

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
KARIMNAGAR | TUESDAY | 8 DECEMBER 2020



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State to credit Rythu Bandhu from Dec. 27

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 7

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao has announced that financial assistance under Rythu Bandhu will be deposited into the accounts of the farmers from December 27 for the Rabi season.

During a review meeting on distribution of farm assistance of ₹5,000 per acre for the Rabi season to each farmer in the state on Monday, Rao instructed officials to ensure that no farmer from the state should be denied assistance under Rythu Bandhu Scheme.

He directed the authorities of the finance department to release ₹73,000 crore, which was required to deposit the farm assistance under the scheme to around 58.33 lakh farmers.

The Chief Minister told the authorities that the assistance should begin with small and marginal farmers and then within 10 days it should be given



K. Chandrashekar Rao

to farmers having large extent of agriculture holdings.

Rao urged the officials to prepare a schedule so that the benefit of farm assistance would reach each and every farmer of Telangana. The state government has been extending ₹5,000 per acre without any ceiling on the extent of land holding of the farmers.

Agriculture minister S. Niranjana Reddy, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, Principal Secretary of Finance Ramakrishna Rao, Principal Secretary of Agriculture B. Janardhan Reddy, and others participated.

HM tells states to keep peace

Bharat Bandh today; protesters told to adhere to Covid-19 protocols

DC CORRESPONDENTS
NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

In view of Tuesday's Bharat Bandh by various farmer unions, the home ministry is closely co-ordinating with all States and Union Territories to ensure that law and order is maintained. In a countrywide advisory, it said states and UT administrations must ensure that the Covid-19 guidelines issued with regard to health and social distancing are strictly followed.

The farmers have been camping along Delhi's borders in large numbers for more than 10 days now.

With massive protests at Delhi's borders continuing for the last 12 days, the protesting farmers at the Singhu border urged peace, and clarified that no shops or establishments will be forcibly closed on account of the bandh. "There will be a complete 'Bharat Bandh' till 3 pm on Tuesday, but emergency services will be allowed," farmers' leader Balbir Singh Rajwala said. Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesman Rakesh Tikait said that "tomorrow's

Bharat Bandh is from 11 am to 3 pm. It is a symbolic protest. We will begin at 11 am so everyone can reach office on time... Services such as ambulances, even weddings, can go on. People can show their card and leave".

Home ministry officials said they were in constant touch with their counterparts in different states to ensure that the strike remains largely peaceful and any kind of violence can be avoided. They added that adequate personnel from central paramilitary force have also been deployed so that these can be rushed at a short notice in case of an eventuality.

"All necessary arrangements have been put in place and we feel that the strike call will remain peaceful. The situation is being constantly monitored and all states have also been asked to make all necessary law and order arrangements," a senior Ministry official added.

Sources claimed that farmers were likely to further intensify their agitation in case the issue is not resolved at the earliest.



Wrestler Kartar Singh, hockey player Rajbir Kaur, Olympics gold medalist hockey player Gurmail Singh and other sportspersons march towards Rashtrapati Bhavan to return their awards to the President in protest against the new farm laws, in New Delhi, on Monday.

— PTI

Roads, highways blocked in TS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 7

Road blockades within cities and on highways of Telangana, apart from rallies and protests, will mark the Bharat Bandh on Tuesday by farmers in protest against "anti-farmer laws" passed by the Centre. The bandh is being

extensively supported by ruling TRS, Opposition Congress and Left parties, several trade and employees' unions in addition to various other organisations.

The Bharat Bandh will start at 8 am on Tuesday and will be in force up to 3 pm across the state. Several trade, transport

and auto workers' unions are also extending support to the farmers' call for bandh.

As a result, those wanting to travel on roads may face difficulties.

Telangana police have made elaborate security arrangements to prevent any untoward incidents in the state.

DHARMADHIKARI PANEL REPORT ON POWER STAFF FINAL, RULES SC

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

The Supreme Court on Monday said that the allocation of staff between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh by Justice D.M. Dharmadhikari committee is final and the same can't be challenged by anyone including employees and officers before any judicial fora.

Holding that the staff allocation by the committee is final, Justice Ashok Bhushan heading a bench also comprising Justice M.R. Shah in a judgement pronounced today said, "...we clarify that the One-Man Committee having completed the process of allocation, the said allocation cannot be challenged by any employee or officer or any utility before any forum."

Insofar as the allocation made by the One-Man Committee, the court said, "no objection or challenge by any employee or officer is entertainable".

The court slammed the doors on any attempt to challenge Justice Dharmadhikari one man committee report on distribution of staff between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh post reorganization of AP and carving out of Telangana.

■ Page 2: Power utilities can decide on claims: SC

Vijayashanti, Gudur in BJP

IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 7

Actor-turned-politician Vijayashanti alias Ramulamma and TPCC treasurer Gudur Narayan Reddy continued the migration of Congress leaders to the BJP. They joined the BJP on Monday in the presence of party president J.P. Nadda. Vijayashanti is a former PCC campaign committee chairman and a former MP.

BJP national general secretary Arun Singh welcomed Vijayashanti into the BJP. Speaking to media at the BJP national office, the former MP said, "My political career started with the BJP on January 26, 1998. For the formation of a separate state, I resigned from the BJP and established Thalli Telangana in the year 2005," she

recalled. After 15 years, I have rejoined my mother party. I am happy to return."

"I was the first to fight for formation of Telangana before K. Chandrashekar Rao," the former MP said.

Rao could not tolerate anyone apart from himself in the same position. Telangana is leading in corruption across India, she said slamming the CM.

"In the coming days the KCR government is going to collapse. I will expose all the corruption done by the state government with evidence before the people of Telangana," she said. She expressed confidence about her position in the BJP and said in 2023, the BJP will form the government in Telangana.

■ Page 2: BJP has info of KCR's frauds: Bandi



BJP president J.P. Nadda welcomes actor-turned-politician Vijayashanti in the presence of Union minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy.

SC faults Centre for going ahead with Central Vista

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

The Supreme Court on Monday pulled up the Centre for going ahead with its Central Vista project despite the challenge to the ₹20,000-crore project pending before it, but allowed the foundation-laying of a new Parliament building by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday, December 10, after the Centre assured the court that no construction or demolition work would be done till the case is finally decided.

"We have shown deference to you and expected that you will act in a prudent manner. The same deference should be shown to the court and there should be no demolition, nor construction nor any felling of trees," said Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, who headed a bench that also comprised Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Sanjiv Khanna.

The court took suo motu cognisance of the activities linked to the Central Vista project, including the construction of a new Parliament building, saying: "We have listed this matter because of certain developments we came across in the public domain. We never thought you will go ahead so aggressively with the construction. The fact that there is no stay does not mean you can go ahead with everything," the bench told solicitor-general Tushar Mehta as the matter was taken up for hearing Monday morning.

Mehta sought a day's time to take instructions in the matter, but the court insisted on the Centre's views being conveyed in just five minutes, and adjourned the hearing until then.

Taking on record a statement by the solicitor-general that "there will be no construction activity of any nature on the concerned site(s) nor demolition of any

structure will be done, including the further translocation of tree(s) will be kept in abeyance, until the pronouncement of the judgment in all these cases", the court said, but permitted the authorities to "continue with procedural processes without altering the status of the site(s) in question in any manner, including to continue with the scheduled programme of foundation stone-laying on December 10, 2020."

The Central Vista area in Lutyens' Delhi houses iconic buildings like North and South Blocks of the Central Secretariat, Parliament House, Rashtrapati Bhavan and India Gate.

The petitioners before the Supreme Court have challenged a notification issued by the Delhi Development Authority on December 21, 2019 on the changes in land use for the area's redevelopment. The court had reserved its ruling on November 5.

BIOTECH, SERUM APPLY FOR EMERGENCY NOD TO VACCINE

New Delhi, Dec. 7: After Pfizer, Serum Institute, and Hyderabad-based pharmaceutical firm Bharat Biotech on Monday applied to the central drug regulator seeking emergency use authorisation for its Covid vaccine Covaxin, official sources said. Covaxin is being indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

The Hyderabad-based firm is conducting phase-3 clinical trial of its vaccine in around 25 places, including Delhi, Mumbai, Patna and Lucknow. The firm, while applying for the phase-3 trial, had stated that the vaccine was well-tolerated in all dose groups and no serious adverse events have been reported.

J&K seeks annulment of controversial Roshni Act

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, DEC. 7

In what seems like a bizarre move but may well be an afterthought to protect its own, the Jammu and Kashmir government has sought a review of the annulment of a 2001 controversial land act by the high court, asserting that a large number of people, including landless cultivators and those residing in modest dwellings, will suffer.

On October 9, the court had in its judgment termed the Jammu and Kashmir state land (Vesting of Ownership to Occupants) Act, 2001, commonly known as 'Roshni Act', which granted ownership of state land to occupants as "illegal, unconstitutional and unsustainable".

The court also ordered a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) investigation, asking that within one month identities of those who have derived benefit under the Roshni Act, including ministers, legislators,

bureaucrats, government officials, police officers and businessmen, their relatives or persons holding benami for them, be made public.

Following the order, the Union Territory government had on November 3 declared all mutations taken under Roshni Act as "null and void" and released the first list of beneficiaries of alleged illegal mutations. But the move stirred a political controversy as several Opposition leaders, including former chief minister Farooq Abdullah, were shown as land grabbers, a charge they vehemently denied.

The BJP had described the Roshni Act as "land jihad" and the government's decision declaring it null and void as a "surgical strike".

However, subsequent lists revealed several serving and former bureaucrats, police officers as well as political activists and businessmen owing allegiance to the BJP or supporting outfits as alleged beneficiaries of the

act. And now Nazir Ahmad Thakur, special secretary with the J&K revenue department, has in the review petition on behalf of the J&K government pleaded for "modifying" the October 9 judgment. The petition says that a large number of common people, including landless cultivators and individuals "who are themselves residing in dwellings on small areas but are unfortunately clubbed along with rich and wealthy land grabbers, who have obtained a title over state land through the provisions of the now struck Act", will suffer.

The review petition calls on the court to distinguish between the two classes of people and also urged it to allow the government to formulate an appropriate mechanism to enable people like landless cultivators and single dwelling owners to continue to remain in possession of their land, subject to appropriate ceiling and on payment at appropriate rates.

Project involves 25 seats where BJP won big time

GHMC awaits nod for nala work

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 7

With the BJP winning over 25 divisions in flood-affected areas during the recently concluded Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections, officials find themselves caught in a Catch 22 situation.

They are waiting for a signal from the state government whether or not to execute the Strategic Nala Development Plan (SNDP). The government developing eastern parts of the city will be a double-edged sword. When the state gov-

● **THEY ARE** waiting for a signal from the state government whether or not to execute the Strategic Nala Development Plan (SNDP).

● **THE GOVERNMENT** developing eastern parts of the city will be a double-edged sword. When the state government decided on SNDP for this part of the city, its wards and constituencies were represented by sitting TRS corporators and MLAs.

● **NOW, HOWEVER**, the BJP has gone on to sweep 25 divisions in the region

for widening nalas and strengthening them will turn a challenge. It was one of the prime reasons for BJP's victory in the east zone. Sources say if the project is not executed, BJP will certainly make noise and blame the government for not widening the nalas and strengthening them by removing encroachments. If the government does develop the drains, BJP will claim the credit for it and encash the same in the 2023 assembly elections.

■ Page 2: New corporators hatch plan to corner govt

ernment decided on SNDP for this part of the city, its wards and constituencies were represented by sitting TRS corporators and MLAs. Now, however, BJP

has gone on to sweep 25 divisions in the region, which are mostly flood-hit areas. According to highly placed sources, the project

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Bahula Ashtami till 5.12 pm
Star: Pubba till 1.43 pm
Variyam: 8.32 pm to 10.03 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.50 am to 9.34 am; 10.49 pm to 11.41 pm
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm
HILARI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Aakhir 22, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.30 am
Zohar: 12.18 pm
Asar: 4.06 pm
Maghrib: 5.48 pm
Isha: 7.01 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.34 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.41 PM
MOONRISE TODAY NA
MOONSET TOMORROW 12.49 AM

COUNTER POINT



No food today... in support of farmers' Bharat Bandh!

IN BRIEF

Mystery disease in Eluru spreads

Eluru: The mysterious illness continued to spread panic in Eluru in West Godavari district, with the number of cases increasing to nearly 450 on Monday. Out of this, 263 patients were discharged after recovery, while 171 are being treated at local government hospitals. Seventeen critically-ill patients were sent to Vijayawada for better medical care. Majority of the people infected with the unknown pathogen have recovered.

CREDIT | GAME

Project involves 25 seats where BJP won big time

GHMC awaits nod for nala work

SHORT TAKES

NEW CORPORATORS
HATCH PLAN TO
CORNER GOVT

From Page 1

State government is thus caught between the devil and deep sea. The newly BJP corporators from Mansoorabad, Hayatnagar, B.N. Reddy Nagar, L. B. Nagar, Vanasthalipuram, Hastinapuram, Champapet, Lingojiguda, Saroornagar, Rama Krishna Puram, Kothapet, Chaitanyapuri, Gaddiannaram, Ramanthapur, Habshiguda and other divisions have already drafted an action plan to expose the government and derive political mileage. Sources say since most employees reside in L. B. Nagar and Uppal zones, their anti-government trend has become clear with the election result. They too might raise their voice if distribution of cash relief is not completed in the flood-affected areas. This would turn out to be dangerous for sitting TRS MLAs in L. B. Nagar and Uppal assembly constituencies. They might no more enjoy power in the areas with main opposition BJP winning all divisions in L. B. Nagar and few of them in Uppal constituency.

Sources, however, maintain that development activities will run smoothly in western, southern and northern parts of the city due to the one-sided verdict given to TRS and MIM. It is expected that officials of GHMC, Hyderabad Road Development Corporation Limited (HRDCL) and other nodal agencies will only execute works accorded to them by the state government. Officials say they are just executing agencies, it is up to political parties to decide where developmental activities should happen. They maintain that they are ready with the ₹250 crore SNPD project and are awaiting state government's nod to execute it.

MIN GIVES CASH
HELP TO TIGER
VICTIM FAMILIES

Komaram Bheem Asifabad: Forest minister Allola Indrakaran Reddy visited the villages where tigers attacked and killed two Adivasis in sperate incidents on Monday.

He announced ₹25,000, compensation to each of the victims families from ITDA, Utmoor, and ₹20,000 from the TRS party. He also announced ₹10,000 as his help to each of the victims family.

He said that the job of a watcher will be given to one of the family members of the victims and promised them 2BHK houses. The minister said that 40 forest staff, from other forest ranges, will be deputed as an additional force in Penchikalpet mandal where the movement of tigers is high. 70 new camera traps will be set up at various locations.

Poll impact: GHMC to shift projects to HMDA

Authority to work on Khajaguda tunnel and other projects

MADHY DEEKSHITH | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 7

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) is contemplating to hand over Khajaguda tunnel, 8.5 km double-decker elevated skyway, from Paradise to Kandlakoya along National Highway 44 on the Outer Ring Road (ORR) and other projects to Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA). Officials said that the decision was a direct impact on GHMC polls to minimise political interference.

According to GHMC officials, a 502.9-metre long tunnel is planned as part of a long-term measure to develop a new route connecting Inorbit Mall to Chitrapuri Colony via Hyderabad Knowledge City in order to substan-

tially ease traffic movement in Gachibowli junction. The new route development includes a tunnel, elevated corridor, loop and approach and down ramps, all being taken up at an estimated cost of ₹875 crore.

Of that ₹775 crore will be used for civil works, including about ₹300 crore for construction of the tunnel, while ₹100 crore goes for land acquisition. The 502.9-metre facility, in fact, gets bifurcated into two independent tunnels facilitating bilateral traffic flow Inorbit Mall to Khajaguda end and vice-versa.

Each independent tunnel will be 19 metres wide. The approach ramps will be passing over Khajaguda junction towards Chitrapuri Colony to avoid any traffic conflict at the junction. On the Inorbit Mall end, approach ramps will be an elevated facili-

● **EACH INDEPENDENT** tunnel will be 19 metres wide. The approach ramps will be passing over Khajaguda junction towards Chitrapuri Colony to avoid any traffic conflict at the junction. On the Inorbit Mall end, approach ramps will be an elevated facilitating entry into the tunnel.

tating entry into the tunnel. This apart, two double-decker elevated skyways will be also handed over to HMDA, which also includes the land acquisition process, since all three projects are not included in the Strategic Road Development Plan (SRDP) project.

A 18.5 kms double-decker elevated skyway from Paradise to Kandlakoya along National Highway 44 on the Outer Ring Road

(ORR), is set to take shape soon. It will provide compatibility for a future Metro Rail project on the same pier.

A senior GHMC official, on condition of anonymity, said that the civic body would complete all ongoing projects too if the State government releases ₹10,000 crore from the budget as promised for Hyderabad urban agglomeration. However, the official said that Khajaguda and other two double-decker elevated corridors, which would cost around ₹6,700 crore, will be executed either by TSIC or HMDA based on the decision taken by the government, since both the nodal agencies are self-sustainable. The official said that if the projects will be executed by the GHMC it would face too many complications, primarily political interference.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivaraj Singh Chouhan during a press conference at the state BJP office in Nampally on Monday.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

Shivraj slams TRS, Cong for provoking farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, DEC. 7

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan slammed the opposition parties for provoking farmers and misleading them.

Addressing a press conference at the state BJP office here on Monday, he said that Congress' boat was sinking, which was the reason they were trying to save themselves by misleading farmers. He slammed the hypocrisy of Congress, DMK, AAP, SP, Akali Dal, TMC and Left parties on farm laws. Chouhan recalled that NCP chief Sharad Pawar

● **THE MADHYA Pradesh** Chief Minister said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had increased the MSP for farmers of all produce, unlike their sorry plight during Congress regimes.

had written to him in 2011, "There's need to amend APMC Act to encourage private sector investment in marketing, infrastructure and to provide alternate competitive marketing channels in the overall interest of farmers, consumers and agri-trade." He reminded that former prime minister

Manmohan Singh also supported the new laws, which he tried during his tenure. He questioned Manmohan Singh's U-turn on the Farmers Act. He said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had increased the MSP for farmers of all produce, unlike their sorry plight during Congress regimes.

The veteran leader said that TRS was also misleading farmers because it was now scared of the rising popularity of BJP and Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao was spreading wrong propaganda against the Union Government only to salvage his political career.

Power utilities can decide on claims: SC

From Page 1

“We make it clear that the One-Man Committee was entrusted only with distribution of personnel between the two States, which distribution has been finalised by the One-Man Committee,” the Supreme Court said.

On the applications raising the plea relating to salaries and allowances, the court said, “They need no consideration in these proceedings and employees of power utilities are free to adjudicate their claims before appropriate forum in accordance with law”

Having held that that the report by Justice Dharmadhikari on staff distribution between two States is final and non-challengeable, the court said, “We have found no

● **SC VERDICT** came on petitions by Telangana Power Utilities, certain employees and employees' associations challenging the June 20, 2020, concluding report by the One-Man Committee.

merit in the objections to One-Man Committee's Concluding Report dated 20.06.2020 it is obligatory for power utilities of both the States and all concerned to carry out and implement the directions of the One-Man Committee Report.”

The top court verdict came on petitions by Telangana Power Utilities, certain employees and employees' associations challenging the June 20, 2020, concluding report by the One-Man Committee.

The SC noted that in the erstwhile state, the power utilities were Andhra Pradesh Generation Corporation, Andhra Pradesh Transmission Corporation and four Power Distribution Companies — Eastern, Southern, Central and Northern DISCOMS. By three Andhra Pradesh government orders issued on May 29, 2014, for distribution companies, generation companies and transmission Corporation, the assets and liabilities of the corporations and companies were to be apportioned between the two new States. However, the dispute arose after power utilities of the two newly formed states could not arrive at any consensus with regard to modalities for allocation and distribution of personnel.

SERIOUS | CONCERN

Excise department officials have busted drug rackets and arrested over 10 persons in last two months

Middlemen gone, now techies in narcotics trade

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC HYDERABAD, DEC. 7

The shortage in supplies of drugs, particularly ganja, during the Covid-19 lockdown appears to have taken the middlemen out of the equation, with techies and students, who are now peddling the stash directly from suppliers. The State Excise department alone has arrested 10 such individuals in the last two months. The alarming rate of drug busts recently in the city has the authorities concerned.

With the bulk of clientele purchasing drugs coming predominantly from the IT sector, police officials are calling on employers also to keep an eye on other aspects of their employees life and not just focus on their work.

Officials of Rachakonda police say that the IT officials should keep an eye on their employees and should conduct sessions explaining the ill-effects of these drugs and ask them not to use any of them. Police also said they are already setting up meetings and seminars at schools and colleges for warning the students. While the primary reason for procuring the drugs is addiction, they also make easy money by selling drugs within their circle, officials said. Vizag Agency area, which is a 12-15 hour drive from the city, is the main source for ganja which is peddled and sold in Hyderabad.

Being caught and using the drugs can ruin their career, said N. Anji Reddy, Asstt

Excise Superintendent of Hyderabad Enforcement team. “One should know that possession, sales, transportation and consumption of drugs is an offence punishable under section 27 of NDPS Act with a punishment for a period from 6 months to one year of imprisonment,” he said.

In the last two months, the state Excise department has arrested 10 individuals who started with consuming ganja during their college, got addicted and later turned into suppliers of the contraband by the time they gained employment. “Ganja is the gateway drug. Once you get addicted to it, you would want to try other drugs and there is no turning back. Without family supervision and control, addicts go through financial crunch and ultimately become peddlers to make money. They start by selling to their close circles initially and then expand the clientele by ultimately falling into the net of law enforcement agencies and landing in jail,” said the official.

Police officials also asked parents to keep an eye over the recreational activities of their child. “Adults should question students spending time with friends at secluded places like the cellars, terrace and open places at colonies etc. They should also ask them to be accountable of their allowances and be wary of their frequent tours to Araku, Kasol, Kodaikanal and Goa,” a police official said.

RECENT DRUG CASES IN THE CITY

DEC 7: Two engineering students who can 1 kilo of ganja concealed in their backpack, died in a road accident in Dundigal when the bike they were travelling in crashed into a divider.

DEC 2: The Excise Enforcement officials seized 56 blots of LSD and 236 grams of hashish oil from three techies in the Tarnaka area.

NOV 27: A Btech dropout who was selling marijuana oil to buyers through online delivery applications was apprehended by the Special Operations Team of Malkajigiri. Officials seized 2 liters of marijuana oil, also known as liquid hashish, along with other contrabands from his possession.

NOV 27: A 20 year old was arrested by the Excise Enforcement team of Hyderabad in possession of ecstasy pills and MDMA from Bowenpally.

NOV 24: A 32 year old Ghana nation-

al in possession of cocaine was arrested within a fortnight after his bail by the Prohibition and Excise department.

NOV 24: The District Task Force team, along with the Uppal police, arrested two men and seized four kilos of Alprazolam drug along with other chemicals at Nacharam.

NOV 22: Three Yemen nationals were arrested in possession of 30 grams of MDMA and 1.1 kilos of marijuana among other contraband by the Excise District Task Force officials.

NOV 20: A techie, a former employee of Facebook and a MSc graduate from Canada, turned peddler was caught in possession of 1.2 kilos of

marijuana and 830 grams of hashish oil by the Excise Enforcement team.

NOV 19: Three men were caught by the North Zone Task Force team, who seized 200 grams of Mephedrone (MD) worth Rs 10 lakh from their possession.

NOV 17: The North Zone Task Force police nabbed two men, an alleged drug supplier from Goa and a manager of a pub from Hyderabad, who were in possession of 200 grams of MDMA and seized the contraband from their possession.

NOV 4: A toddy shop owner from Tandur was arrested by the Vikarabad police for selling the product laced with marijuana to the customers.



SYNONYMS AND DOUBLE ENTENDRES USED AMONG THE SOCIAL CIRCLE FOR MARIJUANA AND OTHER DRUGS

- Molly in the market
- Sativa strain
- Stone good green
- Better spinach
- Good giggles
- Panama red
- Alligator cigarette
- Pot, roach, doobie, joint, dope, herb.



● The drugs are purchased from various sources and are posted on social media platforms.

● The rates are given out openly in the photo caption with hashtags like #cannabis #peace.

● Post is picked up by prospective buyers who either comments or mostly message the seller personally.

● Sellers accepts payment through merchant apps like Paytm or Google Pay or cash and promises 'nodal point' delivery to the buyer, irrespective of age.

OTHER STORIES

TWO ELECTROCUTED WHILE HUNTING FOR WILD BOAR

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, DEC. 7

Two hunters from Dupally village in Renjal mandal got electrocuted on Sunday night while hunting for wild boar.

Farmers found the two bodies and an injured wild boar near the agriculture fields on Monday and informed the police. While hunting, the hunters came in contact with the electric fencing put up around some paddy fields.

Bodhan ACP Rama Rao and Renjal SI D. Sainath visited the spot and shifted the bodies for postmortem to the District Hospital in Bodhan.

Police said, "The deceased did not have any identity proof on them and are around 30 and 35 years." Police registered a case against the farmer of the agriculture fields.

PROSTITUTION RACKET BUSTED IN WARANGAL

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, DEC. 7

The Task Force police on Monday busted a prostitution racket by arresting five persons including the organisers from a house in Santhoshimata Colony, Ramannapet in Warangal Urban district.

The police rescued a woman who was forced into the business and seized ₹10,140 in cash, and condom packets.

Based on reliable information, Task Force inspectors B. Nandiram Naik and G. Madhu raided the house and arrested, Mekala Kumaraswamy of Fort Warangal, Bonasi Swarnalatha of Jammikunta in Karimnagar district, and three customers.

According to the police, Kumaraswamy and Swarnalatha started running a brothel in a rented house in Santhoshimata Colony three months ago.

The duo used to bring sex workers from East Godavari (AP), Hyderabad and other places to carry out the trade.

The duo enticed youth to their brothel by sending porn photographs of women. The Task Force police handed over the case to the Mattewada Police.

COPS ARREST MAOIST PARTY MEMBER

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, DEC. 7

CPI - Maoist Party Manuguru Area Committee member, Sangepu Mahesh alias Ranjith, a native of Gajulagattu village, in Gudur mandal of Mahabubabad district, was arrested by the police on Monday.

Superintendent of Police N. Koti Reddy said, "He was moving suspiciously near Polaram Cross Road in Kothaguda mandal."

Ranjith is said to have in his possession, two wall posters of the Maoist party and PLGA pamphlets, in the name of Telangana State Secretary Jagan.

The pamphlets say that the 20th anniversary of the PLGA should be celebrated from December 2020 to December 2021, with revolutionary vigour in the rural and urban areas across Telangana.

During interrogation, Ranjith revealed that he had hidden 20-SLR pistols and 10 Maoist party revolutionary literature leaflets in the forest areas.

The police later seized them from a hidden place in the Karlai-Battulapalli forest area. Ranjith served in the Gopanna faction of the ND Party from 2011 until 2019.

He has been a member of the Manuguru Area Committee of the Maoist party since 2020.

He is convicted in several cases including murder, threatening for money, possession of weapons, firing at the police etc.

Mr Koti Reddy appealed to the public not to allow Maoist activities in their villages. "Residents must inform the police immediately if they notice any suspicious movement of people in their surroundings. Extremists are plotting to provoke violence in Telangana once again and it should be eradicated from the bud," he said.

● DURING INTERROGATION, Ranjith revealed that he had hidden 20-SLR pistols and 10 Maoist party revolutionary literature leaflets in the forest areas. The police later seized them.

KTR inaugurates 11 projects

Members of other corporations will be sent to Khammam for study: KTR

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM, DEC. 7

Minister for Information Technology, Municipal Administration and Urban Development K. T. Rama Rao said that with the completion of various development projects, the Khammam Municipal Corporation stands as a model in Telangana.

Rama Rao inaugurated various projects in Khammam on Monday. He said, "Members of the governing bodies of other corporations in Telangana, will be sent to Khammam to study how the town is reshaped in a short time with the new projects."

The IT sector which was limited to Hyderabad, in united Andhra Pradesh, is now expanding to other towns in Telangana, due to the push by the state government.

"Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao, increased the number of police commissionerate offices in Telangana, sanctioned new buildings for them. The Khammam Police Commissionerate building is the first one", he said.

Minister Ajay Kumar worked hard to see the RoB, and the modernisation, of the Gollapadu Channel, was completed soon.

The Lakaram projects, providing better roads, water supply and setting up of new parks have created a healthy atmosphere in Khammam.

Rama Rao said that the Ajay Kumar set his eyes on developing Khammam and succeeded in getting funds. He asked Ajay not to confine himself only on Khammam and concentrate on other municipalities like Wyr, Madhira and Sattupalli.

Rama Rao said, "In the IT Hub in Khammam, a task training centre has been set up, and youth should utilise. Industries should also be welcomed. The CM has evolved a plan to set up food processing centres as per the availability of raw material in the particular area."

Referring to the recent



Minister K T Rama Rao unveils the statue of former prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao at Lakaram Tank in Khammam on Monday. The minister demanded that the NDA government give Bharat Ratna to the former prime minister for his great service to the country. — DC



Ajay Kumar Puvvada

● MINISTER FOR transport, Puvvada Ajay Kumar was instrumental in bringing these projects and completing them as early as possible.

● RAMA RAO asked minister Ajay Kumar not to confine himself only on Khammam and concentrate on other municipalities like Wyr, Madhira and Sattupalli.

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections, the minister said that one should discuss politics only during elections.

Minister for Roads and Buildings Vemula Prasanna Reddy and Home Minister Mahammad Ali were present for the inauguration of the projects in Khammam.

3 projects are key, and will give Khammam a facelift

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, DEC. 7

Minister for Information Technology and Municipal Administration and Urban Development inaugurated 11 development projects in Khammam on Monday.

Of the 11 projects, there are three that the people in Khammam Town are happy about – the IT Hub, the Rail over Bridge (RoB) and the police commissionerate central office.

According to them, these three projects are likely to give Khammam town a facelift.

G.V. Narasimha Rao, the correspondent of the Khammam Study Circle, said, "The IT Hub will change the lives of youth who have completed their engineering."

Though jobs that can be provided in it are limited presently, opportunities will increase in the future with new companies setting up."

The Rail over Bridge

● THE THREE projects that the people in Khammam Town are happy about – the IT Hub, the Rail over Bridge (RoB) and the police commissionerate central office.

● ACCORDING TO them, these projects will give the town a facelift.

(RoB) which has been a long pending dream of the people will give relief to people crossing the railway lines at Dwansalapuram. Whenever the rail gate is closed, traffic would be interrupted every half-an-hour.

Gogireddy Srinivasa Reddy, a resident from Sriram Hills colony, said, "The Rail over Bridge is a big relief to farmers and others coming and going to Khammam from Bonakal, Chintakani, Madhira Errupalem man-

dals and Vijayawada.

With the expansion of the road and the RoB, the area from Mustafanagar to Dwansalapuram will witness good development".

Mr Rama Rao also inaugurated the police commissionerate building in Khammam.

Till now, the town did not have a proper space for the police commissionerate. As Khammam town expands, the number of police postings has increased. The new police commissionerate building has all the facilities and a cyber lab.

Minister for transport, Puvvada Ajay Kumar was instrumental in bringing these projects and completing them as early as possible. Nearly 10 companies have set up their offices in the IT Hub.

The government-sanctioned another ₹30 crore for the expansion of the IT Hub and road projects in the Khammam Municipal Corporation.

BODY OF LEOPARD CUB FOUND ON NH-44 ROADSIDE

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, DEC. 7

The body of a Leopard cub was found on NH-44 roadside near Seethagondi in Gudihathnoor mandal on Monday evening.

The animal was bleeding from the mouth.

It is suspected that the leopard might have been hit by a speeding vehicle while crossing the road. Forest staff recovered the body.

MAN FOUND DEAD UNDER HAYSTACK

Khammam: Thotakura Venkata Gopala Rao aka Srinivasa Rao, 45, was found dead under a haystack in Lingannapalem village under Wyr mandal on Sunday. Rao might have died after the haystack fell on him. The family, noticed his body when they went to collect hay.

Nyavanandi villagers sit in protest with dead body for 2 days

NARENDER PULLOOR | DC
NIZAMABAD, DEC. 7

Nyavanandi villagers in Sirikonda mandal prevented the police from shifting the body of a man for the last two days. Tarra Gangadhar, 43, died by suicide and villagers alleged that Tarra Gangadhar took the extreme step due to harassment by the police in a murder case of Purre Mamatha, 35.

The villagers surrounded the body of Gangadhar since Sunday. When the police tried to shift the body, the villagers prevented them from doing so. The villagers allege that Gangadhar is innocent.

Revenue and police officials discussed with the kin of the deceased and the village elders to shift the body but in vain. Talks failed. Heavy police force, was deployed in Sirikonda to tackle the Nyavanandi issue.

Purre Mamatha, of Nyavanandi village, was



Villagers sit near the body of Tarra Gangadhar in Nyavanandi in Sirikonda mandal of Nizamabad district on Monday. — DC

murdered on October 3. The villagers suspect that she was raped first and then murdered. Her family members and Nyavanandi villagers suspect the role of TRS leader Borranra in her murder.

Police had taken into custody five suspects including Gangadhar, who died by suicide on Sunday, was found near a tree behind his residence in Nyavanandi.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Nizamabad range inspector general of police N. Shiva

Shankar Reddy said that they are probing the murder of Purre Mamatha. "The investigation was delayed due to lack of clues. The role of the neighbours is suspected, but suspicion is not enough for investigation," he said.

"People are not cooperating with the police to shift the body of Tarra Gangadhar, and we respected their sentiments", he added.

Replying to a question, the IG said that the police called Gangadhar for questioning 20 days

ago, and died by suicide, on Sunday (December 6). There is no negligence on the part of the cops in investigations in the murder case. We will arrest the accused soon.

Meanwhile, the police have formed a special team to investigate Mamatha's murder case. Nizamabad additional DCP T. Usha

Vishwanath, Nizamabad, CCS ACPs G. Srinivas Kumar, T. Swamy, Sangareddy CI V. Shiva Shankar and Dharipally CI M. Prasad are in the team. Nizamabad MP D. Arvind spoke to DGP M. Mahender Reddy to arrest the accused in the murder case soon.

When the incident had occurred, BJP leaders, including, D. Arvind had visited Nyavanandi and demanded the arrest of the accused.

The villagers and kin of Gangadhar and Mamatha demanded ₹25 lakh ex-gratia for their families and a government job for the son of Gangadhar.

TAB ON MINING

People can fetch quality sand from the sub-storage: Collector

Sand centre to stop illegal mining

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, DEC. 7

The Mahabubabad district administration is keeping a tab on illegal sand mining, said Tribal Welfare Minister Satyavathi Rathod after inaugurating a sand sub-storage centre in Mahabubabad on Monday.

She said that no stream in the district is ideal for sand extraction. "The administration is keen to keep the sand mafia at bay to stop the depleting water tables. Illegal sand

mining is affecting the river ecology, along with creating other environmental issues.

"An official was suspended for his alleged support for illegal sand mining in the Akeru stream. The sand storage sub-centre will address the needs of the people," she said.

The minister added that the sand sub-storage centre besides addressing the needs of the locals, it also end illegal sand mining on the Akeru and other streams. Mahabubabad district

collector V.P. Gautham said that stringent action will be taken against those who infringe the Water, Land and Trees Act (WALTA).

"People can now fetch quality sand from the sand sub-storage centres. The aim of the administration is to provide quality sand of the Godavari to the customers at cost-to-cost price," Gautham said. Telangana State Mineral Development Corporation general manager G. Deepthi was present along with others.



Sand sub-storage centre in Mahabubabad. — DC

COVID CASES RISE IN ADILABAD, AS LEADER RETURN

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, DEC. 7

The Coronavirus is spreading again in the districts. In the last few days, Adilabad district saw as many as 146 positive cases from December 2 to 7.

The rise in cases is being linked, to the political leaders and activists from various parties returning to their respective districts, after campaigning in Hyderabad for the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections, and police personnel returning from poll duty.

According to official sources, the district saw as many as seven positive cases on December 1, and this rose to 14 on December 2; 65 on December 3; 17 on December 4; 12 on December 5; 8 on December 6 and 19 positive cases on December 7.

Top police officials of Adilabad have asked police personnel returning from election duty to get their Covid-19 tests done. A number of those who got themselves tested; were found to be Covid-19 positive, resulting in the sharp rise of positive cases.

According to unofficial reports, of the 384 police personnel who went for election duty to Hyderabad, nearly 60 tested positive after returning to Adilabad and have been asked to home quarantine.

Even some political leaders from Adilabad who campaigned in Hyderabad have tested positive for Covid-19 and are home quarantining themselves. The prevailing cold conditions are favourable for the virus to spread, and people must take care of their health to avoid getting infected with the virus.

● According to unofficial reports, of the 384 police personnel who went for poll duty to Hyderabad, nearly 60 tested positive.

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SHORT TAKES

CAN'T BUILD NEW CENTURY WITH OLD LAWS: PM

Lucknow, Dec. 7: Amid the row over laws meant to bring a major change in the agri-marketing sector, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said reforms are needed for development and some laws from the past century have become a burden now.

Launching the Agra metro rail project through video conference, Modi said the reforms carried out by his government are also getting reflected in election results. His pitch on the importance of reforms comes ahead of Tuesday's Bharat Bandh over the three new farm laws enacted at the Centre. But during his brief address, the Prime Minister made no direct reference to the new laws or the farmers' protests.

"Reforms are needed for development. Reforms are very much needed for a new order and to give new facilities. We cannot build the next century with the laws of the previous century," he said. "Some laws that used to be good in the past century have become a burden in the present century. Reforms should be a continuous process," he said. Modi said his government is carrying out "holistic reforms".

"Earlier, reforms used to happen in a piecemeal manner, or keeping in mind some sectors and departments," the Prime Minister said.

RAJINI IS A MAN OF HIS WORD, SAYS ELDER BROTHER

Bengaluru, Dec. 7: Ahead of launching his political party next month, Tamil superstar Rajinikanth paid a visit to his elder brother R. Sathyanarayana Rao in Bengaluru, where he grew up. "We hadn't met for quite some time. He came last night and left this morning for Chennai after spending some good time," 77-year-old Rao said on Monday.

Rajinikanth sought the blessings of his brother, who wished him good health and a long life. Rao declined to offer comments on the political innings of his brother.

"Didn't he say that he (Rajinikanth) will talk about that on December 31?" Rao said. Rao recalled that Rajinikanth spent his childhood in the city, where he was born, and lived here till the age of 22 before shifting to Chennai.

"He (Rajinikanth) has 'gurukripa' (grace of the guru)," he said. "He (Rajinikanth) is a man of his word. He definitely does what he says. He always keeps his word," Rao added.

Rajinikanth announced on Thursday he would launch a political party in January 2021 to contest in the Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu.

SC REFUSES TO QUASH FIR AGAINST ANCHOR

New Delhi, Dec. 7: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to quash FIRs lodged against TV anchor Amish Devgan for his alleged defamatory remarks on Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti during a show on June 15, but granted him protection from arrest till conclusion of probe if he continues to cooperate in the investigation.

The top court, however, agreed to the submission of the news anchor that all pending FIRs pertained to the same telecast and ordered transfer of all seven cases registered in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Telangana and Madhya Pradesh to Ajmer where the first complaint was registered. A bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and Sanjiv Khanna reproduced the relevant portions of the transcript of the debate anchored by Devgan on June 15 and said that it was "apparent that the petitioner (the journalist) was an equal co-participant, rather than a mere host".

"The transcript, including the offending portion, would form a part of the 'content', but any evaluation would require examination and consideration of the variable 'context' as well as the 'intent' and the 'harm/impact'.

These have to be evaluated before the court can form an opinion on whether an offence is made out.

The evaluative judgment on these aspects would be based upon facts, which have to be inquired into and ascertained by police investigation," the bench said.

CONGRESS BACKS BHARAT BANDH IN MP, C'GARH

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, DEC. 7

Former chief minister and Madhya Pradesh Congress unit president Kamal Nath on Monday declared his party's support to the December 8 "Bharat Bandh" call given by different farmers' bodies in protest against the 3 farm laws by the Centre.

In a statement issued here, Nath said all the district units of the party in the state have been asked to stage demonstrations in district headquarters and submit memorandum to the local district collectors seeking withdrawal of the 3 'controversial' farm bill passed in the parliament recently, on the day. Nath also slammed the Centre for bringing the laws without consulting the farmers' bodies.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Tuesday said the ruling Congress would support "Bharat Bandh".

He described the 3 farm laws as 'anti-farmer' and demanded the Centre to repeal them.



Farmers distribute eatables during their agitation against the new farm laws at Singhu border in New Delhi on Monday.

— PTI

Oppn support irresponsible: BJP

Alleges Opposition parties are trying to save their existence through farmers protests

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

Insisting that a section of farmers have fallen in the grip of a few vested interests, the BJP on Monday said Opposition parties are supporting the protests by some farmers' groups against the recently passed legislations "to save their existence after being repeatedly rejected by people in different elections across the country."

The ruling party said Opposition parties jumping in to support the protest and the 'Bharat Bandh' called by some farmers unions are "irresponsibly and unwarrantedly trying to give protests a wrong direction in order to serve their political interests."

The BJP asserted that the reforms will benefit the small and marginal farmers, which are 86 per cent of the total farming community.

MORTAL REMAINS FOUND AT CRASH SITE, SAYS NAVY

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

Indian Navy said on Monday that mortal remains of a human body have been recovered in the vicinity of the wreckage site of crashed fighter aircraft MiG-29K.

"The samples are being sent for DNA testing for confirmation of identity," said Indian Navy.

Indian Navy's two-seater, trainer aircraft MiG-29K flying over Arabian Sea had crashed on Nov. 26. One of the pilot of the MiG-29K was rescued. However, the second pilot Cdr Nishant Singh has been missing. "Due to salt water the body could not be physically identified," said sources.

Pointing out that the earlier Congress-led UPA government, the then agriculture minister and NCP supremo Sharad Pawar and the Congress' Rahul Gandhi had supported reforms in the APMC Act, senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said whether it is CAA or Shaheen Bagh or any reform, Opposition opposes the Modi government for the sake of opposition forgetting their own work on the same issue in the past, exposing their "double standards."

Reading from the Congress' 2019 Lok Sabha poll manifesto and citing a meeting of Congress chief ministers called by Gandhi in 2013, a policy document of the erstwhile Planning Commission and letters by the then agriculture minister Pawar to chief ministers of all states, Prasad said all had suggested and supported amendment in the APMC

Act, which the Modi government has done. On the issue of contract farming, Prasad pointed that during the UPA rule, states like Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chattisgarh, Odisha, Haryana, Goa, Maharashtra, MP, Mizoram had implemented model contract farming.

"I will reiterate again that farmers' land can neither be leased nor sold nor mortgaged in contract farming as it is not the land but produce that will be the collateral," he asserted. On allegations that the government wants to shut down mandis, he said since the implementation of reforms laws, the minimum support price of six Kharif and Rabi crops have been hiked and by the end of November, 318 lakh tonnes of rice worth ₹60,000 crore has been procured out of which 202 lakh tonnes of paddy has been procured from Punjab.

India hosts fewer foreign defence firms despite largest importer tag

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

India hosts a relatively low number of large foreign defence manufacturers considering that it has been among the world's largest arms importers for decades and has a policy of domestic arms—industrial development, according to a report by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

The report looked at the international presence of the 15 largest arms companies in 2019. These companies are present in a total of 49 countries, through majority-owned subsidiaries, joint ventures and research facilities.

The report said that it identified 13 foreign entities in India. However, only two are involved in manufacturing activities.

Airbus, BAE Systems, Boeing, General Dynamics, L3Harris Technologies, Leonardo, Lockheed Martin and Thales all have foreign entities in India.

UK hosts the most entities about 14 per cent of the total for the 15 largest arms companies. This was followed by Australia (9.5 per cent), the USA (9.0 per cent), Canada (7.5 per cent), Germany (7.3 per cent), Saudi Arabia (6.0 per cent), Italy (3.8 per cent) and India (3.3 per cent).

With a global presence spanning 24 countries each, Thales and Airbus

Cong: Govt responsible for inconvenience due to stir

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

Lending its full support to the 'Bharat Bandh' called by farmers' unions against the three central agriculture laws, the Congress on Monday said the government would be responsible for any inconvenience caused to the people due to the strike.

Around 18 Opposition parties, including the Congress, have already supported the 'Bharat Bandh' call.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi asserted that the Congress supported the "peaceful" Bharat Bandh.

The 'Adani-Ambani Farm Laws' have to be revoked, "Nothing less is acceptable", Gandhi tweeted.

Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar said that the government would be responsible for any inconvenience caused to the people due to the strike.

"The Modi government is squarely responsible for the current situation and it would be responsible for any inconvenience caused to the public during the Bandh tomorrow," Jakhar told the media.

Accusing the government of following the US

model in acting as a "lobbyist" for corporates, he said, "Please do not follow America. The government should not become a lobbyist for the corporate. Corporatising agriculture is not acceptable. The Prime Minister should take note of it".

He said government's intention behind bringing the three laws is "suspect" and accused the ruling dispensation of "misleading" the country on the three legislations.

Jakhar reiterated his party's demand to call a special session of Parliament to discuss the matter afresh and repeal the three farm laws.

Polling to be held in five districts of Kerala today

DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC. 7

Five of the 14 districts in Kerala will go to polls on Tuesday in the first phase of local body elections, considered the semifinals ahead of the Assembly polls in 2021.

The voters of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Idukki districts, will go out to vote in polling booths amid Covid-19 safety protocol. The polls are crucial for the ruling CPM led LDF opposition Congress led UDF and the BJP which is making desperate attempts to make inroads into the red bastion.

All eyes are set on the prestigious Thiruvananthapuram corporation. The BJP buoyed by the massive surge in GHMC elections in Hyderabad believes that the corporation is within their striking range.

In 2015 polls it won 34 seats becoming the main opposition. This time it is targeting 70 of the 100 wards. The LDF on the other hand is confident of retaining the corporation on the strength of its development work and pro-poor welfare programmes.

There are 88,25,620 registered voters across these districts who will elect representatives to 318 grama panchayats, 50 block panchayats, five district panchayats, 20 munic-

KEJRIWAL REVIEWS ARRANGEMENTS AT BORDER

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday visited the Singhu border, where thousands of farmers are protesting against the Centre's new farm laws, and checked arrangements made for them by the city government.

The visit comes a day after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) extended its support to the 'Bharat Bandh' called by farmers' organisations on December 8. Kejriwal was accompanied by his cabinet ministers and some party MLAs during the brief visit to the protest venue on the Delhi-Haryana border.

"I checked the arrangements. We received a lot of pressure to allow the use of stadiums as temporary prisons but we did not give permission and I feel this helped the movement. Since then our party MLAs and ministers have been involved in ensuring that farmers do not face any discomfort," he said.

"We are working like 'sewadaar'. Here I have not come as a Chief Minister but as a 'sewadaar' to serve the farmers. It is our responsibility to support the farmers," he told reporters.

On Sunday, Kejriwal had said that all AAP workers across the country will support the nationwide strike and appealed to all citizens to support the farmers. Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, are protesting at various border points of Delhi against the new farm laws.

The Centre's offer to amend the contentious laws failed to cut ice with farmer groups during the fifth round of talks on Saturday.

● **THE VISIT** comes a day after the AAP extended its support to the 'Bharat Bandh' called by farmers' organisations on December 8. Kejriwal was accompanied by his cabinet ministers and some party MLAs during the brief visit to the protest venue on the Delhi-Haryana border.

ipalities and 2 corporations. Though the main fight is between the ruling CPM led LDF and opposition Congress led UDF, with the BJP too putting up a strong fight the local body polls are expected to witness triangular contests in many local bodies.

The LDF which has traditionally maintained an upper hand in local body polls, is facing a tough challenge this time in the wake of sensational gold smuggling case involving chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan's former principal secretary M. and some other functionaries of the CMO.

Though the local issues usually gain precedence over state or national issues in the local body polls, the gold smuggling, corruption and the arrest of CPM's former state secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan's son in a money trail related to drug racket are being used widely in opposition campaigns.

Almost all major central investigation agencies including National Investigation Agency (NIA), CBI, Enforcement Directorate, Customs are probing cases related to gold smuggling and alleged corruption in government's major schemes. The LDF on its part has tried to build a counter attack accusing the central agencies of implementing the political agenda of the BJP led government at the Centre.

SHORT TAKES

ACTING U.S. DEFENCE SECY IN INDONESIA

Jakarta, Dec. 7: The acting US secretary of defence met with his counterpart in Indonesia on Monday as part of a visit to Asia in which he will push Washington's free and open Indo-Pacific policy.

Christopher Miller met Indonesian Minister of Defence Prabowo Subianto on Monday, according to Prabowo's office. The Pentagon has said during his trip Miller will meet with his counterparts and other senior officials to discuss the importance of the bilateral defence relationships and securing a free and open Indo-Pacific.

After Indonesia, Miller will head to the Philippines. Miller was installed by President Donald Trump on November 9 after he fired Mark Esper.

POPE TO MAKE PILGRIMAGE TO IRAQ IN MARCH

Vatican City, Dec. 7: Pope Francis will make a pilgrimage to Iraq in March, pandemic conditions permitting, the Vatican said on Monday, announcing what would be the pontiff's first trip aboard in more than a year.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Brunetti on Monday said Francis will make the March 5-8 visit, with stops in Baghdad, and the "plains of Ur, linked to the memory of Abraham," the Biblical patriarch, as well as to the cities of Irbil, Mosul and Qaraqosh.

Brunetti said the trip's schedule will be announced later and will take into consideration "the evolution of the worldwide health emergency" that is the Covid-19 pandemic. It would be the first trip abroad for Francis since November 2019, when he visited Thailand and Japan. Francis turns 84 on December 17. The Vatican said Francis had accepted invitations from the Iraqi government from the local Catholic church.

INDIAN EXPAT CHARGED IN UAE FOR MURDER

Dubai, Dec. 7: A UAE-based Indian expat has been charged with beating a compatriot to death after a heated argument over illegal rented accommodation, according to a media report.

The Dubai Court of First Instance on Sunday heard the case and charged the 31-year-old accused for assaulting and leaving his compatriot in unconscious condition following an argument after he went to collect rent from the victim, the *Gulf News* reported on Sunday.

According to records, the incident happened in August when the victim's mother was worried as her repeated calls to her son went unanswered. She then called his friend, who went to his rented apartment to check after breaking open the door with the security guard and found him lying dead on the bed.

Dubai Police were alerted and investigations revealed that the victim had died three days before the body was discovered, the report, which does not identify both the victim and defendant, said.

MINERS' DEATH: CHINA CITY CRACKS WHIP

Beijing, Dec. 7: China's southwestern megacity of Chongqing has ordered a crackdown on breaches of mine safety following last week's deaths of 23 workers in one of the country's worst recent mining disasters.

State media reported Monday that officials were called to a video conference Sunday and told to undertake thorough reforms after the deaths at the Diaoshuidong mine, which was caused by the buildup of deadly levels of carbon monoxide in the shaft. There have been no reports of arrests, although a full investigation has been launched into Friday's disaster.

One miner was rescued from the mine, where the death toll had originally been put at least 18. Miners were reportedly dismantling equipment in the mine, which had been closed two months earlier and may have lacked the ventilation systems needed to clear the gas that leaks from the coal seam. China's coal mining industry used to be the world's deadliest, suffering more than 5,000 fatalities a year from explosions, floods and gas leaks. Safety improved dramatically after authorities overhauled the industry starting about 15 years ago.

Sinovac aims 600 mn capacity

Chinese company gets \$500 mn investment in a boost to its vaccine development efforts

Taipei, Dec. 7: Chinese vaccine company Sinovac announced Monday that it is planning to complete a new facility to double its annual vaccine production capacity to 600 million doses by the end of the year, while also securing a \$500 million investment in a boost to its Covid-19 vaccine development efforts.

The company is currently conducting the last stage of clinical trials for its vaccine candidate in Brazil, Turkey and Indonesia and is among the frontrunners of China's vaccine efforts. China has at least five Covid-19 vaccine candidates running late stage clinical trials across more than a dozen countries. Sino Biopharmaceutical Ltd., a pharmaceutical conglomerate, bought a 15 per cent stake in Sinovac for an investment of \$500 million.

The funds will allow the company to "improve our vaccine sales capabilities, expand in Asia markets, develop and access new technologies, and most importantly, accelerate our efforts to help combat the global pandemic," Sinovac CEO Yin Weidong said in a statement. On Sunday, 1.2 million doses of its experimental vaccine arrived in Indonesia and are expected to be approved for use soon.

Sinovac's candidate is a two-dose inactivated vaccine, an old-school technology in which a live virus is killed and then purified. It can be stored at 2 to 8 C (36 to 46 F), within the range of a normal refrigerator, unlike some other vaccines candidates that require far lower temperatures. Sinovac's experimental vaccine is currently approved for emergency use in China, although it has not yet obtained final market approval.

Under emergency use, it has been distributed to groups the Chinese government deemed suitable, including front-line medical workers and border personnel. The latest public data from the company, published in the science journal *Lancet*, showed its candidate produced lower

Virus 'war zone', warns Korean min

Seoul, Dec. 7: South Korea's health minister said Monday that the Seoul metropolitan area is now a "Covid-19 war zone," as the country reported another 615 new infections and the virus appeared to be spreading faster. The president, meanwhile, issued a call to expand testing and contact tracing.

The country has recorded more than 5,300 new infections in the past 10 days and Monday was the 30th day in a row of triple-digit daily jumps. Most cases have come from the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area, where half of South Korea's 51 million people live.

With people increasingly venturing out in public and spending longer hours indoors amid cold temperatures, health workers have struggled to stem transmissions tied to

restaurants, saunas, schools, hospitals and long-term care facilities.

"The capital area is now a Covid-19 war zone," Health Minister Park Neung-hoo said, asking for citizen vigilance. He said the country may have to increase social distancing to prevent the resurgence in the capital area from "exploding into a major outbreak nationwide and collapsing the health-care system."

Na Seong-woong, a senior official from the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency, said the country could be reporting around 900 new infections a day next week if it fails to slow the virus quickly. While South Korea managed to contain a major outbreak in spring, it's less clear where the reinforcements will come if the virus wreaks havoc in the Seoul area. — AP

levels of antibodies in people than those who have recovered from Covid-19. — AP

Lawmakers: Covid-19 relief bill won't offer \$1,200 checks

Washington, Dec. 7: With time running out, lawmakers on Sunday closed in on a proposed Covid-19 relief bill that would provide roughly \$300 in extra federal weekly unemployment benefits but not another round of \$1,200 in direct payments to most Americans, leaving that issue for President-elect Joe Biden to wrestle over with a new Congress next year.

The \$908 billion aid package to be released Monday would be attached to a larger year-end spending bill needed to avert a government shutdown this coming weekend. The cash payments were popular when they were first distributed after the pandemic hit. — AP

TRUMP LAWYER RUDY GIULIANI TESTS POSITIVE

Washington, Dec. 7: Rudy Giuliani, the personal lawyer to Donald Trump, has tested positive for Covid-19, becoming the latest person in the US president's inner circle to be infected by the deadly virus.

Giuliani, 76, has been taken to the Medstar Georgetown University Hospital in Washington DC, according to US media reports.

The news of the former mayor of New York testing positive was first tweeted by President Trump on Sunday. The president and his team have been criticised for shunning Covid-19 safety guidance.

Trump, 74, was tested positive in October. — PTI

TECH PROVIDES RESULTS IN LESS THAN 30 MINS

Washington, Dec. 7: Scientists have developed a novel technology for a CRISPR-based Covid-19 diagnostic test that uses a smartphone camera to provide accurate results in under 30 minutes.

According to the research published in the journal *Cell*, the new diagnostic test can not only generate a positive or negative result, it also measures the viral load — the concentration of virus — in a given sample. All CRISPR diagnostics to date have required that the viral RNA be converted to DNA and amplified before it can be detected, adding time and complexity, the researchers said.

In contrast, the new approach skips all the conversion and amplification steps, using CRISPR to directly detect the viral RNA, they said. — PTI

Iran says US 'got the message' on tense exchanges in Gulf

Tehran, Dec. 7: Iran said on Monday it was glad the United States "got the message" and modified its behaviour in the Persian Gulf, after the top US Navy official in the region said his forces had reached a state of deterrence with Iran after months of regional attacks and seizures at sea.

"We are happy that the other party has got the message and made its behaviour more respectful," Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said. He said the US military is the "main source of tension" in the region and that Iranian forces have always acted professionally.

"Unfortunately, the US has often had an unprofessional approach toward Iran's navy," he said. He was responding to Vice Adm. Sam Paparo's remarks, delivered at a conference in Bahrain on Sunday. Paparo, who oversees the Navy's 5th Fleet based in Bahrain, said the two sides

HALEY OPPOSES BIDEN'S PLAN TO REJOIN IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

Washington, Dec. 7: Nikki Haley, the former US envoy to the United Nations, on Monday opposed President-elect Joe Biden's plan to re-join the Iranian nuclear deal, saying the Trump administration's sanctions on Tehran deprived the regime of the money it needed to harm American military.

"The Iran deal is only as reliable & trustworthy as the partner who signs the agreement & Iran is nei-

ther of those. Iran continues to enrich uranium, sponsor terrorists & call for Israel & America's destruction. Members of the Iranian parliament recently chanted 'Death to America'," Haley tweeted.

In an interview to *The New York Times*, Biden had expressed his desire to rejoin the Iranian nuclear deal, one of the key foreign policy accomplishments of the Obama Administration. — PTI

had reached a state of "uneasy deterrence" and that he had a "healthy respect" for Iran's regular navy and the naval forces of its Revolutionary Guard.

Tensions remain high over the Islamic Republic's nuclear programme after President Donald

Trump withdrew the US from the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers and imposed heavy sanctions on Iran. The killing of Iran's top general in a US drone strike in Iraq in January pushed the two countries to the brink of war, with Iran

responding with a missile attack on US forces.

The US Navy routinely has tense encounters with the Revolutionary Guard, whose speed boats race alongside American warships in the Persian Gulf and sometimes conduct live-fire drills with machine guns and missile launches in their presence.

In recent years Iran has seized oil tankers and been blamed for a series of limpet mine explosions targeting tankers. Tehran denied involvement, but Revolutionary Guard members were filmed taking an unexploded mine away from one tanker.

In recent days, a mine struck an oil tanker off Saudi Arabia and a cargo ship near Yemen came under assault. Suspicion immediately fell on Iranian-backed rebels in Yemen, known as Houthis. The rebels have not commented on the attacks. — AP

Azerbaijan's war victory



A TV crew works on Bakus Azadiq square in front of a huge poster reading "Karabakh is Azerbaijan!" decorating the facade of a hotel on Monday, days ahead of December 10 military parade celebrating the country's victory in its armed conflict with Armenia over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region. — AFP

Texas officer kills man suspected of hitting worker with his vehicle Shooting at eatery: Varsity campus shut

Mesquite, Dec. 7: An off-duty police officer shot and killed a 30-year-old man who refused to stop after striking a highway construction worker with his vehicle in Dallas, authorities said.

The Mesquite Police Department said off-duty officers from the East Texas cities of Jefferson and Seven Points were providing construction security in Dallas early Saturday when the construction worker was hit. The suspect refused to stop at the scene, and officers requested assistance as they pursued him on Interstate 635, police said Saturday in a statement.

The suspect finally stopped "after contact was made between the suspect's vehicle and the officer's vehicle" in the Dallas suburb of Mesquite, according to the statement. One of the officers then shot the suspect, police said.

The statement did not explain what prompted

the shooting nor if the off-duty officers identified themselves to the suspect as police. Mesquite Lt. Stephen Biggs said Sunday that he couldn't say much more than what was included in the statement because the investigation is ongoing.

Biggs added Sunday that he was told the off-duty officers were in a vehicle owned by a private security company. It was not immediately clear who told him that. When Mesquite officers arrived, the suspect had been shot and the off-duty officers who pursued him were providing first aid.

Mesquite police then took over first aid until paramedics arrived. Police said the suspect

died at a hospital. Biggs said the construction worker had been in stable condition but forwarded questions about updates to Dallas police, who responded to the shooting.

Dallas police Officer Tamika Dameron said Sunday that the department did not know the current condition of the construction worker. — AP

6 cleric supporters killed in Indonesia

Jakarta, Dec. 7: Indonesian police Monday fatally shot six followers of a firebrand cleric who returned last month from a 3-year exile in Saudi Arabia after criminal charges against him were dropped, officials said, prompting fears of more violence.

Jakarta Police Chief Muhammad Fadil Imran said police were following a car carrying 10 supporters of Rizieq Shihab, the leader of the Islamic Defenders Front. The followers attacked the police with guns and swords.

"The officers then took action so that six died from the group of 10 people," he said. An official of the Front, Ahmad Shabri Lubis, gave a different account, saying that Shihab and his family were heading to a place to deliver a sermon and that guards travelling with them had been shot. "On their way to the sermon location, the group was intercepted by unknown people that we strongly believed were part of an operational group to stalk and harm him," Lubis said. — AP

LIBRARY | UPDATE

Fauci's 'Wear a mask' tops quotes list

New Haven (US), Dec. 7: A plea from Dr Anthony Fauci for people to "wear a mask" to slow the spread of the Coronavirus tops a Yale Law School librarian's list of the most notable quotes of 2020.

The list assembled by Fred Shapiro, an associate director at the library, is an annual update to "The Yale Book of Quotations," which was first published in 2006. Also on the list is "I can't breathe," the plea George Floyd made repeatedly to police officers holding him down on a

Minneapolis street corner. Several quotes from the presidential campaign appear including Joe Biden telling a student: "You're a lying dog-faced pony soldier."

Shapiro said he picks quotes that are not necessarily admirable or eloquent, but rather because they are famous or particularly revealing of the spirit of the times.

THE LIST 1. "Wear a mask." — Dr. Anthony Fauci, CNN interview, May 21. 2. "I can't breathe." — George Floyd,

plea to police officer, Minneapolis, May 25. 3. "One day — it's like a miracle — it will disappear," President Donald Trump, referring to the coronavirus in remarks at an African American History Month reception at the White House, Feb. 27. 4. "I see the disinfectant that knocks it out in a minute, one minute. And is there a way we can do something like that by injection inside or almost a cleaning?" — Trump, in remarks at a White House Coronavirus Task Force news

briefing, April 23. 5. "I will never lie to you. You have my word on that." — White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany, at her first press briefing, May 1. 6. "My most fervent wish is that I will not be replaced until a new president is installed." — Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, statement dictated to granddaughter Clara Spera, September. 7. "If you have a problem figuring out whether you're for me or Trump, then you ain't Black." — Joe Biden, in an

interview with "The Breakfast Club" radio programme, May 22. 8. "The science should not stand in the way of this." — McEnany, referring to school reopenings in a news briefing, July 16. 9. "You're a lying dog-faced pony soldier." — Biden, in a remark to student at campaign event, Hampton, N.H., Feb. 9. 10. "We are all Lakers today." — Los Angeles Clippers coach Doc Rivers, in a remark to reporters after the death of Kobe Bryant, Orlando, Fla., Jan. 26. — AP

DECCAN Chronicle

8 DECEMBER 2020

Govt needs to do more to push vaccine awareness

The news of Haryana health minister Anil Vij contracting Covid-19 after receiving a shot of Covaxin, the Coronavirus vaccine that Indian company Bharat Biotech International Ltd has developed in association with the Indian Council for Medical Research, may be seen as a setback but the larger point the incident flags is the need for a far better understanding of the defence that human beings have created against the killer micro-organism. It has now emerged that the state minister, who volunteered for the trial, had received only one shot of the vaccine and that he had missed the second one, which should have been administered 28 days after the first one. Though anyone's body should start developing immunity with the first dose itself, it would take the second dose to make it fairly foolproof. According to the company, the Covaxin trials are based on a two-dose schedule, which are administered 28 days apart. The vaccine's efficacy will be determined two weeks after the second dose. As per the data the company has published, it expects a certain number of infections among the volunteers, and the minister contracting the disease is not entirely unexpected. It may be remembered that the efficiency of the Pfizer vaccine that has been given a licence in the United Kingdom as well as Bahrain is only 95 per cent.

The Centre must think of designing a campaign on the need for vaccination and its protocols. If a minister can skip a dose, it is likely that many Indians may do so

So, it's no reason to be less confident about the indigenous vaccine development process that is now under way. It should not also impact India's partnership in the development and manufacture of the other vaccines as well — Indian volunteers are part of the clinical trial of vaccines developed in foreign countries; Indian companies are gearing up for the mass production of vaccines once they receive the authentication.

However, the incident related to the Haryana minister has some lessons for the government. It has been working with the stakeholders on the details of the way people are to be vaccinated. It has a lot of ground such as finalising the norms for preparing the priority list, arranging the logistics, creating a cold chain and setting up the last mile inoculation mechanism to cover.

It looks like the government has taken one area for granted — public awareness about the vaccine. That the government had made no plans as such on handling Covid-19 when it struck is obvious — most decisions were haphazard, giving little thought on their impact on the people at the bottom. It is noteworthy that the government later launched awareness campaigns about the pandemic. And given that the number of daily cases has not risen the way it was projected, it should be safe to assume that the campaign had played its part.

The government should think of designing a similar campaign on the need for vaccination and its protocols. If a minister can skip a dose for whatever reason, it is highly likely that millions of Indians could do something similar due to sheer ignorance or negligence, defeating the very purpose of the entire exercise. This is a serious public health issue, and the government must use whatever tools it has to make it a success. The campaign on vaccination looks as important as vaccination itself.

Christmas threat harmful

The extreme right-wing group Bajrang Dal's threat to Hindus who may wish to attend church on Christmas Day in Assam's Barak Valley is a self-destructive diktat emanating from hard Hindutva. It's a clear threat not just to communal harmony but also an assault on Hinduism, which is an open religion that for millennia has been known to respect variety, plurality and diversity and for its acceptance of all other faiths. The likes of the Bajrang Dal do no justice to the beliefs of its own faith that has been able to assert itself globally without threatening any other faith.

Regardless of such threats materialising to pose a danger to ordinary people who have been accustomed to celebrating the special days of all faiths, the truth is they serve only to tear the fabric of harmony prevailing in most parts of India. Fringe elements tend to be pockets of religious bigotry and communalism, but their voluble presence presents an image that brings about an avoidable perception across the world that India is a hotbed of Hindu communalism.

The threat itself was triggered by a non-event in the assumed closing of a Vivekananda cultural centre in Shillong, which was denied by the Meghalaya government, which said the centre was merely shut for a district holiday. Taking offence at imaginary slights and assuming a rigid stand on religious matters is not uncommon for Hindutvadis. What makes this case curious is that the main character in this play of religious fervour, Mithu Nath of Bajrang Dal, is indoctrinated to the extent of claiming that Hindus have never broken a mosque or church to build a temple. Recent history doesn't bear that out: we know how the Babri Masjid was brought down in a cataclysmic moment for inter-religious harmony.

All governments need to rein in such divisive forces or at least reassure people that they will not come to any harm if they follow the simple but eloquent practice of enjoying all festivals: whether it be Diwali, Id or Christmas.

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Subhani



Worry on Brahmaputra waters seems misplaced



Mohan Guruswamy

Last week, the Chinese state media said the country could build up to 60 GW of hydropower capacity on a section of the Brahmaputra, citing a senior executive. Yan Zhiyong, chairman of the state-owned Power Construction Corporation of China, speaking at an industry conference, said plans to dam the river were a "historic opportunity". This is not a confirmation but an old pipe-dream. But it has set off a howl of protest in the social media.

The Chinese have built a run of the river hydel (215 MW) project at Zhangmu, just like the dams that India is building on the Jhelum and which Pakistan vigorously contests. The bottom-line is that the upper riparian states may use the water but not divert it. But we seem to have other concerns too. An external affairs ministry consultant has cautioned: "First, China's attempt to build infrastructure in Tibet and improve its connectivity with the Chinese mainland has been one of China's major strategies, not only in terms of military preparedness but also to overcome the challenge of regional disparity. Second, China has been working on improving infrastructure and connectivity with the frontier states along its border. Finally, the Brahmaputra is a major lifeline for India's northeastern region. If the situation continues unabated, it will have long-term implications for India."

Let's examine these. Should not the improvement of infrastructure within its own territory be the concern of every government? Are we to keep complaining about every road or bridge, just in case military vehicles

use them? Our first two concerns are not really serious. Then there is the concern over the Brahmaputra waters. We need to familiarise ourselves with some realities.

Many Indian and international security experts have been warning of the looming "water wars" between the two countries. A few years ago, the late B.G. Varghese, an acknowledged expert on the India-Pakistan-China water disputes, and myself made a presentation on this subject at the well-known think-tank, the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS). We showed that India and Bhutan together generate about 80 per cent of the system's input. China accounts for almost half the basin area, but it actually contributes a fraction of the system's input of waters. The narrow Yarlung Tsangpo actually becomes the mighty Brahmaputra only after it enters India after the Great Bend. Yet the water wars narrative persists.

The supporters of this narrative believe that China already has a plan to divert the Brahmaputra river's waters — more specifically, the western route of China's South-North Water Diversion Projects. They are referring to the Grand Western Water Diversion Plan (GWWD), which was proposed a long time ago by Chinese water expert Guo Kai, to divert water from the upstream sections of six rivers in southwest China, including the upstream Mekong, the Yarlung Tsangpo River, and the Salween, to the dry areas of northern China. Writing about this, Zhang Hongzhou, of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore, unambiguously states: "This is a misperception. It was

only an idea. And it will be no more than an idea."

The Yarlung Tsangpo originates near Mount Kailash and traverses eastward for about 1,700 km as a relatively shallow and small river when the river enters the area known as the Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon. This is the deepest canyon in the world, and at 504.6 km is longer than the famed Grand Canyon (446 km) in the US. As the gorge bends around the 7,800-metre-high Mount Namcha Barwa and cuts its way through the eastern Himalayan range, its waters drop from about 2,900 metres (9,500 ft) near Pei to about 1,500 metres (4,900 ft) at the end of the upper gorge, where it is joined by the Po Tsangpo river. The river continues through the lower gorge to the Indian border at an elevation of 660 metres (2,170 ft). The steep river drops make it a raging torrent all along the canyon. As the canyon passes between the peaks of the Namcha Barwa and Gyalu Peri mountains, it reaches an average depth of about 5,000 metres (16,000 feet) around Namcha Barwa. The canyon's average depth overall is about 2,268 metres (7,440 feet), while the deepest depth reaches 6,009 metres (19,714 feet). Now imagine the physical challenge of damming this canyon. And if it is meant to also support irrigation in Yunnan, the water has to be lifted a few thousand metres and will involve monumental costs. Even in China a cost-benefit analysis will make its unviability apparent. Even the technically less challenging American-designed Three Gorges

Dam in Hubei cost China over \$50 billion.

Now let's look at some basic realities of the Yarlung Tsangpo-Brahmaputra system. While China has the largest spatial share of the basin at over 50 per cent, it generates only 22 per cent of the total basin discharge. Tibet's low precipitation and desert conditions is the main reason for this. In contrast, the India section of the basin, with about 34 per cent of the basin area, contributes about half of the total discharge. This is because of melting snows in the eastern Himalayas and the severity of the monsoon. Equally significant is the contribution from Bhutan, that has 6.7 per cent of the total basin area but generates 21 per cent of the output. The utilisation rate of water in the Brahmaputra is very low. Prof. Pranab Kumar Ray, director, Centre for Hydro-Meteorological Research, Kolkata, in "Rivers of Conflict or Rivers of Peace", a paper published by the ORF, estimates that the utilisable water of the Brahmaputra system is just four per cent of the total discharge. This is a reflection of the very high speed of the discharge and its sheer volume. That's to say even a 10 per cent or 20 per cent cut in the Brahmaputra's water flow is unlikely to cause water scarcity of any nature in the Indian part of the basin.

Quite clearly, the "water wars" scenario is unfounded in the case of Brahmaputra. We need to think of ways to harness more of the mighty Brahma-putra for power and agriculture to help the people of India (and Bangladesh), rather than let 96 per cent of it to just flow into the Bay of Bengal. We must work with Bangladesh closely rather than just keep pointing fingers at China.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

LETTERS

FARMERS PROTEST

The Centre must immediately convene a Parliament session to find an amicable solution to the farmers agitation. The Opposition, particularly the Left and the Congress should not try to exploit the agitation for gaining political mileage, but put pressure on the Centre to convene Parliament to discuss the issue.

R.J. Janardhana Rao
Hyderabad

GHMC ELECTIONS

After the bitter poll campaign, the GHMC has got a truncated verdict with no one able to muster strength to have a Mayor on their own leaving them to depend on parties. We hope the parties will do some out of the box thinking than resort to good old machinations of weaning the corporators from one party to another. They can reach a consensus for mayor like Mahatma Gandhi in 1922 when he urged the rest of India to emulate the Ganga-Jamuna tehzeeb in Hyderabad.

D. Nagarjuna
Hyderabad

BJP FAMILY POLITICS

BJP president J.P. Nadda has conveniently forgotten that the BJP is part of the Sangh Parivar (*Nadda: All parties are family-centric except the BJP, DC, Dec. 7*). They are day-dreaming about perpetuating the Sangh's dynastic rule in India while legitimising it through the elections. The elections for the BJP president's post needs the RSS approval. Can anyone outside the Sangh aspire for the top offices in the country? It is this is so, can it be called a democratic process? It is time BJP stopped fooling people.

Mohd. Saleem
Hyderabad

Plea to include temple lands in Tenancy Act

BY A STAFF REPORTER
HYDERABAD, Dec. 7

Several Opposition members of the State Assembly today urged the Government to bring tenants of temple lands within the purview of the Andhra Area Tenancy Amendment Bill.

During the general discussion on the Bill, as reported by the Joint Select Committee, several Opposition members, including a Ruling Congress member, criticised the provision relating to the exemption sought to be given to temple lands.

Aakar Patel



Will Centre be forced to give in to the farmers?

Once again, the Narendra Modi government has shown that it will ignore the concerns of large numbers of Indians till it becomes a national crisis. Exactly a year ago, after a series of threats from the Union home minister to India's minorities, the government passed legislation that Amit Shah said would be the first step of his chronology on citizenship. We know what happened immediately after that — protests by those whom the laws were victimising, no support for them from India's internal democratic structure, international condemnation of India's actions, and then violence instigated and encouraged by the ruling party.

Earlier this year, the government passed, by ordinance during the Covid-19 pandemic, a set of laws that would change the way that agriculture would be done, especially in the northwest. Nobody had asked for these laws, no farmers' groups were consulted and there was no explanation on why these had been brought into force

through the ordinance route. Of course, this government follows the adage of "never apologise, never explain". It has never apologised, and it has never explained.

For most of the media, which is urban and middle class, the farmers' laws made no sense. Google will throw up dozens of reports, often from the same publication, with the headline "farmers bills explained". Few of us have seen a mandi, know what APMC stands for or does and what the issue of MSP means to the average Punjabi. For this reason, the issue was off the headlines very soon.

Predictably, the farmers began a protest that soon developed into a mass movement but appeared small because it was ignored by the national media and was localised in a couple of states. The government in New Delhi also ignored it and in fact escalated its confrontation by disallowing the Indian Railways from operating trains to Punjab even after the protesters had said they would not disrupt traffic. No railway property was damaged in the peaceful protest, but for two

months no train went through even after the protesters had left the railway tracks.

It was clear that the government was not going to back off its legislation unless it was forced to. At this point, the farmers began their march to besiege the national capital. The BJP made a few attempts to hold them back in Haryana, a state that it controls, but was unable to because of the resolve of the farmers. We are now seeing the consequences of arrogance and hard-headedness. The government has no option but to negotiate with the farmers. It is about to rewrite the laws that it should have written up after consulting them in the first place. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will say that he means well and wants to double the farmers' incomes, but he will not concede that he needs to consult them before coming up with his genius idea that will help them do this.

Notice the similarities between the farmers' movement and the protests across the country against the citizenship amendment laws. First, that these laws were passed

without anyone having asked for them. Second, that the minorities they affected went on to protest immediately because they sensed the danger to them that the rest of the population did not, and third, that the rest of us did not care about the laws and had little or no empathy for those who were affected. It was the Muslims in the lead in the protests against being sent to concentration camps, and it was the Sikhs in the lead on the issue of the controversial farm laws. Fourth, that the government recklessly and deliberately demonised the protesters, calling them terrorists, separatists and "Khalistanis".

Fifth, that the rest of the world was alarmed by what the government was doing and intervened. India does not like to be lectured by other nations but if you do something dumb then you have to face the consequences. The European Union's members of Parliament wrote up a very strong motion against India's citizenship laws, and India was able to only delay the tabling of the motion with difficulty. Canada, which has a large and

influential Sikh population, told India that it was "concerned". India objected to this interference but could do little because we have no real leverage. If thousands of Canadians were migrating to India monthly instead of the other way around, we might have had some say.

The sixth thing that will likely be common to both these issues is that they will end in the same way. Mr Modi made Amit Shah eat his brave words on his chronology and said that the issue of the National Register of Citizens had not been discussed. That lay the matter to rest. On the issue of the three farm laws, something similar will come. The government has used all the tricks it has on the farmers. But they are still standing there blockading Delhi, prepared to be there for months. Their demands will have to be met, of course, and this government will move on to the next great idea, without an apology or an explanation.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	45,426.97	0.77
Nifty 50	13,355.75	0.73
S&P 500*	3,695.77	-0.09
Dollar (₹)	73.90	-0.14
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.85	1.66
Euro (₹)	89.36	0.47
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,703.104	0.21
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	49.16	-0.09
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.924	0.026
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.939	-0.030

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Hindalco to set up ₹730 cr plant in Silvassa

Aditya Birla group firm Hindalco Industries said it plans to set up a 34,000-tonne aluminium extrusion plant at Silvassa, in Dadra and Nagar Haveli, at an investment of Rs 730 crore. In a regulatory filing, it said the new plant will service the fast-growing market for extruded aluminium products in the western and southern regions. It said the project signals a big step forward in Hindalco's downstream strategy.

IndiGo to refund all passengers by January 31



IndiGo said it will refund all customer credit shells, which were created when flights were cancelled due to the coronavirus lockdown earlier this year, by January 31. The airline said it has processed close to Rs 1,000 crore of refunds, which is about 90 per cent of the total amount it owed to its customers. CEO Ronojoy Dutta said, "As our incoming cash flow dried up, we were unable to immediately process refunds."

NSE starts weekly F&O contracts in 3 currency pairs

The NSE launched weekly futures and options contracts on three currency pairs-- euro-rupee, yen-rupee and pound sterling-rupee. "NSE is launching a weekly futures contract for the first time, while we have already seen market acceptance in weekly options contracts across asset classes," the exchange's MD and CEO Vikram Limaye said. The weekly derivatives on currency pairs will reduce time-related costs, he said.

Nissan receives 5,000 bookings for Magnite

Nissan Motor India said it has received 5,000 bookings for its newly launched compact SUV, Magnite in five days. The firm also received over 50,000 enquiries for the vehicle launched on Dec. 2 at an introductory price of Rs 4.99 lakh, with over 20 variants. Over 60 per cent of the bookings have been received for the top 2 grades (XV and XV Premium), and more than 30 per cent are for CVT Automatic, Nissan said.



■ Growth in tier-I cities and metros came to 20% Online festive sales double in small cities

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 7

Smaller cities played a key role in driving e-commerce festive season sales this year. Online sales almost doubled in volume terms in smaller cities this festive season. The tier-II and III cities have been growing way faster than metropolitan cities and its impact is visible in the festive season sale as well, finds Unicommerce, e-commerce focused SaaS platform. Tier-II and beyond cities have witnessed a growth of 99 per cent as compared to last year's festive season. The growth in tier-I and metropolitan cities remained around 20 per cent. According to Amazon, initial days of the festive season saw 91 per cent of new customers coming



from smaller cities. However, states like Delhi, Maharashtra and Karnataka with metropolitan cities continued to dominate e-commerce sales. These three states contribute 55 per cent of India's e-commerce volume in the festive month. Personal care category emerged as the biggest gainer, with 176 per cent

order volume growth over last year's festive month. Beauty and wellness reported 52 per cent order volume growth. Fashion and accessories witnessed an order volume growth of 71 per cent. Electronics continued to be the highlight of festive sales, with all marketplaces extensively promoting discounts and offers on

electronic products. The segment saw a substantial growth of 65 per cent in order volume. RedSeer Consulting too found that mobiles and appliances remained strong this year driven by new launches, discounts, bank offers and smart upgrade plans of brands. Returns remained a concern for e-tailers despite automation, though the industry overall observed a 35 per cent decrease in return orders this season compared to last year. Fashion and accessories remained the category with maximum return orders. This year brands got serious about online selling by developing own websites. Brand websites witnessed 77 per cent order volume growth compared to 60 per cent for marketplaces.

PSU insurers go slow with crop insurance

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

Major general insurers, especially public sector players, are learnt to be shying away from insuring their crops through the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, or PMFBY, scheme. They feel the current crop insurance scheme is not lucrative enough for them to focus on it. However, a few private players have been looking at the scheme for widening their market reach. For

instance, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company has increased its presence in the segment and has gone ahead of its peers. Its exposure to the sector currently stands at Rs 1,700 crore. "All the major players, who are active on the non-life insurance space in the country, have reportedly reduced their exposure to the crop insurance, as they don't find the PMFBY scheme lucrative any more in its revised form. Therefore, they are slightly

pushing away from this scheme to avoid losses," a senior official of a public sector general insurance company told *Financial Chronicle* on condition of anonymity. Data with sector regulator Irdai shows private insurer's exposure to crop insurance stands at Rs 1,615 crore for HDFC ERGO, Rs 1,605 crore for Reliance General Insurance, Rs 1,370 crore for SBI General Insurance and Rs 843 crore for Ifco Tokio. In contrast, the

exposure of the largest state-run non-life insurer, New India Assurance, is Rs 675 crore. Ashish Agarwal, head-agri business & CSC, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance, said the firm has been participating in the PMFBY scheme from its launch in 2016. "We have been authorised to enrol farmers under the PMFBY by the governments of Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan during the kharif 2020 season."

Only 4 sales returns for small biz next yr

New Delhi, Dec. 7: Businesses with up to Rs 5 crore turnover will have to file only four GST sales returns, or GSTR-3B, from January instead of 12 at present, according to sources. The Quarterly filing of Return with Monthly Payment (QRMP) Scheme would impact almost 94 lakh taxpayers, about 92 per cent of the total tax base of the goods and services tax (GST), the source added. With this, from January onwards, small taxpayers would need to file only eight returns (four GSTR-3B and four GSTR-1 returns) in a year, one of the sources said. The source further said the scheme also brings in the concept of providing input tax credit (ITC) only on the reported invoices, thereby putting a curb on the menace of fake invoice frauds. Sources said the QRMP scheme has an optional invoice filing facility (IFF) to mitigate business-related hardships for the small and medium-sized taxpayers.

Under the facility of IFF, the small taxpayers who opt to be quarterly return filers under the QRMP scheme would be able to upload and file such invoices even in the first and second month of the quarter for which there is a demand from the recipients. Further, this would engage buyers who earlier used to avoid purchase from the small taxpayers for want of uploading invoices in the system on a monthly basis, the sources said. According to the sources, the taxpayers would need not upload and file all the invoices for the month and could upload and file only those invoices required to be filed in IFF as per demand of the recipients. The remaining invoices of the first and second months can be uploaded in the quarterly GSTR-1 return. The IFF would be available up to a cut-off date and credit would flow to the recipient after the cut-off date on filing of the IFF, they added. —PTI

Dip in wages of informal workers: ILO

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 7



While the pandemic saw workers' wages shrinking, informal workers in India experienced a sharper fall than formal workers, finds the International Labour Organisation. ILO also found that the gap between real and nominal minimum wages of unskilled workers in India has become significantly wider in the past 10 years. Post-pandemic, formal workers' wages have been cut by 3.6 per cent in India, while informal workers have experienced a much sharper fall in wages of 22.6 per cent, finds ILO's Global Wage Report. Around two-thirds of countries whose short-term statistics are available showed

decreasing wages or slower average wage growth. In India, delayed increase or freeze in minimum wages because of the Covid-19 crisis have taken place at the local or sectoral level. For example, in the Punjab region, the local government reversed its order announcing a minimum wage increase, says the report. Further, the report also found that the gap between

the nominal wages grew to Rs 180.9, whereas real wages grew at Rs 104.5. By 2019, this gap became wider. The nominal wages touched Rs 270, while the real wage was lagging behind at Rs 135.3. In the past one decade, nominal wages grew by 239.6 per cent, whereas real wages grew by only 70.2 per cent. Minimum wage rates vary widely in the country and the variations across states in the number of wage rates indicates the high complexity of the minimum wage system. Minimum wages of unskilled workers ranges between Rs 115 and Rs 538 across states. Rajasthan and Maharashtra are at the lower end of the range and Delhi and Karnataka at the upper end.

Xiaomi ramps up smart TV production in India

New Delhi, Dec. 7: Chinese tech major Xiaomi on Monday said it has partnered with Hyderabad-based Radiant Appliances as it ramps up production of its smart TVs in India. The move comes ahead of Xiaomi's foray into the premium QLED TV segment

in India. Xiaomi India category lead (smart TV) Eashwar Nilakantan said when the company had launched its smart TVs in 2018, there were two key trends—Internet tariffs were getting cheaper and speed was faster; and there was a proliferation of content. "Since then, we have

already sold over 5 million smart TVs and continue to be No. 1 in the segment. Last year, we started with 4K TVs and that has also seen strong growth. In the pandemic, content consumption has gone up drastically and people are also looking for movie theatre-like experiences at

home," he said. With the QLED TV, Xiaomi wants to offer premium viewing experience to customers, he added. While Nilakantan did not disclose details of the pricing, he said the first 55-inch QLED TV will be launched on December 16. —PTI

CEO of fashion retailer quits to prioritise wife's career

Berlin, Dec. 7: The chief executive of online fashion retailer Zalando is stepping down to focus on his family, saying his wife's career should take priority in the coming years. Rubin Ritter, one of three co-chief executives at Zalando, has been in the job since 2010.



Rubin Ritter

Tasked with overseeing strategy and communications, the 38-year-old helped turn the Berlin-based start-up into one of the world's top online fashion retailers with 14,000 employees and net profit of almost 100 million euros (\$121 million) in 2019. In a statement, Zalando said Ritter had informed

the company on Sunday of his decision to step down in 2021, more than two years before his contract ends. "I feel that it is time to give my life a new direction," Ritter was quoted as saying. I want to devote more time to my growing family, he added. My wife and I have

agreed that for the coming years, her professional ambitions should take priority. The head of Zalando's supervisory board, Cristina Stenbeck, said the company regretted Ritter's decision but we have the highest respect for the underlying personal motivation. Last month, Ritter published the company's first report on diversity and inclusion, saying these should be seen as an opportunity rather than a challenge. The company has been criticised for currently having only men on its five-member management board. —AP

HOTELS SEEK LOAN RESTRUCTURING

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, DEC. 7

Fearing a second wave of the pandemic, the hospitality sector, which is already weighed down by massive losses and mounting debt, is seeking a sector-specific loan restructuring plan. The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India said the sector suffered revenue loss of Rs 1.14 lakh crore this year. Pradeep Shetty, honorary joint secretary, FHRAI, said if a favourable policy is not drawn for survival of the sector, at least 40 to 50 per cent restaurants and 30 to 40 per cent hotels in the country will shut down, resulting into millions of job losses.

Franklin seeks investors nod to wind up schemes

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 7

The Trustee of Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund in India has sought unitholders consent for the orderly winding up of the six fixed income schemes, abiding with the December 3 interim order of the Supreme Court. "Voting 'Yes' will allow schemes to monetise assets without resorting to distressed sales and will maximise value to Unitholders," the fund house said in a release. Voting will take place during December 26-28. Santosh Kamath, CIO, Franklin Templeton Fixed

Income India, said, "From April 24, 2020 to November 27, 2020, the six schemes under winding up have received Rs 11,576 crore from maturities, pre-payments, and coupons. Four out of the six schemes are already cash positive and have close to Rs 7,226 crore available to return to unitholders, subject to fund running expenses. All of this cash has been received without any secondary market sale (active monetisation) of the securities in these six schemes." He said of the Rs 11,576 crore received, nearly half has come from securities rated 'A'.

KOTAK LAUNCHES FIRST REIT MF

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, DEC. 7

Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company has launched India's first diversified REIT Mutual Fund. Kotak International REIT Fund of Funds is an open-ended mutual fund scheme that will invest in units of SMAM Asia REIT Sub Trust Fund. This mutual fund scheme will have a diversified investment portfolio comprising listed REITs which will invest in real estate projects like residential, office, data centres, warehousing, retail and hospitality. The new fund offer (NFO) opens on December 7 and closes on December 21.

ICICI BANK LAUNCHES INTEROPERABLE APP

Mumbai, Dec. 7: ICICI Bank launched a new mobile payment app that is interoperable and allows payments and other services to customers of any other bank. Through iMobile Pay, customers of other banks can link their accounts to it.

DLF TO EQUIP OFFICES WITH AIR FILTRATION

New Delhi, Dec. 7: DLF will invest Rs 30 crore over the next six months to install new air-filtration technology, MERV-14, in all its office buildings to ensure safe re-entry of tenants and their employees in its office buildings, the company said.

LEAD SCHOOL TO HAVE AI-LED ASSESSMENT

Mumbai, Dec. 7: LEAD School, an EdTech player in K-12 education, has acquired QuizNext, an AI-powered gamified student assessment and practice platform. Commenting, LEAD School co-founder and COO Smita Deorah said, "Beyond online classes, students need a lot of support in a remote learning environment for a full schooling impact."

HIGH-TECH ASSISTANCE

Pilot project running across 100 locations in MP, Maharashtra

Voda, Nokia team up for SmartAgri solution

New Delhi, Dec. 7: Vodafone India Foundation, the corporate social responsibility (CSR) arm of Vi, has, in partnership with Nokia, deployed a smart agriculture solution that aims to enhance farming practices and improve productivity of farmers. Vodafone Idea CSR has deployed Nokia's World-wide IoT Network Grid (Wing) solution to equip farmers in the country with precise and practical data to help them achieve better yields.



"Deployment of the smart agriculture-as-a-service solution includes soil probes, weather stations, insect traps and crop cameras to help drive productivity of soy

and cotton crops," a press release said. A pilot project, being implemented across 100 locations in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, aims to benefit over 50,000 farmers in the region by enhancing their productivity and income. "The SmartAgri project aims to enhance the liveli-

hoods of small farmers through sustainable farming approaches, deployment of IoT (Internet of Things) solutions and by improving their access to information, using technology," it added. Under the project, over 400 sensors have been deployed over 1,00,000

hectares of farmland to collect various data points, which are then analysed by a cloud-based and localised Smart Agriculture app. The app offers local language support as well as weather forecast and irrigation management information. "The sensors generate insights that is helping to improve soy and cotton crop yields. Crop management through Wing can include smart irrigation, smart pesticide control, and proactive information sharing frameworks on crops and weather, as well as a platform for commodity exchange," the release added. The use case can also employ Remotely Piloted

Aircraft System (RPAS) technology, or drones, instead of traditional sensors for crop management. "To demonstrate the impact of technology in transforming agricultural practices in India, Vi CSR chose the agri-heartlands of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, and on-boarded Nokia as the IoT solutions provider, and Solidaridad for field implementation," it said. The CSR initiative will be showcased at the Voda Idea booth during India Mobile Congress 2020 from December 8 to 10. Telecom operator, Vodafone Idea, offers products and services to its customers under the brand name 'Vi'. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Reds join Spurs at top of EPL

London: Liverpool turned on the style for their returning fans on Sunday, beating Wolves 4-0 to join Tottenham at the top of the Premier League after another episode of the Son Heung-min and Harry Kane show. Jurgen Klopp's men had not had the chance to play in front of their supporters since they ended their 30-year wait to be crowned English champions but made up for lost time. "You'll Never Walk Alone" rang out around Anfield as 2,000 home fans — the maximum allowed under coronavirus rules — witnessed strikes from Mohamed Salah, Georginio Wijnaldum, Joel Matip and an own goal. Liverpool have now won 31 of their past 32 home league games, scoring 93 goals while conceding just 25. Earlier, Jose Mourinho's Spurs beat faltering Arsenal 2-0 at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium and Leicester, who ended the day in fourth spot, struck late to beat rock-bottom Sheffield United 2-1. — *AFP*

Milan pip Samp to maintain lead

Rome: AC Milan kept hold of their five-point lead at the top of Serie 'A' on Sunday after a hard-fought 2-1 win at Sampdoria, while Napoli moved third after strolling to victory over bottom side Crotone. Franck Kessie's penalty on the stroke of half-time and Samu Castillejo's 77th-minute strike were just enough for the seven-time European champions, who were without injured talisman Zlatan Ibrahimovic, to move up to 26 points and keep second-placed local rivals Inter Milan at arm's length. Napoli are six points back in third after goals from Lorenzo Insigne, Hirving Lozano, Diego Demme and Andrea Petagna earned the away side a 4-0 win at Crotone. Ivory Coast midfielder Kessie coolly struck home his spot-kick after Jakub Jankto unluckily handled while challenging for the ball with Theo Hernandez. — *AFP*

Sociedad held, cede La Liga lead

Madrid: Real Sociedad were unable to regain first place in La Liga on Sunday night when they were held to a goalless draw at Basque rivals Alaves. Deprived of injured captain Mikel Oyarzabal, top scorer in La Liga with seven goals, Sociedad were unable to breach the home defence. The draw dropped them one point behind Atletico, who on Saturday beat Valladolid 2-0 for a seventh straight Liga victory. Earlier on Sunday, Villarreal also lost ground with a 0-0 draw at home to Elche. Villarreal regained third place but fell five points behind Diego Simeone's league leaders. Sociedad and Villarreal have both played two games more than Atletico and one more than Real Madrid. Real Madrid reversed a recent slide with a 1-0 victory at Sevilla on Saturday. — *AFP*

Jamshedpur halt Mariners' sail

Goa: A fine brace from Nerijus Valskis ensured Jamshedpur FC bagged their first win in the Hero Indian Super League Season 7 as they beat early pace-setters ATK Mohun Bagan 2-1 at the Tilak Maidan Stadium, here on Monday. Valskis (30', 66') scored in either half for Owen Coyle's side, while Krishna pulled a late goal back for ATKMB. The result also meant ATKMB's perfect run in the campaign came to an end following the defeat. — *Agencies*

India eye clean sweep

Kohli's men look to extend unbeaten run in last T20 against Oz

Sydney, Dec. 7: The series pocketed and their confidence restored, India would eye nothing less than a clean sweep when they take on an Australian side significantly weakened by injury blows, in the third and final T20 International here on Tuesday.

Skipper Virat Kohli and his main protagonist of the white-ball leg, Hardik Pandya, will feel a sense of *deja vu* given that the script has panned out exactly like 2016 when the team got walloped in the ODIs but came back strongly to rout the Aussies 3-0 in the T20 International series.

After a couple of crushing defeats in the first two ODIs, the Indians have turned a corner starting with the final ODI in Canberra.

Even the absence of a white-ball pro like Ravindra Jadeja didn't have an impact during their convincing six-wicket win in the series-clinching second T20 on Sunday.

What will boost the Indian team's morale manifold is the fact that it had the confidence to rest both Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah, relying on a troika of pacers, who between them haven't played even 40 games collectively.

India's new white-ball sensation Thangarasu Natarajan has had a superb initiation in international cricket with Australian batsmen still finding it difficult to read him.

As Pandya so rightly put it, Natarajan's spell and the 10 runs that Australia failed to score became the difference between winning and losing on Sunday.

The difference between India and Australia during the last game was the batting of the two teams during the middle overs.

Australia lost a bit of momentum after stand-in skipper Matthew Wade was dismissed while his opposite number Kohli played some outrageous shots after the Powerplay to up the ante. — *PTI*



Members of the Indian team celebrate their T20 series victory over Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday. India are leading the three-match series 2-0. — *AFP*

Umesh, Ashwin impress in warm-up

Sydney, Dec. 7: Senior pros Umesh Yadav and Ravichandran Ashwin staked strong claims to be included in India's playing XI for the first Test with impressive performances against Australia A, who scored 286 for 8 on the second day, riding on Cameron Green's unbeaten century.

Australia now have a 39-run lead after India A declared their innings at 247 for 9 in the first hour of the second day, with

skipper Ajinkya Rahane remaining unbeaten on 117.

With Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah being automatic choices, Umesh (18-3-44-3), fighting for third pacer's slot, certainly looked more penetrative compared to Mohammed Siraj (19-4-71-2) with the new ball.

Yadav removed both rival Test team openers Will Pucovski (1) and Joe Burns (4) in his third and fourth over with the new

ball to make initial inroads.

Ashwin (19-2-58-2) also did his Test chances no harm as he reminded old timers of Australian off-spinner of 80's Greg Mathews (hero of 'Madras' tied Test) bowling with his cap on.

Only that Mathews was protecting himself from Chennai heat while Ashwin was reluctant to give it to fellow fielders.

For Australia A, the giant all-rounder Green

continued his rich vein of Sheffield Shield form with an unbeaten 114 off 173 that had 10 fours and a six. He showed good temperament against the Indian attack while adding 104 runs for the sixth wicket with his national skipper Tim Paine (44) after being reduced to 98 for 5. — *PTI*

Brief scores: Indian A 247/9 decl. (Rahane 117*, Pujara 54) vs Australia A 286/8 (Green 114*, Paine 44, Yadav 3/44, Ashwin 2/58).

Jaddu may miss first Test

New Delhi, Dec. 7: Indian all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja is likely to miss the opening Test against Australia owing to the concussion and a hamstring injury that he sustained during the opening T20 International in Canberra.

The 32-year-old, who is on the cusp of his 50th Test, is likely to be out for at least three weeks which certainly rules him out of the first Day/Night Test in Adelaide starting December 17.

In case it turns out to be a hamstring tear, it could well rule him out of the second Boxing Day Test in Melbourne from December 26.

"As per ICC's concussion protocols, after any head injury, a player needs to be rested for 7 to 10 days, which effectively rules Jadeja out of the three-day day/night warm-up game at the SCG from December 11," a BCCI source said on



Ravindra Jadeja

conditions of anonymity.

"Therefore, it is next to impossible that the Indian team management would field Jadeja, without any warm-up game time ahead of the opening Test," the

source added.

However, more than concussion, it is understood that the hamstring injury is likely to keep Jadeja out of action for at least one Test if not two. — *PTI*

PAK SQUAD CLEARS 5TH COVID TEST IN NZ

Christchurch, Dec. 7: The touring Pakistan squad has returned negative in a fifth round of Covid-19 tests and will now be able to leave their managed isolation on Tuesday, subject to clearance from the health ministry, New Zealand Cricket said on Monday.

The 53-member Pakistan team was denied the right to train while in managed isolation in New Zealand after eight members of the touring squad had tested positive for Covid-19.

"This is to advise the Pakistan squad's fifth and final day 12, Covid-19 tests have all been returned as negative," NZC said.

"As a consequence, and pending final Ministry of Health approval, the squad will leave managed isolation tomorrow and fly to Queenstown, where they will train ahead of the T20 and Test series against the BLACKCAPS."

Pakistan are scheduled to play three T20Is, beginning in Auckland on December 18 followed by two Tests starting December 26.

Six members of the Pakistan team had tested positive on arrival, while two more returned positive later and all eight are now in quarantine. — *PTI*

Anju won medals with one kidney

Kochi, Dec. 7: Olympian Anju Bobby George, who secured a historic bronze medal in the 2003 World Athletics Championship in Paris, on Monday said she achieved success and reached the top with a single kidney.

In a tweet, the ace athlete, a gold medalist in the IAAF World Athletics Finals (Monaco, 2005), said she had many limitations, including being allergic to even a painkiller, but still made it.

"Believe it or not, I'm one of the fortunate, among very few who reached the world top with a single KIDNEY, allergic with even a painkiller, with a dead takeoff leg... Many limitations...Still made it. Can we call, magic of a coach or his talent," Anju tweeted.

Her career blossomed under the coaching of husband Robert Bobby George.

Anju said she chose the pandemic season to make this revelation to "motivate" all the sportspersons in the current generation, who are missing their practice and competitions due to the spread of the deadly virus.

"The general perception of the people is that I have a perfect body. But the fact is that I achieved all the success in my field by overcoming all difficulties. I hope that sharing of my experience will help motivate all aspiring sportspersons," she said.

She said she complained of fatigue while in Germany for a competition in 2003 and doctors there advised her rest for six months and not to even think about sports "It was just 20 days ahead of the Paris World Athletics Championship. I overcame all the issues and won a medal in Paris," she said.

Anju came to know she was living with a single kidney during an overall health check-up in Bengaluru 2001 due to some health issues before starting her international career. "It was shocking news for me. But Bobby (husband) motivated me to continue my career and achieve success. He even offered his kidney if I face any problem," she said.

Anju said she was now mature enough to handle



Anju Bobby George

● **In a tweet, the ace athlete, a gold medalist in the IAAF World Athletics Finals (Monaco, 2005), said she had many limitations, including being allergic to even a painkiller, but still made it.**

the situation brought about by her health issues.

"If I had gone public with my health then, the situation would have been different," Anju said.

Responding to her tweet, Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said she brought laurels to India through her hard work, grit and determination. "Anju, it's your hard work, grit and determination to bring laurels for India, supported by the dedicated coaches and the whole technical backup team. We are so proud of you being the only Indian so far to win a medal in the World Athletic Championship!" the minister said in his response to her tweet.

The Athletics Federation of India said as India's only medalist at the IAAF World Championships (Paris, 2003), a gold medalist in the IAAF World Athletics Finals (Monaco, 2005) and a remarkably consistent performer, Anju is among the country's most inspirational track and field stars.

She finished sixth at the 2004 Olympics with a personal best leap of 6.83m, but was elevated to fifth place in 2007 when USA's Marion Jones was disqualified for a doping offence. — *PTI*

England tour off after Covid strike

Johannesburg, Dec. 7: England's cricket tour of South Africa has been called off after a Covid-19 outbreak in the England touring party, both countries said on Monday.

The joint announcement from the two boards, which alluded to the "mental and physical health" of the players, came after the rearranged first match in the three-match series on Sunday was cancelled after two members of the England touring party tested positive for the virus.

England will return home having played all three matches in the T20 series but none of three scheduled ODIs.

"Cricket South Africa and the England and Wales Cricket Board have agreed

to postpone the remaining matches in the current ODI Series. The decision was taken jointly by the two Boards to ensure the mental and physical health and welfare of players from both teams," a joint statement said.

Many of the England players spent long stretches during the summer in a bio-secure bubble and some were also confined during the Indian Premier League in the Emirates which followed.

Two of the younger members of the squad, Tom Banton and Tom Curran have pulled out of contracts in Australia's Big Bash League in the last week, citing the pressure of living in the bio-secure bubbles. — *AFP*

Jadeja absence throws conspiracy theories out of window



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

The Australians don't take defeat on their chin and move on. Their last setback, in the first Twenty20 match (T20) coming on the back of another loss in the final One Day International (ODI) at Canberra has put them in a bit of a spot. The reactions of their cricketers, both current and former, to the losses, shows that the confidence they had gained after wins in the first two ODIs has been shaken and that's good news for India.

The concussion substitute issue, which has

opened debates across platforms, where Yuzvendra Chahal replaced Ravindra Jadeja and bowled India to a win in the first T20 saw responses from the hosts which affirmed their discomfort. Coach Justin Langer's head-shaking argument with match referee David Boon during the innings break was followed by Aussie all-rounder Moises Henriques doubts whether Chahal's was a 'like-for-like' replacement for the injured Jadeja.

Former Aussie international Tom Moody commented that he had no

issues with the substitution but raised a question if the correct 'protocol' was followed since no physio or doctor came on to the middle when the Indian left-hander was struck on the helmet by a Mitchell Starc bouncer. Though these reactions were aimed at officials (match referee and umpires — as the decisions would ideally remain in their domains) they did lead to the perception that the replacement by India wasn't 'fair dinkum' to put it in Aussie slang.

The 'issue' unnecessarily raised by the Aussies was because Jadeja suffered a hamstring injury after he was hit on the head and their reactions were bordering on that fact. Coming back, the questions one could ask Moody will be about protocols that need to be followed.

Would coach Langer's act of arguing with match referee Boon, a veteran cricketer and an Australian to boot, in full public with cameras focussed on them be considered as correct protocol? Would Moody have done the same while coaching a team in the Indian Premier League?

As someone who has been a frontline coach Moody should know what is and isn't part of cricket's covenant. It just maybe that the former coach may have suffered a moment of 'brain fade' just the way former Aussie skipper Steve Smith did while touring India in the 2017 series.

Cricketers were always taught to respect the umpires decisions as final and any argument about the same was abhorred upon. In today's parlance, arguments with referees

and umpires are taken as part of cricket's changing scenario which makes for great viewing and juicy stories but is terrible if looked at from the point of view of the spirit of the game.

Looking back, Chahal replacing Jadeja wasn't exactly a major achievement by India but a mere opportunity for them to get a leg spinner in a game that was helping that genre of bowling. Calling it a masterstroke by India would be a misnomer. Indian captain Virat Kohli was honest enough to admit that there were no plans to play Chahal in the match and the decision they took worked for them this time and may not work in the future. Also, Jadeja being ruled out of the remainder of the T20 series and put under medical observation throws all

conspiracy theories out of the window.

The reactions from the Australians will now put Kohli and team India in a better frame of mind as they approach the crucial Test series. They know that the Aussies are riled after two consecutive losses and have given them a foot in the door. The host team's decision to rest their star bowler Pat Cummins and all-rounder Marcus Stoinis showed that they missed their opportunity for a clean sweep and gave the visitors a much needed lifeline.

The Aussies hate for anyone to get under their skin. We saw how former Indian skipper Sourav Ganguly irritated his counterpart Steve Waugh (by keeping him waiting for the toss) in 2001 taking Waugh away from his objective of beat-

ing India and conquering the last frontier. This time, they have inadvertently allowed the Indians to affect their psyche. Their adverse reactions to a superficial incident shows that they got complacent, effectively masking their failure to get dominating over the visitors.

If India do keep up the momentum and win the T20 series (this is written before the second T20 match at Sydney) it will put them in a great position for the Test series. With Ajinkya Rahane's century and Cheteshwar Pujara's fifty for India 'A' against Australia 'A' in the ongoing practice match at the Drummoyne Oval in Sydney, the mood in the team India's camp will be upbeat and more positive than it was a week ago — a great build up for the Test series.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Australia vs India: Third T20 from 1.40 pm on Sony Six, Ten 1, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Bengaluru vs NorthEast United from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Champions League: Zenit vs Dortmund from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Barcelona vs Juventus from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2; Chelsea vs Krasnodar from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Six; Leipzig vs Manchester United from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 1; PSG vs Istanbul Basaksehir from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 3

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