are rented out as offices, leaving no space for parking.

IN BRIEF

Gold worth ₹4.5 cr seized mid-sea

Chennai: In a joint mid-sea operation on Friday, the Coast Guard and the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) foiled a bid to smuggle into the country gold bars worth ₹4.50 crore from Sri Lanka. Acting on a tip-off, the Coast Guard and DRI officials intercepted a fishing boat ‘Sailor’ with five fishermen off the Tamil Nadu coast and seized the gold concealed in a bag, a press release said. Initial investigations revealed that the boat with the contraband was proceeding from Gulf of Mannar to Marakkayar Pattinam near Mandapam in Ramanathapuram district, the release said. The gold weighed nine kgs and worth ₹4.50 crore, it said. The fishermen were apprehended and further investigations on, the release said.

ASSAM RESUMES ANTI-CAA AGITATIONS

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, DEC. 11

A group of 18-organisation led by Krishnak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) here on Friday organised a massive protest at Sivasagar in Upper Assam and threatened to intensify agitation against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) all over the state. All Assam Students’ Union (AASU) has also decided to revive the anti-CAA protests from Saturday by starting ‘Gono Hoanar’, meaning public outcry, the agitation aims to press for repealing of the act.

AASU general secretary Shankar Jyoti Baruah said, “The government has to repeal the CAA—an anti-Assam law that has already taken the lives of five Assamese citizens including innocent students during the agitation last year. The families of the five martyrs and AASU will continue to seek justice.” The students’ unions in Assam had launched a protest against the CAA after it was passed by Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of the Parliament.

UZBEKISTAN TO JOIN TRANSPORT CORRIDOR (INSTC)

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

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

The INSTC is the “shortest multimodal transportation route linking the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf via Iran to Russia and North Europe”. The “in-principle concurrence” of Uzbekistan was conveyed by the Central Asian country at a Virtual Summit between the two nations on Friday co-chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. India had maintained that Uzbekistan’s participation in the project would add to the “overall improvement of connectivity in the larger Eurasian space”.

VIGILANCE PROBE AGAINST SACKED BJD LEGISLATOR

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, DEC. 11

Odisha Lokayukta on Friday directed the state Vigilance Directorate to investigate the corruption allegation levelled against expelled BJD leader and Gopalpur MLA Pradeep Panigrahi. The Lokayukta asked the Vigilance to submit a report within two months after preliminary investigation.

On December 7, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had recommended the Lokayukta for a probe into the corruption charges against Panigrahi, who is currently lodged at Jharpada jail after his bail plea was rejected by Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate (SDJM) Court on December 3.

This was the first case of corruption allegation that has been referred to Odisha Lokayukta by the state government after its formation.

Centre, WB engage in power play

West Bengal refuses to let its chief secretary, DGP go to Delhi after MHA summons them

RAJNISH SHARMA & RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, DEC. 11

A day after Trinamul Congress workers’ violent attack on BJP president J.P. Nadda’s convoy at Diamond Harbour in West Bengal, the Union home ministry on Friday morning summoned top two bureaucrats of the Mamata Banerjee government to New Delhi on December 14. The MHA’s move, however, infuriated the Trinamul supremo and the state government has decided not to allow the two bureaucrats to go to Delhi, saying that the issue is being dealt with.

Nadda’s convoy had come under attack in the Lok Sabha constituency of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s nephew, Abhishek Banerjee.

State chief secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay and director general of police Virendra were directed to meet Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla at 12.15 pm on Monday to “discuss the law and order situation, including the incidents regarding certain Z-category protectees” in the poll-bound state.

On Friday afternoon, Bandyopadhyay wrote a letter to Bhalla, assuring him of the state government’s “elaborate arrangements for security coverage” which included a pilot and a bullet proof car for Nadda in his convoy and a large deployment of

Dhankhar asks Mamata PM talks to Nadda, to apologise to Nadda

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, DEC. 11

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday advised Trinamul Congress supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee “not to play with fire” and “apologise” for mocking BJP president J.P. Nadda as “Chaddha, Nadda, Fadda, Bhaddha” after her party workers’ alleged brazen attack on his convoy at Diamond Harbour, also her nephew Abhishek Banerjee’s Lok Sabha constituency, in South 24 Parganas a day before.

“It is dangerous that she is using the word ‘outsider.’ India is one nation. We all are Indians. We believe in one Constitution. The CM is not above the

● **THE GOVERNOR** says it is dangerous that she is using the word ‘outsider.’ India is one nation. We all are Indians. We believe in one Constitution. The CM is not above the Constitution. She must not call who is an outsider or an insider. Such a comment from her side is unwarranted, shameful and painful. Madam Chief Minister, please don’t play with the fire.

She added, “What happened was most unfortunate. I once again make an appeal to her to withdraw her video with an apology.”

On Thursday afternoon Banerjee had told a rally, “They (BJP) have no other work. Sometimes the Union home minister comes here. Otherwise its Chaddha, Nadda, Fadda, Bhaddha who are here. And when they do not have an audience, they call their workers for doing Nautanki.”

Senior TMC MP Sougata Roy, however, rejected Dhankhar’s demand of an apology from the CM.

“The question of Banerjee’s apology does not arise. Why does the Governor feel so much anguish over a comment against the BJP chief? Is he a BJP representative?” he asked.

He added, “What happened was most unfortunate. I once again make an appeal to her to withdraw her video with an apology.”

BJP TO HOLD AWARENESS DRIVE ON FARM BILLS

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

With the Modi government unwilling to buckle under farmer unions pressure to repeal the recently passed three farm sector legislations, the ruling BJP has decided to take the three laws to the farmers across the country by organising ‘chaupals’ and press conferences. Despite the deadlock between the Centre and the farmers unions, mainly from Punjab, continuing even after series of talks between representatives from both sides, the government is hopeful that to “find a solution to the issues raised by the agitating farmers.” But, with the farmer unions showing no sign of relenting, the BJP has decided to hold atleast 700 press conferences & 700 ‘chaupals’ till the district levels to “dispel the myth and propaganda” against the three laws.

The party has also activated its social media team and supporters to explain why the three laws were enacted, why the reforms were needed in the agri sector and how its political opponents are “trying to misled the farmers for their political interest.”

The party has also asked its social media teams and cadre to highlight how opposition parties, including the Congress, had proposed the same reforms regarding AP- MCs, contract farming and some other issues.

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

After senior BJP leaders’ convoy in West Bengal came under attack allegedly from the ruling TMC cadre, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to party president J.P. Nadda and national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, who were also in the convoy.

Many senior BJP leaders from the state, including Mukul Roy, Anupam Hazra and many MPs were in the convoy when it came under attack on Thursday.

The convoy of BJP leaders was pelted with stones when they were on their way to attend a party event in Diamond Harbour, which is the Lok Sabha constituency of

blamed BJP leader Rakesh Singh for provoking the attack on his party chief.

“Singh was in the convoy in front of Nadda. He has 55 criminal cases against him and he made provocative gestures at the crowd. An FIR has been registered against him,” he alleged.

The Union home affairs’ step to summon the two officials came after it

● **MANY SENIOR BJP** leaders from the state, including Mukul Roy, Anupam Hazra and many MPs were also in the convoy when it came under attack allegedly from the ruling TMC cadre on Thursday.

Abhishek Banerjee, chief minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee’s nephew.

While Banerjee termed the incident as “nautanki,” the BJP claimed that the state has “descended into an era of tyranny, anarchy and darkness” under the TMC rule. Crucial assembly polls in the state are lined up early next year and the BJP has launched an aggressive campaign in an effort to oust the TMC.

received an adverse report from Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on “serious security lapses” on part of the state police which led to the brazen attack on Thursday leaving two senior BJP leaders, Kailash Vijayvargiya and Mukul Roy, who were in Nadda’s convoy, injured. Sources said that Shah may visit the state on December 19-20.

Expansion of ministry is Shivraj’s jurisdiction: Scindia

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, DEC. 11

Senior BJP leader and Rajya Sabha member Jyotiraditya Scindia on Friday arrived in a 40-car-convoy carrying his supporters to hold discussions with Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and top leaders of the state party to accommodate his loyalists in the state ministry and party organisational posts.

Neither side disclosed what transpired at the meeting, but sources said that it’s been a month since bypoll results were announced in Madhya Pradesh that firmly placed the Shivraj Chouhan-led BJP government in power. And yet the MLAs who had quit the Congress along with Scindia are yet to be accommodated in Chouhan’s Cabinet.

There has been a delay in the reconstitution of state executive body and district units of the party owing to some “hitches” between Scindia and the state party leadership over accommodating the former’s loyalists in various organisational posts.

State party president V.D. Sharma and state organisational secretary Suhash Bhagat were also present at

NK: MUST REVISIT 7TH SCHEDULE OF CONSTITUTION

New Delhi, Dec. 11: Finance Commission Chairman N.K. Singh on Friday underlined the need for revisiting the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, which specifies allocation of powers between the Centre and states, in view of changes in technology and national priorities.

The Seventh Schedule has three lists — Union, state and concurrent. While the Centre can make laws on subjects specified in the Union list, the state governments have jurisdiction over items in the state list. Both the Centre and states can make laws for subjects in the concurrent list, but the Union’s law will prevail in case of conflict.

“We need to revisit Schedule VII of the Constitution in a more fundamental way,” Singh said while speaking at FICCI’s Annual Convention and 93rd AGM.

Singh said the Commission on Centre-state relations, headed by Justice M.M. Punchhi, had in 2010 recommended that there should be a consultation process between the Union and states via an Interstate Council for legislation on concurrent subjects. It was of the opinion that the Union should only transfer those subjects into the concurrent list which were central to achieving demonstrable national interest, he said. —PTI



Doctors hold banners in Thane on Friday, during their strike, demanding the withdrawal of CCIM notification.

— PTI

Doctors sport black armbands, ribbons

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

Doctors at several hospitals in the national capital, including AIIMS, on Friday sported black ribbons in support of the protest call of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) against the Centre’s move allowing post graduate practitioners of Ayurveda to be trained in performing surgical procedures.

The IMA, which had given the nation-wide call on December 1, has

demanding withdrawal of the notification. Doctors at AIIMS, and various Delhi government-run facilities, including LNJP Hospital, Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, DDU Hospital, GTB Hospital, BSA Hospital, Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital, and civic-run Hindu Rao Hospital performed duties while wearing black armbands and ribbons.

The Resident Doctors Association of AIIMS-Delhi, in a statement said, “This step will not

only encourage already rampant quackery, but also undermine the safety of the public. We request the government of India to retract this notification immediately. We stand with our medical fraternity in this regard and support the strike called by Indian Medical Association.”

President of FORDA, an apex bodies of various RDAs in the city, Shivaji Deb Barman said, “Doctors in Delhi observe black ribbon protest, but will not withdraw any

services”.

The IMA has given a call for withdrawal of non-essential and non-Covid services between 6 am and 6 pm on Friday to protest against the notification.

“The notification by the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) to allow legal practice of surgeries by Ayurveda practitioners and the formation of four committees by NITI Aayog for integration of all systems of medicine will only lead to “mixopathy”, said the IMA.

SHOOT TO KILL

Device will help user to detect, engage targets effectively

Special forces get a CornerShot boost

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 11

Counter-insurgency operations by special forces across the country are all set to get a major boost with the Centre procuring CornerShot devices to be used with Glock pistols.

The CornerShot, which provides its operator the ability to observe and engage targets from behind cover, will minimise casualties and gunshot wounds during counter-insurgency operations or hostile situations.

The ministry of home affairs (MHA) recently

cleared the proposal and orders for the state-of-the-art weapons system is to be placed shortly.

“CornerShot will enable the user to detect and engage targets effectively, using traverse firing in day or night. It also allows its user to see and fire around corners. It will go a long way in preventing and minimising casualties as the user will not be exposed to return fire by the enemy,” a senior police official told *Deccan Chronicle*.

Though CornerShot systems are being used for training purposes, this will be the first time that personnel in the



CRPF, BSF and other forces will be using them in their Glock pistols.

The CornerShot weapon system consists of two joined sections.

The front portion holds the pistol along with the camera and other features including tactical LED light, laser device besides other attachments. The rear section houses the operating features, monitor, controls and has a foldable butt.

Among other countries, Israel has been a leading manufacturer of CornerShot systems that are used by military special forces and counter-terrorism units across the world.

They mostly use it for their Beretta and Glock pistols.

“CornerShots that are being purchased will

have a visible laser indicator with zeroing mechanism for range not less than 15 metres under clear starlight night conditions. The CornerShot lever allows the operator to quickly swivel the weapon system up to 60 degrees in either direction and turn it back to straight just as quickly,” another official involved in anti-insurgency operations explained.

The CornerShot system is already in use for the Indian Police Service (IPS) probationers at the prestigious Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy in Hyderabad.

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, DEC. 11

Observing that the quantum of sentence to be imposed upon the accused convicted for rape cannot be viewed with leniency unless there are special reasons, the Bombay High Court enhanced imprisonment of a convict to 10 years from 3 years and fine amount to ₹1,10,000 from ₹10,000. The court has ordered that ₹1 lakh from the fine amount be given to the victim. The incident had happened around 28-years-ago.

A division bench of Justice Sadhna Jadhav and Justice N.J. Jamdar observed that the trial court has shown undue leniency to the aunt of the accused and acquitted her and the state has failed in discharging its duty of prosecuting the case diligently.

According to the judges, “Passage of time will not be a justifiable reason to take a lenient view.”

“The bench further said, “Courts cannot be oblivious of the impact of such a heinous offence. The object of deterrence in commission of such heinous offence cannot be lost sight of while sentencing.”

“Once the accused is convicted, the victim also deserves justice. Dishonour of a woman needs to be eliminated and judicial pronouncement, which imposes a disproportionately lenient sentence, needs to be set aside. The sexual harassment of a woman at a place, where she is working to earn her livelihood, is a disgrace meted out to her at the hands of the abuser, which needs to be deprecated and set right,” the court further said.

SHORT TAKES

BIDEN, HARRIS TIME
'2020' PERSON
OF THE YEAR

New York: US President-elect Joe Biden and Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris have been named by the prestigious *Time* magazine as '2020 Person of the Year' for changing the American story, showing that the forces of empathy are greater than the furies of division and sharing a vision of healing in a grieving world.

It named the Democratic leaders for its annual prestigious honour, choosing them over other finalists — front-line health care workers, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Dr Anthony Fauci, the Movement for Racial Justice and US President Donald Trump.

INDIAN AMONG 3
HELD IN \$3MN
FRAUD CASE IN US

Washington, Dec. 11: An Indian-American from Michigan has been arrested along with two others on charges of conspiring to defraud at least 43 victims of more than \$3 million through the sale of phony business opportunities, a US attorney has said. David Weinstein, 61, Vijay Vanam Reddy, 45, and Kevin Brown, 61, have been charged with one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud.

Reddy on Thursday made an appearance in a Detroit federal court. Brown and Weinstein were arrested on December 8. Brown was released on \$50,000 bond and Weinstein a day later. From September 2015 through August 2018, the three advertised business opportunities for sale on various websites. They purported to sell "blocks" of contracts with medical providers who allegedly wanted to outsource their medical billing, collections, appeals, answering, credentialing or transcription functions.

The buyers would then provide the contracted services to the medical providers and earn a profit.

UN BACKS AFGHAN
PEACE TALKS IN
RESOLUTION

United Nations, Dec. 11: The UN General Assembly approved a resolution over Russian objections on Thursday commending progress in peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban while urging stepped-up efforts to tackle terrorist attacks by the Taliban, al-Qaida, the Islamic State extremist group and their affiliates.

The vote in the 193-member world body was 130 in favour, Russia against, and China, Pakistan and Belarus abstaining. Fifty-nine countries did not vote. The 15-page resolution titled "The Situation in Afghanistan" covers a wide range of issues including peace and reconciliation, democracy, the rule of law, good governance, human rights, counter-narcotics, social and economic development and regional cooperation. While welcoming progress in the intra-Afghan talks, including the December 2 agreement on rules of procedure for negotiations.

ITALIAN ON TRIAL
FOR THREAT TO
BLOW UP UK HOSP

Berlin, Dec. 11: A 33-year-old Italian man was going on trial Friday in Berlin on allegations that he threatened to blow up a British National Health Service hospital unless he was paid off with 10 million pounds in crypto currency.

The Berlin resident, identified only as Emil A. in line with German privacy laws, is accused of attempted extortion on allegations he sent an email in April 2020 from his home to the NHS, threatening the attack on an unspecified hospital unless he received the funds in his Bitcoin account.

The NHS did not respond, and the suspect proceeded to send another 17 threatening emails until his arrest in June, according to prosecutors. Investigators were able to track the suspect through his electronic trail, which he had attempted to conceal through basic encryption that was easily cracked, said court spokeswoman Lisa Jani. "It was not highly professional," she said. Investigators determined the suspect had no bomb and no specific target, and the case was assigned to a Berlin district court rather than a higher court due to the nature of the allegations, Jani said.

UK, EU prepare for 'no-deal' Brexit

British PM admits Sunday deadline for next discussion does not hold out great promise

London, Dec. 11: (PTI) British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has issued the starkest warning yet that the UK could be out of the EU on January 1, 2021, without a trade agreement in place as the two sides remain divided on key areas amidst last-ditch talks between the chief Brexit negotiators.

After Johnson's urgent talks with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Brussels failed to break the logjam over the European Union (EU) fishing rights in UK territorial waters as a non-member and competition rules for businesses, the Prime Minister admitted that a Sunday deadline for their next discussion does not hold out great promise.

"At the moment, I have to tell you in all candour, the treaty is not there yet and that was the strong view of our Cabinet," Johnson said on Thursday night. "There's a strong possibility that we will have a solution much more like Australian relationship with the EU than a Canadian relationship with the EU," he said.

An Australia-style agreement effectively means no trade agreement and the two sides would then be trading on World Trade Organisation (WTO) norms, with considerable barriers to movement of goods as well as people. With the UK no longer signed up to the EU rules, it would also mean travel restrictions for Britons travelling to and from the EU at the end of the Brexit transition period on December 31, given the Coronavirus pandemic lockdown rules. — PTI



Fishermen sort and load trays of salmon heads to be used as bait for crab and lobster pots as they prepare for their next voyage to sea, on the South Pier of Bridlington Harbour fishing port in Bridlington, north east England on Friday. Trade talks between the UK and the EU continue in Brussels with EU members' future access to Britain's rich fishing waters remaining a major sticking point. — AFP

EU leaders agree on climate deal

Brussels, Dec. 11: EU leaders on Friday agreed an ambitious target for cutting greenhouse gas emissions after unlocking the bloc's landmark budget and Coronavirus recovery fund at a marathon summit.

The 27 member states struck a deal on a binding target to slash emissions by at least 55 percent by 2030 following an entire night of intense wrangling in Brussels.

● **TURKEY ON Friday** called on the European Union to act as an 'honest mediator' in its dispute with EU members Greece and Cyprus over the exploration of gas reserves in the Mediterranean, after European leaders approved expanding sanctions against Ankara.

The fight was over how the cost of the effort should be shared across the countries: highly dependent on coal, Poland — allied with several Eastern European countries — fears serious economic consequences and demanded details on the aid it would receive.

"Europe is the leader in the fight against climate change," European Council president and summit host Charles Michel

declared on Twitter.

French President Emmanuel Macron tweeted an appeal for action now the target was agreed, insisting: "Let's do everything to succeed. Now. All together. Because there is no plan B!" As part of its commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement, the EU has pledged to become climate-neutral by 2050, the date when it would offset or capture more greenhouse gas than it emits. — AFP

China critic held
under HK tough
new security law

Hong Kong, Dec. 11: Hong Kong media tycoon and Beijing critic Jimmy Lai was charged under a new national security law on Friday, accused of colluding with foreign forces, the latest pro-democracy figure targeted under the legislation.

Lai, 73, is the most high-profile figure charged under the sweeping law, which has targeted the city's pro-democracy movement but brought a semblance of calm to the finance hub after months of often-violent protests.

The city's new national security unit charged him "with one count of collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security", police said in a statement.

National security offences carry a maximum sentence of life in prison.

The publisher will appear in court on Saturday in relation to the national security charge, police said.

Lai is the owner of Hong Kong's best-selling Apple Daily, a popular tabloid that is unashamedly pro-democracy and fiercely critical of authorities. — AFP

CHINA DETAINS
BLOOMBERG
NEWS ASSISTANT

Beijing, Dec. 11: US financial news service Bloomberg said on Friday that Chinese authorities have detained one of its Beijing-based news assistants on what they said was suspicion of endangering national security.

Bloomberg reported that Chinese citizen Haze Fan was seen being taken from her apartment building accompanied by security officers in plain clothes at about noon on Monday, shortly after her last contact with her editors.

It quoted a Chinese government statement as saying Fan was detained by the Beijing branch of the National Security Bureau "according to relevant Chinese law on suspicion of engaging in criminal activities that jeopardize national security." China permits Chinese citizens to work only as translators, researchers and assistants for foreign news organisations, not as registered journalists able to report independently. — AP

Pak PM reshuffles
on court's orders

Islamabad, Dec. 11: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday reshuffled his Cabinet, days after a top court barred un-elected advisers and special assistants from heading the Cabinet committees.

This is the fourth Cabinet shakeup since Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) came to power in 2018. The reshuffle followed the December 7 verdict of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) barring un-elected advisers and special assistants from heading Cabinet committees.

The court ruled that special assistants and advisers to the prime minister were not members of the Cabinet and therefore, cannot be part of Cabinet

proceedings. On Friday, Khan elevated Sheikh Rashid Ahmed as interior minister and appointed Dr Abdul Hafeez Sheikh as finance minister.

State-run Radio Pakistan reported that Ahmed was already a part of the Cabinet working as minister for railways, while Hafeez Sheikh was serving as advisor on finance and revenue. Hafeez Sheikh is not an elected member and he could not lead several committees.

He was appointed as minister under Article 91 (9) of the Constitution and can serve as a minister for six months. He must be elected as a member of the National Assembly or Senate to continue after that. — PTI

Germany plans for tougher lockdown

Berlin, Dec. 11: Calls grew on Friday for tougher lockdown measures in Germany as the country's disease control center reported record daily increases in both Coronavirus cases and deaths.

The Robert Koch Institute said the country's 16 states reported 29,875 new cases of Covid-19, breaking the previous daily record of 23,679 cases reported the day before.

The number of deaths from the virus rose by 598, to a total of 20,970. The previous daily record of deaths was 590, set on Wednesday. "The only chance we have to get in control of the situation is a lockdown, but it needs to be immediate," Interior Minister Horst Seehofer told Der Spiegel magazine. "If we wait until Christmas, we'll have to continue fighting these numbers for months."

Under current restrictions implemented at the beginning of November as numbers were growing exponentially, restaurants, bars, leisure and sports facilities have been closed and hotels are closed to tourists, but schools and nonessential shops have remained open.

The numbers had plateaued — but at high daily levels — and have again been rising in recent days. That prompted Chancellor Angela Merkel this week to call on state governments, which are responsible for imposing and lifting restrictions, to consider closing schools early before Christmas and other measures. — AP

US experts okay
Pfizer's vaccine

Washington, Dec. 11: US experts voted on Thursday to recommend granting emergency approval for Pfizer-BioNTech's Covid-19 vaccine, paving the way for America to become the next country to move ahead with mass immunisation.

It comes as the worst-hit country in the world logged more than 3,000 virus deaths in one day and its overall toll was approaching 3,00,000.

With northern hemisphere countries hit by a pandemic winter surge, Britain this week became the first Western country to roll out the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

Canada, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have also approved it.

EU countries eagerly awaited a greenlight for

vaccines that the bloc's own watchdog said remained on track for approval despite a two-week-long cyberattack, which is under investigation.

Independent experts convened by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) voted 17 in favor, four against and with one abstention for emergency approval of the two-dose regimen in over-16s.

The vote is non-binding, but a formal emergency use authorisation (EUA) is expected within days.

Momentum was building as the New England Journal of Medicine published full results of a clinical trial of the vaccine involving nearly 44,000 people, which confirmed it was 95 percent effective with no serious safety issues. — AFP

S. Korean director Kim Ki-Duk
passes away at 59 due to Covid

London, Dec. 11: South Korean filmmaker Kim Ki-Duk, known for films such as "Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring", "The Isle" and "Pieta", has died due to complications from Coronavirus. He was 59.

The filmmaker passed away at a hospital in Latvia, where he had arrived last month to buy a house, reported local outlet Delfi.

The news of his death was confirmed by Russian director Vitalijis Manskis to Delfi. Ki-Duk was known for his peculiar movies, which were often laced with provocative themes like sex, violence

and animal cruelty.

Born on December 20, 1960 in Bonghwa in North Gyeongsang Province, South Korea, Ki-Duk studied fine arts in Paris from 1990 to 1993. He started his film career as a screenwriter and made his directorial debut with 1996 feature "Crocodile". — PTI

UK BUSINESSES
WANT BREXIT
DISCUSSIONS

London, Dec. 11: British trucking firms, supermarkets and other businesses on Friday implorred the government to strike a last-minute trade deal with the European Union, as the two sides' leaders told their citizens to brace for New Year upheaval in the UK-EU trading relationship.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said there is a "strong possibility" that negotiations on a new economic relationship to take effect Jan. 1 will fail. Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen have set a Sunday deadline to decide whether to keep talking or prepare for a no-deal break.

"We have not yet found the solutions to bridge our differences," von der Leyen said Friday at an EU summit in Brussels. "We will decide on Sunday whether we have the conditions for an agreement or not." Either way, she said, "in less than three weeks, it will be new beginnings for old friends."

Britain left the EU on January 31 but has continued to follow the bloc's rules during a transition period that lasts until the end of the year. Months of talks on a future trade deal have failed to bridge the gaps on three issues — fishing rights. — AP

OZ ENDS VACCINE
TRIAL DUE TO HIV
+VE ANTIBODIES

Melbourne, Dec. 11: Australia on Friday stopped the further development of a Covid-19 vaccine candidate as several participants in the early-stage trials generated antibodies for HIV after receiving the potential therapeutic.

There were no serious adverse events or safety concerns reported in the 216 participants of the phase 1 trial of the v451 Covid-19 vaccine candidate being developed by the University of Queensland (UQ) in collaboration with biotech company CSL, according to a statement. However, data showed that some patients developed antibodies towards fragments of a HIV protein (gp41), which was used to stabilise the vaccine, it said. — PTI



Joe Biden

BIDEN'S CABINET
GIVES DISTINCT
OBAMA FEEL

Washington, Dec. 11: President-elect Joe Biden is getting the old gang back together. Increasingly deep into the process of selecting Cabinet members and other senior staff, the incoming Biden administration has a distinctly Obama feel.

There's Denis McDonough, former President Barack Obama's chief of staff who Biden announced on Thursday would be nominated as the secretary of veterans affairs. Susan Rice, Obama's former national security adviser, was named the director of Biden's White House Domestic Policy Council.

That's on top of Biden already tapping Obama's agriculture secretary, Tom Vilsack, to head the department once again, former Secretary of State John Kerry to serve as special envoy on climate and Kerry's Obama-era deputy Antony Blinken to lead the State Department. Jeff Zients, who did stints as acting Office of Management and Budget director and a top economic adviser in the Obama White House, will return as Biden's Coronavirus response coordinator. — PTI

GSK, SANOFI SHOT
WON'T BE READY
UNTIL LATE 2021

London, Dec. 11: Drugmakers GlaxoSmith-Kline and Sanofi say their potential Covid-19 vaccine won't be ready until late next year as they seek to improve the shot's effectiveness in older people.

The companies said on Friday that early-stage trials showed the vaccine produced an "insufficient" immune response in older adults, demonstrating the need to refine the product so it protects people of all ages. They said they now expect the vaccine to be available in the fourth quarter of 2021.

GSK and Sanofi, based in London and Paris, respectively, said they were confident of the vaccine's ultimate success due to positive results from other tests. In adults 18 to 49, the vaccine produced an immune response comparable to patients who had recovered from Covid-19, the companies said.

In addition, they reported positive results from a "challenge study" in which non-human primates were intentionally exposed to the virus. "We have identified the path forward and remain confident and committed to bringing a safe and efficacious Covid-19 vaccine," Thomas Triomphe, head of Sanofi's vaccine unit, said. — AP

GREEN | REPORT

Estimated 2.4 billion-ton fall is larger than previous record

Carbon emission down 7% in Covid

Paris, Dec. 11: Carbon emissions fell a record seven percent in 2020 as countries imposed lockdowns and restrictions on movement during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Global Carbon Project said Friday in its annual assessment.

The fall of an estimated 2.4 billion tonnes is considerably larger than previous annual record declines, such as 0.9 billion tonnes at the end of World War II or 0.5 billion tonnes in 2009 at the height of the financial crisis.

The international team

of researchers behind the report said emissions from fossil fuels and industry would be around 34 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent this year — still a significant chunk of Earth's remaining "carbon budget".

Emissions reductions were most pronounced in the United States (down 12 percent) and the European Union (down 11 percent), the Global Carbon Project said.

In China, however, it said emissions would likely fall in 2020 just 1.7 percent as Beijing superpowered its

economic recovery. By sector, emissions from transport accounted for the largest share of the global decrease, with emissions from car journeys falling by roughly half at the peak of the first Covid-19 wave in April.

By December emissions from road transport had fallen 10 percent year-on-year and emissions from aviation were down 40 percent. Emissions from industry — 22 percent of the global total — were down 30 percent in some countries with the strongest lockdown measures. — AFP



Emissions from aviation fell some 40 percent in 2020, the research showed. — AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

12 DECEMBER 2020

Nadda stoning: All parties guilty of decorum breach

The attack on the motorcade of BJP president J.P. Nadda in the Diamond Harbour area near Kolkata on Thursday is disquieting. We know the culture of violence appears deeply embedded in West Bengal, ironic as this is for a part of the country to which the uplifting description “renaissance” is ascribed for the all-round effervescence seen here in the nineteenth century in conditions of colonial modernity. No political party operating in the state can claim to be free of guilt in this regard.

Even so, when politically mobilised hooligans, even at a symbolic level — as seems the case in the attack on Mr Nadda’s entourage — target the highest functionary of a political party, in this case the organisational head of the ruling party of the country, it is time for all concerned to reflect and get back to the drawing-board — for the sake of West Bengal and India. If not, political misfortune is apt to overtake us, no matter which party is in the saddle.

The BJP veteran Rajnath Singh, the defence minister and a former BJP chief, put the matter in a very sober way when he noted after the sorry incident, “Attack on political leaders is highly condemnable. The incident should be thoroughly probed and accountability should be fixed.”

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee can hardly be said to have covered herself with glory when she rhymed disparagingly on Mr Nadda’s name

This is the right way, but “nothing happened” to Mr Nadda’s convoy, tweeted the state police. It noted, “A few bystanders threw stones at vehicles trailing his convoy. Everyone is safe and the situation is peaceful,” adding that a probe was on. What are they probing if nothing happened and all is tranquil? At any rate, the police are charged with investigating a crime in neutral fashion, not pass judgments.

When the force has already passed a judgment, it is likely the probe will be designed to be a formality. The head of police ought to be asked questions about his organisation taking such a cavalier view of things in its social media interactions — and frankly, in its actions. It should have been proactive in clearing the route the BJP leader’s convoy was taking. If it pleads that it had not been told about it in advance, it is even worse. The local police ought to know. This is no one else’s business, Mr Nadda’s ‘Z plus’ security status notwithstanding.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee can hardly be said to have covered herself with glory when she rhymed disparagingly on Mr Nadda’s name. This is not “bhadralok” at all, and sits even worse on a CM’s tongue. “I have asked the police to find out all this,” she said in public remarks. But she ought to be ordering a magisterial inquiry.

The state is to have Assembly elections in a few months. If events of recent weeks are an indication, political violence may possibly rise. BJP is desperate to unseat Ms Banerjee’s Trinamul Congress. In the circumstances, it is necessary not to fan political passions. Union home minister Amit Shah tweeted soon after the tawdry incident, “The West Bengal government will have to answer for the state-sponsored violence.”

This is an observation laden with political partisanship, and because state polls are due soon it gives off the sense of President’s rule being imposed. The home minister ought to sound more sober and act with due responsibility.

A lone ranger departs

In the culture wars of yesteryear, his dance was totally lost on critics. Not considered Indian enough in the West, and Western enough in India, his zany moves failed to satisfy either the “diversity” or the “fashionableness” criteria. Then there were the traditionalists. Whenever he approached potential sponsors for money for his performances or projects, they invariably asked him, “What is modern dance?”

Astad Deboo kept on dancing, for 50 years, not just in India, but all over the world. His dance education was grounded in kathak, taken up at age six. His inspiration, on the other hand, had been a show by the American Murray Louis Dance Company, which he chanced to attend while pursuing a commerce degree in erstwhile Bombay. The adventurous Parsi boy left Mumbai in 1969 onboard a cargo boat and hitchhiked his way through Europe to reach New York in 1974.

In New York, Deboo enrolled at the famous Martha Graham dance academy, but dropped out. He then trained with Pina Bausch in Germany and, in 1977, returned to India and learned kathakali under E. Krishna Panicker, eventually evolving his own style that was minimalist and eloquent in equal measure. But it was not until 1986 that his breakthrough came in terms of peer recognition when Deboo was commissioned to choreograph for Maya Plisetskaya, the prima ballerina of Bolshoi Theatre. The versatile Deboo went on to collaborate with Bausch herself, theatre artiste Alison Becker Chase, rock band Pink Floyd, dhrupad singers the Gundecha brothers, even Manipur’s Thang-Ta martial artistes and Pungi cholom dancers. Accolades arrived late, in the form of a Sangeet Natak Akademi award in 1995 and a Padma Shri in 2007, and when they came were too little given his contributions. It would not be incorrect to comment that Deboo was among the few who changed Indians’ puritanical approach to music and dance. For a long time, he was the only one in his field of contemporary dance, a genre he single-handedly, or rather single-footedly, pioneered in India. He leaves behind a transforming legacy, and unreserved admiration in the hearts of his now-sizeable tribe of students, dance aficionados and followers.

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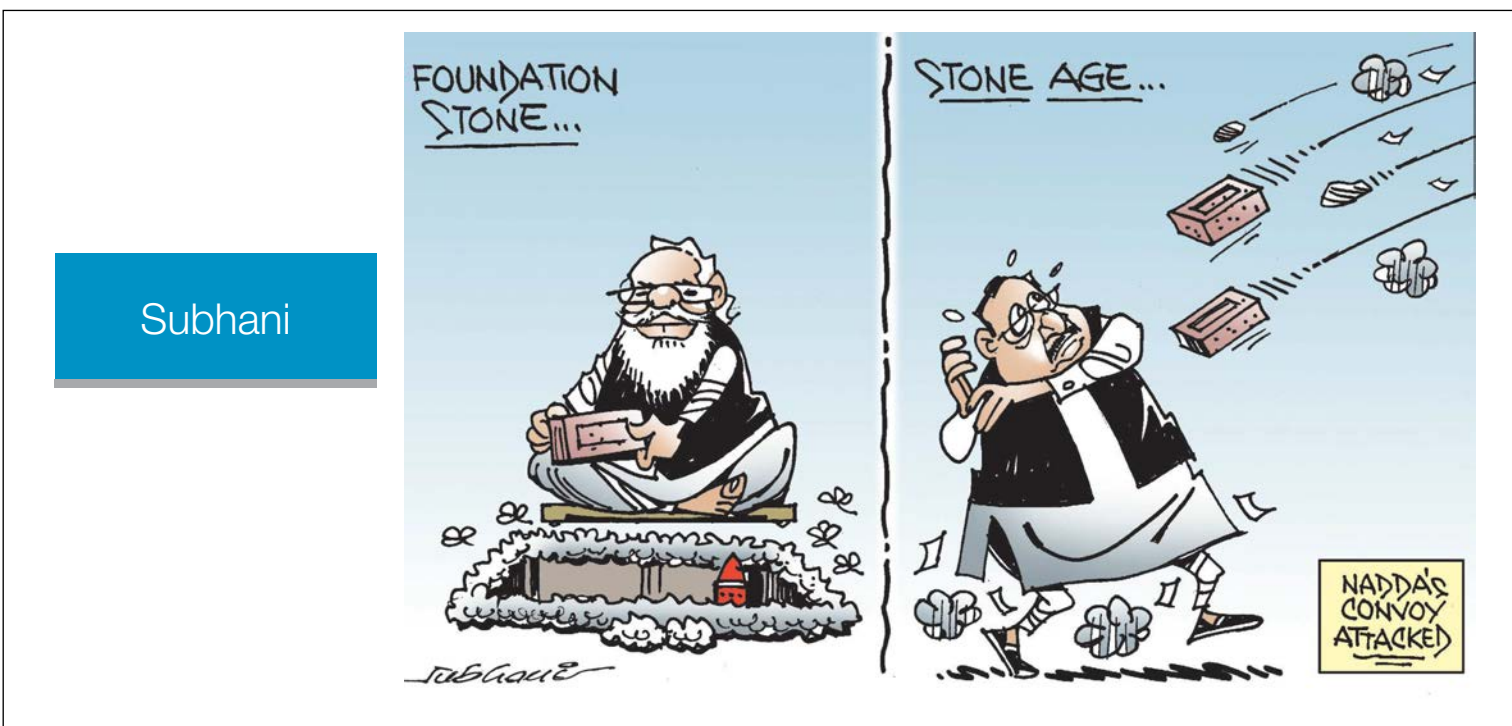
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V is for valour, victory... But V is also for vaccine!



Shobhaa De

There is a joke doing the rounds on the social media which goes something like this: “Meanwhile, in Ullhasnagar, everybody is waiting impatiently for the original Covid vaccine to be launched... They say that their duplicate has been ready for two months!” That joke says it all, and is such an accurate reflection of collective angst as one hears the “latest” vaccine-waley breakthroughs, with sombre experts weighing in with their considered opinion on the V-word. In Mumbai, it is as if Covid never happened, or at any rate, even if it did, the virus has miraculously vanished, and the party can begin. In drawing room discussions, the conversation flits from, “Are you going to take it?” to “I hear SRK went to Pune and has already taken it”. I am asked if I plan to take it, and I hesitate before replying... truth be told, I am still sitting on the fence. When I saw pictures of 90-year-olds getting jabbed, I turned cynical because I found it hard to understand why they would risk it at this stage of their lives. The Covid updates in the national dailies remain unread by me, and I switch off when prime time panel discussions breathlessly focus on “Who will win the vaccine race?” The point is, whichever pharmaceutical company wins that Covid Cup, it still won’t solve our problems here in India. But sure... shareholders who have invested in any of the big pharma players will be in a joyous mood over Christmas and New Year.

The off-site narratives of the vaccine story are most engaging. Kids and senior citizens, frontline

workers and others in privileged categories, are busy boasting about being one up on the rest. Getting a shot will soon become a social test — if you aren’t amongst the first to extend an arm for the jab — hey — poor you! The usual “janata class” jamboree will kick in, with folks who will try to jump the queue, bribe their way to “qualify”, forge certificates and documents, call up influential “contacts”, fake illness, do whatever it takes to stake a claim and brag about it. “I have taken the shot — and you haven’t? Arrey! You should have called me, na? I know somebody who would have arranged it for you — that too, at home. Why go and stand in a line like all the others?” Funny... our “line complex”! We hate being seen standing in an orderly line anywhere. If you have to line up, it means you are a nobody — that’s the thinking. I remember one of our most dazzling billionaire wives cribbing that she hated flying “commercial” because it involved lining up with the hoi polloi! She used to frequently berate her husband publicly for not getting her a private jet. “It is so humiliating to be seen at an airport standing with the public!” she would moan and groan. It didn’t matter that personalities in the league of Ratan Tata and Azim Premji not only fly commercial, but carry their own bags on board, with

My own state of denial has made me push Covid and the vaccine into the background. I am not convinced it is THE answer, no matter what the docs say.

Neither have I understood the booster shot logic or the reactions to it — headaches, body aches and other symptoms. It’s being described as ‘The Post-Vax effect’.

Azim preferring to fly economy class whenever possible — but that is his special brand of eccentricity. I suspect we will see a similar scramble for the vaccine, with India’s swish set flying off to get their shots in London rather than wait it out for their turn back home. “Apna Time Aayega” holds no appeal for most self-styled VIPs, who consider it infra dig to be told they need to line up like everybody else.

My own state of denial has made me push Covid and the vaccine into the background. I am not convinced it is THE answer, no matter what the docs say. Neither have I understood the booster shot logic or the reactions to the vaccine — the headaches, body aches and other symptoms. It’s being described as “The Post-Vax effect” and it isn’t sounding good — pain swelling, fever. “The vaccine works! Crow those whose faith is undiminished, even if the statistics aren’t in place right now to make such declarations about this particular vaccine. But when it is pointed out that America has crossed the 15 million coronavirus cases, and people are still dropping like flies there, the writing on the wall is ominous indeed. What can be said to reassure citizens? Canada has already picked its vaccine of choice (Pfizer-BioNTech), the same one approved by Bahrain and the United Kingdom. Approvals are being rushed by several other countries, after stating just how rigorously the testing process is being imposed. I dunno! Call me a sceptic — this unholy rush to “market” the vaccine seems more

driven by commerce than humanitarian compulsions. To think such a swathe of people across the globe will be at the mercy of agencies and governments! If your government decides — “This is the one” — then, that is the one! We will never know why this one was picked over that one. Who lobbied for it — who had the most to gain... Today, this one magic vaccine is going to determine the future of the world — and it will instantly become the single most potent factor when it comes to votes and elections. Its availability and efficacy will determine the fate of governments and political parties across the world. Citizens may never know why a certain pharma company was picked over rivals. Questions about decisions that will affect the health and well-being of our planet will be decided by politicians! The almost unlimited power of the virus over our lives has been established. Now comes the challenge of how we can tame the microbe, save ourselves and keep the faith. What if we discover a few years down the line that our governments have shortchanged us by withholding vital information. Or that our leaders sold our safety in order to stay in power. That the wrong pharma horse was backed? That a corrupt system bought a vaccine it knew full well would not work as promised and made guinea pigs out of us? We have given the mandate a bit too easily. Was there ever a choice?

Readers can send feedback to www.shobhaade.blogspot.com

What if we discover a few years down the line that our governments have shortchanged us by withholding vital information? That the wrong pharma horse was backed?

LETTERS

FARMERS’ STRIKE

Farmers’ unions have put the government on the mat for a straight answer to repeal the contentious laws and rejected talks. It is a deadlock with both sides sticking to their guns. The only solution seems to be judicial intervention from the apex court where several PILs (writ petitions) are pending against the three farm laws promulgated under dubious circumstances in contravention to laid down procedures in the Constitution.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

The farmers’ agitation which has been peaceful so far, may create law and order problems if trains are blocked. Hawkish elements among farmers want a confrontation. Once anti-social elements take over the peaceful agitation, it could escalate into a serious situation. It will be prudent for farmers to resume dialogue with the Centre and convince it about their genuine grievances.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

MYSTERY ILLNESS

Even though there has been some consolation due to decline in the number of mystery diseases, the authorities concerned need to take it seriously (*Mystery illness cases falling to 13, DC, Dec. 11*). A stitch in time saves nine.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

INEVITABLE CURSE

The people have got accustomed to dynastic rule in politics and celluroids. Over the years, politicians and leading actors took impeccable care to see that alternatives are not available. We hope this will not haunt our posterity.

D.S.P. Rao
Kakinada

IA pilots refuse to fly HS 748 aircraft

NEW DELHI, Dec. 11
Pilots of the Indian Airlines today stood firm in their resolve not to fly HS 748 aircraft.

After a secret meeting of Delhi-based pilots, one of their spokesman told UNI: “We will have no compromise with the safety of passengers. We have a conscience and cannot risk the lives of passengers.”

Myself? If I was president of the Cambridge Union and Osama bin Laden (Fish be Upon Him) was still alive, I’d send him an email asking him to speak about why Donald Trump — sorry, I mean America — is in his opinion The Great Satan. I’d perhaps invite Richard Dawkins or someone more militant to speak against him and let a thousand flowers (followers?) fight it out.

I shall not cease from mental strife... etc. — As we go to press, Cambridge announces that the Arif amendment and others were passed with a huge majority.

Should tolerators and repliers, supporters of all free speech, now be termed “Arifists”?

Farrukh Dhondy Of Cabbages & Kings



“What use the scorching summer That burns the buds of spring? And these intense obsessions That with them despair bring?”

What good the freezing winter In which viruses survive? Oh! take the seasons as they come It’s good to be alive!”

— From **Great Expectations** by Bachchoo

Why we need to ‘tolerate’ all those who have contrary views

Philosophy quibbles over words? If language is the avatar of thought, then ideas, propositions and proofs are the recipes in the avatar’s cookbook. No, not cardamom pods, but cinnamon sticks? Not “ambiguity” but “ambivalence”. “Generalisation” is the foundation of science, “generality” the enemy of it. And thus, we philosophers (*Kabh sey? Pack it in yaar!* — *Ed. Arrey kuchh tho pretension karney do sethji — fd*) purify the dialect of the tribe.

Long years ago, in my teenage in Pune, there was an establishment at one end of the cantonment’s Mahatma Gandhi Road called the Punjab Book Service. It had a display window in which were arranged books such as Bertrand Russell’s *History of Western*

Philosophy, Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, several literary hard-covered tomes and titles which made the Punjab Book Service (PBS) look like it was in any street in Oxford or Cambridge.

But those titles were not what the clientele wanted and were not the titles stocked in the body of this lending library. The front room had packed shelves of detective stories, Perry Mason courtroom sort of stuff and “Westerns”. There was a back room which you entered through a heavily beaded curtain, with shelves full of brown-paper-covered pamphlet-like books with titles such as *Confessions of a Russian Princess*, *Forget the Hocus Enjoy the Pokus* and *The Nun’s Delight*. All to be borrowed overnight or so for a few annas.

Gentle reader, I beg you to believe that I only became aware of these titles when my friend Dara Cama borrowed them. I never crossed the beaded curtain.

Then a fateful day Dara went to the showcase and brought Will Durant’s *Story of Philosophy* to “Punjabi”, as we called the proprietor, at the book-borrowing counter.

Punjabi stared at the hard-covered volume as though he had never seen it

before. There was a long pause because he couldn’t believe that anyone wanted to read the stuff that he used as decoy material for his chaaloo lending library. He looked up.

“Arrey vah Kyemah! Thoo flaaafy pudthai?”

And yes, it was the moment when I converted from addiction to Earl Stanley Gardner to “flaafy”. And then it was I came to appreciate, as perhaps Socrates did, that substituting one word for another changes the world.

This memory of such realisation came to me when in September of this plague year Cambridge University’s vice-chancellor issued a sort of fatwa on free speech demanding of the university staff and students that they “respect” all opinions. His bulletin was widely interpreted as the outlawing of any arguments or contentions which would offend any group. The fatwa was probably issued as a caveat to opponents or those who would argue against the “reality” or achievability of gender transformation. The call to “respect” the insinuations of “trans” people and their supporters was interpreted in some quarters as a ban on expressing any opposition to them. This could, if extended, apply to a ban on countering the arguments of anti-

vaccers, people who oppose vaccination.

A professor of philosophy at the university, Arif Ahmed, saw this fatwa as a mandated opposition to free speech. He proposed a simple amendment: substitute the word “tolerate” instead of the word “respect”. That would recognise the right to live with, but not agree with, opinions which seemed to you either ridiculous, contrary to scientific fact or unacceptable for some reason of faith, or otherwise.

Prof. Ahmed calls the vice-chancellor’s directive a policy and labels it as “academic McCarthyism”. The injunction to “respect” an opinion could merely mean to support the fact that it exists. But it could also mean to refrain from publicly contradicting it.

Prof. Ahmed began alone but soon signed up a fair number of academics and students to his amendment to the directive. He is certainly motivated by the acute opposition to the recent practice in British universities of banning (they call it “no-platforming”) people whose views they feel will offend one or another minority.

Prof. Ahmed sees that as an infringement of free speech within institutions which should be the champions of it and of vociferous arguments against

offending ones. He told London’s *Times* that there is the risk of “self-censorship”, that there are now views and opinions in British academia that dare not speak their name.

He goes controversially further, saying that it’s right for academics to engage with white nationalists or even Islamic fundamentalists and that people should be able to hear their, possibly toxic, reasoning, and “make up their own minds and criticise as disrespectfully as they want”.

Myself? If I was president of the Cambridge Union and Osama bin Laden (Fish be Upon Him) was still alive, I’d send him an email asking him to speak about why Donald Trump — sorry, I mean America — is in his opinion The Great Satan. I’d perhaps invite Richard Dawkins or someone more militant to speak against him and let a thousand flowers (followers?) fight it out.

I shall not cease from mental strife... etc. — As we go to press, Cambridge announces that the Arif amendment and others were passed with a huge majority.

Should tolerators and repliers, supporters of all free speech, now be termed “Arifists”?

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	46,099.01	0.30
Nifty 50	13,513.85	0.26
S&P 500*	3,639.00	-0.79
Dollar (₹)	73.64	0.03
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.75	0.35
Euro (₹)	89.31	-0.17
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,594*102	0.20
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	50.03	-0.22
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.956	0.040
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.883	-0.025

* As of 8:30 PM IST

US retailers urge shoppers to hurry before rush

Many retailers, including JC Penney, Lowe's and Kohl's, are telling shoppers they need to place their online orders soon or else pay expedited shipping fees if they want to get their packages delivered in time for the holidays. The early deadlines come as more people turn to online shopping this time, creating a logjam for shipping firms and delivery delays. For some retailers, like H&M and Lego, the deadlines have passed.

Gems & jewellery sector pares debt by 26% to \$7.7 bn



The gems & jewellery sector has cut its outstanding debt by 26 per cent to \$7.75 bn in 18 months. The industry has faced difficulties in securing credit in the wake of a few bank fraud cases, Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council chairman Colin Shah said. "The gross bank debt of India's gems and jewellery industry has reduced by a healthy rate of 26 per cent from \$10.44 bn in March 2019 to \$7.75 bn in October 2020."

Auto firms hit by semiconductor shortage

Auto components industry body Acma said it is still not clear about the extent of impact of a shortage of semiconductors on vehicle production in India, after supplier Bosch said it has been impacted severely by supply shortage for imported micro-processors. Acma president Deepak Jain said, "Any stoppage of vehicle lines has a resonating effect on the entire auto component manufacturing ecosystem."

Trust Group enters mutual fund business

Financial services provider Trust Group has announced their foray into mutual fund/asset management business under the brand name Trust Mutual Fund. The asset management company has appointed Sandeep Bagla as its chief executive officer and rating agency Crisil as knowledge partner. There will be periodic review by Crisil of the universe, portfolio and performance, Trust Group said.



■ Carlsberg, SABMiller, UB in the dock Beer cartel faces hefty CCI penalty

ADITYA KALRA
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

Top executives of Carlsberg, SABMiller and United Breweries (UB) exchanged commercially sensitive information and colluded to fix beer prices in India for over 11 years, according to a government antitrust investigation report seen by Reuters.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) in 2018 raided the offices of the three brewers and started an inquiry. The investigation's findings—which are not a final judgment of wrongdoing—cast a shadow on the brewers, which account for 88 per cent of the country's \$7 billion beer market.

Senior CCI members will consider the report, drafted in March, as they decide on fines, which could exceed \$250 million, two sources familiar with the case said. The CCI members could agree with or dispute the findings of its investigation team.

Executives' conversations, WhatsApp messages and e-mails contained in the report show the companies regularly and collectively strategised in seeking price increases in "several states", forging a cartel the CCI said gave them more bargaining power with state authorities.

The companies also used the All-India Brewers Association (Aiba) as a "common platform" to decide collectively on prices; and the local group then lobbied on the compa-



nies' behalf for price increases, the CCI report found.

At least thrice executives exchanged messages urging one another to keep their plans quiet, the report showed.

"We should avoid getting caught," Aiba's director general wrote in an e-mail in 2016 to executives of the three companies.

The brewers coordinated to "manipulate the government machinery" and "were well-aware that their collective approach through the association (Aiba) was violating" competition law, the 248-page CCI report said. The report concluded the cartel existed between 2007 and October 2018.

The CCI did not respond to Reuters queries. Aiba and Carlsberg declined to comment, citing ongoing CCI proceedings.

United Breweries, part-owned by Heineken, said it had cooperated with authorities and would make submissions to the CCI. Heineken didn't comment.

The world's largest brew-

er, Anheuser-Busch InBev, which acquired SABMiller in 2016, said it takes "antitrust compliance very seriously".

The CCI raids in 2018 seized hundreds of files and more than 2 terabytes of data from laptops, pen drives and smartphones.

The case was triggered when AB InBev used CCI's "leniency programme" to disclose that it had detected a cartel while integrating SABMiller's operations in India. Later in 2018, UB and Carlsberg also filed leniency applications.

Under the programme, the CCI can reduce the penalties it imposes on companies depending on the cooperation they provide. In this case, 19 beer executives engaged in anti-competitive practices, the report says.

"The collusion... has been mostly through the highest level of management in these companies," the report said, including managing directors, vice presidents, and sales and marketing heads.

— Reuters

UAE's Lulu Group to set up food unit in J&K

Dubai, Dec. 11: The UAE-based Lulu Group Inter-national plans to set up a food processing centre in Sri-nagar for sourcing agri products from Jammu and Kashmir.

The plan was revealed by Lulu Group chairman Yusufali M.A. on Thursday to a Jammu and Kashmir delegation led by principal secretary (agriculture production & horticulture) Navin Kumar Choudhary.

"As per the commitment made during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the UAE in 2019, Lulu Group is fully focused on sourcing a wide range of agri products from J&K," Yusufali said.

Currently, Lulu imports apples and saffron from Kashmir and imports will significantly increase in the coming years. The group imported more than 400 tonne of Kashmiri apples till date, according to an official statement.

Yusufali said the Lulu group is one of the leading importers of food and non-food products from India and setting up a new food processing and logistics centre will further boost export of Kashmiri products to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and other countries.

Choudhary welcomed the Lulu Group initiative to host a J&K special fortnight at its super markets across the Gulf region on the occasion of Republic Day-2021. —PTI

Industrial output rises 3.6% in October

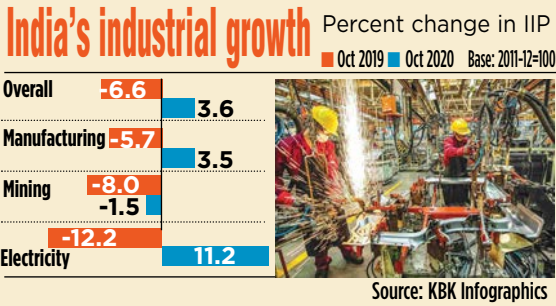
FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

With an upward growth in most sectors, especially manufacturing, electricity and consumer durables, the industrial output, or the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), for October registered 3.6 per cent growth, according to government data released on Friday.

This is the second consecutive month when IIP data remained in positive territory after six months of contraction. The IIP was up 0.5 per cent in September.

The manufacturing sector, which has a weightage of 77.6 per cent in the IIP, recorded a growth of 3.5 per cent in October.

In line with the Reserve



Bank of India's expectation, the October IIP number showed a sign of healing the economy. However, for the April-October period, industrial production contracted 17.5 per cent against 0.1 per cent growth in the year-ago period.

The October IIP growth was mostly driven by the electricity and manufac-

turing sector. The electricity sector grew 11.2 per cent, while the manufacturing sector jumped by 3.5 per cent year-on-year.

The output of capital goods—a barometer of investment—grew 3.3 per cent in October. There was a contraction of 22.4 per cent in the year-ago month.

Home prices fall 2.4% in India

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, DEC. 11

Home have become more affordable in the Indian market in the last one year, with prices dropping by 2.4 per cent. The demand for housing units have also gone up during the period.

Property consultants Knight Frank India says India has come down seven places in the Global House Price Index, as residential prices have dropped 2.4 per cent for the 12-month period and six-month period to September end. Prices were down 0.5 per cent for

the September quarter compared to June quarter. This led to India moving down to 54th place on the index in Q3 2020 against 47th rank in Q3 2019.

The demand for housing units jumped in India as well. Home sales volume jumped in top eight cities by 2.5 times to 33,403 units in Q3 2020 compared to 9,632 in Q2 2020. New residential unit launches increased by 4.5 times to 31,106 units in Q3 2020, compared to 5,584 units in the previous quarter.

Knight Frank said mainstream residential prices across 56 countries and territories worldwide saw

an average 4.5 per cent price correction in the September quarter. Around 16 per cent of the surveyed global countries and territories registered a decline in yearly price growth.

In Q3 2020, India, Ireland, Spain and Hong Kong witnessed the weakest price growth year-on-year.

Turkey led the index for the third consecutive quarter with annual price growth of 27 per cent. New Zealand with 15 per cent price rise jumped from 11th to second place between Q2 and Q3 as the country saw demand increase post-lockdown.

Hyundai buys 80% in robotics company Boston Dynamics

KYUNGHEE PARK
DEC. 11

Hyundai Motor Group agreed to buy a controlling stake in Boston Dynamics Inc in a deal that values the mobile robot firm at \$1.1 billion.

Hyundai Motor Group, along with some associated companies and chairman Euisun Chung, will acquire an 80 per cent interest in the US robotics company from SoftBank Group Corp, leaving the Japanese firm with a 20 per cent share, the companies said in a statement on Friday.

Hyundai Motor Group has been beefing up its research in robotics as it expands further into electric and autonomous vehicles. Carmaker Hyundai Motor Co plans to spend over 60 trillion won (\$55 billion) in the next five years in these areas to become one of the world's leading auto manufacturers. The broader empire is also exploring practical uses for industrial robots. "The combination of the highly complementary technologies of Hyundai



Motor Group and Boston Dynamics, and the continued partnership of SoftBank, will propel development and commercialisation of advanced robots," the companies said, helping to create a "robotics value chain ranging from robot component manufacturing to smart logistics solutions."

Other Hyundai entities that will participate include auto-parts maker Hyundai Mobis Co and Hyundai Glovis Co, which provides international and domestic logistics services. Along with Hyundai Motor the trio will spend around 717 billion won, with Hyundai Motor taking 30 per cent, Mobis 20 per cent and Glovis 10 per cent. The transaction is expected to close by June.

—Bloomberg

PSU stocks gain on sectoral rotation

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, DEC. 11

The Union government's divestment plan has got a boost from a bullish equity market. PSU stocks on Friday rallied to catch up with the rest of the market as investors resorted to sectoral rotation.

As the Sensex made a new all-time high of 46,309.63 on Friday, the main contribution came from the BSE CPSE Index, which gained 2.25 per cent

and the BSE PSU Index, which gained 1.89 per cent. PSU banks also gained.

IRCTC's offer for sale got a good response, with the OFS getting subscribed 2.28 times. Government has got over Rs 4,374.4 crore from the IRCTC divestment at the floor price of Rs 1,367 per share.

"Market mood remains positive with sectoral rotation. Expect 13,000 to act as major support for the Nifty-50 in the near future with 14,000 as the next hur-

dle," said Ruskim Oza, head of fundamental research, Kotak Securities.

Top gainers on the BSE included ONGC (5.68 per cent), NTPC (5.30 per cent), GAIL (4.92 per cent), Punjab National Bank (5.61 per cent), NBCC (5.33 per cent), MMTC (4.26 per cent) and SAIL (3.59 per cent). Other PSU gainers were Coal India (2.52 per cent), PFC (2.45 per cent), NMDC (2.83 per cent) and OIL (4.48 per cent).

Petroleum to boost central tax kitty by 25%

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, DEC. 11

Petroleum taxes' share in central government tax revenues is likely to touch 25 per cent in FY21. However, with higher oil prices feeding into inflation, a likely rebound in global oil prices could push inflation up further.

In FY15, the share of petroleum taxes in the central tax revenues stood at 12.2 per cent and this has doubled to 25 per cent as of FY21. In absolute terms, the petroleum tax

revenues have almost tripled from Rs 1.26 lakh crore to Rs 4.5 lakh crore during the period, finds Barclays.

The state government taxes on petroleum products too have moved up during the period, but at a slower pace. In FY15, state governments collected Rs 1.37 lakh crore as petroleum tax revenues and this has moved up to Rs 2.1 lakh crore as of FY21. Till FY15, both the taxes have been moving in tandem.

Taxes now account for 60 per cent of the pump price

versus 35 per cent in 2014. Now that the crude prices have started rebounding, the fuel prices will further exert pressure on inflation.

"We estimate that a \$10 per barrel increase in the price of crude oil to \$55 per barrel will increase Indian fuel prices by Rs 5.8 per litre at the pump. This would add 34 basis points to headline inflation over three to six months, assuming no change to petroleum taxes," said Rahul Bajaria, chief India economist, Barclays.

STREAMING | STRENGTH

Firm expects 350 million subscribers worldwide by 2024

Disney+ to get flood of new shows

CHRISTOPHER PALMERI
DEC. 11

Walt Disney Co issued a bold forecast for its new streaming services, projecting a Netflix-like trajectory that could bring the company as many as 350 million subscribers worldwide by 2024 thanks to an onslaught of programming from Marvel, Star Wars and Pixar.

In a presentation to investors on Thursday, the world's largest entertainment company outlined plans for dozens of new movies and TV shows from those major brands, with an eye toward becoming a streaming behemoth in four years. The company expects its programme spending to reach \$14 bil-

lion to \$16 billion annually by then.

Disney+, the entertainment giant's flagship streaming platform, also is getting a price hike. The US monthly rate will climb by \$1 to \$8 in a move that executives telegraphed earlier this year. In Europe, the price will rise 29 per cent to 9 euros (\$11) a month, although there it is getting additional content aimed at adults.

"The enormous success of Disney+ inspired us to be even more ambitious," executive chairman Bob Iger said at the event. "Our pipeline is much more robust than we initially anticipated," he said, adding that the Disney+ cadence should soon hit 100 new titles per year.



Disney, like other Hollywood studios, is reorienting its film and TV business toward home entertainment, and has leapfrogged many competitors with its fast subscriber growth. Yet with its new subscriber goals—including hopes for as many as 260 million

Disney+ customers—the company would surpass where industry pioneer Netflix Inc is today.

Shares of Disney rose as much as 4.7 per cent to \$162 in extended trading. The has about doubled since March on the strength of the streaming business.

As part of the presentation, CEO Bob Chapek said Disney+ has soared past 86.8 million subscribers in a little over a year. The company closed the last quarter with almost 74 million.

Disney executives outlined aggressive plans to stock the Disney+ service with new programming to keep the subscriber pipeline growing over the next few years.

Future plans include 10

series from the Marvel division, 10 Star Wars TV series, and another 15 programs from Disney live action, Disney animation and Pixar.

The programming slate also includes feature-length films, such as the Disney animation picture "Raya and the Last Dragon," which will debut on Disney+—at any extra charge—the same time as in theaters.

Chapek said that 80 per cent of projects are now headed to streaming, rather than the big screen. But the company's biggest films will be saved for theaters exclusively at first. That includes movies such as "Black Widow," a Marvel film slated for May.

— Bloomberg

Car wholesales increase 9% in November



MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, DEC. 11

The passenger vehicles sales to dealers by car makers jumped 9 per cent in November after demand continued to stay strong even after the Diwali festival, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers or Siam said on Friday.

Car and SUV sales in the country rose to 2,86,529 units (2,64,898 units + 21,641 units of Tata Motors) as against 2,63,539 units (253,139 units + 10,400 units of Tata Motors). Tata Motors shares data to the Siam only on a quarterly basis but releases the same to the stock exchanges.

Auto experts said new model launches such as Kia Sonet, Hyundai i20, Tata Altroz and Mahindra Thar off-roader boosted volumes last month.

After a fall in October, retail sales of cars and SUVs swung back in the green, registering their best-ever numbers for November; the latest data from Siam showed.

"We have witnessed an increase in wholesale numbers in November primarily on account of the festive season," Rajesh Menon, director general at Siam said.

While the festive season brought back some fervour in specific segments, the overall economic scenario would determine the industry's performance going forward, he said.

Retail demand, as per carmakers, is expected to stay strong in December too which would translate to high wholesale volumes.

The two-wheeler industry saw an increase of 13 per cent during November to 1.6 million units as against 1.41 million units clocked in the same month last year.

SHORT TAKES

Verstappen is at maximum speed

Yas Island (Abu Dhabi): Max Verstappen posted the fastest time Friday in the first practice for the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. The Red Bull driver was 0.34 seconds ahead of Mercedes rival Valtteri Bottas and 1.14 seconds quicker than Renault driver Esteban Ocon. Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton returned for Mercedes after recovering from the coronavirus and had the fifth fastest time. He struggled early in the session with a brake sensor issue which needed fixing in the team garage. A second practice will be held later Friday at the Yas Marina circuit. — AP

Joshua, Pulev on the boil at weigh-in

London: Anthony Joshua warned Kubrat Pulev he faces “the real one” in Saturday’s world heavyweight title bout in London as the pair almost came to blows at the weigh-in. Former Olympic champion Joshua defends his IBF, WBA and WBO belts at Wembley Arena against the veteran Bulgarian in front of 1,000 fans due to coronavirus restrictions. The two men have been scheduled to fight twice before but both times the bout was postponed — in 2017 Pulev was injured and Covid-19 put paid to a planned fight in June. But the 39-year-old, nicknamed “The Cobra”, boasts an impressive 28-1 record — his only defeat came in a world title fight against Wladimir Klitschko in 2014. “Many years I’ve been in boxing and seen a lot of fighters talk a lot of rubbish, then they get smacked up,” Joshua told *Sky Sports*. — APF

Tennis great Alex dies at 84

Santa Monica, USA: Alex Olmedo, who won the Wimbledon and Australian Championships singles titles in 1959 and was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1987, has died. He was 84. Citing Olmedo’s son, Alejandro Jr., the Hall of Fame said Thursday that Olmedo died of brain cancer on Wednesday. Alejandro Alex Olmedo was born in Peru in 1936 and moved to the United States as a teenager. He went to the University of Southern California, where he won NCAA tennis championships in singles and doubles in both 1956 and 1958. Olmedo played in the Davis Cup for the United States and led the team to the trophy in 1958, when he also paired with Ham Richardson to win the doubles title at the U.S. National Championships, the tournament now known as the U.S. Open. — AP

Hyderabad hold Mohun Bagan 1-1

Margao: Hyderabad FC rode on Joao Victor’s second half penalty to hold ATK Mohun Bagan to a 1-1 draw, maintaining their unbeaten run in the Indian Super League, here on Friday. The duo of Roy Krishna and Manvir Singh looked threatening up front but missed a flurry of chances, while veteran Subrata Pal pulled off some fine saves under the Hyderabad post to keep a clean score-sheet in the first-half. Manvir finally broke the deadlock in the 54th minute capitalising on a defensive lapse by Odei Onandia. But the Mariners’ joy lasted just over 10 minutes as they conceded a soft penalty after Nikhil Poojary was brought down by Manvir with a faint touch. — PTI

Live on TV

CRICKET
Australia ‘A’ vs India: Day 2 from 9 am on Sony Six, HD
Big Bash League: Melbourne Stars vs Sydney Thunder from 10.35 am; Melbourne Renegades vs Perth Scorchers from 1.45 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

FOOTBALL
English Premier League: Wolverhampton vs Aston Villa from 6 pm; Newcastle vs West Brom from 8.30 pm; **Manchester United vs Manchester City** from 11 pm; Everton vs Chelsea from 1.30 am (Sunday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

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Hitman is fit, set for Tests

Rohit clears fitness test at NCA, to leave for Australia on Dec. 14

New Delhi, Dec. 11: Senior India batsman Rohit Sharma on Friday cleared an eagerly-watched fitness test at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru and will leave for Australia on December 14, three days before the start of the marquee Test series against the world’s number one team.

Rohit had sustained a hamstring injury during the IPL, which led to him missing the white-ball leg of the ongoing tour. He is also out of reckoning for the first two Tests but can now be there for the last two games. “Rohit has cleared the

fitness Test and will soon be flying out to Australia,” a senior BCCI official said on conditions of anonymity.

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

As per the Australian government’s rules, the star batsman will have to undergo a mandatory 14 days of hard quarantine before being able to train for the last two Tests in Sydney (January 7 to 11) and Brisbane (January 15 to 19). He is flying straight to



Rohit Sharma

Sydney and will get a week’s training there.

There had been confusion around Rohit’s status over the past few weeks. Captain Virat Kohli spoke about a lack of clarity on

the issue that has been full of intrigue ever since he injured his left hamstring during a league match while playing for Mumbai Indians in the IPL.

The injury, which forced him out of four IPL games, prompted the national selectors to not consider him for the Australian tour.

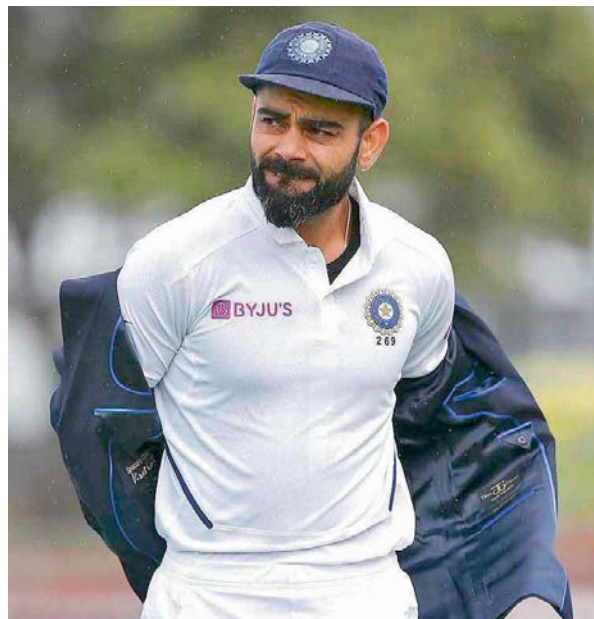
Omitted from the squad for the much-anticipated tour, he soon returned to lead his franchise in the remainder of the lucrative league, adding to the curiosity.

On November 9, the BCCI provided an update on his status, saying the

selectors had kept Rohit out of only the limited-overs leg for him to “regain full fitness” for the Test series.

But the white-ball vice-captain came to Mumbai instead of travelling straight to Australia with his national teammates after leading Indians to IPL title triumph in the UAE.

The BCCI then issued another press release on November 26, a day after Kohli claimed he did not know why Rohit had not done his rehab in Australia, stating that the reason behind the opener coming back to India was his father’s illness. — PTI



Indian cricket team captain Virat Kohli in this file photo.

Virat, Indian with Aussie trait: Greg

Adelaide, Dec. 11: Batting great and former India coach Greg Chappell has called Virat Kohli the “most Australian non-Australian” cricketer of all time and thanked the sport’s “most important” figure for championing the cause of the Test format with his “all-out aggression”.

Chappell invoked Mahatma Gandhi before crediting Kohli’s intensity for bringing about a paradigm shift in Indian cricket. “Many previous Indian cricket teams tended to play with undue deference to their opponents, as if in accord with the Gandhian principle. Sourav Ganguly was the first Indian captain to try to change that approach. It worked to a degree in India, but usually hit a hurdle overseas,” Chappell wrote in *Sydney Morning Herald*.

“Virat Kohli does not believe in passive resistance. He is a proponent of all-out aggression. His idea is to dominate the opposition. Kohli is the most Australian non-Australian

cricketer of all time. He embodies the new India. As the premier player and captain of the world’s pre-eminent cricket power, he feels an abiding responsibility to the wider game,” he added.

“The fact that Kohli champions Test cricket is a huge plus for a format under pressure for time and space in a crowded schedule,” Chappell said.

“Test cricket has always been the pinnacle for him and it has driven him to be fitter and stronger to cope with its demands. It is why he drives his team in these areas because he wants India to be respected in the most demanding format.

“If the captain of India is ambivalent towards Test cricket, some administrators would be happy for it to slide into ignominy, as they are seduced by the newer, shinier models,” he said.

On Kohli’s standing in world cricket, Chappell said the batting maestro is aware of that but not obsessed with it.

— PTI

Bumrah blasts maiden 50 in India’s warm-up match

Sydney, Dec. 11: Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah headlined the opening day’s play with a maiden first-class fifty and then chipped in with a couple of wickets in an impressive bowling effort putting India in the driver’s seat against Australia in the pink ball warm-up game on Friday.

With his unbeaten 55 off 57 balls, Bumrah was the top-scorer for the visitors, who folded for a disappointing 194 in 48.3 overs at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

The Indians however came back strongly with the ball to bundle out Australia ‘A’ for 108 at stumps as 20 wickets fell on a curtailed when almost an hour was lost due to heavy rain.

India’s pace attack did well to intimidate Australian youngsters with short-pitched stuff



Jasprit Bumrah in action during India’s warm-up match against Australia ‘A’.

— TWITTER

as Mohammed Shami and Navdeep Saini got three wickets apiece.

On a day when the recognised batsmen struggled to put runs on the board, Bumrah, who came into the game with a Test batting average of 2.9, produced a stellar performance with the willow,

smashing the ball six times to the fence and twice over it. He reached his half-century in style, hooking a bouncer by all-rounder Will Sutherland for a huge six over the deep square-leg fence.

Earlier, after skipper Ajinkya Rahane opted to bat, Prithvi Shaw (40) and Shubman Gill (43) showed enough glimpses of why they are rated so highly by almost everyone in the Indian cricket fraternity.

However, the rest of the teammates including the seasoned Rahane, failed to impress on the first day of their final tune-up before the start of the four-match Test series beginning December 17.

— PTI
Brief scores: Day 1, India ‘A’ 194 in 48.3 overs (Shubman Gill 43, Bumrah not out 55; Wildermuth 3/13) vs Australia ‘A’ 108 in 32.2 overs (Alex Carey 32; Md Shami 3/29, Navdeep Saini 3/19, Bumrah 2/33).



A shot of the Diego Armando Maradona Stadium in Naples, Italy, before the start of Napoli’s Europa League match against Real Sociedad on Thursday. — AP

Napoli play 1st match at Maradona stadium

Naples (Italy), Dec. 11: Napoli kicked off a new era, playing the first game in their stadium since it was renamed in honour of club legend Diego Maradona.

The match at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona was a Europa League clash against Spanish club Real Sociedad which ended in a 1-1 draw.

Argentina football great and former Napoli star Maradona died two weeks ago aged 60. He led the club to their only league titles in 1987 and 1990 and the UEFA Cup in 1989.

“Being here, inside the Diego Armando Maradona stadium, is a great honour,” Napoli sporting director Cristiano Giuntoli said before kick-off.

A minute’s silence was also held before the game in memory of Italy 1982 World Cup winner Paolo Rossi who died early Thursday aged 64 years. Rossi inspired Italy in the 1982 tournament in Spain where he was the top scorer with six goals, including a hat-trick in the 3-2 defeat of Brazil. He also scored twice against Poland in the semifinals and the opening goal in the 3-1

win over West Germany in the final.

“Paolo Rossi was a great point of reference for me,” said Giuntoli.

City authorities and the club’s president had proposed renaming the San Paolo Stadium with-in hours of Maradona’s death. Napoli have already paid homage to Maradona, who played for the club from 1984 to 1991, in two home games.

The players wore his number ten for a minute’s silence in a Europa League game the day after the legendary Maradona’s death. — AFP

Leaps and bounds



A Croatian player goes for goal during the match against Romania at the European Women’s Handball Championship played at the Sydbank Arena in Kolding, Denmark. Croatia came from behind to beat Romania 25-20 in the first match of the second phase to confirm their place at the top of Group II with 6 points. In the second half, Croatia managed to hold their lead and win by five goals to record their fourth win in a row. Valentina Blazevic was Croatia’s top scorer with 7 goals. In other matches, Russia defeated Montenegro 24-23; France sneaked past Spain 26-25 and Norway nailed Netherlands 32-25.

NICHOLLS PEPS UP KIWIS WITH FINE CENTURY

Wellington, Dec. 11: New Zealand’s Henry Nicholls rode his luck to post a crucial century as the hosts, weakened by the loss of Kane Williamson, survived a shaky start to reach 294 for six on day one of the second Test against the West Indies on Friday.

Nicholls snapped a 21-month string of low scores with his sixth Test century. At stumps, he was 117 not out. From being on the ropes at 78 for 3, Nicholls said New Zealand now considered 400 would be “a good result”.

— AFP
Brief scores (Day 1): New Zealand 294/6 in 84 overs (Henry Nicholls not out 117, Shannon Gabriel 3/57) vs West Indies.

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