

**NELLORE | SUNDAY | 27 DECEMBER 2020**



**Forecast:** clear  
Max/Mir  
temp. 29/21 °C

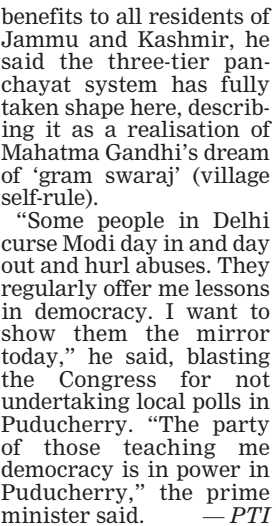
## Bumrah, Ashwin bowl Australia out for 195

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

Vol. 18 No. 171 Established 1938 | 8 pages | ₹6.00

\_\_\_\_\_

■ Report on Page 4



On the auspicious occasion of Vaikunta Dwadasi, Chakrasnanam was performed in Ekantam to Sri Sudarshana Chakrattalwar in the sacred waters of Swamy Pushkarini in Tirumala on Saturday.  
— BY ARRANGEMENT

■ **Page 2: Section of Tollywood cautious**

Praveen Adithya said all village secretaries, Velupillai Prabhakaran's personnel, ward, and village volunteers, apart from others, will carry out large-scale campaigns about the impending ban on plastics up to the end of December 2020. All plastic packaging will be seized from January 1, 2021 onwards.

He said, "All separatist groups have slowly left the violence and joined the mainstream. Bodo youths who used to carry guns are now joining the mainstream. Recently conducted polls saw 80 per cent voting without violence—this pair of BJP leaders—Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and minister Himanta Biswa Sharma has crossed several hurdles in the story of Assam's progress. People of Assam will give the mandate to BJP in 2021."



Shah further said, "BJP believes that India cannot

arts." In an obvious reference to the Congress government, Shah said that there was a period of movements in Assam when many agitations were launched over different issues in which hundreds of youths were killed.

The peace of Assam was disturbed and the develop

home minister Amit Shah and Union Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Shekhawat and requested them to accept the revised cost estimate to enable completion of the project so as to extend its benefits to all the targeted people and the farmers. He appealed for acceptance of revised cost estimate-2 at ₹5,656 crore at 2017-18 price level.

■ Page 2: YSRC managed to persuade Centre on costs

“The Covid infections have come down, We hope to see that there won't be any spike as testing and tracing has been continuously taken up in the district, he said.

Once the UK drug regulator gives its approval to the Oxford vaccine, the expert committee on Covid-19 at the CDSCO will hold its meeting and thoroughly review the safety and immunogenicity data from the clinical evaluations conducted abroad and in India before granting any emergency authorisation for the vaccine here, official sources said.

The process of granting emergency use approval for Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 vaccine 'Covaxin' may take time as its phase 3 trials are still underway, while Pfizer is yet to make a presentation.

“Going by this, Oxford vaccine ‘Covishield’ is likely to be the first to be rolled out in India,” a source said. Serum Institute of India last week also had submitted some additional data required by the DCGI, the sources said. Amid fears about the mutated variant of SARS-CoV-2 detected in the UK, government officials recently said that it will have no impact on the potential of emerging vaccines that are being developed in India and other countries. Bharat Biotech, SI and Pfizer had applied to the DCGI seeking emergency use authorisation for their Covid vaccines early in December.

—  $PT$ .

No need to panic,  
It's safe!

## BJP to push for 1 nation, 1 poll

Party sources said its senior leaders, besides members of academia and legal fraternity, will be attending these 'webinars', seminars that are held online. "We plan to hold 25 webinars by the end of this month," a party leader said.

**Bhopal:** Madhya Pradesh Cabinet on Saturday cleared the Dharma Swatantrata (Religious Freedom) Bill, 2020, known in political parlance as 'Love Jihad' bill. The draft bill, which may see its 3-day winter session commencing on December 28, provides a maximum of 0 years imprisonment and ₹1 lakh fine for the perpetrators of forced religious conversion of a girl for marriage. The new bill has provision of declaring such a marriage null and void. The Bill puts onus on the accused against those associated with them accused including organisations and institutions, to prove their innocence.

■ **Report on Page 4**



## SHORT TAKES

APFDC WISHES  
EARLY RECOVERY  
OF RAJINIKANTHDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 26

AP Film Development Corporation chairman T. Vijay Chandar wished early recovery of actor-politician Rajinikanth who is undergoing treatment at Apollo hospital for severe fluctuations in blood pressure.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, the APFDC chairman said that he was praying to the God to help the actor get speedy recovery from his health problem and added that the actor's services were indispensable to the society by entering into the politics.

DEVOTEES WHO  
PAID ₹11,000  
GET RAW DEALDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, DEC. 26

Devotees who bought tickets under Sri Vani Trust scheme by paying ₹11,000 for special darshan on the occasion of Vaikunta Ekadasi criticised TTD for sending them in the ₹300 queue and offering only Laghu darshan on Saturday at Tirumala.

They alleged that TTD staff handled women and children roughly when they questioned the rationale behind providing darshan from Bangaruvakili instead of allowing them into the sanctum sanctorum.

Police officials spoke to the women devotees who complained against staff outside the temple while assuring to take action against the staff responsible for high-handed behaviour with them.

Meanwhile, Rayalaseema Porata Samiti leader Naveen Kumar Reddy criticised the TTD for the ordeals of devotees holding Sri Vani Trust ticket after paying ₹11,000 per head for darshan on Vaikunta Ekadasi day.

He demanded to know the number of tickets issued for special darshan and also explanation for increasing the ₹300 darshan ticket to ₹1,000.

Meanwhile, TTD authorities in a release said that they have printed about laghu darshanam for devotees who bought tickets under Sri Vani trust scheme. However, some devotees demanded regular darshan inside the temple after reaching Bangaru Vakili. They have blocked the way for devotees waiting for darshan.

SC NOTICE TO  
CONVICT FOR  
MISLEADING ITDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 26

Supreme Court has served show-cause notice to a convict for misleading it by submitting a wrong copy of the trial court's verdict to escape jail term.

S. Sankar was convicted on December 31, 2000, along with others, on charges of graft and other offences, including criminal breach of trust and conspiracy. Special judge for CBI cases, Hyderabad, awarded him a sentence of one-year jail term and imposed a fine of ₹1,000 for criminal breach of trust under provisions of IPC and Prevention of Corruption Act.

However, Sankar, accused number 5 in the case, moved AP High Court challenging the sentence awarded by the trial court. However, the HC upheld the sentence awarded by the trial court.

Sankar then moved Supreme Court claiming that AP High Court had wrongly construed the operative portion of sentence passed by the trial court. He went on to claim that he was only sentenced to pay a fine of ₹500 each on each count, apart from undergoing one month simple imprisonment in case of failure to pay the fine.

Accordingly, the SC, in its verdict delivered on July 23, 2019, allowed Sankar to walk free in the graft case on payment of ₹1,000 as fine.

Subsequently, the Supreme Court secretary general held an inquiry and submitted a report that the convict had misled the court to avoid the jail term.

Following this, an SC division bench comprising justices Surya Kant and Aniruddha Bose issued an order to serve a show-cause notice to appellant Sankar as to why the earlier order of the court not be recalled and modified to initiate a further suitable action against him.

Sankar's advocate on-record A. Venkateswara Rao accepted the show-cause notice on behalf of Sankar, who has been granted four weeks' time to respond.



Beneficiaries of the housing scheme gathering at Gandhiji Mahila Kalasala for receiving house pattas at One Town in Vijayawada on Saturday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

Housing to create jobs,  
boost economy: Dokka

Distribution of 31 lakh of houses will lead to growth of state's GDP: MLC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 26

YSR Congress MLC Dokka Manikya Varaprasad Rao has stated that distribution of house sites and construction of houses is not just a welfare scheme but would generate revenues for the state, apart from providing employment to people.

Specifically, he claimed, distribution of house sites to 30 lakh women will lead to employment of people with 30 types of skills, apart from unskilled persons, in all 13 districts of the state.

Speaking to media here on Saturday, the MLC flayed opposition TD for creating hurdles in house sites distribution and construction scheme by moving courts. He asked opposition party leaders to withdraw cases they have filed if they have any concern for poor. He maintained that housing for poor is a brainchild of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan

Lokesh: CM telling lies on  
demographic imbalanceDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 26

Telugu Desam national general secretary N. Lokesh has criticised Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for "deliberately misinterpreting" demographic imbalance as caste imbalance with the ulterior motive to derive undue political advantage. He said that the Chief Minister was telling all lies only to rake up caste feelings and thereby divert the people's

attention from the pressing issues and problems in the state. He claimed that Jagan Reddy fully aware that demographic imbalance had nothing to do with caste but yet he was resorting to cheap political gimmicks with utter disregard for decorum and decency.

Mr Lokesh said that it was because of his non-stop lying that Jagan Reddy was called a fake CM. He claimed that no section of society in Andhra Pradesh was now

ready to trust the Chief Minister's words and statements considering his dubious track record in just 19 months of his misrule. He further claimed that the real caste imbalance took place in the present regime as it was discriminating against the weaker sections in nominated posts and works.

Mr Lokesh said that over 850 posts at the government and corporations' top levels were given to only one caste.

next to agriculture, majority of employment comes from the housing sector. He underlined that while the state government wanted to provide houses for 54,000 poor families in

While the state government wanted to provide houses for 54,000 poor families in Amaravati region, TD leaders approached the High Court

Amaravati region, TD leaders approached the High Court on grounds that it would lead to demographic imbalance. He wondered whether such an objection is a democratic act or another cheap political stunt.

The MLC said that TD is now blocking provision of housing for poor after abandoning them during its own regime. He pointed that all commercial sectors have been facing a slump due to Covid crisis across the country. As such, it is a great thing that Jagan Mohan Reddy government is taking up a massive housing programme to generate economic activity on a large scale.

## Covid-19 vaccination trial tomorrow

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 26

Andhra Pradesh will conduct a trial run of Covid-19 vaccination programme to find out the preparedness of the health personnel roped in for the programme in Krishna district on Monday.

State health and family welfare commissioner K. Bhaskar said here on Saturday that as the Centre had selected Andhra Pradesh along with four other states for conducting a dry run of

The Centre had selected Andhra Pradesh along with four other states for conducting a dry run of the vaccination programme

the vaccination programme, they were making all arrangements for taking it up.

Accordingly, the state health authorities will be using a software application called "Co-WIN" to take up the trial run for all identified beneficiaries to check on the preparedness. No person will be administered the vaccine

during the run as it was meant to be a mock drill. Health authorities maintain that they are coming up with an action plan to take up the vaccination programme in compliance with the guidelines issued for it. The authorities will arrange the requisite amenities for the programme. The action plan also includes arranging amenities for storage of the vaccine and mobilisation of personnel for taking up the programme, and to come up with plans at the state, district and block level.

In Krishna district, the mock drill will be held at five centres, including government general hospital, primary health centre at Uppuluri, Purna Heart Institute, the primary health centre at Penagalur and at the urban primary health centre at Prakash Nagar.

As part of preparatory work, the state health authorities will identify health personnel for taking up the programme and upload their names in the Co-WIN app. A special team will handle any untoward incidents.

FACING COVID CHALLENGE 1.15 crore tests were conducted, covering nearly 20% of population

## State makes rapid strides in health infrastructure

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 26

The year 2020 threw a lot of challenges to the State government, more specifically the Covid-19 pandemic, which the administration not only contained well but also strengthened the medical and health sector. Further, the government increased the extent of YSR Arogyasri scheme by incorporating many more diseases under its cover.

The State, led by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, made rapid strides in developing infrastructure and facilities in controlling the pan-

demic by widening the network and pressing into service the village secretariat system and closely monitoring the situation almost on a daily basis. It stood first in the number of tests per million in the country and its recovery rate was higher and mortality rate lower than that of the national average. Labs were established in a record time. 'Trace, Test and Treat' was the policy followed and ANMs, village and ward volunteers along with sanitation workers and medical personnel did a commendable job in containing the pandemic.

A household survey was

AP stood first in the number of tests per million in the country and its recovery rate was higher and mortality rate lower than that of the national average.

taken up by volunteers on each and every demanding situation and adequate medical staff were recruited for Covid centres.

The data, as on Friday, shows that about 1.15 crore tests were conducted, covering nearly 20 per cent of the population standing first in the country. About 8.80 lakh were infected with an average positivity rate of 7.64 per cent, the

death rate logged was 0.81 per cent, which is considerably lower than the national average.

An effective control system was put in place by developing testing facilities, setting up of Covid care centres, and establishing a structured network right from 104 toll-free number to telemedicine. The number of virology labs went up to 150 when there was not even one before. The State has followed a decentralised model of sample collection centres and about 1,519 facilities acted as sample collection centres ranging from teaching hospitals to primary health centres

Section of Tollywood  
cautious over Covid

FROM PAGE 1

K.L. Damodar Prasad, film-maker and Telugu Film Chamber secretary, said, "As people have started visiting the theatres in large numbers to watch films, we appeal to the Centre to allow viewers to full capacity in the theatres to help the industry to recover quickly from huge financial loss. We also appeal to the AP government to issue GO on waiver of power bills and deferred payment to give us some relief."

Another section of Tollywood is cautious, given the threat of a second wave of Covid-19 and the discovery of a mutant

strain of the Coronavirus in the UK and elsewhere. They want to play safe with regard to allowing viewers into theatres. They maintain that they are expect a large turnout at the theatres as more are scheduled for release during the Sankranti festival in January.

Andhra Pradesh Film Development Corporation (APFDC) former chairman Ambika Krishna said, "Though allowing theatres to run to full capacity helps quick revival of the industry, with shooting of films and other related activities gaining pace, we should be more careful about the health risk."

3 women killed  
in mishap on NHDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, DEC. 26

Two woman and a 14-year-old girl were killed on the spot and four others injured critically when a minivan in which they were travelling was hit by a speeding truck on the Putalapattu-Naidupeta National highway early on Saturday.

According to the police, one P. Vijay Kumar and his brother P. Sekhar belonging to Nangili in Karnataka had planned a trip to Tirumala and other temples in Chittoor district on the occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadasi. Their houseowner Subhramanyam and his family members joined them. The three families hired two vehicles for the pilgrimage.

The mishap took place near Gadanki in Pakala mandal when a speeding lorry going towards Tirupati hit the minivan

when the families were returning to Nangili after offering prayers in Tirumala on Friday.

Among the victims were Vijaya Kumar's wife Annappurna, 60, mother Rajamma, 80, and a relative, Jyothi 14. The injured were shifted to the SVR Ruia Government General Hospital in Tirupati.

Some passersby alerted the police and 108 staff. Pakala police rushed to the spot and shifted the injured to hospital. Police registered a case and are investigating.

Meanwhile a couple were killed on the spot after an unidentified vehicle hit their bike near Jadadevi village in Varikuntapadu mandal of SPSR Nellore district on Saturday.

The couple identified as Gangi Srinivasulu Reddy and Rathamma belong to Vadlamudi village in Udayagiri mandal.

## It's TD vs YSRC



TD activists stage protest against YSRC activists outside the Vizag-east MLA office at MVP Colony in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. — K. MURALIKRISHNA

YSRC GOVT MANAGED TO PERSUADE  
CENTRE ON REVISED PROJECT COST

FROM PAGE 1

The fixing of the project cost has been a bone of contention for long. Recently, the Centre had raised queries on the project cost and announced that it would extend financial help as per earlier agreement with the previous Telugu Desam regime at the price level of 2014-15. However, the YSR Congress government submitted relevant details and managed to persuade the Centre to consider the revised cost estimate of the project at the 2017-18 price level.

As per Central Water Commission's revised cost estimate-II, the total

cost of the project was ₹55,656.87 crore at 2017-18 price level while the revised cost committee recommended the price level at ₹47,725.74 crore at the 2017-18 price level.

With regard to reimbursement details, the total expenditure incurred up to December 11, 2020, was ₹17,733.75 crore and expenditure incurred after declaration as national project up to December 11, 2020, was ₹12,597.70 crore. The amount reimbursed to the AP government by the Polavaram Project Authority was ₹10,741.46 crore while the amount yet to be reimbursed was estimated at ₹1,856.24 crore.

ing ₹1,000 or more and bringing 2,059 ailments under its purview from the earlier 1,059.

The scheme was extended to Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, Guntur, Prakasam, YSR Kadapa and Kurnool districts from July 16 covering 2,200 ailments. Later, it was implemented in Srikakulam, East Godavari, Krishna, Nellore, Chittoor and Anantapur districts.

Procedures were increased by 234, taking the total to 2,436 on November 10. During the year, the State recruited 508 Arogya Mithras and 670 new help desks were set up in the network hospitals.



## OTHER STORIES

### CHAKRASNAMAM HELD IN SWAMY PUSHKARINI

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, DEC. 26

On the auspicious occasion of Vaikuntha Dwadasi, Chakrasnamam was performed in Ekantam to Sri Sudarshana Chakrattalwar in the sacred waters of Swamy Pushkarini in Tirumala on Saturday.

The Sudarshana Chakrattalwar was being rendered in the holy Chakrasnamam temple tank waters for the first time after nine months. TTD has closed the Pushkarini activities early in March this year, following Covid-19 pandemic along with the entry of pilgrims into Pushkarini. Even during the annual and Navarathri brahmotsavams also, TTD has observed Chakrasnamam in a makeshift temple tank inside the temple only.

## 227 RED SANDER LOGS WORTH ₹1CR SEIZED

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, DEC. 26

In a prize catch, Red Sanders Anti-Smuggling Task Force (RSATF) team seized 227 red sander logs along with the lorry transporting them to Chennai illegally following a tip off in Pithathoor mandal in Chittoor district during the early hours of Saturday.

The team also apprehended the driver of the lorry apart from the B-grade logs weighing around 3 to 4 tonnes worth ₹1 crore in the open market.

## AP CJ OFFERS PRAYERS AT TIRUCHANOOR

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, DEC. 26

The Chief Justice of High Court of Andhra Pradesh Justice Jithendra Kumar Maheswari and his family was given a warm reception by the Additional Sri A.V. Dharma Reddy on their arrival at Sri Padmavathi Rest House in Tirumala on Saturday.

Earlier he offered prayers in the temple of Goddess Padmavathi Devi at Tiruchanoor on Saturday. After darshan, he was offered prasadam by TTD JEO P Basanth Kumar.

# Silpa, Raja Singh spar over 'desecration' of Srisailem

Srisailem MLA offers to resign if allegations are proved

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL, DEC. 26

Srisailem MLA Silpa Chakrapani Reddy offered to resign if allegations of harbouring Muslims in the temple town of Srisailem are proved by Goshamahall legislator Raja Singh.

The BJP MLA from Hyderabad alleged that Srisailem temple was under the control of Muslims and all contracts and shops were monopolised by them. He alleged cows in Goshala are being killed to extract their meat.

Denying the charges, Silpa said he was ready for a debate after Sankranti.

Srisailem, one of the Shaktipeeths, and an important Jyothirlinga in India has been in the eye of controversy as the major revenue sources of commerce and business are cornered by Muslims. Raja Singh had alleged that one Razaq, who is a

● **RUBBISHING THE allegations, Silpa Reddy said Muslims have been living in the temple town for ages and he became MLA only two years back.**

contractor with Srisailem temple and his wife, a Hindu, is employed as a supervisor in the temple.

He said Razaq is a close aide of Silpa Chakrapani Reddy while Razaq's brother is a TD leader. Irrespective of which party is in power, the Razaq brothers are controlling the temple with the help of political parties.

When contacted, Raja Singh told *Deccan Chronicle* that several cases are pending against Razaq, which include transporting of mutton in flower baskets. These flowers are used for puja in the temple. He said the gosha-

la is supervised by Razaq's wife, who is helping her husband. Cows are killed with the connivance of the supervisor and its meat was being consumed, which is prohibited in the temple town.

Rubbishing the allegations, Silpa Reddy said Muslims have been living in the temple town for ages and he became MLA only two years back.

He clarified that he had nothing to do with Razaq and Singh's allegations were "baseless, malicious, mischievous," and only intended to provoke a section of the community and spreading ill-will in the community.

He claimed that he was a staunch Hindu by practice and had built temples with his own money. He challenged Singh to prove his allegations in the presence of Peetadhipathis at Srisailem after Sankranti and he was ready for any eventuality.

The gosha-la run by the Srisailem Bhramaramba Mallikarjuna Swamy temple has about 1,542 cows including ox. Every month at least one or two cows reportedly die due to diseases, said a temple official.

A dedicated veterinary doctor, along with 44 helpers, is working at the gosha-la. The official said that the gosha-la supervisor was shifted after allegations of killing of cows surfaced.

The official said Endowments Act clearly states that people of other religions are not allowed to live in temple towns. But the Muslims staying in Srisailem approached courts and the issue is now pending before the Supreme Court.

"Once a decision is out, we will proceed accordingly," he said.

Atmakur DSP, Y. Sruthi said no cases have been filed against Razaq at Srisailem.

## YSRC GROUPS IN CHIRALA LOCK HORNS AGAIN

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, DEC. 26

Differences between the groups of YSRC leaders of Chirala continue to create ruckus in the constituency.

Even before the wars between fishermen groups owing allegiance to former MLA Amanchi Krishna Mohan and Chirala legislator Karanam Balaram died down, MLC Pothula Suneetha created a scene during the distribution of house pattas at Akkayyapalem on Saturday.

Ms Suneetha raised a hue and cry after former MLA Paleti Rama Rao said in speech that they wish to have Karanam Balaram as their representative in the Assembly in the next term also.

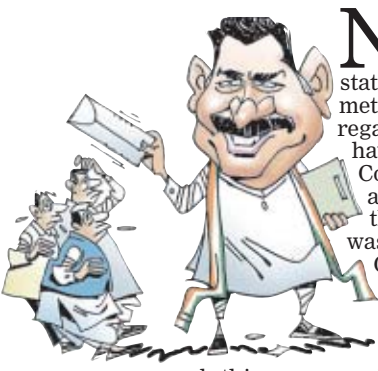
## NETA'S NATTER

Deepwater port is ported out again



Ramachandra Rao, in a literal sense also for they are neighbours. K.V. Rao managed to get the government to agree to dilute the concession agreement and Chandrababu Naidu never uttered a word against the gross compromise of the state's financial interests. Finally, it's curtains down for K.V. Rao with the Aurobindo group, which enjoys the most favoured company status in the Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy regime, buying a major stake in the port company.

In Congress, secret within a secret



such things, no one knows if the Tagore report will prevail on the AICC or the famous 'sealed cover' will come from the high command, carrying the name of the favoured one. However, one of the aspirants is learnt to have told scribes that he will take charge of the post and launch a padayatra to ensure that the Congress wins in 2023.

Easy jump from TS to AP

**K**endram oka midhya (Centre is a myth)" was a famous slogan of Telugu Desam founder and former chief minister N.T. Rama Rao, who fought relentlessly against the big brother attitude of the Centre. The executive heads of two the Telugu states seem to have taken a leaf out of NTR's book when it came to accommodating the long-pending wish of senior bureaucrat Y. Srilakshmi who is facing many cases. Ever since Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy took over the reins of Andhra Pradesh, the Telangana state cadre officer made Herculean efforts to go on deputation to

Andhra Pradesh.

With all efforts failing, she got an order from the Central Administrative Tribunal changing her cadre to AP, six years after bifurcation.

What is more shocking is that TS Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar gave her relieving orders and his AP counterpart Nilam Sawhney not only admitted Srilakshmi in the AP cadre but also made her secretary to municipal administration.

Neither took the Union department of personnel and training, the deciding authority over all India services officers, into cognisance.

Jagga joins the gorakshaks

**C**ongress MLA T. Jayaprakash Reddy, better known as Jagga Reddy, is feeling the pain and agony for losing six cows which he said he had bred with utmost love and affection. Jagga Reddy made a request to the DGP through the media that the cows were stolen by some unidentified persons two months ago, in October. He said that thieves had taken away the cows, leaving the behind their calves.

He told the DGP that he had lodged a complaint with the Sangareddy police, but they had failed to either recover his cows or trace the thieves. But then, this is no Uttar Pradesh and he is no Azam Khan for the police to go rushing off to find missing cattle. And, in the style of BJP MLA T. Raja Singh, darkly hinted that cow slaughter gangs may have something to do with it. Is there a message here?

## CLASSIFIEDS

### FOR SALE AUTOMOTIVE FOUR WHEELERS

**HONDA CITY 2016 VX, Diesel, sunroof red pearl color, fancy number, full insurances, 75000 kms drive, neatly maintained. P.h : 9 8 4 9 4 4 7 0 0 3 . (HYCL/2021/C01941)**

**FOR SALE....** Innova 2008 model... done 2.65 lakhs km... single owner. Excellent condition, full insurance. Contact 9 1 0 0 3 8 1 7 9 0 (R/2021/C00012)

### MACHINERY

**BUY & Sell:** Excavators, Loaders, Tipplers, Dozers, Single & Double Drum Rollers, Boom Placers, Graders, Concrete Pumps, Transit Mixers, Crushers, Hot Mix, Wet Mix & RMC Plants, Piling Rigs, Pavers, Gensets & Cranes. Ph:9848124242. (V J : 2 0 2 1 - 0 0 1 3 0 ) (S/2021/C01630)

### FOR SALE PROPERTY AGRICULTURE

**KARIMNAGAR, CHERLABUTKHUR** Agricultural land for sale 1,2,3, Guntas, per Gunta 2 Lakhs only. Clear titled. New Pass Book. P.h : 8 3 3 1 9 6 2 6 8 9 / 8 9 1 9 9 6 4 9 6 3 . (S/2021/C01699)

### COMMERCIAL

**6 FLOORS** Plus 2 Cellars parking, each floor 10,000 Sft

### NOTICE

Readers are advised to make appropriate enquiries while responding to advertisements in these columns. Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. does not vouch for any claims made by the Advertisers. The Printer, Publisher, Editor and Owner of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. shall not be held responsible / liable for any consequences, in case such claims are found to be false.

Commercial Complex under construction on Main Road, Aramghar Cross, opp P.V.N.R Express Way for Sale. P.h : 9 0 0 0 8 7 6 5 2 . (B/2021/C00078)

**BANJARAHILLS ROAD** No.1 615 yards, MasabTank 3,000 JubileeHills Road No.92 300 yards, Road no.45 1,000, Road No.36 1200 & 8200 sft, Road No.10 1400, Madhapur 720 yards Building N/E corner 16,000 sft, Kondapur 1400 & Rental income properties 5Cr to 50Cr 9966991449, 9 3 9 4 0 2 2 4 4 9 . (W/2021/AT000734)

✓ **SALE HYDERABAD** near Cherlapally Railway station 2km from Infosys . 5-storeyed 36,000sft building 1200 sqyds Modern construction 2 lifts, interiors , plug play for Software, BPO, Educational, Pharma, R&D, Electronics. Contact 9581942180 or 8978074107 (HYMM/2021/C04984)

### FLATS

**KEYES HIGH** School opposite, near Secunderabad Railway Station, main road facing, beautiful Metro view, two minutes walk from Metro Station. Newly Renovated, 1100 Sft. Contact: 9121421689/ 8106408689 (S/2021/C01736)

**BANJARAHILLS MLA colony Duplex flat 4600sft-4bhk, 2300sft-3bhk, Road no.5 3100sft-3bhk, Road no.10 1800sft-3bhk Road no.2 2000sft-3bhk, JubileeHills MP mla col 1600sft, Madhapur DSR Fortune prime 3240sft E/F-4Bhk, Kakatiyahills 1425sft-3bhk, 1600sft-3bhk, For more flats and villas 8884872389, 9985888511. (W/2021/AT000736)**

### INDEPENDENT HOUSE

**INDEPENDENT HOUSE** for sale @ Baghdad Colony, Langer House, 80 Sq.yds., G+1 @ 65 Lakhs. Contact-9 0 3 0 3 9 7 3 6 4 (HYCL/2021/C02143)

**4 FLOOR Building with 14 Flats for Sale at A.C.Guard Advocate Colony, Lakdikapool. 10 years Old with all permissions. Each floor 3 Flats, Ground floor 2 Flat Office use, Total Land 480 Sq.yds, 100% clear title, 2 side road with all amenities. Rental income property 7 Cr Neg. Ph:9246588336, 9 2 9 2 0 5 3 7 8 6 . (B/2021/C00081)**

✓ **EAST FACING, 320 Sq.Yds, Perfect Vasthu, Independent House, ICRISAT Colony, Phase-II Bowenpally, 6th House from Mainroad, Prime Location, Secured Community, Clear Title, Single Owner, Drinking Water, Two Borewells, Car Parking, Rental Income 40K/-pm. Close to Schools, Hospitals, Banks. P.h : 9 7 0 4 6 7 8 1 2 3 , 9 9 6 6 0 3 1 7 4 6 . (A/2021/C00090)**

**JUBILEEHILLS INDEPENDENT house sale, east facing 717 sq.yds, 5 bedroom 10,000 sft, 6 car parking, home theatre, 3 servant rooms, Gym room with Lawn & Society membership. Interested buyers contact: 7995125559. (A/2021/C00086)**

**KOMPALLY, HYDERABAD, SRC Luxury Villas, beside Nuziveed seeds, in Gated community Project. 2130 Sft to 4130 Sft 4BHK, all Modern Amenities. attractive offer till 31st January 2021. Ph: 9550155023/ 9 4 8 1 2 0 6 0 3 1 4 . (S/2021/C00127)**

for sale @2999/- sqyard at Nawabpet Village R1Zone Call 08047486188 or 9 0 0 1 1 7 4 5 2 (W/2021/AT000861)

### PLOTS

**VIJAYAWADA HIGH** Way, Warangal, Srisailem, Bangalore, Bombay High Way All Developments Very Low Price Open Plots For Sale. P.h : 9 3 9 1 8 1 3 6 7 8 , 7 0 9 5 3 8 0 7 6 5 . (HYCL/2021/C02154)

**BANJARAHILLS 350, 500 North 600 West jubileeHills 200 South 400North 500East 600East 717 East 1200East 1500West Filmnagar 1110yards Journalist Colony 300 Nandagirihills 600North Madhapur kavuriHills 500East Gachibowli Jayabheri HUDA 934 N/E JubileeHills and Banjarahills independent houses 10Cr to 50Cr, All commercial plots with tenant properties 9966991449, 9 3 9 4 0 2 2 4 4 9 . (W/2021/AT000735)**

**KADTHAL- SEMI Commercial North & South 50' Road facing, 350 & 455 Sq.Yds Plots, DTCP Approved with 24/7 Security & all Developments, Near Pharma City, RRR & 4 Roads Junction. Spot Registration, Genuine Buyers only Contact: 81794-58669. (L/2021/IC00005)**

### REAL ESTATE

### LAND REQUIRED

**LAND REQUIRED,** Immediate Payment, 5Acres To 100 Acres, R1, Agriculture, Industrial, or 111. in And Around Hyderabad. For Development or Outrate. Clear Title Ph: 8374399578/ 6 3 0 3 1 0 7 4 2 1 . (HYMM/2021/C05242)

### RENTALS

### COMMERCIAL

**NEWLY CONSTRUCTED** of 1 lakh sft (50+ 50) Godown available for lease. 5 km dis-

tance from Guntur NH- 16 & also 5 km distance from Mirchyard. CWC: FCI norms godown. For details contact: cell: 9949596999. (VJ/20-21-00149) (S/2021/C01741)

**JUBILEEHILLS ROAD** no 36 commercial sapce1000 sq ft for long Lease suitable for office/ boutique/ accountant. etc Interested parties pls contact 9396534776 (W/2021/AT000788)

**VIJAYAWADA MG** Road, backside of Manorama Hotel, 2500 sq.ft, 1st, 2nd, 3rd floors commercial building with lift, parking, Tolet for Corporate Offices, Hospitals, Banks, Function Hall. Ph:9440579150. (VJ/20-21-00148) (S/2021/C01740)

### FLATS

**LAKDIKAPOL 1800 Sft Semi Furnished 3 Bedrooms, dining hall, modular kitchen, 3 baths, car parking, lift, power backup, 24 hrs water. (2) Banjarahills, Road No.13, Newly constructed semi furnished 2400 Sft 3 Bedrooms, drawing, dining hall, modular kitchen, 3 attached baths, 2 car parking, swimming pool, gym, banquet hall. P.h : 9 3 4 6 3 8 4 9 0 4 . (B/2021/IC00076)**

**HIMAYATHNAGAR/ ASHOK Nagar, 2800 Sft, 3600 Sft, 3 BHK. (2) 4 BHK Semi Furnished Flats for Rent with lift, car parking, power backup. (3) Basheerbagh Semi furnished, 1850 Sft 3 bedroom, drawing, dining hall, modular kitchen, car parking, lift, power backup, 24 hrs water. P.h : 9 3 4 6 3 8 4 9 0 4 . (B/2021/IC00077)**

**INDEPENDENT HOUSE GATED COMMUNITY** High-end new villas Kondapur w/ 4 Bedroom + Home theatre, Hitech City E/ 4 Bedroom, Kokapet E/ 4 Bedroom, Aditya Casa Grande E/ 4 Bedroom + Apartment flats Banjarahills, JubileeHills, Madhapur, & kondapur For Rent.

8884872389, 9985888511. (W/2021/AT000845)

### SITUATION VACANT

### ACCOUNTS & FINANCE

**REQUIRED SENIOR** Finance Controller with 15+ years of experience to head Finance dept of mid-sized company at Hyderabad. Contact: 9010252680, Email: hrdept262@gmail.com (W/2021/AT000805)

### MEDICAL

**URGENT REQUIRED MBBS** Doctor with MCI certificate Location: Uttara Pradesh District Salary 60,000.00+Bonus 20,000.00 Age below 65-years, Doctor Should be fluency in Hindi & English Contact: 9005144477, 8500007470. (HYCL/2021/C01924)

### MULTIPLE VACANCIES

**REPUTATED FIRE** Fighting Company Requirement Staff For Telangana Andhra Two Years Experience Marketing Executives Four, Marketing Managers Two, Fire System Engineers With Execution Designs Electrical/ Mechanical Four Administrative Officer One, Accounts Officer One, Required Technicians, Welders, Fitters, Electricians Contact: 9885166673, 9908348452 Mail: agnidassociates@gmail.com (HYMM/2021/C05248)

### BRIDE WANTED

### CASTE NO BAR

**BOTH PARENTS** Doctors Propriated Mds Dentist Having 2 Clinics At Hyderabad Earning More Than 1 Lakh P.M. Kapu Boy Fair 32/168, Language Caste No Bar, Seeks Suitable Alliance Contact yrajeshwari@yahoo.com or rajeshwariiesel2009@gmail.com (HYMM/2021/C04872)

**WELL EDUCATED** pvt job age 50, ht 5'5", OC, looking

for single independent friendly bride professional widow, age divorcee no bar. P.h : 7 9 8 9 4 2 6 4 9 0 . (S/2021/C01749)

### HINDU

**WWW.EASYVIVAH.COM.** Rs.365/- for 365 Days. For All Religions, First, Second & Late Marriages, Lakhs of people are seeing from India & Abroad, No Settlement Fees. Phone/ Whatsapp: 9 4 4 0 5 0 6 4 4 1 . (HYMM/2021/C04992)

**KAPU BOY 37 years, B.Tech MBA, born & brought-up in Hyderabad, Well Settled, Affluent Family looks after own Manufacturing Unit, First Marriage Annulled, Caste No Bar seeks suitable Educated Girl from Telugu, Tamil Family. Contact: 9440048236, 7816027077. (S/2021/C01638)**

### GROOM WANTED

### MUSLIM

**ASM PARENTS** settled in Hyderabad, invite proposal for their youngest Daughter MBA, fair, 5'3", 34yrs never married, looking for minimum Graduate working anywhere in India. Contact number 7780747964, 9866312847 (what's app) (HYMM/2021/C05203)

**ASM PARENTS** settled in Hyderabad invite alliance for their daughter 30/5.4, MCA seeks suitable boy well settled, educated family background. W.A 9398805429 (HYMM/2021/C05225)

### FINANCE

**LOAN FOR High Level Projects & Properties from 10Cr to 1000Cr R.O.I @ 3.5% to 8% with feasible tenure No prepayment Ct:09884327792. Email: hiri-seventuress@gmail.com (CHSD/2021/C00007)**

### BUSINESS

✓ **INVESTORS** REQUIRED for Development of Prime

**Properties in Hyderabad. Pls Contact Engr. Baig at 7337457025 / 8790528280 (W/2021/AT000826)**

### BUSINESS OFFER

**CONCEPT ORIENTED,** Fast Growing Construction company is looking for HNIs for long term investments, minimum 10cr. Contact: 8885688856. (HYMM/2021/C05179)

### CONSTRUCTION/ FABRICATION

### BUILDERS & DEVELOPERS

**MS CONSTRUCTION & Interiors....** We undertake independent house, villas apartment, all constructions & renovation works along with materials. Architect planning, interior designing with vastu. P.H : 9 1 2 1 3 5 2 3 7 6 . (HYMM/2021/C04779)

### EDUCATIONAL

### DISTANCE EDUCATION

✓ **ONLY FOR Educational Consultants/ Academies. No Advance Fee. Students please no call. Contact for Verifiable + Fast Track: Graduation(15,000)/ B.Ed.-M.Ed.-NCTE Recognised (30000)/ BBA-MBA-BCA-MCA(20-25,000) from Government University. WES Documentation & Attestation Support Available. 47-years Educational Experience. S h i k s h a Bharti.Varanasi.Mobile: 9 5 1 9 7 5 9 6 6 3 , 9915103781. Email: shikshabharti88@yahoo.com (HYMM/2021/C05127)**

### FILM

**URGENTLY REQUIRED** Hero, Heroins, Friends, Character and Dubbing artists, children, villains, singers. All age group character required immediately: 9 3 9 1 5 4 7 3 2 . (S/2021/C00124)



SHORT TAKES

CONGMEEN HELD FOR PROTECT COW, FARMERS STIR

Lalitpur/Jhansi (UP), Dec. 26: Uttar Pradesh Congress president Ajay Kumar Lallu and over 50 party workers were arrested in Lalitpur on Saturday after they tried to take out the 'Gai Bachao, Kisan Bachao' march without permission, but were released hours later, police said.

However, district Congress president Balwant Singh Rajput, who was among those arrested, claimed around 200 party workers were held. He also alleged that about two dozen party workers were injured as the police used force against them.

"About 50 to 60 workers, including state Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu and district unit chief Balwant Singh Rajput, were arrested from Dailwara township while trying to take out the march without permission. They have all been taken to police lines," Additional Superintendent of Police Brijesh Kumar Singh said. Later in the evening, the Congress leaders, including Lallu, were released from police lines on furnishing personal bonds and the UPCC president was allowed to leave for Lucknow, the ASP said.

The Congress had announced that it will take out the 'Gai Bachao, Kisan Bachao' march in different districts of Bundelkhand to highlight the alleged mismanagement in cow shelters under the state government.

PM TO INAUGURATE INDIA'S FIRST-EVER DRIVERLESS TRAIN

New Delhi, Dec. 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate India's first-ever driverless train operations on Delhi Metro's Magenta Line along with the fully operational National Common Mobility Card service on the Airport Express Line on December 28 via video conferencing.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said on Saturday that these innovations will herald a new era of travelling comfort and enhanced mobility. The driverless trains will be fully automated, which will eliminate the possibility of human error, it said, adding that after the start of driverless services on the Magenta Line (Janakpuri West-Botanical Garden), the Pink Line (Majlis Park-Shiv Vihar) of Delhi Metro is expected to have driverless operations by mid-2021.

The National Common Mobility Card, which will be fully operationalised on the Airport Express Line, will enable anyone carrying a RuPay-Debit Card issued from any part of the country to travel on the route using it. This facility will become available on the entire Delhi Metro network by 2022, the PMO said.

I-T DEPT DETECTS BLACK INCOME OF ₹100 CR IN ASSAM

New Delhi, Dec. 26: Unaccounted income of ₹100 crore has been detected after the income tax department raided three "leading" contractors of Northeast India based in Assam early this week, the CBDT said on Saturday.

The search and survey action was initiated on December 22 at fourteen locations in Guwahati, Silapathar and Pathasala in Assam and in Delhi. "Cash of ₹2.95 crore has been seized.

Overall, undisclosed income to the tune of approximately ₹100 crore has been unearthed so far during the search and survey operation," the Board said in a statement without sharing the identities of those raided.

It added that "jewellery of ₹9.79 lakh has been seized and the sources of acquisition of some other jewellery worth ₹2 crore is under verification." The Central Board of Direct Taxes frames policy for the I-T department.

The entities covered are "leading contractors of Northeast and one group is also involved in the hospitality business," it said.

"The main allegation against the three groups is that they have taken accommodation (dubious) entries in the form of non-genuine unsecured loans and also securities premium from dubious Kolkata-based shell (dummy) companies." "The three groups have suppressed their net profits across the years and routed back into business the unaccounted income through entry operators based out of Guwahati and Kolkata," the CBDT said.

J&K residents get free treatment



Jammu and Kashmir Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha hands over the golden cards to beneficiaries of the Ayushman Bharat PM-Jay Sehat scheme, after it was rolled out by Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually, in Jammu, on Saturday.

India, Vietnam begin SCS drills

Sea exercises to be closely watched by an already furious China

PAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 26

The Indian and Vietnamese navies on Saturday started an exercise in the South China Sea, something which will be closely watched by China. The exercise comes when China is becoming increasingly assertive in the South China Sea and has been conducting aggressive military manoeuvres in the region to warn other nations.

"Indian Navy conducted Passage Exercise today with the Vietnam People's Navy in the South China Sea," said a senior official. The relations between India and China have deteriorated this year after the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) violated the Line of Actual Control in Eastern Ladakh and the military stand-off between two armies in the sector has continued for the last eight months. India is now putting

pressure on China at many fronts.

China was already furious over India-Vietnam virtual summit this week, where India had stressed that negotiations for a Code of Conduct (CoC) in the disputed South China Sea (SCS) waters should not undermine the interests of other countries or third parties in the region. Reacting to the summit, China's state mouthpiece *Global Times* had said, "This is not the first time

(nor will it be the last) that India has poked its nose in the South China Sea."

Earlier this week defence minister Rajnath Singh and his Japanese counterpart Nobuo Kishi had also discussed regional situation in the South China Sea. Both had asserted to oppose any activities that escalate tension.

The US Navy has started patrolling in the South China Sea to challenge China. In past few months US aircraft carriers USS

Ronald Reagan and USS Nimitz along with their escorting cruisers and destroyers have conducted exercises in South China Sea.

After clash between Indian Army and teh PLA in Galwan Valley in June, India had sent its frontline warship to the South China Sea much to the displeasure of the Chinese who raised objections over the move during diplomatic talks between the two countries.

MP Cabinet clears 'Love Jihad' Bill

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, DEC. 26

The Madhya Pradesh Cabinet on Saturday cleared the Dharma Swatantra (Religious Freedom) Bill, 2020, known in political parlance as 'Love Jihad' bill.

The draft bill, which may sail through in the Assembly during its three-day winter session commencing on December 28, provides a maximum of 10 years imprisonment and ₹one lakh fine to the perpetrators of forced religious conversion of a girl for marriage.

The new bill has the provision of declaring such a marriage null and void.

The bill puts the onus on the accused and those associated with the accused, including organisations and institutions, to prove their innocence. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who chaired the cabinet meeting, justified the bill saying that instances of religious conversion of a girl for political purpose has come to the fore.

If someone is looking to capture a panchayat, he gets married to a girl and fields her in elections, Chouhan explained.

"We have rescued many minor girls from various places recently. We will not allow this to happen to innocent girls from Madhya Pradesh," he added.

Later, briefing reporters, Home minister Narottam Mishra said that the new bill provides

● THE DRAFT bill, which may sail through in the Assembly during its three-day winter session commencing on December 28, provides a maximum of 10 years imprisonment and ₹one lakh fine to the perpetrators of forced religious conversion of a girl for marriage.

imprisonment of 1-5 years and a fine of ₹25,000 for forced conversion. If the victim of forced religious conversion belongs to Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe or is under-aged, the offence would attract a jail term of 2-10 years with a maximum penalty of Rs one lakh.

Under the new bill, it is mandatory for both the bride and groom sides, to notify local district magistrate on change of religion two months in advance, failing which the marriage would be declared illegal.

Religious leaders and priests associated with such marriages would attract five-year jail terms and organisations and institutions involved in such marriages would be deregistered.

The new bill has also made provision of maintenance for the victim and her children. The Uttar Pradesh government passed a similar law on November 28.

However, cases of abuse of law in Uttar Pradesh have come to the fore.

NTF: No need to change protocol for new strain

SHASHI BHUSHAN | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 26

The National Task Force (NTF) on Covid-19 has concluded that there is no need to change the existing treatment protocol in view of SARS-CoV-2 mutations emerging in the United Kingdom and spreading to some countries. The NTF on Saturday discussed evidence-based modifications in testing, treatment and surveillance strategies for Covid-19 in view of the new virus strain.

The NTF deliberated on aspects related to the treatment protocol, testing strategy and surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 vis-a-vis the UK variant. It emphasised that since the UK strain is implicated to cause increased transmissibility of the virus, it is critical to identify individuals infected with this strain and adequately contain them to prevent its transmission in India.

The NTF recommended that in addition to the existing surveillance strategies, it is critical to conduct enhanced genomic surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 specially in incoming passengers from the UK. Besides, it will also be critical to conduct genome sequencing in samples where there is dropout of the S gene in lab diagnosis, proven cases of re-infections etc. Routine genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 from representative samples all across the samples needs to be a continuous and well planned activity.

8 UK returnees to Kerala test +ve

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec. 26: Eight people who recently returned from the UK to Kerala, have tested positive for Coronavirus and their samples have been sent to the National Institute of Virology, Pune for genomic analysis.

Health Minister K. K. Shailaja said on Saturday that samples of eight returnees were found positive for Covid-19 and their samples have been sent to NIV for further tests. Following this development, it has been

decided to subject the returnees to more tests, she added.

Surveillance at the four international airports in the state have been further strengthened. After the recently held local body polls, it was feared that there would be a massive surge in cases. However, that did not occur.

The death rate did not go up in the state as the government had taken precautionary steps in this regard, she said.

— PTI

According to the Union health ministry, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) informed that the Centre has taken cognizance of the reports of mutant variants of SARS-CoV-2 reported from the UK and the response of other countries to these reports. The situation is being monitored proactively. A strategy has been put under place to detect and contain the mutant variant.

"The NTF concluded that there is no need to change the existing treatment protocol in view of mutations emerging in the strain. Further, since ICMR has always advocated use of two or more gene assays for testing

SARS-CoV-2, it is unlikely to miss infected cases using the current testing strategy," said the Union health ministry.

A total of 251 new deaths and 22,273 infections of Covid-19 were, meanwhile, reported in the country. The number of people who have recovered from the disease climbed to 97,40,108, pushing the national recovery rate to 95.78 per cent, while the fatality rate stands at 1.45 per cent. The active caseload remained below three lakh for the fifth consecutive day. There are 2,81,667 active cases of Covid-19 in the country, constituting 2.77 per cent of the total caseload.

Delhi, which has launched anti-leucoderma product into the market by trade name Lukoskin. "In recognition of his invaluable contribution, the Scientist of the Year Award-2018 is conferred on Dr. Hemant Kumar Pandey," the citation accompanying the award stated.

Though the scientist has developed six herbal drugs so far, Lukoskin used for treating leucoder-

Farmers ready for talks with Centre on Dec. 29

ASHHAR KHAN | DC  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 26

As the protests demanding the repeal of the three farm laws entered the 31st day, the protesting farmer unions on Saturday decided to resume talks with the government. They have proposed December 29 as the date for the next round of negotiations and sent the draft of the issues to be discussed.

These include repeal of the farm laws, making the minimum support price (MSP) a legal guarantee and changes in the draft Electricity Amendment Bill to safeguard the interests of the farmers. There is also a demand to exclude farmer from the amendments to be the Commission for the Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance, 2020.

The decision to resume talks was taken at a meeting of Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of 40 farmer unions protesting at various Delhi border points against three farm laws.

Rakesh Tikait, a senior leader of the Bharatiya Kisan Union, said the modalities for the repeal of farm laws and guarantee for MSP should be part of the agenda for talks with the government. "We have decided to hold talks with the government on December 29," he said.

The announcement for fresh discussions came a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi lashed out at the Opposition for the first time since the beginning of the protests. On Friday he stressed that farmers' lands won't be taken away, adding, "Some people are spreading lies".

The Prime Minister also released a financial aid of ₹18,000 crore under the PM-Kisan cash transfer scheme.

Five rounds of talks between the government and farmers have failed in the last couple of weeks.

The government has been repeating its stand that the farm laws will benefit the farmers. Several senior ministers have said that farmers

should have faith in the government and that if at any stage the laws cause hindrance to the farmers the government will not hesitate to rethink these.

Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan said that during Dr Manmohan Singh's government in 2013-14, the farmers were paid ₹1,310 for a quintal of paddy but now they are being paid ₹1,815.

Carrying ration and other essential items with them, several batches of farmers from Punjab headed towards Delhi borders to join the peasants protesting against the Centre's new agriculture-related laws.

According to farmer union leaders, farmers from various places including Sangrur, Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Gurdaspur and Bathinda districts were headed towards Singhu and Tikri borders. They began their journey despite fog and biting cold wave conditions in many parts of Punjab.

Tractor trolleys, cars and other vehicles carrying farmers, including the elderly and women, were seen on the Amritsar-Delhi national highway. The road from Delhi to Ghaziabad near the Ghazipur border was also closed as the farmer protest split over to the other carriageway.

Kisan Union leader Dr Darshanpal said on Saturday that the farmers will celebrate the martyrdom of Guru Govind Singh's son on December 27 and December 28. The protesters will then meet the Centre for the next round of talks on December 29.

On December 30, farmers will march from Singhu to Tikri and Shahjahanpur alongside their tractors on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) highway. "We request people from Delhi and other parts of country to come and celebrate New Year with protesting farmers," he said.

Dr Darshanpal added. He went on to say that the farmers are inviting everyone to have langar with them on December 31 and January 1 at Singhu border.

BJP leaders will join NCP: Pawar

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC  
MUMBAI, DEC. 26

Deputy chief minister of Maharashtra and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Ajit Pawar on Saturday said that leaders who had joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will return to NCP in the next three-four months. Mr Pawar said that he will refrain from commenting on who will be joining the party as election code of conduct for the gram panchayat elections is in effect as of now.

Few days ago 18 Congress corporators shifted their loyalty to NCP. Mr Pawar indicated that BJP leaders are next in line.

Mr. Pawar said that those joining the NCP were earlier in the same party before defecting to the BJP. These leaders

are not being heard by the BJP.

The NCP leader's statement would assume a political significance as elections of the several local bodies and gram panchayats are round the corner.

"The leaders who joined the BJP thought that they would be heard when the BJP would come to power. Now, they want to leave BJP because their works weren't done. Some leaders from Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad have wished to return. They will soon be welcomed," Mr Pawar said.

Reacting to Pawar's statement, the BJP state president Chandrakant Patil said, "When Ajit Pawar failed to keep his 28 MLAs, whom he thought were with him when tried to form the government with the BJP, how would he get any other MLA now?"

MEDICAL | RECORD

Hemant had developed Lukoskin for leucoderma; several other herbal medicines

DRDO man bags Scientist of the Year Award

New Delhi, Dec. 26: Senior scientist Hemant Kumar Pandey has been honoured with DRDO's 'Scientist of the Year Award' for his contribution in developing several herbal medicines, including the popular drug Lukoskin meant for treatment of leucoderma.

A recipient of several prestigious awards for his contribution in the field of herbal medicine, Pandey has been undertaking

research at the Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) lab Defence Institute of Bio-Energy Research (DIBER) at Pithoragarh in Uttarakhand for the past 25 years.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had recently facilitated the scientist at an event here with the prestigious award that comprises a certificate and cash prize of ₹2 lakh.

● DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh had recently facilitated the scientist at an event here with the prestigious award that comprises a certificate and cash prize of ₹2 lakh.

● APART FROM Lukoskin, Pandey has developed drugs for treatment of eczema and toothache as well as an anti-radiation cream.

"Dr Hemant Kumar Pandey, Scientist 'E', Defence Institute of Bio-Energy Research (DIBER), Haldwani has significantly contributed

in the development of five herbal products and filed seven patents.

ToT of three products has been done with Aimal Pharmaceuticals, New

Delhi, which has launched anti-leucoderma product into the market by trade name Lukoskin.

"In recognition of his invaluable contribution, the Scientist of the Year Award-2018 is conferred on Dr. Hemant Kumar Pandey," the citation accompanying the award stated.

Though the scientist has developed six herbal drugs so far, Lukoskin used for treating leucoder-

ma or Vitiligo, a condition in which white patches get developed on the skin, has been most widely appreciated and found huge acceptance in the market.

A formulation of around eight herbs found in Himalayan region, Lukoskin helps in treating white patches and is marketed by Delhi-based Aimal Pharmaceuticals.

Leucoderma is an autoimmune disorder and

— PTI



## SHORT TAKES

JUDGE DELAYS  
EXECUTION OF  
U.S. WOMAN

Washington, Dec. 26: A federal judge said the Justice Department unlawfully rescheduled the execution of the only woman on federal death row, potentially setting up the Trump administration to schedule the execution after president-elect Joe Biden takes office.

US District Court Judge Randolph Moss also vacated an order from the director of the Bureau of Prisons that had set Lisa Montgomery's execution date for January 12.

Montgomery had previously been scheduled to be put to death at the Federal Correctional Complex in Terre Haute, Indiana, this month, but Moss delayed the execution after her attorneys contracted Coronavirus visiting their client.

TURKISH OPPN  
TV STATION  
SHUTS DOWN

Istanbul, Dec. 26: A private Turkish TV station that aired pro-Kurdish opposition views has shut down less than a month after launch, raising press freedom concerns in a country often chastised by rights groups.

Olay TV, owned by businessman and former minister Cavit Caglar, began broadcasting on November 30 and was pulled off the air on Friday.

Its staff announced its closure live on air.

Caglar said he pulled out of the venture because the station's editorial line veered too close to the pro-Kurdish opposition, while the editor claimed he had bowed to government pressure.

Executive editor Suleyman Sarilar said on air that the network had aimed to maintain equal distance from every segment in Turkey's polarised society. "But we have seen that we can no longer keep up with this kind of broadcasting ... Cavit (Caglar) said he was under intense pressure from the government and that he cannot move forward," he claimed.

BUTCHERING  
LOVER: RUSSIAN  
GETS 12.5 YRS

Saint Petersburg, Dec. 26: A Russian historian and Napoleon enthusiast was sentenced to 12-and-a-half-years in prison for murdering and dismembering his young lover last year.

The Saint Petersburg trial, which spurred activists to voice growing anger over domestic abuse in Russia, began in June after delays due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Oleg Sokolov, 64, had admitted murdering 24-year-old Anastasia Yeshchenko but said he committed the crime against his former student and lover in the heat of the moment during an argument.

He was arrested in November last year after he was found drunk and carrying a backpack containing a woman's arms. Judge Yulia Maximenko sentenced Sokolov on Friday to "12 years and six months in a strict regime penal colony" on charges of murder and the illegal possession of firearms. "He was aware of his actions at the time of the crime," Maximenko said as she read out the verdict.

BRITISH DOUBLE  
AGENT GEORGE  
BLAKE DIES

Moscow, Dec. 26: George Blake, a former British intelligence officer who worked as a double agent for the Soviet Union, has died in Russia. He was 98.

Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, known as SVR, announced his death Saturday in a statement, which didn't give any circumstances of his death. Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed condolences, hailing Blake as a "brilliant professional" and a man of "remarkable courage." Blake has lived in Russia since his daring escape from a British prison in 1966 and was given the rank of Russian intelligence colonel.

Born in the Netherlands, Blake joined British intelligence during World War II. He was posted to Korea when the war there erupted in 1950 and was detained by the Communist north. He said he volunteered to work for the Soviet Union after witnessing relentless US bombing of North Korea. In a statement issued in 2017 through SVR, Blake emphasised that he decided to switch sides after seeing civilians massacred by the "American military machine."

## UK variant strikes Spain, France

New virus strain has prompted more than 50 countries to impose travel restrictions on the UK

Madrid, Dec. 26: Spain has registered its first cases of a Coronavirus variant believed to be particularly infectious that emerged in Britain, Madrid's regional government said on Saturday.

The first case of a particularly infectious coronavirus variant that recently emerged in Britain has been confirmed in France, the health ministry said on Friday.

The person — a French citizen living in Britain — is asymptomatic and self-isolating at home in Tours in central France, the ministry said.

The person arrived from London on December 19 and was tested in hospital on December 21 and found to be positive for the strain of the virus known as VOC 202012/01.

"The health authorities have carried out contact-tracing for the health professionals taking care of the patient," the ministry said in a statement.

Any of their contacts that were seen as vulnerable would similarly be isolated, the statement said.

In addition to this first case, "to date, several positive samples that may suggest the VOC 202012/01 variant are being sequenced" by the specialist laboratories of the national Pasteur Institute, the statement added.

The region said four cases had been detected involving people who had recently arrived from the UK or had close contact with someone who had.

The father, mother and sister of a young man who arrived in Madrid by plane last week have tested positive for the coronavirus variant, it added.

The young man is suspected to have the new variant as well but Spanish authorities are waiting for the results of a polymerase chain reaction PCR test to confirm this.

The fourth confirmed case of the new variant involves a man who arrived in Madrid on December 20 on another flight.

"The patients are not seriously ill, we know that this strain is more transmissible, but it does not cause more serious illness," Madrid regional deputy health chief Antonio Zapatero told a news conference.

"There is no need for alarm." There are another three suspected cases of the coronavirus variant but the results of tests will only be available on Tuesday or Wednesday, Zapatero said.

The new strain of the virus has prompted more than 50 countries including Spain to impose travel restrictions on the UK.

Madrid has banned all entries from the United Kingdom except for Spanish nationals and residents.

France and Italy have also already confirmed cases of the new variant, while the World Health Organisation reported that nine cases have been detected in Denmark and one each in the Netherlands and Australia.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said the new viral strain "may be up to 70 percent more transmissible than the original version of the disease". — *AFP*



A near-deserted Old Bond Street in London is pictured on Saturday, as Londoners continue to live under Tier 4 lockdown restrictions. Fears over new strains and surging Covid-19 infections in general across Europe have severely dampened the mood over the holiday season. — *AFP*

UK millions face tough  
post-Christmas curbs

London, Dec. 26: Millions more people across different parts of the UK entered tougher lockdown restrictions from December 26, the day after Christmas marked annually as Boxing Day, as part of plans announced earlier this week to contain the rapid spread of a highly transmissible variant of Coronavirus.

Around six million people in east and south-east England have joined many others into Tier 4, England's highest Covid level which includes a "stay at home" order.

Lockdowns have also started in Scotland and

● **LOCKDOWNS HAVE also started in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and measures have been reimposed in Wales after being eased for Christmas Day, when the UK crossed another grim milestone of 70,000 virus deaths.**

Northern Ireland, and measures have been reimposed in Wales after being eased for Christmas Day, when the UK crossed another grim milestone of 70,000 Coronavirus deaths.

Under the toughest Tier 4 restrictions, all non-essential shops, bars and

restaurants are closed and people are not allowed to meet other households, except in a support bubble or in an outdoor public space with one other person. Large parts of England were already in this tier pre-Christmas, including London, after the new mutation was found to be spreading fastest in those regions. With the devolved administrations setting their own strategies,

Northern Ireland goes into a six-week lockdown from Saturday with non-essential shops shut and hospitality open only for takeaway services. — *PTI*

NO COMMERCIAL  
FLIGHTS IN LANKA  
AS OF NOW

Colombo, Dec. 26: Sri Lanka has postponed the reopening of its airspace for commercial flights, scheduled for Saturday, to prevent the spread of a new variant of the Coronavirus, officials said.

The next date for resumption of flights will be announced later. The Civil Aviation Authority of Sri Lanka (CAASL) had announced last week that it will resume international flights operations from December 26, eight months after they were closed in view of the Covid-19 outbreak. The decision was taken in the wake of the new Coronavirus strain. — *PTI*

TOKYO CONFIRMS  
RECORD HIGH OF  
949 NEW CASES

Tokyo, Dec. 26: Tokyo has confirmed 949 new cases of the deadly novel Coronavirus, a new high for the Japanese capital, as the country struggles with an upsurge that is spreading nationwide.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government said on Saturday that the additional cases bring the prefectural total to 55,851. Japan had 3,823 new cases on Friday for a national total of 213,547, with 3,155 deaths, the health ministry said.

Japan has not been able to slow the infections despite government requests for the people to avoid going out for dinner and parties before and during the holiday season.

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike has ordered bars to close early and urged residents to avoid nonessential outings.

But many people have continued commuting on crowded trains and going out for dinner and drinks. And now with a new virus variant from the United Kingdom reaching, there's danger. — *AP*

Beijing residents  
face restrictions

Beijing, Dec. 26: China's capital has urged residents not to leave the city during the upcoming Lunar New Year holidays, implementing fresh restrictions after several Coronavirus infections last week.

Two domestic cases were reported on Friday, a convenience store worker and a Hewlett Packard Enterprise employee. Another two asymptomatic cases were discovered in Beijing earlier in the week.

● **BEIJING IS conducting testing on a limited scale in the neighbourhoods and workplaces where the cases were found.**

● **AUTHORITIES HAVE shut schools and all public spaces in five divisions in Dalian, and only essential workers can leave their compounds.**

ern port city of Dalian said Friday that they had tested over 4.75 million people for the Coronavirus after 24 confirmed infections this month.

Authorities have shut schools and all public spaces in five neighbourhood divisions in Dalian, and only essential workers can leave their compounds. — *AP*

EU starts vaccine  
rollout: Doses reach  
Italy, Spain, France

Paris, Dec. 26: The European Union teed up a vaccine rollout Saturday, even as countries in the bloc were forced back into lockdown by a new strain of the virus, believed to be more infectious, that has spread from Britain to France and Spain and even as far as Japan.

The pandemic has claimed more than 1.7 million lives and is still running rampant in much of the world, but the recent launching of inoculation campaigns has boosted hopes that 2021 could bring a reprieve.

First doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine arrived in hard-hit Italy, Spain and France on Saturday morning ready for distribution to elderly care facilities and hospital staff.

"We'll get our freedom back, we'll be able to embrace again," Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio said as he urged Italians to get the shot.

Vaccinations in all 27 European Union countries will begin on Sunday, after regulators approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on December 21.

Several countries including France, Spain, Japan, Denmark, Lebanon, Germany, Australia and the Netherlands have reported ca-

POC DOCTOR DIES  
OF COVID AFTER  
RACIST PLAINTS

Indianapolis, Dec. 26: A Black doctor who died battling Covid-19 complained of racist medical care in widely shared social media posts days before her death, prompting an Indiana hospital system to promise a "full external review" into her treatment.

Dr. Susan Moore, 52, tested positive for Covid-19 late last month and was admitted to IU Health North Hospital in Carmel, Indiana, according to a Facebook post. Acutely aware of her condition and medical procedures, the physician said had to repeatedly ask for medication, scans and routine checks while admitted at a hospital in Carmel. — *AP*

ses of the new strain, which has sent jitters through already overstretched health services. More than 25 million total infections have been recorded in Europe on Friday, and Russia on Saturday said it had topped three million. — *AFP*

Ahead of WHO  
probe, China hails  
handling of virus

Beijing, Dec. 26: China's ruling Communist Party leaders have congratulated themselves on their "extremely extraordinary" success in handling the Covid-19 outbreak domestically, ahead of a World Health Organisation probe into the disease's origins.

China faced a barrage of criticism at home and abroad over its initial handling of the virus, which emerged in the central city of Wuhan last December.

China's Politburo, the top decision-making body of the Communist Party, said late Friday that the party leadership "played a decisive role in leading ... China in prevailing over the rare risks and challenges this year."

"At the critical moment ... the Party Central Committee took a long-term view ... achieving an extremely extraordinary glory in this extremely unusual year," state news agency Xinhua reported, citing a statement issued after the two-day meeting.

China has largely curbed the spread of the virus, and was one of the only major economies to report growth this year. But it has been accused of covering up the initial outbreak, and so contributing to the virus' spread internationally. At home, Beijing has attempted to stifle criticism by punishing at least eight whistleblowers. A Chinese citizen journalist who reported on Wuhan's outbreak, Zhang Zhan, has been detained since May and is expected to go on trial on Monday. — *AP*

TURKMENISTAN  
PREZ: LICORICE  
CAN CURE COVID

Ashgabat, Dec. 26: Well-known for his baffling botanical pronouncements, Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov claimed Saturday that licorice could cure Coronavirus, the latest supposed miracle cure in a country still claiming zero cases.

"Scientists from every country are looking for effective cures, running various studies, and one of them could be licorice root," the leader of the authoritarian ex-Soviet country told ministers.

Without citing any scientific evidence, former dentist Berdimuhamedov claimed that "Licorice stops the Coronavirus from developing" and "even a weak concentration of a water-based extract has a neutralising effect." — *AFP*

cism by punishing at least eight whistleblowers. A Chinese citizen journalist who reported on Wuhan's outbreak, Zhang Zhan, has been detained since May and is expected to go on trial on Monday. — *AP*

## LOW-KEY | EVENT

Families that reunite for Christmas celebrated apart this yr

## Services move online, people stay home

Rome, Dec. 26: Families that usually reunite on Christmas over a hearty, lingering meal celebrated apart Friday, services shifted online, and gift exchanges were low-key in one of the most unusual and subdued holiday seasons in decades.

The Coronavirus left almost no one unaffected. Patricia Hager, 60, delivered homemade caramel rolls for breakfast to family and friends in Bismarck, North Dakota, a state that didn't get hit until later in the pandemic but was struck hard.

It seemed every time she opened her door this holiday season, someone had left smoked salmon, baskets of nuts or cookies.

"This year Christmas love is expressed at the door," she said.

"I'm glad that people will probably be with us next year with the vaccines. I can give up anything for that." With a child due in February, Song Ju-hyeon of Paju, South Korea, near Seoul, said home is the only place she feels safe.

The government reported 1,241 new cases Friday, a new daily record for the country. "It doesn't feel like Christmas anyway, there's no carols being played on the streets," she said. "It's Christmas," the *Daily Nation* newspaper declared in Kenya, where a surge in cases led to doctors ending a brief strike Christmas Eve.

● **POPE FRANCIS delivered his Christmas blessing from inside the Vatican, breaking with his traditional speech from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica to tens of thousands in St. Peter's Square.**

Celebrations were muted in the East African hub as a curfew prevented overnight church vigils.

Pope Francis delivered his Christmas blessing from inside the Vatican, breaking with his traditional speech from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica to tens of thousands in St. Peter's Square. Tourism in Italy has virtually vanished and the government's

Coronavirus restrictions for the holidays foiled any plans by locals to flock to the square. Citing a cause for optimism, Francis said the development of Covid-19 vaccines shines "lights of hope" on the world.

In a passionate appeal to leaders, businesses and international organisations, he said they must ensure that the most vulnerable and needy in the pandemic be first in line to receive the vaccine. Bells rang out around Bethlehem as the traditional birthplace of Jesus celebrated.

But the closure of Israel's international airport to foreign tourists, along with Palestinian restrictions banning intercity travel in the are-

as they administer in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, kept visitors away.

In Beijing, official churches abruptly cancelled Mass after China's capital was put on high alert following two confirmed Covid-19 cases last week. Two new asymptomatic cases were reported Friday. With economies reeling around the world, it wasn't a year of lavish gifts.

Robin Synniewski of Middlesex County, New Jersey, was furloughed twice from her job serving school lunches and is now on reduced hours as her husband retires next week as a trash collector and her daughter wrestles with student debt. — *AP*







## OUR CRITIC'S RATING

Outstanding ★★★★★ | Great ★★★★ | Good ★★★ | Okay ★★ | Poor ★ | Truly Terrible TT

## The burden of proof is hers alone

## Criminal Justice: Behind Closed Doors

**CAST:** Kirti Kulhari, Pankaj Tripathi, Jisshu Sengupta, Adrija Sinha, Anupriya Goenka, Mita Vashisht, Ashish Vidyarthi, Deepti Naval, Khushboo Atre, Kalyanee Mulay, Shilpa Shukla

**DIRECTOR:** Rohan Sippy and Arjun Mukherjee

**STREAMING ON:** Disney+ Hotstar

**RATING:** ★★★★★

SUPARNA SHARMA

**M**urder is a crime against the Union of India and it is designed to rise to defend itself.

Marital sexual abuse is not a crime. Not in the eyes of the Union of India. It is trained not to react.

*Criminal Justice: Behind Closed Doors* is an eight-part series that conducts the forensic examination of our *purush-pradhan samaaj* and some of its institutions while it investigates a murder.

As the series goes about interrogating the accused, digs into the actions and personality of the victim, it lays bare the most horrific abuse that goes on in the privacy of homes, behind bedroom doors, where nightly assaults leave no scars.

**B**ikram Chandra (Jisshu Sengupta) is a well-regarded, well-heeled lawyer who fights the cases of the dispossessed. He is also a devoted husband to Anu Chandra (Kirti Kulhari) who is a quiet, even strange sort. She's forgetful, nervous, in constant need of reminders and calming pills.

Outwardly it seems like a straight-

forward crime involving a husband, a wife and an eyewitness.

But the series, sharply tuned to catch overt misogyny and micro sexism of the police force, the legal system and the family, takes us into confidence right at the beginning. It shows us the obsessive, controlling actions of one and the fear-stricken jitters of another, thus casting us in the role of an anxious juror who is the keeper of a secret. But things are kept suitably ambiguous, everything is not made clear — his actions and hers, their motivations. This adds an element of desperate urgency for us to get to the truth.

Like us, Bikram and Anu's 13-year-old daughter Rhea (Adrija Sinha), an eyewitness to what happened that night and on several other nights, knows some things for sure but is confused about others.

*Criminal Justice: Behind Closed Doors* is in slow-burn mode.

While it keeps its main focus on unravelling what happened, it spends a considerable amount of time on the tangents that spring from this one crime, and the tributaries that join it.

After the murder is reported and the wheels of the criminal justice system start to move, an ecosystem begins to take shape for several to feed off and benefit from.

Lawyers are either out to earn some money or to bolster their reputation while restoring the balance of patriarchy and earn kudos from brother lawyers.

Cops want to earn brownie points or make money.

Jail inmates need a friend or a foe. Family members and friends pick sides.

This entire ecosystem of criminal justice is pivoted on one inherent belief — of man's innate goodness. Running parallel to this is the belief that

women are evil.

And

if they prove that they are not, then they are either wrong, misguided or mad.

Thus, the system is

designed to give the man the benefit of the doubt and make the woman carry the burden of proof, even when she is the victim.

Thankfully, *Criminal Justice* is not simple minded. Everything is layered here, everyone carries patches of grey. There is no innocent, blemish-free victim here.

There's the accused who doesn't speak, not even in her own defence, and like her lawyers — Madhav Mishra (Pankaj Tripathi), Nikhat Hussain (Anupriya Goenka) — her silence hassles us, especially because we know what happened. And then we are told that she is flawed.

*Criminal Justice* challenges us, makes us struggle to decide which side we are on even as we watch active misogyny at play that taints everything, from evidence collection and interrogation to what gets asked and how it gets presented in the media. We see whose character the system is interested in "exposing" and whose character it would rather not discuss.

The show ventures behind several closed doors, including those of several bedrooms, the jail and the chambers of powerful lawyers. Through three couples — cops Gauri (Kalyanee Mulay) and Pradhan (Ajeet Singh Palawat), and advocate Madhav and his adorable wife Ratna (Khushboo Atre), Nikhat's ammi and abbu — we see varying degrees of sexism.

But it's the marriage of the Chandras that shows us, in disturbing detail, how marital abuse works. How the perfect son, brother, lawyer, husband exorcises all his demons and complexes when bedroom doors are shut. How fine that crack between words and actions is.

"I love you, I will take care of you." *Criminal Justice* show how these sweet, simple words get weaponised, disappointment, disapproval and

anger is used to cover abuse, and a woman's belief in herself, her abilities is shaken to the core, so much so that till the very end she thinks she deserved it.

The second season of *Criminal Justice*, which is based almost verbatim on the 2009 BBC series, carries along a few worthies from the first season — advocates Madhav Mishra, Nikhat Hussain (Anupriya Goenka), and Mandira Mathur (Mita Vashisht), the high-powered corporate lawyer.

That is partly because that's how it was in the BBC series but also because Pankaj Tripathi now has the power to make us smile everytime he is on screen. Here, however, he takes a courteous step back, letting the women around him shine.

Anupriya Goenka is efficient but Khushboo Atre, who plays his adorable wife, insistent on initiating conjugal ties, is very good. Kirti Kulhari's silent, stoic but also quaking and crying performance is the series' centrepiece. She deserves awards just for the litres of tears she has shed here.

Mita Vashisht has always had a powerful presence on screen. Though here she sometimes projects more than is required, as if she can't do light touch, she makes her presence felt as the mover-shaker. Matching her heavy footprint is the male lawyer she recruits, played by Ashish Vidyarthi.

Ajeet Singh Palawat, who plays the cop Pradhan, is excellent. Deepti Naval brings a lot of class and manages to anchor this gritty crime-court room-jail drama.

Jisshu Sengupta has very few scenes and yet his presence lingers throughout. Much like the insidiousness of sexual abuse, long after a controlling partner is gone, his noose-like, suffocating grip remains.

## An entertaining meta experience

## AK vs AK

**CAST:** Anil Kapoor, Anurag Kashyap, Yogita Bihani, Sonam Kapoor, Harshvardhan Kapoor

**DIRECTOR:** Vikramaditya Motwane

**STREAMING ON:** Netflix

**RATING:** ★★★

SUPARNA SHARMA

**I** have always worried, rather needlessly up until now, at having to use the word "meta". I have always sensed a distinctive pretentiousness to it and despite looking up its meaning a hundred times, it has never sat well with me.

Meta means being self-referential, having and showing explicit awareness of oneself. And there really is no other way to describe *AK vs AK* except as a major meta experience and experiment.

Thankfully, unlike the word, the film is not just hugely entertaining but is also a sharp commentary on our current voyeuristic state of being.

**I**n *AK vs AK*, actor Anil Kapoor and director Anurag Kashyap are playing themselves, their "characters" generously and

wickedly embellished by their real-life professional glories and glitches, as well as their personality traits and reputations.

Kashyap is a director who is riding a high after some critically acclaimed films and moves around with a camera constantly filming him.

One Yogita is shooting a film school documentary on the best of Indian cinema and the first episode is on him. "*Mere baad sab gobbar hai*," he tells Anil Kapoor who is telling him that he is keen to work with him.

But Kashyap still cradles a 17-year-old grouse and reminds Kapoor how her turned down his dream project. And now, he tells Kapoor, "I have now moved on. And in any case, you are no longer hero material. You are playing grandfather in *Dil Dhadakne Do*." He says all this while texting. He's probably in the midst of another Twitter spat.

This being the mood before the two appear before an audience for a panel discussion, it takes just a few more insults and a glass of water to bring the two to a head-on collision.

A full-blown fight ensues and the industry takes sides. Anil Kapoor the star emerges as the winner and Kashyap sinks. And then he plots.

Kashyap barges into Anil Kapoor's set one day and then into his vanity van with the camera



lady in tow saying he is shooting a hostage thriller and Kapoor now has to look for his daughter, Sonam, who has been kidnapped.

He Facetimes a hooded man who has Sonam Kapoor bound, gagged and weeping.

Kashyap insists that Kapoor adhere to his rules if he wants to see his daughter alive, and that he has to find her by sunrise.

No cops, no outsiders, camera won't be switched off, all calls have to be on speaker mode and it's 14 hours to sunrise.

What follows are sequences that showcase how powerful and insidious reel life is — even when an actor wants to shed it, it won't

leave them.

Some of these scenes, like the one in a police station, are funny, while others, where Kapoor is asked to dance for a bit of information, are scathing.

The idea for *AK vs AK* and to pull off its script required both — megalomania and humility. So, perhaps, it is appropriate that it's written by Anurag Kashyap. The writing is sharp, political, funny, and the jokes are often on Kashyap himself.

While the dizzy, hand-held camera gives a reality *waali* feeling to *AK vs AK*, two interesting things happen simultaneously in the film — one

is entertainment that draws all its power, jokes and insults from the real lives of these two Bollywood personalities, and the other is us, the viewer, cringing at the gleeful voyeurism of people who don't see the reality and trauma of Kapoor, but treat it as an act, a performance.

The film recruits most of Anil Kapoor's family members and some of Kashyap's, but sometimes it is too made-up. This is because while the characters are real, Kapoor and Kashyap's silly fight, rivalry is not. It is not like, say, watching Rekha and Jaya fight over Amitabh Bachchan in *Silsila*.

There is a fakeness to it. And that is why, for a while in the middle, the film, which is mostly *faltu* fun, becomes a bit tedious and dull. But then a chase is thrown in, followed by a twist.

*AK vs AK* is a clever plot executed very well by director Vikramaditya Motwane and can be put down as a fun milestone of lockdown creativity.

Both Anurag and Anil Kapoor are very good and convincing. While Kashyap exudes a certain creepy vibe laced with arrogance, Kapoor again reminds us of how good he is. While he is obviously acting, he has to swing between "acting" and "reality", or be meta within meta. That requires swag. And he still has it.

## In 'Copperfield,' Iannucci brings Dickens to life

JAKE COYLE

**I**t's not hard to draw a straight line from Charles Dickens to Armando Iannucci. In each there's a passion for human frailty and absurdity, and, above all, a richness of people. Nobody filled pages with a vivid cast of characters like Dickens, so who better to take a shot at "David Copperfield" than the man behind the teeming ensembles of "*Veep*," "*In the Loop*" and "*The Death of Stalin*"?

In his third film as director, following his farce of bumbling and bloody Kremlin power struggles, Iannucci has turned to Dickens' most quintessential and autobiographical novel with the same zeal he previously reserved for political parody. "*The Personal History of David Copperfield*" is one of the more lively, colorful and whimsical Victorian costume dramas you're likely to see. It's a movie flowing with fresh air, which isn't something normally said of adaptations of 700-something-page books.

Iannucci, famed for his improvisational style and expetive-laden barrages, clearly finds in Dickens a writer simpatico in fondness for language and taste for multitudes. In many ways, they make a good match, with Iannucci's more anarchic, free-wheeling style animating the wit and idiosyncrasies of Dickens' tome.

And just as in the absurdly deep bench of "*Veep*," casting has made a difference. Dev Patel plays Copperfield, once out of childhood (as a boy, he's played by compelling youngsters Jairaj Varsani and Ranveer Jaiswal), with wide-eyed wonder, always alive to the world around him, if generally

## The Personal History of David Copperfield

**CAST:** Dev Patel, Aneurin Barnard, Peter Capaldi, Morfydd Clark, Daisy Mary Cooper, Rosalind Eleazar, Hugh Laurie, Tilda Swinton

**DIRECTOR:** Armando Iannucci

**Playing in theatres**

**RATING:** ★★★

rather mystified by it. Still, the film belongs largely to the overall cast, including Tilda Swinton, as David's aunt Betsey Trotwood; Hugh Laurie as the mentally ill, King Charles I-obsessed Mr. Dick; Peter Capaldi as the creditor-evading Wilkins Micawber; Rosalind Eleazar as the romantic interest Agnes Wickfield; Benedict Wong as the wine-swilling Mr. Wickfield; Ben Whishaw as the plotting Uriah Heep.

The performers, a distinctly multicultural cast, add considerably to the vibrancy of the film, collectively making a fairly irrefutable argument for colorblind casting, for anyone who needs one.

But while "*The Personal History of David Copperfield*" keeps a restless, brisk pace as it rushes through Copperfield's life, Iannucci and his co-writer Simon Blackwell arrange the film in such distinct chapters that the movie feels more like a litany of scenes than the dramatic evolution of a young man. Some sections are better than others. The episode with Laurie and Swinton at their country home, flying kites and chasing away donkeys, is so good that you want a whole film of them. —AP



## Wonder Woman combats a huckster's rise in 1984

JAKE COYLE

**I**f you're going to make a movie about wish fulfillment, 1980s America is about as good as you can do for a setting outside the Arabian Desert.

"*Wonder Woman 1984*," Patty Jenkins' time-traveling sequel to 2017's record-setting "*Wonder Woman*," shuttles Gal Gadot's warrior to the era of Regan economics, parachute pants and "Rio." All have their cameos in "Wonder Woman 1984," a superhero parable of greed and fanny packs with pointed references to today.

Two movies in, it's clear that Jenkins and DC Comics have a thankfully different concept for Wonder Woman as a film franchise. Like its predecessor, "*Wonder Woman 1984*" is spirited, purposeful and blessedly lacking in grandiosity. And both films place Wonder Woman not under the burdensome heft of world building or even universe saving — or at least Gadot comes across as too resplendently regal to ever seem weighed down. She's more a moral and muscular counterweight to ego-driven male misdirections, steering history through the repeating pitfalls of megalomaniacs intoxicated by power.

Last time, it was German and British military leaders under the sway of Ares, the god of war. This time, it's a struggling entre-

## Wonder Woman 1984

**CAST:** Gal Gadot, Chris Pine, Kristen Wiig, Pedro Pascal, Robin Wright, Connie Nielsen

**DIRECTOR:** Patty Jenkins

**Playing in theatres**

**RATING:** ★★★★★

preneur/TV personality who, in stealing an ancient gem — the "dream stone" — from the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. (where Gadot's Diana now works), gains the power to grant wishes. Max Lord (Pedro Pascal) goes from deadbeat dad to despot, turning into a conman of mythical dimensions. He's a diabolical genie without a bottle, or to paraphrase Robin Williams's Aladdin, he's got phenomenal cosmic powers sans the itty, bitty living space.

A snake oil salesman who plagues cravings while stealing everything else is, you might say, a touch timely. "*Wonder Woman 1984*" plays up its Trump critique about as much as it does its '80s style. In one scene, Steve Trevor (Chris Pine), summoned from the grave by Diana's own wish while holding the gem, giddily tries on all the period-appropriate clothing like Ken's fashion show in "Toy Story 3." Best in the first "*Wonder Woman*" were the screwball fish-out-of-water scenes of Diana experiencing

London with Trevor; this time the roles are reversed, and the charm a little less.

What does Max's rise have to do with Wonder Woman? A huckster is a kind of perfect foil to Diana, conceived from the start as a force for truth. (Her lasso of truth was modeled after the polygraph, an invention of Wonder Woman creator William Moulton Marston.) Jenkins opens the film with an Amazonian flashback to an obstacle course race on the island of Themyscira where a young Diana learns the value of truth. "No true hero is born from lies," says Antiope (Robin Wright).

The dream stone transforms another, too: Barbara Minerva, a meek archeologist played by Kristen Wiig. Awkward in heels and most everything else, she mutters that she'd like to be more like Diana when holding the stone, setting off a metamorphosis that playfully remakes Wiig's typical screen presence, and creates another foe for Wonder Woman.

Just as in "*Wonder Woman*," I think Jenkins has left some opportunities on the table. The first film, despite being set in 1918 during WWI, omitted any real interaction with the era's then-flourishing women's rights movement — a vital source of inspiration to Marston. Likewise, "*Wonder Woman 1984*" — more focused on "greed is good" decade and its contemporary resonances — doesn't much pause to interro-

gate the 1980s' gender imbalances. Like the last movie, "*Wonder Woman 1984*" becomes consumed by its (admittedly quite good) antagonist. It drags in the third act in a messy White House battle and a prolonged finale.

But I still like these movies more than most superhero films. They feel both campier and more real than Marvel movies — more like the page-turning thrill of a comic book. The ambitions of "Wonder Woman 1984" may be just outside its grasp, but it seldom feels predestined or predictable — a preciously rare commodity in the genre.

As its characters awaken to their powers, turning from recognizable people to monsters, the film keeps changing shape, enlarging as it goes. Jenkins' pop cinema craft is limber and lucid. Pascal's performance, more sweet than sinister, is scintillatingly over the top.

Premiering in theaters and on HBO Max in North America, "*Wonder Woman 1984*" will close out a year largely absent of superheroes in a release plan that has upended the film industry. It's a very big film heading primarily to the small screen, at a time when the pandemic has made the escapist, popcorn-eating moviegoing that superhero movies are made for impossible, or nearly so. That makes "*Wonder Woman 1984*" a nostalgia act in more ways than one.

—AP



