



STATE

Identify land for industrial zones beyond ORR: Revanth **page 5**

NATION

'Will approach Centre to get Guv removed' **page 8**

WORLD

US not dictating timeline or terms to Israel, says Defence Secretary **page 9**



Rains, floods ravage TN again

3 killed, 3 more feared dead; IMD says more rains in store



Manimuthar waterfall overflows due to incessant heavy rainfall in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu on Monday. — Photo: ANI

PTI

CHENNAI/KANYAKUMARI

Intense rainfall and heavy inundation, unseen in recent times, overwhelmed four southern districts of Tamil Nadu and Chief Minister MK Stalin arrived on Monday in Delhi to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss relief initiatives.

People marooned in residential colonies were evacuated by authorities and were housed in relief centres, such as neighbourhood schools and marriage halls and over 7,000 people are housed in such facilities. Three persons were killed in rain-related incidents and three more are feared dead. Paddy fields, roads and bridges were submerged and many residential colonies came under sheets

800 train passengers stranded

MADURAI: Due to floods, approximately 800 train passengers were stranded at Srivaikuntam in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu, an official said on Monday. The passengers of a Chennai-bound express train from the temple town of Tiruchendur were stranded for nearly 20 hours at Srivaikuntam, which is in the worst flood-hit region. An official said 'all efforts are on to rescue them' and NDRF authorities have also been alerted. The Tiruchendur-Chennai Egmore Express (Train No 20606) departed from Tiruchendur to Chennai at 20.25 hours on December 17. PTI

of water as heavy rains wreaked havoc in Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Tenkasi districts. Electricity supply was halted in advance due to rains. Mobile phone connectivity was hit in several regions and public transportation was completely affected, severely disrupting

normalcy. Road link was cut-off in several regions of southern Tamil Nadu following breaches in lakes and flooding. The storage in major dams and reservoirs in southern Tamil Nadu ranged between 80 and 100 per cent. Authorities said rescue efforts in areas including Tirunelveli junction

and Sindupoonthurai is continuing using boats. In Tirunelveli district alone, so far at least 36 villages were flooded. Food was provided to over 50,000 people.

Chief Minister Stalin reached Delhi from Coimbatore to discuss rain and the flood situation in southern parts of the State with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 19. Iron tracks attached to cement slabs for support dangled precariously. Chief Secretary Shiv Das Meena told reporters that the rains and flooding were unprecedented and the services of the Army, Navy and the Air Force have been requisitioned. In Tirunelveli town, a concrete house collapsed and went under water on the road, which appeared like a waterway. (SEE PAGE 2)

JN.1 spreads faster than other variants

Experts say new variant not life-threatening, Centre advises States to keep vigil on

CITY BUREAU
 Hyderabad

The new coronavirus variant JN.1, first reported in the country by health authorities of Kerala, can evade human antibody response, thus enabling it to spread faster than other variants.

While the initial indications are that JN.1 is not life-threatening, it should, however, be a cause of worry for vulnerable population with co-morbid conditions, as Covid has the ability to destabilise their underlying medical conditions.

Due to the inherent risks of JN.1 and epidemic status of Covid in India, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi on Monday issued an advisory to all the State governments, directing them to maintain a state of constant vigil over the Covid situation, right up to the district level. Based on reports and initial views on the JN.1 variant from public health

Symptoms

SEVERE FATIGUE, DIARRHEAL SYMPTOMS, VOMITING AND FEVER

- Initially, people without fever or respiratory symptoms are testing positive
- Before spreading elsewhere, JN.1 first affects gastric system
- Other symptoms are cough, fever, runny nose, headache, stomach cramps, loss of smell
- It may take longer to recover from JN.1 due to severe disease

Geographical distribution

JN.1 variant reported in US, China, Singapore, India
 Seven cases reported in China
 More genetic sequencing required to confirm in other countries
 Current RTPCR tests enough for confirmation of variant

Mask up, K'tata to people above 60

MADIKERI: The Karnataka government on Monday asked those above 60-years of age, with comorbidities, and symptoms of cough, phlegm and fever to mandatorily wear face masks, in the wake of detection of a case of Covid sub-variant JN.1 in Kerala. (REPORT PAGE 8)

No need to panic: Kerala Minister

KOCHI: Kerala Health Minister Veena George dismissed the news of Covid spread in State as by "some vested interests" attempting to create a panic. "The fact of the matter is authorities are constantly watching things and all things are in place," the Minister said. (REPORT PAGE 8)

experts, most cases of normal fever or even upper respiratory tract infections being reported in Telangana and other parts of the country are not being tested

for Covid. As a result, the reported numbers of Covid infections are a gross underestimation of the ground realities. (SEE PAGE 2)

I.N.D.I.A's PM face after polls
NATION | PAGE 07

N Korea fires ballistic missile
WORLD | PAGE 09



India aim to seal series
SPORT | PAGE 10



ENTERTAINMENT
 PAGE 12

Neha's int'l debut

Actor will star in Blue 52, helmed by Egyptian director



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With skin	Rs. 177
Skinless	Rs. 201
Egg Rates (12 eggs)	Rs. 74

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Repair Medigadda or face action, Uttam to agencies

STATE BUREAU
 Hyderabad

The State government is contemplating legal action against contract agencies of the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme if they fail to honour the agreements and take up repair works. Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy gave indications in this regard during a review meeting with L&T officials on the Medigadda barrage here on Monday.

During the meeting, Uttam Kumar Reddy warned L&T Group director SV Desai, stating that the company had carried out inferior quality work at the Medigadda (Lakshmi) barrage which led to the sinking of the piers and subsequently caused cracks on the pillars. Referring to a letter written by the agency to irrigation officials where the former expressed its inability to carry out the repair works, the Minister strongly warned that the company cannot escape from its responsibilities citing excuses.

"We will not spare those who waste public money and take up inferior quality works," he said and asked irrigation officials to submit

Minister says they carried out inferior quality work at the barrage which led to the sinking of the piers

a comprehensive report on the overall quality of works, including financial implications of repair works required for the Medigadda barrage. The officials were also instructed to organise a meeting with the contract agencies of Annaram and Sundilla barrages.

Earlier in October, three piers of the Medigadda barrage sunk and led to cracks on a couple of pillars. Vehicular movement on the 1,623 metre barrage between Maharashtra and Telangana, was stalled temporarily. Initially, the contract agency L&T Group issued a statement that it would carry out the restoration and repair works at its own expense. However, recently, the company authorities wrote a letter to the irrigation officials stating that they were not responsible for the sagging of piers and subsequent damage caused to the barrage. (SEE PAGE 2)

78 more Opposition MPs suspended



Opposition MPs, who were suspended from for the remainder of the Winter Session, stage a protest, in New Delhi. — Photo: ANI

NEW DELHI

In an unprecedented move, 78 opposition MPs were suspended from Parliament on Monday, the highest number of suspensions in a day, triggering a strong reaction from the Congress that accused the BJP government of trying to bulldoze key legislations in an "Oppositionless" Parliament.

As many as 33 members were suspended from Lok Sabha followed by Rajya Sabha where 45 leaders were suspended after the

Opposition refused to budge on their demand for a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah over the breach in Parliament security on December 13, when two protesters jumped into the lower house chamber and opened smoke cans.

Monday's action has taken the total number of opposition MPs suspended from both houses to 92 since last Thursday on the issue. AAP member Sanjay Singh has been suspended as a Rajya Sabha member from July 24. On Thursday, the Lok Sabha

suspended 13 members for the remaining part of the Winter Session for waving placards and disrupting proceedings over the Parliament security breach issue. Trinamool member Derek O'Brien was suspended from the Rajya Sabha for the remainder of the Winter Session for unruly behaviour. In Lok Sabha, 33 members, including floor leaders of the Congress and DMK — the two large parties in the opposition, were suspended on Monday for unruly behaviour. (SEE PAGES 2, 7)

President arrives in Hyd

STATE BUREAU
 Hyderabad

President Droupadi Murmu arrived in Hyderabad on Monday as part of the President's annual southern sojourn. She was accorded a warm welcome at the Begumpet airport in the evening by Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Ministers Seethakka and D Sridhar Babu and senior officials. The President will stay at the Rashtapathi Nilayam for five days. (REPORT PAGE 4)

Man kills six of a family for property

STATE BUREAU
 Nizamabad

A man, allegedly with an eye on a family's property, killed six members of the family within a week in Matlur village of Dichpally mandal in the district. According to police, the accused, Prashant, killed all of them separately. He allegedly first killed his friend Maklur Prasad and buried his body beside the highway at Dichpally.

Later, he went to Prasad's house and told his wife that her husband

was arrested by the police and took her to the banks of the Godavari river at Basara, where he allegedly pushed her into the water. He then returned to Prasad's house and is said to have killed his two children and threw their bodies in the canal at Soan Bridge. The next day, Prashant allegedly took Prasad's sisters out separately and killed them.

The crime came to light after villagers found the burnt body of one of Prasad's sisters in Sadashiva Nagar and informed the police. The

police, who took Prashant into custody, came to know about the entire incident. The police investigation revealed that Prashant committed the first three murders alone and the next three with the help of his friends.

As per reports, Prasad along with his family left Maklur village long ago and settled in the Machareddy area. While leaving the village, he gave the responsibility of his house to his friend Prashant, but the latter transferred the house documents on his name

without the knowledge of Prasad and even took a loan after mortgaging it. In the meantime, Prasad came to know about the transfer of ownership and asked Prashant to transfer it back on his name.

However, Prashant, instead of doing so, decided to eliminate the entire family to retain the ownership and took the help of his friends. According to the police, all the killings took place after December 9. Sadashiva Nagar police registered a case and are investigating.