


# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
ANANTAPUR | SATURDAY | 17 OCTOBER 2020

## WEATHER

 **Max:** 31.0°C  
**Min:** 14°C  
**RH:** 83%  
**Rainfall:** Nil

**Forecast:** Cloudy sky.  
Misty morning. Max/Min  
temp. 31/14 °C

## COVID-19 CUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+64,091)	(+1,167)
74,28,912	1,13,302

## STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,554)	(+7)
TS: 2,19,224	1,256
(+3,967)	(+25)
AP: 7,75,470	6,382

## CASES AROUND THE WORLD

 **3,94,21,619**  
**DEATHS**  
11,06,174

 **213**  
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES  
worldometers.info/coronavirus

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Nija-Ashvina Suddha  
Padyami till 9.10 pm  
**Star:** Chitta till 11.52 am

**Variyam:** 4.46 pm to 6.10 pm  
**Durmuhurtam:** 6.13 am to 7.46 am

**Rahukalam:** 9 am to 10.30 am  
**HURI CALENDAR**

**Safar ul Muzaffar 29, 1442 AH**

## PRAYERS

**Fajar:** 5.31 am  
**Zohar:** 12.26 pm  
**Asar:** 4.28 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.05 pm  
**Isha:** 7.21 pm

**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.08 AM**

**SUNSET TODAY 6.25 PM**

**MOONSET 12.42 PM**

**MOONRISE 12.56 AM**

## COUNTER POINT



**We will restore power once the rainwater recedes!**

## IN BRIEF

## RBI eases credit flow to realty

**Mumbai:** In a bid to increase flow of credit to the real estate sector, the Reserve Bank on Friday rationalised the risk weightage to LTV (loan to value) ratio for all new housing loans sanctioned up to March 31, 2022. As per a notification issued by the RBI, new housing loans will attract a risk weight of 35 per cent where LTV is less than 80 per cent and a risk weight of 50 per cent where LTV is more than 80 per cent but less than 90 per cent. This measure, according to the RBI, is expected to give a fillip to bank lending to the real estate sector.

## FM reaches out over GST loan

**New Delhi:** A day after the Centre agreed to borrow ₹1.10 lakh crore on behalf of states for meeting GST shortfall, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday reached out to all states explaining the contours of the special window. “We have worked out some key aspects of special window. It has now been decided that the Centre will initially receive the amount and then pass it on back-to-back to the States as loans,” the letter said.



## NATION | 4

**IAF to get more Rafale jets**



## WORLD | 5

**Thailand PM rejects calls to resign**

## SPORTS | 8

**Karthik steps down as KKR captain**



## Vijayawada on fast lane



Vehicles ply on the Kanakadurga flyover in Vijayawada after it was inaugurated online by Union minister Nitin Gadkari and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

# Kanaka Durga flyover opens, to ease traffic

**MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 16**

The much awaited iconic Kanaka Durga flyover was jointly inaugurated by Union minister for road transport Nitin Gadkari and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy virtually here on Friday.

This marks the end of several postponements for various reasons. Giving further relief to traffic users another flyover at Benz Circle was also inaugurated on the occasion.

The Chief Minister sought the Centre's help in taking up eight more projects, including the four-lane bypass road from Vizag to Bhogapuram airport. Gadkari asked him to

come to Delhi to sort out the proposals. After laying foundation stone for the new highway project, they dedicated it to the nation.

Around 61 projects of 1,411 kms length are being constructed at a cost of ₹15,592 crore. While the 2.6 km long six lane Kanakadurga flyover was constructed at a cost of Rs 502 crore, the 2.3 km long Benz Circle flyover, started in 2016, has come up at Rs 80 crore.

Speaking on the occasion, Jagan Mohan Reddy thanked the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Gadkari for supporting the State in developing the connecting highways and State infrastructure and increasing the pace from 12 km per

day in 2014 to 30 km per day, increasing the highway length to 6880 km from 2667 km. He also thanked them for taking up the work on 22 green-field highways of which six pass through Andhra Pradesh over 375 kms.

“As Visakhapatnam is being made the executive capital, there is a need to build an alternative road from Visakhapatnam to Bhogapuram airport. This can be taken over as coastal highway project by turning the Beach Road as a four-lane highway to Bhogapuram,” the Chief Minister said and urged the Union Minister to consider it favourably along with seven other projects.

■ **Page 2: Proposal to link key ports to boost growth**

# NGT seeks info on forest land encroachment in AP

**NAGESWARA RAO BALLEDA | DC KADAPA, OCT. 16**

National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed AP forest department to ensure that reserve forests in the state are free from encroachments and trespasses. It ordered officials to take all steps for preventing encroachments, so that wild animals could move freely in the region. In addition, the tribunal wanted formation of a high level committee to monitor reserve forest lands, protect them from land grabbers, and file periodic reports to NGT on the status of these forests.

The tribunal's order came following a complaint by TTD former

chairman Putta Sudhakar Yadav on encroachment of reserve forests. Sudhakar Yadav, who is TD Mydukur area in-charge, filed an affidavit before the National Green Tribunal, Southern Zone, Chennai, stating that reserve forests were encroached in survey numbers 506-B and 507 around Nandyal-ampeta village in Mydukur mandal of YSR Kadapa district. He charged that certain politicians backed by a political party had encroached 304 acres of land. Of this, 104 acres have even been fenced with barbed wire. Bore wells have been dug and pipelines laid on the land. Though complaints have been made to forest authorities, no action had

been taken due to political pressure. Following the complaint, the National Green Tribunal took up the matter for hearing on October 12 through video conference. The tribunal stated that Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, AP, must inquire and submit a report to the tribunal on or before November 23.

Addressing media on Friday, Sudhakar Yadav advised people of Mydukur not to fall into the trap and buy these lands, which belong to the Forest Department. He asked officials to work in the interests of people and not act like ruling party activists. Kadapa parliament constituency TTD president Mallela Linga Reddy and others were present.

## AP GIRL SECURES 6TH RANK; NEET RESULTS DELAYED

**SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 16**

Guthi Chaitanya Sindhu from Andhra Pradesh secured the sixth rank in NEET-UG, with 715 out of 720 marks. The results were announced after considerable delay on Friday. Another Telugu student, Karthik Reddy, made it to the top 10 ranks. From Telangana state, Snikitha Thummala secured the third rank. Another student from Telangana state, Anantha Parakrama B. Nookala, secured the 11th rank with 710 marks.

A large number of students faced difficulty in accessing the results. Though the NTA announced that the results can be accessed on its website www.neetnta.nic.in from 4 pm, the students could find out their results only after 8.30 pm. D. Ravi Kumar, a NEET applicant, said, “I started to visit the NTA website from 4 pm but I managed to access it at 9 pm. I was told that the website had crashed.”

Meghana from Rajahmundry said, “I managed to access the website at 9.30 pm though I had been trying since 4 pm.”

■ **Page 2: State merit list on getting official results**

# Kolleru fish farmers suffer massive losses in rains

**VADREVVU SRINIVAS | DC KAKINADA, OCT. 16**

Kolleru Lake and its adjoining areas have been jolted by the recent heavy rains with the fish wealth getting washed away and aqua ponds drastically damaged. Fish were netted by local fishermen on road side canals.

Many locals are dependent on Kolleru Lake and they are all worried over significant losses.

According to a preliminary report, 2,800 hectares of fish ponds have been destroyed and 1600 farmers incurred great losses.

“This is only a preliminary assessment report. The final report would be prepared within a week and the fisheries and Animal Husbandry Minister Sidiri Appala Raju would submit the preliminary report to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to help the farmers,” said Deputy Chief Minister Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas (Nani) adding that farmers need not worry about their crop loss as the government would help them. Nani along with the minister Sidiri Appala Raju, Denduluru MLA Mr Abbayi Chowdary and Fisheries Commissioner K.Kannababu visited

Lanka Villages and rain-hit areas like Sriparru causeway, Jalipudi and Gudivaka villages.

Appala Raju said that due to heavy rains for the past five days, agriculture and its affiliated sectors have been adversely impacted and aqua and fish ponds have been destroyed. He said that the aqua sector generates income for the government and also provides employment.

Abbayi Chowdary said that nearly 1000 acres of aqua ponds have been damaged in Jalipudi, Sriparru and Chataparru villages. Appalaraju visited Gudivaka lanka also.

Sriranganatha Raju, who visited Yendagandi village where the crops have been submerged due to overflow of Yanamadurru drain, instructed officials to continue rehabilitation steps in the rain-hit areas. He said that the officials should pay attention to sanitation in the villages.

Meanwhile, due to overflowing drains and canals, rain waters entered some of the rice mills in Akiveedu mandal. A rice miller at Akiveedu Mr Pedababu said that the drains have been encroached and the width of the drains and canals has been reduced. It

resulted in inundation of the villages, towns and industries. He said that he has never seen inundation of the rice mill in the past 40 years. The agriculture minister visited Avanthinagar in Thimmapuram village, Bappannadora colony, Tarakaramanagar and other places in Kakinada Rural mandal by boat. He said that Krishna, Kurnool, Visakhapatnam, East and West Godavari districts have been adversely affected due to rains. He said that due to developing breaches to Tulyabhaga drain, Karapa mandal has been badly damaged.

Meanwhile, two cars were stuck in the rain waters on the road between Pithapuram and Samalkot road in East Godavari district. Police rushed to the spot and rescued seven persons, including a boy. According to Samalkot police, four men and two women and a boy were travelling towards Pithapuram and Samalkot road late last night. Due to overflowing of Yeleru flood waters, the roads between Kodandapuram of Samalkot and Jalluru in Pithapuram were filled with waters at a depth of two to three and half feet to a length of one and half kilometres.

## LANCET: INDIANS LIVING LONGER, ADDED 10+ YEARS

**New Delhi, Oct. 16:** India has gained more than a decade of life expectancy since 1990, but there are wide inequalities between states, according to a new study published in the journal *Lancet*. It assessed more than 286 causes of death and 369 diseases and injuries in more than 200 countries and territories across the world.

The study noted that life expectancy in India has risen from 59.6 years in 1990 to 70.8 years in 2019, ranging from 77.3 years in Kerala to 66.9 years in Uttar Pradesh.

However, the researchers, including Srinivas Goli from the Indian Institute of Public Health Gandhinagar, said the increase in healthy life expectancy has not been as dramatic since “people are living more years with illness and disability.” “The main improvement we see in almost every country is a decline in infectious diseases and rise in chronic diseases,” said study co-author Ali Mokdad from the University of Washington. “In India maternal mortality used to be very high, but now it is down,” he said. — PTI

## FLIGHT | PATH

**Bird experts say long distance flights taken to avoid bad weather, get good feed**

# No rain effect on migratory birds to AP

**SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 16**

Incessant rainfall under the influence of southwest monsoon seems to be having no major impact on arrival of several species of migratory birds spotted at several bird sanctuaries and water bodies in AP.

According to an estimate, nearly six lakh migratory birds of 100 to 130 varieties from parts of Central Europe, Mongolia, Central, West and South Asia, Siberia, Tibet and others visit Pulicat and Kolleru

lakes, Avangad and Hamsaladevi in Krishna delta, Telukunchi, Teline-elapuram, Naupada in Srikakulam, Coringa sanctuary and Punyakshetram in East Godavari and others in the state.

Water birds like great crested grebes, great knots, the ruff, bar-headed geese, red-crested pochards, ospreys, sandpipers, pacific golden plovers, Eurasian wigeons, peregrine falcons, Asian openbill storks, spotted pelicans, bar-headed geese, black-tailed gowits and several others start arriving from early

● **ACCORDING TO AN estimate nearly six lakh migratory birds of 100 to 130 varieties from parts of Central Europe, Mongolia, Central, West and South Asia, Siberia, Tibet and others visit AP**

October and stay up to March or mid-April the next year before they return. Some birds arrive early while others come late, even in December or January, depending upon climatic conditions in their places of origin. Chief conservator of

forests (wildlife), Rahul Pandey said, “We have spotted openbill storks at Telukunchi and spotted pelicans at Telineelapuram bird sanctuaries in Srikakulam district recently. Migratory birds have arrived in AP. As the state has been witnessing a series of cyclonic storms like Titli, Hudhud and others during the monsoon season, these migratory birds have adapted themselves to survive except in worst case scenarios, like uprooting of trees with high velocity winds and devastation. We

don't expect any major impact on the arrival of migratory birds to AP this season.”

However, bird experts say that as these migratory birds fly thousands of kilometres of distances to arrive to parts of South India, including AP, to avoid bad weather conditions and lack of feed. They can survive here with the availability of vegetation and water bodies as they get good feed. However, they say that if the birds find no vegetation, no trees to take shelter and flooding of water bodies, they will

move to some other place. They say that as AP is witnessing a prolonged spell of rainfall at present and all water bodies are filled to the brim and there are no high velocity winds and devastation, the birds will continue to arrive and take shelter as usual unless they find major disturbances in nature.

Deccan Birders executive committee member, Bhamidipati Srikanth, said, “Though nature is supportive to migratory birds, we are facing the challenge of the destruction of their habitats.”



## OTHER STORIES

## GOV CALLS FOR MAKING AP ROLE MODEL IN N.E.P.

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 16

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan called for making Andhra Pradesh a role model in implementation of National Education Policy 2020.

The Governor held a video conference with the vice-chancellors of 20 state universities from Raj Bhavan on Friday. He stated that the AP government was committed to implementing NEP in its true spirit and felt the need on the part of vice-chancellor to play a leading role to implement NEP 2020 by overcoming the challenges. He said that the NEP envisioned a robust and vibrant public education system in the country by putting an end to the fragmented functioning of the higher education system and also for the transformation of higher education institution into multi-disciplinary universities.

Education minister Adimulapu Suresh stated that the implementation of NEP was expected to bring about structural, institutional and curricular reforms in the higher education system and added that several suggestions made by the AP government were incorporated in NEP by the Centre concerning governance and financial aspects.

## TOURISM MINISTER ASKS CENTRE FOR SUPPORT

V.K.L.GAYATRI | DC  
VISAKHAPATNAM, OCT. 16

Minister for tourism, M. Srinivasa Rao, urged the union government for more support for the development of the tourism sector in the state.

The government is very keen to promote and develop the sector using the unlimited natural resources across the state. The state has huge potential to develop temple and river-based tourism circuits, the minister informed to the centre.

The Union tourism minister, Prahlad Singh Patel, convened a video conference with the tourism ministers of various states on Friday.

While addressing them, Patel said that the tourism sector was badly affected due to the pandemic. However, after the relaxations, the state governments should implement Covid-19 precautionary measures and promote the industry further. While responding, Rao said that there is a huge potential in AP to develop the sector with 10 harbours and five international airports. The state has mythological temples and good rivers to develop tourism sector in the state further.

## SC ADMITS PLEA SEEKING RESTRAINT ON JUDICIARY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 16

Supreme Court has admitted a petition seeking to lay down some restraints or checks on the judiciary on its adjudication process.

Advocate T. Koteswara Rao who practices in Telangana High Court filed a petition in the Supreme Court recently. Referring to instances of comments of Andhra Pradesh High Court reported in a section of media stating that the court asked the AP DGP to resign if he could not control the police force and the court commenting that when crores of rupees were being spent on painting party colours to gram panchayat buildings how the state government could stop payment of pensions to the senior citizens, the advocate said that such comments would shake the confidence of common man on the judiciary. He also said that such comments would also be having cascading effect on the morale of the police forces as their boss was punished without hearing him.

He said that it had become a routine practice for the members of the bench including tribunals to adjudicate the matters by conducting question and answer sessions where the counsels were supposed to answer questions without making any arguments.

The advocate opined that such tendencies were allowed to prevail, it might result in common man to lose confidence on judiciary and might even revolt against the system. He said that the present government was elected by the people of the state and added that he was taking up these issues to the notice of the court with bonafide intention.

## Durga flyover puts an end to traffic chaos

The new flyover cleared the rush on the old main road

MD. ILYAS | DC  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 16

The opening of the iconic Kanaka Durga flyover is expected to resolve traffic problems around Durga temple here.

The devotees have to go to the temple through ghat road and its entrance is situated on the Vijayawada-Hyderabad National Highway. A bane has been frequent traffic jams due to huge rush of devotees and vehicles, especially during festivals and on auspicious days.

The Durga flyover will help traffic towards Hyderabad and into Vijayawada bypass the main road. The Canal road, which goes to Durga temple and connects the Hyderabad highway, used to be busy with overflowing vehicular traffic.

Further, half of the city's population lives on the other side of Indrakeeladri hill in Bhavanipuram, Vidyadharapuram, Gollapudi, Housing Board colony and adjacent areas and they bear the brunt of frequent traffic jams. The Durga flyover will provide direct route to their destinations.

In an interesting incident, a woman devotee elated over the flyover inauguration, Enna Tirupatamma performed 'Sashtanga Namaskaram'. She said that she was an ardent devotee of Goddess Durga. Another devotee, A.V. Ramana said that the devotees have to take bath in Krishna river and cross Hyderabad Highway road to reach the ghat road to go to the temple. Now they can reach the ghat road without difficulties.

The beauty of floodwater gushing Krishna river, Prakasam Barrage and other areas of the city can be viewed from the Durga flyover, which is why many people rushed to the flyover and took selfie photos for posterity.

The general traffic on the Canal Road was diverted to the flyover after the flyover's inauguration and it cleared rush on the old main road.

● In an interesting incident, a woman devotee elated over the flyover inauguration, Enna Tirupatamma performed 'Sashtanga Namaskaram'. She said that she was an ardent devotee of Goddess Durga.

## FM KEEN TO MAKE ORVAKAL AIRPORT FUNCTIONAL SOON

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL OCT. 16

Finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy has ordered the officials concerned to complete all pending works at Orvakal Airport in the next couple of weeks and make Orvakal airport functional soon.

The minister held a review meeting at Orvakal Airport on Friday evening. Later he addressed the media, and said Orvakal of Kurnool district is selected as a node to develop as an industrial sector under Hyderabad-Bangalore industrial corridor, stated the minister. It will develop as a model industrial zone and there is a chance to raise the industrial economy with the establishments of many industries, he added.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has mainly focused on developing the backward region particularly Kurnool to be a judicial capital and Nandyal to be a separate district.

The Orvakal is located in the middle of these two major towns.

● Orvakal is selected as a node to develop as an industrial sector under Hyderabad-Bangalore industrial corridor



Ministers M. Sankaranarayana, Peddireddy Ramachandrareddy, Collector MD. Imtiaz, MLA's Jogi Ramesh, D. Nageswara Rao, Malladi Vishnu, R&B Principal Secretary M.T. Krishna Babu inauguration Kanaka Durga Flyover at Bhavani Puram in Vijayawada on Friday. — DC

## Centre to invest ₹15k cr on AP roads

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 16

Minister for roads and buildings M. Sankaranarayana said the central government has agreed in principle to invest ₹15,000 crore on roads in the state during the next five years.

The minister had formally cut the ribbon at the site of Kanaka Durga flyover after Union minister Nitin Gadkari from Nagpur and Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy from CM's Camp Office in Tadepalli had virtually inaugurated the flyover on Friday.

Mr Sankaranarayana said with this, the Kanaka

Durga and Benz Circle flyovers have been dedicated to the nation, resolving the traffic woes of Vijayawada citizens forever.

He criticised the previous Telugu Desam government for dilly-dallying on completion of the Kanaka Durga flyover.

Later, people's representatives travelled on the flyover along with the minister. They included panchayat raj minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Brahmin Welfare Corporation chairman and MLAs Jogi Ramesh, K. Rakshana Nidhi and Dulam Nageswara Rao.

## Proposal to link key ports to boost growth

From page 1

Mr Nadkari said proposed connecting of important ports to highways to propel economic activity, sanction of bridge connecting additional funds linking Anantapur four-lane of national highway, connecting road to Nellore YSR Kadapa, Chittoor and Prakasam, and bypass road on the eastern side of Vijayawada connecting Machilipatnam port, without the State's share of funds.

Mr Nadkari said that the

issue could be sorted out at a meeting if the Chief Minister along with his officials to come to Delhi. He also assured that the Centre will develop best-in-class infrastructure in Andhra Pradesh paving way for socio-economic development.

Union Ministers V K Singh, G Kishan Reddy, Union Secretary (MoRTH) A Giridhar, state minister for Roads and Buildings M. Sankaranarayana and Principal Secretary M.T. Krishna Babu were present.

## SALIENT FEATURES OF DURGA FLYOVER

● The iconic Kanaka Durga flyover is the longest flyover in Andhra Pradesh with a length of 2.3 kilometres.

● It has a unique and complex design with a six-lane corridor supported by a single pillar.

● Only two flyovers, in Delhi and Mumbai, have come up on a single pillar.

● It is a flyover spanning the Krishna River and Prakasam Barrage in Vijayawada built adjacent to Indrakeeladri hill on which ancient Kanaka Durga temple is situated.

● The total length of Durga flyover project is 5.29 kilometres with 2.9 kilometres being approach roads.

● The flyover crosses Krishna River, Prakasam Barrage and Buckingham canal and meets National Highway-65 near Pandit Nehru bus station.

## Wakf lands in Kurnool district up for grabs

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL, OCT. 16

Wakf lands in the Kurnool district are up for grabs. As local MLA is in cahoots with the land grabbers who are on the prowl. Kallur tahsildar declared ten acres of land encroached by land grabbers as Wakf land and barred it from being registered. Several properties were either under encroachers or were wrongfully got registered by land grabbers. Politicians se-

questered both Christian and Wakf properties in the last 20 years, said Mahaboob Basha, a minority representative.

Kallur MRO Ramesh in a proceeding said that the land in Survey No. 524 of Kallur village comprising a total extent of 10.64 acres was included vide notification No. Rc. E2/1719/2005. In addition to it, he said that it is brought to the notice of the issue whether the land in question is wakf or not is pending for enquiry

before the special deputy collector, Kurnool. He said that in the circumstances he had recommended the land for the prohibition of registration is Survey No. 542 as it is *prima facie* construed the land in question is Wakf property.

Kurnool MLA Hafeez Khan said the encroachments and land grabbing of Wakf Property in Kurnool are being digitized and the IIT Kanpur was given the task of mapping the entire wakf lands.

## PAYMENT OF ARREARS

NAGESWARA RAO  
BALLED 1 DC  
KADAPA, OCT. 16

Irrespective of there was anything political, or whether they were of inferior quality and irregularities, the fact is that small contractors are facing problems because arrears due to them for various development works undertaken in villages remain unpaid.

TD leaders are criticising the government for setting aside the bills on the pretext that the works are being reviewed and pay-

Bills amounting to ₹130.90cr are pending clearance in Kadapa district

## Contractors rue non-payment of NREGS bills

● DUES UNDER the Housing Department for making bricks and construction of toilets are at ₹96.38 lakh while for construction of check dams under Minor Irrigation Department is about ₹17.58 crore, construction of cement concrete roads and gravel roads ₹89.38 crore; ₹93.25 lakh for CC drains under Rural Water Works Department and ₹37.9 lakh for construction of compound walls at schools.

● THE GOVERNMENT has to clear bills for horticulture orchards of about ₹3.84 crore, which are pending for three years now.

Dues for construction of Anganwadi buildings is about ₹1,11,54,057 and of Forest Department nurs-

eries and check dams are about ₹6.24 lakh. Dues under the Housing Department for making

bricks and construction of toilets are at ₹96.38 lakh while for construction of check dams under Minor Irrigation Department is about ₹17.58 crore, construction of cement concrete roads and gravel roads ₹89.38 crore; ₹93.25 lakh for CC drains under Rural Water Works Department and ₹37.9 lakh for construction of compound walls at schools.

The government has to clear bills for horticulture orchards of about ₹3.84 crore, which are pending for three years now.

Telugu Desam activists

have warned that if these bills are not paid, they would forcibly lock offices.

TD Rajampet Parliament president Reddeppagari Srinivasa Reddy said that the non-payment of bills had political overtones. Development works were undertaken by the Telugu Desam government with Central funds, he said.

He said the state government was postponing payment of bills in the name of inquiry, which was anti-people. He said that they would get these bills cleared by fighting them legally.

## Minister slams Naidu over his remark on flood mngt

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC  
KURNOOL OCT. 16

Minister for irrigation and district in-charge, Dr P. Anil Kumar, slammed N. Chandrababu Naidu for his unfounded comments on the state government over the failure of flood management due to rains in the recent past.

Countering Mr Naidu's claims, Mr Kumar said that there was a flood in 1998 during Naidu's regime due to which the Srisaillam power plant was submerged and operations were stopped for well over a year. Naidu failed utterly in flood management. He said Naidu's management could be seen clearly during Godavari pushkarams when 36 people lost their lives.

Claiming that CM Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's government does not hanker for publicity and was doing its job without any fanfare, Mr Kumar challenged Mr Naidu and his son to stop torrential rains if they had any capacity to do so in 'real time'.

Alluding to Naidu's presence in disasters like drought and floods, Mr Kumar said as Naidu shifted to Hyderabad city from Vijayawada, the Hyderabad city was devastated with floodwaters. This was due to his 'leg power,' he said.

Naidu's house at the Krishna river course on Karakatta in Vijayawada would submerge in waters as there is a heavy influx of flood from Srisaillam. He said is frustrated a man and had become senile and does not know what he was speaking. He said the government was open to constructive criticism but not unfounded attacks on it.

Along with finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy, Mr Kumar reviewed the flood situation in Tungabhadra pushkarams at the state guest house here on Friday. There is hardly one month's time to take up pushkaram-related works.

Regarding Prakasam barrage, he said it has a storage capacity of only 3 tmc and that is why water was being let out. He said Mr Naidu should first get out of the encroached house on Krishna river embankments instead of politicising the situation. He said officials were doing the best to mitigate the situation. Mr Naidu should take to constructive criticism instead of uttering falsehoods for political gain.

Meanwhile, government chief whip Gadikota Srikanth Reddy refuted allegations of TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu that the state government was trying to inundate his 'illegal' residence on Karakatta at Undavalli.



TD national secretary N. Lokesh interacting with flood victim farmers in their damaged crop fields at Peddakonduru village of Mangalagiri mandal in Guntur district on Friday. — DC

## Lokesh demands relief for flood-hit

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 16

Telugu Desam's national general secretary, Nara Lokesh, on Friday warned the YSR Congress government that it would pay a heavy price if it continued to ignore the woes and suffering of the farmers in view of huge losses they have suffered in heavy rains and floodwaters.

Visiting the flood and rain-hit crops in Mangalagiri, Tenali and Vemuru Assembly constituencies in Guntur district with TD leaders, Lokesh said that over 14 persons died in the floods in the past few days and farmers suffered ₹400 crore-worth crop losses but this government was not giving them any relief. He demanded that the government begin relief measures.

Objecting to the negligence of Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, in not visiting flood-affected areas, Lokesh said that it was only after Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, telephoned Jagan that he held a review on the rain mitigation efforts.

During his visit, Lokesh stepped into the knee-deep waters that submerged and damaged the crops in agricultural fields. He enquired from the farmers about their woes and the help they required to overcome the present crisis.

After speaking to farmers during his visit to Gundimeda, Chirravuru and Pedakonduru villages in Mangalagiri segment, Lokesh said that this government was trying to leave farmers in bare loin cloths and nothing else by being indifferent to their problems in this time of natural calamity. He lamented that severe losses were caused in 11 districts as over 8,000 houses were submerged and crops were damaged in about 2.5 lakh acres, in which farmers suffered a total loss of

## 'DISQUALIFICATION FEARS HAUNTING 'CORRUPT' JAGAN'

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 16

Leader of Opposition in AP Legislative Council Yanamala Ramakrishnudu on Friday said that the threat of disqualification from elections was haunting Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, following speedy trials on his assets cases. He said that the Chief Minister was now in the grip of fear that his political career would reach a dead-end because some of his 31 cases were quite serious. He claimed that Jagan will face immediate six-year disqualification if he is convicted.

Mr Ramakrishnudu said that if a 10-year sentence would be slapped, then Jagan Mohan Reddy faces a 16-year disqualification. This was why he was making one mistake after another and he was going on indulging in unprecedented wrongdoings. He said that new tension gripped him on the consequences of his letter to the Chief Justice of India. He further claimed that all national associations of advocates have been attacking the mischievous attitude and hidden agenda of the Chief Minister.

₹400 crore. Paddy, black gram, groundnut, chilli and sugarcane crops were badly hit.

Visiting damaged fields in Attalurvaripalem, Pidaparthi and Pathabomavani Palem in Tenali segment and Chilumuru, Epuru and Kolluru Lockulu in Vemuru segment, Lokesh was accompanied by former ministers Alapati Rajendra Prasad and others.

## State merit list on getting official results from Centre

From page 1

The Dr NTR University of Health Sciences authorities say that the NTA will submit the NEET UG results to the Union health ministry which in turn will communicate the same to the NTRUHS in AP. Once they get the official copy of the results with all India ranks pertaining to AP, they will prepare a state merit list and award ranks accordingly. There will be reser-

vation for SC, ST, BC and women categories and also for sports, NCC, physically challenged and for Children of Armed Personnel.

Dr K. Sankar, registrar of Dr NTR University of Health Sciences, said, "It may take a week or so to announce state-wide ranks from the day of receipt of official list. As 15 per cent of seats will go to all India rank students, only 85 per cent will be available for local stu-

dents in the state." The university authorities reiterated their appeal to the state government to amend GO 111 pertaining to the department of higher education to issue a fresh GO fixing the process for conduct of counselling for admission into medical and dental colleges for first year MBBS course. They also appealed for issue of another GO fixing fee for both medical and dental courses for 2020-21.



## SHORT TAKES

## SCR TO RUN SPECIAL TRAINS FOR DASARA

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 16

The South Central Railway to operate several daily/weekly festival special trains from October 17 covering various destinations while some trains pass through its jurisdiction.

According to a release from SCR on Friday, train No. 02514 from Guwahati - Secunderabad weekly special will depart Guwahati at 6.20 am on Thursdays and will arrive at Secunderabad at 4 am on Saturdays beginning from October 22 to November 26. In the return direction, train no. 02513 Secunde-rabad-Guwahati will depart Secunderabad at 7.20 am on Sundays and will arrive at Guwahati at 6 am on Tuesdays from October 25 to November 29.

Train No. 07319 Hubballi-Secunderabad daily special train will depart Hubballi at 8.50 pm and will arrive at Secunderabad at 11.45 am on the next day beginning from October 20 to November 30.

In the return direction, train no. 07320 Secunderabad-Hubballi will depart Secunderabad at 3.40 pm and will arrive at Hubballi at 7.35 am on the next day from Oct. 21 to Dec. 1.

As many as 14 special trains passing through SCR covering various destinations on both sides including Howrah-Puducherry (02867/02868), H o w r a h - E r n a k u l a m (02877/02878), Bhubaneswar-Tirupati (08479/08480), B h u b a n e s w a r - C e n t r a l Chennai (02839/02840), Bhubaneswar-Bengaluru (02845/02846), Bhubaneswar-Puducherry (02898/02897) and Bhubaneswar-Rameswaram (08496/08495) are to be operated from Oct. 18 onwards.

## NAVARATRI UTSAVS TO BE LOW-KEY AFFAIRS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, OCT. 16

The nine-day Dasara festivities from October 17 to 26 will be a low-key affair this year in East and West Godavari districts due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Although, there will be no special poojas and theertha prasadam, temples are fully-decked up. Across Kakinada and Rajahmundry and other places in the districts, Devi Navaratri festivals are celebrated with devotional fervour every year.

In Rajahmundry, Sri Devi Mahotsav Committee has been celebrating Utsavs for the past 87 years and is renowned for a multitude of cultural events, including mythological plays, classical dances and film musical shows. However, this year all of them have been cancelled. The devotees can only take darshan of the Goddess at Devichowk in Rajahmundry from 6 am to 11 am and 5 pm to 8 pm, Committee president Bathula Rajarajeswara Rao said.

## WOMAN ENDS LIFE WITH TWO KIDS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIZIANAGARAM, OCT. 16

In a suicide pact, a 28-year-old woman committed suicide by jumping into a local pond along with her two daughters in Narapam village under Kothavalasa Mandal in Vizianagaram district on Friday.

The deceased have been identified as N. Gowri, 28, and her daughters N. Sankeerthana, 6, and N. Hasini, 4.

The locals said that the woman, along with her two daughters, went out on Thursday evening and did not return home. The trio was found dead in the local tank on Friday morning.

The police, with the support of the locals, retrieved the bodies from the tank and sent them to a government hospital for autopsy. The police are suspecting that family disputes could be the reason for the woman to take the extreme step.

Gowri married one Srinivas Raju around eight years ago and later on had some disputes with him and her in-laws.

The Kothavalasa Sub-Inspector N.P. Murthy registered a case and is trying to ascertain the exact reasons for the suicide.

The family members of Gowri alleged that Srinivas Raju and his parents were responsible for the death of their daughter and her two children.

## Rescue operation



AP Police, fire and disaster management personnel evacuate the locals of Chinttamotu, Pesarla Lanka, Madhyagudem and Kiskindapalem Lanka villages of Bhattiprolu mandal of Guntur district from flood-affected areas on Friday evening.

— TEJO ROY ELETI

## AP records 3,967 new Covid cases, 25 deaths

Total 74,337 samples tested during the past 24 hours

SAMPAT G. SAMRTAN  
DC  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 16

Andhra Pradesh has registered 3,967 new Covid-19 positive cases during the last 24 hours, raising the overall tally to 7,75,470, apart from 25 deaths, taking the death toll to 6,382.

The state health authorities have released their Coronavirus bulletin here on Friday reporting that of the total 74,337 samples tested during the past 24 hours, 3,967 individuals have tested Covid-19 positive.

Out of a total number of 69,20,377 samples tested so far in the state, 7,30,109 patients have been discharged after recovery while 38,979 patients are still active with the virus and undergoing treatment.

Among daily cases of

confirmed Covid, West Godavari registered 627 patients, followed by 608 in East Godavari, 510 in Chittoor; 456 in Krishna, 355 in Prakasam, 246 in Guntur, 233 in Anantapur, 220 in Nellore, 212 in Kadapa, 206 in Visakhapatnam, 108 in Srikakulam, 100 in Kurnool and 86 in Vizianagaram district.

East Godavari has been the worst hit with regard to cumulative Covid-19 positive instances, registering 1,09,044 cases in all, followed by 78,072 in West Godavari, 72,724 in Chittoor, 62,075 in Anantapur, 61,593 in Guntur, 58,636 in Kurnool, 57,689 in Nellore, 55,900 in Prakasam, 53,384 in Visakhapatnam, 49,351 in Kadapa, 42,313 in Srikakulam, 38,007 in Vizianagaram, 33,787 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other

countries.

Rate of recovery among Coronavirus-infected patients has been good in East Godavari with 1,01,840 recoveries, followed by 72,868 in West Godavari, 66,923 in Chittoor, 59,610 in Anantapur, 56,947 in Kurnool, 56,608 in Guntur, 55,973 in Nellore, 52,096 in Prakasam, 50,855 in Visakhapatnam, 45,902 in Kadapa, 40,558 in Srikakulam, 36,410 in Vizianagaram, 30,624 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Chittoor has registered the highest number of five deaths in the last 24 hours due to Covid-19, followed by four each in Kadapa and Krishna, three each in Guntur and Prakasam, two in East Godavari and one each in Nellore, Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam and West Godavari districts.

Overall, Chittoor has recorded the highest 732 cumulative cases of death, followed by 582 in East Godavari, 576 in Guntur, 553 in Prakasam, 533 in Anantapur, 516 in Krishna, 485 in Visakhapatnam, 480 in Kurnool, 478 in West Godavari, 475 in Nellore, 411 in Kadapa, 335 in Srikakulam and 226 in Vizianagaram district.

State health authorities have discharged 5,010 Coronavirus-infected patients after recovery from various hospitals in the state in the last 24 hours.

AP has so far conducted Covid-19 tests on 1,29,595 samples per one million population, registering a Covid-19 positive rate of 11.21, while Maharashtra tested 63,368 samples with a positive rate of 19.77 and Telangana tested 94,225 with a positive rate of 5.88.

## 5,000 people shifted to relief camps in Krishna

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 16

Krishna district collector A. Md Imtiaz stated that as many as 5,000 people from 1,736 families were moved to 22 relief camps living in low-lying and Krishna river catchment areas as nine lakh acres of floodwaters is expected to be released from Prakasam Barrage.

The Krishna district collector informed that as per the preliminary information 14,400 hectares of paddy, 4,568 hectares of others crop were damaged due to torrential rains.

The collector reviewed the flood situation in Krishna River through a teleconference with the Revenue, Irrigation, Fisheries and Municipal officials from the Camp office here on Friday.

Mr Imtiaz said that as Prakasam Barrage was likely to receive floodwa-

ters the district authorities and tahsildars are instructed to evacuate the people of low-lying and catchment areas of Krishna river.

The collector said that 32 villages in 31 mandals were affected by the Krishna River floods and directed that the victims should be shifted to relief camps. He alerted to be released from Jaggayyapeta, Chandarlapadu, Kanchikacharla, Pamidimukkala, I b r a h i m p a t n a m, Kankipadu, Mopidevi, Challapalli, Avaniigadda, Thotlavalluru and Nagayalanka mandals should be more vigilant and use boats in areas where it is necessary to evacuate victims. He directed the director of the fisheries department to arrange boats wherever required.

Mr Imtiaz directed the government staff in each mandal to attend to the emergency duties

and said the staff of Agriculture, Fisheries, Irrigation Horticulture and Secretariat shall attend the emergency duties.

He said that all the people in the flood-hit areas should be moved to a safer area and the NDRF and SDRF troops are available to take part in the relief operations.

The collector said that 5,025 people belonging to 1,736 families affected by the floods in the district so far have been shifted to safer areas and provided accommodation through 22 relief camps.

According to preliminary information received so far, due to heavy rains, 119 km roads were damaged. The collector said 24 houses were completely damaged and 112 houses were partially damaged and 3,302 houses were surrounded with flood water.

## Police to file chargesheet within a week in Tech student murder case

MD ILYAS | DC  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 16

Vijayawada city police commissioner, B. Srinibasulu, handling engineering student, Divya Tejaswini's, murder case said the chargesheet would be filed in a week.

AP DGP Gautam Sawang here on Friday said that it is outrageous that the engineering student was killed by a stalker. He said that very stern action will be taken and such brutalities shall not be ignored under any circumstances. He stated that already instructions have been issued to the Vijayawada commissioner of police to handle the case. Expressing his deepest sympathies with the family

● Gautam Sawang here on Friday said that it is outrageous that the engineering student was killed by a stalker.

members of the victim, Mr Sawang warned that the police department will not spare anyone who attacks women and children and added that it is the responsibility of everyone to put an end to such crimes in society.

Disha special officer, Deepika Patil, on the instruction of Chief Minister, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, met the victim's family. She appealed to people to lodge complaints through the Disha app, police service app, Dial

100/112 "and post whatever information you have." Patil made it clear that the first duty of the police was to protect women and children.

Meanwhile the last rites for Divya performed in Vijayawada on Friday. The condition of stalker, Chinna Swamy, who killed Divya and is undergoing treatment in the government general hospital, Guntur, is critical.

GGH superintendent, Dr Prabhavati, said that surgery was performed on Swamy to stop the bleeding in the stomach. She said that he was put under observation for 48 hours due to his critical condition as a result of multiple injuries.

## LORD TAKES RIDE ON PEDDA SESA VAHANAM

AVINASH P.  
SUBRAMANYAM | DC  
TIRUPATI, OCT. 16

On the day one of the on-going Srivari Navaratri Brahmotsavams, Lord Malayappa rode on Pedda Sesa Vahanam in the guise of Lord Govindaraja Swamy at Tirumala on Friday.

As the Vahana seva held inside the temple in view of the Covid-19 restrictions, Lord Malayappa and his consorts Srivevi and Bhudevi took a celestial ride on the Pedda Sesa Vahana in the inner precincts of the temple.

## BIRRD DOCTORS TREAT GIRL'S DEFORMITY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, OCT. 16

A 13-year-old girl, suffering from a spinal deformity, was successfully treated at the TTD's BIRRD hospital in Tirupati. Probably, this is the first known surgery in the Rayalaseema region wherein such a complicated procedure was carried out.

According to Dr Madan Mohan Reddy, Director, BIRRD hospital, a patient from West Godavari district identified as C. Indu came to BIRRD hospital a while ago with a complaint of spinal cord deformity. The doctors examined her and diagnosed it as adolescent idiopathic scoliosis, which required surgical correction and the hospital director determined to operate her at the BIRRD.

"The surgery was challenging on all counts, as it usually requires anaesthesia for long hours and will require insertion of pedicle screws. Dr Naveen and Dr Nareesh Kumar have performed this surgery with the help of Dr Rakesh, a visiting spine surgeon from Apollo Hospital, Chennai. And, Dr Srinivas, Anaesthetist from Apollo Hospital, Chennai and our BIRRD Anaesthesia team played a key role in the surgery," Dr Reddy said.

The surgery lasted for more than four-five hours.

## Illegal ventures are rampant in Pulivendula

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, OCT. 16

Illegal layouts have erupted on a large scale within the municipality of Pulivendula. New ventures on about a hundred acres are being subdivided into plots and sold to the public without following any regulations.

Chief Minister, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has been focusing on developing Pulivendula and the real estate business in the town flourished. Farmland was converted into housing plots.

In some places, agricultural land is being subdivided into plots of land without any conversion. Real estate ventures have sprung up on about 150 acres on the Kadapa, Muddanur and Kadiri roads. Of these, 100 acres do not appear to have complied with any regulations.

Usually, if the venture is on an acre of land, 10 percent of it, that is 10 cents of land, has to be given to the municipality in a gift deed. Another three percent of land has to be kept free to be used for community purposes.

The municipality lost about 10 acres of land because no one has followed this. Also, in the layouts, roads are to be laid 40 feet wide, while roads less than 25 to 30 feet have been built.

Pulivendula municipality town planning officer, Ratnaraju, speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, said that they have identified 36 layouts without proper permissions from the municipality. They have stopped these and cautioned the public not to buy plots in these ventures. Some of them have been approached by the municipal authorities to join LRS to regularise their ventures, he said.

## Amul delegation visits dairy plant

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, OCT. 16

A delegation of Amul company along with district officials on Friday paid a visit to the Madanapalle cooperative milk dairy, a subsidiary of Chittoor dairy, following the state government's agreement with the company to develop dairies in the state.

District collector Narayan Bharath Gupta, J.C. Veerabrahmam and Sub-Collector Jahnavi accompanied the delegation, who inspected the milk processing, packing, refrigeration units and electrical wing in the dairy.

Officials explained the delegation of Amul company

about the present turnover of the Madanapalle dairy, the capacity of milk procurement and production per day, the role of women self-help groups in dairy activities.

Collector Dr Gupta said that the delegation's visit to the dairy to study various aspects and prepare a report for further development of the dairy, as part of the government's initiative to develop dairies in the state. The Amul company will submit a detailed report shortly to the government, based on which the government will chalk out a plan for reforming dairies in the Rayalaseema districts including Kadapa, Kurnool, Anantapur and Chittoor.

## PRAKASAM POLICE KEEP CRIMINALS AT TENTERHOOKS WITH SERIES OF ARRESTS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, OCT. 16

The Prakasam district police led by SP Siddharth Kaushal were keeping criminals at tenterhooks with a series of arrests. The police on Friday cracked three cases, a murder case and highway robbery case and temple theft cases by arresting 10 accused, including two minors involved in tem-

ple thefts.

According to the SP, a housewife Velpula Rani, 26, a resident of SC Colony at Kookatlapalli village in Ballikaruvu Mandal, was strangled to death by her husband Velpula Mariyadasu, 28, who works as a masonry labourer in Hyderabad. He had an affair with another woman and used to mentally and physically abuse his wife.

## ‘HAND OVER HOUSES TO BENEFICIARIES’

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, OCT. 16

Demanding the state government to immediately hand over the houses to the beneficiaries under housing for all scheme, the Simhapuri Pura Samkhyha (SPS) under the aegis of CPM staged a protest at the NTR housing for all complex here on Friday.

The leaders along with beneficiaries, took out a rally from Venkateswarapuram centre to Janardhan Reddy colony, where police obstructed them.

AUSPICIOUS | TIME Number of weddings performed on October 29 will be more as it is auspicious day

## Wedding bells to start ringing from tomorrow

VADREVU SRINIVAS | DC  
KAKINADA, OCT. 16

Weddings in the state will recommence from Sunday, October 18, after a gap of two months. People had avoided performing marriages during this period due to Bhadrappa Masa and Adhika Aswayijja Masa, which are considered inauspicious.

There had, however, been a few days during June, July and August, when weddings could have been celebrated. But due to Covid-19, people had to obtain permissions from government authorities.

Moreover, they could invite only 30 to 50 members. Many avoided marriages due to these restrictions, as they wanted to make their functions a grander affair. With the intensity of Coronavirus now decreasing, restrictions on number of invitees have now been lifted and up to 200 persons can attend the ceremony.

District revenue officer Ch. Sathibabu clarified, "Marriage parties need not apply for permission like they had to previously.

However, they will have to keep invitees below 200,

● PEOPLE CAN perform Upanayanas (thread ceremonies), weddings and other rituals at the Kalyana mandapams after booking them in advance

depending on the size of the Kalyana Mandapam or marriage venue. If they have any doubts, they can get them cleared from mandal tahasildars of their respective areas."

Meanwhile, authorities have informed that marriages can now be performed at shrines like Lord Trimurtiyatnaka Sri

Veera Satyanarayana Venkata Swamy Temple at Annavaram in East Godavari and the famous Lord Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple at Dwaraka Tirumala (China Tirupati) in West Godavari district. Endowment officials of the two temples, however, maintained that marriage parties will have to follow the Covid-19 guidelines like wearing of masks by all attendees and maintaining of social distance. Dwaraka Tirumala executive officer D. Bramaramba said people can perform Upanayanas

(thread ceremonies), weddings and other rituals at the Kalyana mandapams after booking them in advance. She advised people to contact 08829-271427 and 08829-271436 for further details. Temple officials disclosed that nearly 30 marriage parties have booked the Kalyana Mandapams. The number of weddings performed on October 29 will be more as it is a very auspicious day. Annavaram Devasthanam temple authorities said only six persons will be allowed if the marriage function is in the 500 sq. feet Kalyana

Mandapam. 10 members will be allowed in the hall up to 1,000 sq. feet.

Drikh Siddhanta Almanac Writers Association former president Gorthi Mahara Subrahmanya Pattabhi Sastry said auspicious wedding Muhurats will be available from October 18 to January 10. Subsequently, there will be no auspicious days up to May 15.

Several Kalyana Mandapams are cleaning up their premises and taking necessary precautionary measures to ensure that they are ready to host weddings.



## SHORT TAKES

DHARMENDRA  
CLEARS AIR ON  
PENDING GST DUESAKSHAYA KUMAR  
SAHOO | DC  
BHUBANESWAR, OCT. 16

Union minister and senior BJP leader Dharmendra Pradhan on Friday cleared the air on the pending Goods and Services Tax (GST) dues of Odisha saying that the Centre had cleared the entire compensation amount for the financial year 2019-20 and a part of the dues for the for FY 2020-21 was also released.

“₹5,122 crore has been released as an entire GST compensation to the Odisha government for FY 2019-20. Similarly, of the ₹2,258 crore allocated for Odisha as GST compensation for the FY 2020-21, ₹1129 crore has been released,” the minister told reporters in New Delhi.

The minister's clarification came in the wake of the state government raising the issue of non-clearance of the compensation on different occasions and platforms, ostensibly for scoring a few political brownie points.

The ruling BJD and BJP, though have supported each other on the floor of Parliament on passing many crucial Bills, are arch political rivals in state politics.

The minister's clarification is seen as a tactical move to rob the BJD of the opportunity to raise the pending GST issue during the forthcoming by-polls in Tirtol and Balasore assembly constituencies and portray it as an act of apathy by the Centre.

The minister went on to add that Odisha was also permitted to borrow an additional ₹2,858 crore at 0.50 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product for meeting the shortfall arising out of GST implementation.

Pradhan stated that the Modi government had provided ₹22,267.66 crore to the Odisha government in the forms of grants, materials and assistance to effectively fight the adverse situations caused due to the Covid crisis.

While the BJP is trying hard to retain the Balasore seat where its sitting MLA Madan Mohan Dutta died in July, the BJD is also working hard to defend its position in Tirtol. Tirtol's sitting MLA Bishnu Charan Das died also in July.

‘NEXT 2.5 MONTHS  
CRUCIAL IN FIGHT  
AGAINST COVID’

**New Delhi, Oct. 16:** The next two-and-a-half months are going to be crucial in the fight against Coronavirus because of the winter season and festivals, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Friday.

Vardhan, who is also Science and Technology Minister, said three vaccine candidates are progressing well in India with one of them in the advanced stage-III clinical trial and two others in stage-II trial.

He hoped that India will soon have indigenous production of vaccine against Coronavirus.

The next two-and-a-half months are going to be very crucial for us in our fight against corona because of the winter season and the festival season. It becomes the responsibility of every citizen to not let our guard down and follow Covid-19 appropriate behaviour to curb the spread of the infection, Vardhan said.

Meanwhile, India's Covid-19 caseload rose to 73,70,468 with 63,371 new infections being reported in a day, while the number of people who have recuperated from the disease crossed 64 lakh pushing the recovery rate to 87.56 per cent, according to the Health Ministry data updated on Friday.

The toll climbed to 1,12,161 with the virus claiming 895 lives in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

## Festive spirit



A worker gives a finishing touch to a display mask of Chhau dancers at a community puja pandal ahead of the Durga Puja festival in Kolkata on Friday.

— PTI

Assam SP held in  
police job scam

Sanjit Krishna is the brother of Assam chief secy

MANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, OCT. 16

In a major breakthrough in the Assam Police job recruitment scam, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) busted the entire racket by arresting serving IPS officer Kumar Sanjit Krishna who also happens to be the brother of Assam chief secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna.

Pointing out that Sanjit Krishna was kingpin of recruitment scam as he was responsible for leaking question paper of the Sub-Inspector recruitment exams, security sources said that the CID sleuths have also succeeded in recovering more than ₹5.70 crore cash from the accused involved in selling the leaked question papers to aspirants.

Informing that Sanjit Krishna hatched the conspiracy to leak the question paper with a former DIG P.K. Dutta, security sources said that with his arrest one part of the investigation into the scam is complete.

Indicating that some more arrests were possible among those who were involved in

● **ASSAM CHIEF** secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna in social media post clarified that the law would take its course and his name should not be dragged in as his brother “is a mature, independent individual in a different profession”.

● **THE POLICE** have so far arrested over 50 people in connection with the case including a ruling BJP leader Diban Deka.

selling the question papers, sources said that police have already re-created the crime scene from where question papers were leaked and circulated on the WhatsApp, a day before the state-level SI recruitment test on September 20.

Sanjit Krishna, who was holding the post of SP (Karimganj), was transferred as SP of Foreigner Regional Registration Office, Barpeta, on Sunday after his name surfaced in the scam. Subsequently, he was summoned by the CID.

Sanjit Krishna was questioned by the CID on Monday and his residence in Guwahati

was also raided on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, the CID raided the officer's Karimganj residence and interrogated five police personnel, including the driver of the former SP, the in-charge of the police guest house and the security guard of the SP's official residence. After this, CID officials produced the five police personnel at a local court in Karimganj.

Police are also investigating the involvement of PK Dutta, an APS officer who served as Sanjit's deputy in Karimganj.

Meanwhile, Assam chief secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna in social media post clarified that the law would take its course and his name should not be dragged in as his brother “is a mature, independent individual in a different profession”.

The police have so far arrested over 50 people in connection with the case including a ruling Bharatiya Janata Party leader Diban Deka (who has since been expelled from the party).

Former DIG Dutta and BJP leader Deka are alleged to have fleeced many candidates for the SI post by assuring them jobs in lieu of cash.

MP CONG TO  
RELEASE FRESH  
POLL MANIFESTORABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, OCT. 16

A row has erupted in Congress over the absence of Rahul Gandhi's photograph on the cover page of the poll manifesto booklets released recently by the Congress for the November 3 by-elections to 28 Assembly constituencies in Madhya Pradesh.

The party is set to release the fresh election manifesto here on Saturday.

The Congress last fortnight released poll manifestos separately featuring Sonia Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and former CM Kamal Nath.

However, Rahul Gandhi was missing on the coverage page, causing consternation among a strong section in the party.

BJP RELEASES REPORT  
CARD FOR CENTRE,  
BIHAR AHEAD OF POLLSNAYEAR AZAD | DC  
PATNA, OCT. 16

The BJP on Friday released a report card to highlight the performance of the Centre as well as the state government ahead of Bihar polls. Assembly elections in the state are scheduled to begin from October 28 and the NDA comprising JD(U), the BJP and two partners HAM and VIP are in the fray against Opposition coalition led by the RJD.

The report card released by the BJP claims that the Centre, as well as the state government, extended all kind of support to the people who were stuck outside the state during the Covid period. The BJP also asserted that the state saw all-round progress under the leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led NDA government.

The report card highlights that “the government spent about ₹30,000 crore to support people during the Covid period. ₹203 crore were transferred to the bank account of about 21 lakh people who were stranded outside the state”.

While presenting the achievements of the state government, Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who was also present on the dais along with other senior NDA leaders, said that the party is contesting polls in alliance with Nitish Kumar's JD(U) for the development of Bihar.

“We are here to discuss the work done under the leadership of Nitish Kumar. We understand our responsibility and we will continue to work for the development of Bihar. But there are others who are only interested in the development of their family”, Ravi Shankar Prasad said while targeting the Opposition RJD.

During the event, he also accused the Opposition coalition of corruption and said that “they keep talking about the future of Bihar but their past exposes the reality. We are also trying to figure out how their assets keep changing during every election. This is the reality and we will continue to highlight this”.

SAURABH JOSHI | DC  
MUMBAI, OCT. 16

The Mumbai police's cyber cell has arrested a Delhi based person, claiming to be a lawyer, for allegedly spreading rumours in connection with the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide by uploading the videos on internet.

The officials said he was arrested in one of the two FIRs registered by the Mumbai police for defaming Mumbai police and the state government.

The arrested accused was identified as Vibhor Anand, who allegedly uploaded misleading videos on Youtube in connection with the probe that also trolled the Mumbai police.

The officials will grill Anand on the source of his information and what made him upload such videos.

“His custody will be sought for questioning in the case and to find if there are any accomplices,” said an officer.

Early October, the police filed two cases to identify trolls. The cyber cell began a probe in the cases and found several fake social media accounts that were floated to troll and tarnish the image of Mumbai police.

The police said that fake accounts were being operated from Twitter, Instagram and Facebook where the trolls went on to abuse the city police chief and the whole force.

The officials tracked down the internet protocol (IP) addresses of some of the accounts and are in the process of tracking the online footprints of the remaining accounts.

After the police came across the series of such accounts, the first case was filed last month

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC  
MUMBAI, OCT. 16

Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh on Friday said that Mumbai police will investigate Vivek Oberoi-Sandip Ssingh angle to a drugs case related to the film industry if the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) doesn't act against them.

A day after the Bangalore police searched the actor's Mumbai residence, a Congress delegation met Deshmukh and demanded investigation against the actor.

After meeting the Congress

‘Is there mechanism  
check news before  
damage is done?’DC CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI, OCT. 16

The Bombay High Court on Friday asked the Union government to explain if there is any mechanism in place for checking the content broadcast by news channels before the damage is done.

The court also said that if the media crossed the line, it is for the legislature to act.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Dutta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by several retired IPS officers alleging some media entities of maligning image of Mumbai police in Sushant Singh Rajput suicide case and simultaneously running media trials. Petition sought HC intervention to stop this practice.

The bench observed, “If public officers are removed for their wrong act, then same practice should be followed for private employment. Strict action needs to be taken for not behaving appropriately.”

## INDIA TO GET MORE RAFALES NEXT MONTH

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 16

The Indian Air Force (IAF) will get the second batch of three to four Rafale fighter aircraft in the first week of November boosting its firepower amidst on going tensions with China.

These fighter jets will be arriving at the Ambala airbase in Haryana from France. Preparations are going on to receive these jets.

The Indian Air Force will

Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh, appearing for the Union government, argued that the Supreme Court has said in several judgements that the government must not interfere with the freedom of press. Mr Singh also submitted judgements before the court. After perusing those judgements, Justice Dutta said “These judgments are from 2012-2013. Time has changed. This is the most misused freedom now.”

The bench also referred to the Chief Justice of India's recent remark that freedom of speech is the most abused. The high court further said it was concerned with the efficiency of the present mechanism of regulation with regard to news channels. “Everyone seems to be having an unfettered license to say whatever they want...Before the so-called damage is done, is there any machinery to check that? Or do you act only when a certain news is disseminated and complaints are received?” the judges asked.

Delhi man arrested for  
‘defaming’ Mumbai policeMan held for defamatory  
posts pleads innocenceSHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, OCT. 16

Shrishail Khajje, an accounting professional, arrested by cyber police for abusing state home minister Anil Deshmukh on a fake Facebook account on Friday filed bail application as soon as the court remanded him to judicial custody. He has claimed that he has not created this FB account and some professional hacker must have done this. The court has adjourned hearing on his plea till October 22.

The cyber police had arrested 26-year-old Khajje from Pune. He hails from Osmanabad and was working in Chikhli area of Pune.

A magistrate court on October 13 had demanded Khajje to police custody till October 16 and upon completion of his custody he was produced before the court again.

On Friday Khajje's lawyer Shriganesh Sawalkar opposed his further police custody saying evidence involved in this case are of technical nature and there is no need to keep the accused in police custody, as his custody would not help in investigation in any manner.

After hearing the arguments, the judge remanded Khajje to

judicial custody. Soon after, advocate Sawalkar filed a bail application on behalf of Khajje. He contended that his client has nothing to do with the FB post of abusing the home minister or anyone else.

According to him, the accused is not affiliated or connected with any political party or any political leader. “We are completely unaware that the said FB post has been posted in our clients name. It seems that a professional hacker must have done this mischievous act,” he argued. Furthermore, Khajje does not have any criminal record, the lawyer said.

The Mumbai Police has also begun investigations into various fake accounts that had been abusing Mumbai Police and the state government, especially after the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput on June 14.

According to police, a Facebook user profile ‘Appa Keaserjavalgekar’ had been abusing several political leaders from Maharashtra, including some women leaders. The Mumbai Cyber Police registered an FIR in the case on October 9.

Police began technical investigations in the matter and two teams were sent to Navi Mumbai and Pune.

as per the provisions of the Information Technology Act and the further investigation in the case is underway.

## BRAVE | HEART

## Balwinder Singh Sandhu fought terrorism in Punjab for years

## Shaurya Chakra awardee shot dead

Amritsar, Oct. 16:

Shaurya Chakra awardee Balwinder Singh Sandhu who fought terrorism in Punjab was shot dead by unknown assailants in Tarn Taran district on Friday, months after the government withdrew his security cover.

The motorcycle-borne men pumped four bullets into 62-year-old Sandhu when he was at his office adjoining his home at Bhikhiwind in the district and escaped, police said. He was taken to the hospital where doctors

declared him brought dead. Sandhu had fought against terrorism in the state for years, facing scores of terror attacks during the height of Khalistani militancy.

Singh's security cover was withdrawn by the state government a year ago on the recommendation of Tarn Taran police, his brother Ranjit said, adding their entire family had remained on the hit list of terrorists.

Balwinder's wife Jagdish Kaur said it was the handiwork of terror-

ists, maintaining that their family did not have any personal enmity with anyone.

The family always fought against terrorists. As many as 62 attacks were made on my family by terrorists. We made numerous requests with DGP Dinkar Gupta for the security cover but all in vain, she said.

Tarn Taran Senior Superintendent of Police Dhruvan Nimbale said the investigations were underway. He said those responsible for the mur-

der would be nabbed soon. The entire incident was captured by the CCTV, he said adding the footage was being checked.

The Tran Taran braveheart also featured in some documentaries. Inspired by Sandhu and his family, many people followed him and defended themselves from terror attacks. The Union government awarded him Shaurya Chakra in 1993.

Balwinder Singh Sandhu and his brother Ranjit Singh Sandhu are

opposed to the activities of terrorists. They were on the hit lists of terrorists. The terrorists so far have made 16 attempts to wipe out the Sandhu's family within in about 11 months, the citation for the gallantry award said.

The terrorists attacked them in groups of 10 to 200, but every time Sandhu brothers with the help of their brave wives Jagdish Kaur Sandhu and Balraj Kaur Sandhu have successfully foiled the attempts, it said.

— PTI





## SHORT TAKES

## GUINEA'S PREZ , SEEKS TO PROLONG RULE FOR 3RD TIME

**Conakry (Guinea), Oct. 16:** Guinean President Alpha Conde, 82, is seeking a third term in office on Sunday, insisting his attempt to prolong his rule does not make him a dictator even as opposition protesters slam his candidacy as an illegal power grab.

The electoral campaign in this West African nation already has seen deadly protests, which some fear could explode after results are announced. More than 50 people have been killed in anti-Conde protests since October last year, Amnesty International said this month, urging the government to investigate.

Already the International Criminal Court at The Hague has said it is "deeply concerned" about the mounting tensions.

"These recurring episodes of election-related violence are deplorable," ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said.

## POLICE GRILL ANWAR OVER BID TO BECOME PM

**Kuala Lumpur, Oct. 16:** Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim was grilled by police on Thursday over his bid to oust the government, in what he called "political harassment" to thwart his attempt.

Anwar met the nation's king on Tuesday to show evidence that he has majority support in Parliament to form a new government and unseat Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, who has only a thin two-seat majority in the house.

Police summoned Anwar to give a statement Thursday after 113 complaints were lodged over a purported list of 121 lawmakers allegedly backing Anwar that has spread on social media.

Anwar, 73, told reporters outside police headquarters that six cases were being investigated against him under the penal code covering statements of public mischief and a multimedia law on the improper use of network facilities to harass someone.

## PHILIPPINES LIFTS BAN ON SCS OIL EXPLORATION

**Manila, Oct. 16:** The Philippine president has approved the lifting of a ban on oil and gas exploration in or near disputed areas of the South China Sea that was imposed six years ago because of escalating territorial tensions with China, an official said Thursday.

Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi said companies awarded contracts to explore for oil and gas in three sprawling areas off the western Philippines have been asked to resume their search operations, including in a potentially oil- and gas-rich region called Reed Bank.

Chinese ships tried to shoos away a Filipino exploration vessel in Reed Bank at least once in the past, and it was not immediately clear if China was aware of the Philippine decision. President Rodrigo Duterte has nurtured closer ties with Beijing since taking office in 2016 and put the territorial rift on the backburner in his initial years in power to avoid offending China.

## YOUTUBE FOLLOWS TWITTER, FB WITH QANON ROW

**Oakland (US), Oct. 16:** YouTube is following the lead of Twitter and Facebook, saying that it is taking more steps to limit QAnon and other baseless conspiracy theories that can lead to real-world violence.

The Google-owned video platform said Thursday it will now prohibit material targeting a person or group with conspiracy theories that have been used to justify violence. One example would be videos that threaten or harass someone by suggesting they are complicit in a conspiracy such as QAnon, which paints President Donald Trump as a secret warrior against a supposed child-trafficking ring run by celebrities and "deep state" government officials.

Pizzagate is another internet conspiracy theory — essentially a predecessor to QAnon — that would fall in the banned category. Its promoters claimed children were being harmed at a pizza restaurant in Washington, D.C. A man who believed in the conspiracy entered the restaurant in December 2016 and fired an assault rifle.

## Televised townhalls replace US Prez debate

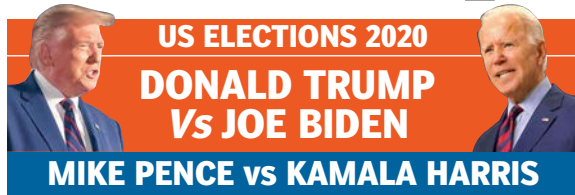
**Greenville (US), Oct. 16:** US President Donald Trump and his Democratic challenger Joe Biden held simultaneous and separate televised town halls in lieu of the second presidential debate, taking questions from pre-selected individuals at sessions moderated by eminent television journalists.

While Trump's town hall was hosted by the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in Miami, Florida, that of Biden was held in Pennsylvania, Philadelphia by the *American Broadcasting Company* (ABC) News. The second presidential debate had

originally been scheduled for on Thursday night. However, it was cancelled after Trump refused to participate in a virtual format of the presidential debate as amended by the independent debate commission following the president's Covid-19 diagnosis.

A final debate is still scheduled for October 22 in Nashville, Tennessee. The first debate was held on September 29 in Cleveland, Ohio.

Trump, 74, has recovered from a brief spell of Covid-19 after he and First Lady Melania Trump, 50, tested positive for the deadly viral infection on



October 1. Trump's doctors have now cleared him for his election campaigns. During the town hall, Trump defended his handling of the Coronavirus pandemic.

He also reiterated his stand on tax returns. However, Trump refused to denounce the QAnon conspiracy theory. According to QAnon, a far-

right group that has been labelled a terror threat by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Democrats are running a secret paedophilia ring. When asked by moderator Savannah Guthrie if he would denounce the QAnon theory and "just say it's crazy and not true", Trump said, "I don't know about QAnon." Wh-

en pressed further on whether or not he believed that Democrats were running a pedophile ring, Trump said, "I have no idea."

Biden's during his town hall said he would soon express his position on court packing, an issue that he has avoided so far. The 77-year-old democratic presidential nominee said he will come out with a clear position before Election Day about where he stands on expanding the Supreme Court, depending how the rest of the confirmation process of Judge Amy Coney Barrett is handled. President Trump has selected Judge

Barrett to succeed Supreme Court Justice late Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

The Senate Judiciary Committee finished its confirmation hearings for Barrett earlier on Thursday. Judiciary Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham said that the committee will vote on Barrett's nomination on October 22. If the committee approves her nomination, which is expected, it would be sent to the full Senate floor.

At the town hall with ABC's George Stephanopoulos, Biden said he is "not a fan" of court packing. When asked by

Stephanopoulos if he was open to increasing the number of judges on the court if Barrett is confirmed before the election, Biden said, "I'm open to considering what happens from that point on".

Republicans have repeatedly criticised Biden for not directly giving his view on court packing. "They do have a right to know where I'll stand and they'll have a right to know where I stand before they vote," Biden said, when asked whether voters had a right to know where he stands on the issue of expanding the court.

—PTI



Pro-democracy protesters react as police use water cannons to disperse the anti-government rally in Bangkok on Friday. — AFP

## Thai PM rejects calls to resign

**Bangkok, Oct. 16:** Thailand's prime minister rejected calls for his resignation on Friday, while his government failed to stop student-led protesters from rallying again in the capital in defiance of a strict state of emergency.

More than 1,000 protesters gathered in torrential monsoon rains to push their core demands, including that Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha leave office, the constitution be amended and the nation's monarchy undergo reform. It was the second day

they defied an order not to gather, imposed after some demonstrators heckled a royal motorcade, an unprecedented development in Thailand, where the monarchy is normally held in reverence.

Police had earlier closed roads and put up barricades around a major Bangkok intersection where some 10,000 protesters defied the new decree Thursday. Police in riot gear secured the area, while malls in the normally busy shopping district closed early.

—AP

## 2 Thai protesters held for 'violence against queen'

**Bangkok, Oct. 16:** Authorities in Thailand have filed the most severe charges yet in connection with ongoing pro-democracy demonstrations, charging two men under an article of the law covering violence against the queen.

Ekachai Hongkangwan and Paotrong Bunkueanum were arrested Friday. They could face

anywhere from 16 years to life imprisonment.

The move against the two activists comes as the student-led protest movement continues to press its demands, including new elections, changes to make the constitution more democratic and reform of the monarchy to make it conform with democratic norms.

—AP

## RACIAL TENSIONS RISE IN SA OVER FARM KILLING

**Senekal, Oct. 16:** A tense standoff between white farmers and Black activists gripped the South African town of Senekal Friday, as two men accused of killing a white farm manager were to appear in court.

More than 100 police patrolled the area in front of the courthouse in the Free State province and used barbed wire to separate the rival groups.

Sekwetjie Mahlamba and Sekola Matlaletsa were to appear in the court on charges of killing Brendin Horner, 21, on October 1.

About 250 white farmers gathered to protest the killing, charging that police do not adequately protect white farmers. In an earlier court hearing last week, a group of white farmers stormed the court and burned a police vehicle.

—AP

## Remdesivir found ineffective: Study

## WHO disappointed with test results

## Millions of French face Covid curfew

**London, Aug. 16:**

Antiviral drug remdesivir has "little or no effect" on a hospitalised Covid-19 patients' chances of survival, a World Health Organisation (WHO) clinical trial has suggested.

The potential Coronavirus treatment option is one of four repurposed drugs being examined under the UN agency's large Solidarity trial that launched in March.

Randomised trials at hospitals around the world have involved remdesivir, lopinavir, hydroxychloroquine and interferon-beta 1a — looking to assess their impact on inpatient mortality.

The hydroxychloroquine and lopinavir arms of the trials were discontinued on June 20 and July 4 respectively.

In a statement provided to the PA news agency on Thursday evening, the WHO press office said results from these first four treatment options of the Solidarity trial were "unpromising".

"The trial found that remdesivir, hydroxychloroquine, lopinavir/ritonavir and Interferon have little or no effect on mortality for hospitalised patients," WHO said.

"Other uses of the drugs, for example in community and pre-hospital settings, would have to be examined using different trial designs."

It added: "For each drug in the study, the effect on mortality was disappointingly unpromising. These results were not significantly affected by the exclusion of certain countries, regions or sub-groups."

WHO said later on Thursday that the results of the trial are under review for publication in a medical journal, and have been uploaded as a preprint at the medRxiv website.

—Agencies

**Paris, Oct. 16:**

Millions of French people were looking forward to a last night of freedom on Friday before a Covid-19 curfew in Paris and other large cities comes into force for at least a month, prompted by an alarming surge in new cases.

The curfew aims to keep some 20 million people home from 9 pm to 6 am — 30 percent of the French population. It was ordered

by President Emmanuel Macron this week as the number of new infections and deaths raised the spectre of hospital overloads like those seen in March and April.

Health authorities reported on Thursday a record 30,621 new cases in the previous 24 hours as well as 88 deaths and over 200 new Covid admissions to intensive care units.

—AFP

## Chinese Covid-19 cure shows hope

**Beijing, Oct. 16:** One of China's leading Covid-19 vaccine candidates, called BBIBP-CoV, was shown to be safe and elicited immune response in a small early-phase human trial, researchers said on Friday.

A previous clinical trial reported similar results for a different vaccine that is also based on inactivated whole SARS-CoV-2 virus, but in that study the vaccine was only tested in people aged under 60 years.

The latest study, published in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* journal, included participants aged between 18 and 80 years, and found that antibody responses were induced in all recipients. Participants aged 60 and over were slower to respond, taking 42 days before antibodies were detected in all recipients compared with 28 days for participants aged 18-59, the researchers said. Antibody levels were also lower in

## DOZENS CONTRACT VIRUS AT NYC'S 'SWEET16' PARTY

**New York, Oct. 16:** A 16th birthday party in New York state became a super-spreader event with dozens of attendees contracting Coronavirus, according to officials.

The September 25 shindig at the plush Miller Place Inn on Long Island left 37 people infected with Covid-19 and forced more than 270 into quarantine.

Over 80 people attended the party, known as a "Sweet 16" in the United States, well above the state's 50-person limit. The venue has been closed temporarily and fined \$12,000, local officials said.

—AFP

those aged 60-80 years compared with those aged 18-59, they said.

—PTI

## Finnish PM leaves EU summit as 'precautionary' measure

**Brussels, Oct. 16:** Another day at the European Union summit, another leader gone away.

Finland's Prime Minister Sanna Marin said Friday that she had left the summit of heads of states and governments in Belgium on its final day "as a precautionary measure" after learning that a

Finnish lawmaker she recently attended a meeting with tested positive for the coronavirus.

The move came one day after European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen left the summit venue in Brussels shortly after talks began because one of her close staffers tested

positive for Covid-19.

Two other EU top officials, the bloc's top diplomat Josep Borrell and the commissioner for humanitarian aid Janecz Lenarcic, went into isolation this week after coming into contact with people who tested positive for the virus during a trip to Ethiopia.

—AP

## NEW | RESEARCH

## Glaciologists predict that 95 per cent of Alps could disappear by the end of this century

## Melting glaciers yield archaeological troves

**Sion, Switzerland, Oct. 16:** The group climbed the steep mountainside, clamoring across an Alpine glacier, before finding what they were seeking: a crystal vein filled with the precious rocks needed to sculpt their tools.

That is what archaeologists have deduced after the discovery of traces of an ancient hunt for crystals by hunters and gatherers in the Mesolithic era, some 9,500 years ago.

It is one of many valuable archaeological sites to emerge in recent decades



Curator at archaeological department of the history museum of Canton of Valais showing a shoe from 17th century found in a glacier in the Southern Swiss Canton of Valais. — AFP

from rapidly melting glacier ice, sparking a brand new field of research: glacier archaeology.

Amid surging temperatures, glaciologists predict

that 95 percent of the some 4,000 glaciers dotted throughout the Alps could disappear by the end of this century.

While archaeologists la-

ment the devastating toll of climate change, many acknowledge it has created "an opportunity" to dramatically expand understanding of mountain life millennia ago.

"We are making very fascinating finds that open up a window into a part of archaeology that we don't normally get," said Marcel Cornelissen, who headed an excavation trip last month to the remote crystal site near the Brunifirm glacier in the eastern Swiss canton of Uri, at an altitude of 2,800 metres (9,100 feet).

—AFP

## EU to decide tougher climate target for 2030 in December

**Brussels, Oct. 16:** EU leaders on Thursday said they will decide on a more stringent climate target for 2030 at a summit in December, leaving more time to forge a united response to climate change.

Ambitious climate goals are backed by big EU powers including France and

Germany, as well as many major businesses, but face resistance from eastern member states still dependent on coal for energy.

The 27 leaders meeting in Brussels said they will return to the issue "with the aim of agreeing on a new emission reduction

target for 2030", conclusions from the summit said.

As part of its commitments to Paris Climate Agreement, the EU has pledged to being climate-neutral by 2050 when it would offset or capture more greenhouse gas than it emits.

—AFP



# DECCAN Chronicle

17 OCTOBER 2020

## If PDP, others cohere, Centre will be afraid

Earlier this week PDP leader and former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti was freed from detention after 14 months. With this is raised the prospect of the coming together of every mainstream party in Kashmir — the regional parties as well as the Congress and the CPI(M) — on a common platform to confront the Centre.

This has not happened before and is a development of singular significance. It has the potential to prevent the ruling BJP from striking political roots in the Valley, the saffron party's thwarted decades old wish. To make this dream come true, the RSS-BJP, using its power at the Centre, sought to neuter Kashmir and impose a militaristic dispensation as a way to bulldoze its way through. If the Kashmir parties stick together in the foreseeable future, the BJP's pursuit could prove Sisyphean.

Kashmiri politicians are notorious for their inability to cooperate. Now they have the opportunity to turn this on its head. To remain accommodative toward one another until the next Assembly election in order to present a united face to BJP and its local hangers-on is the first practical challenge before them. They have cleared the first hurdle by gathering at Ms Mufti's residence upon her release to reaffirm their commitment to the Gupkar Declaration, which enjoins them to unitedly work for the restoration of Article 370 of the Constitution that was abrogated on August 5, 2019, ending J&K's constitutional autonomy.

Unlike National Conference leaders Farooq and Omar Abdullah, who spoke in a measured tone upon their release a few months before Ms Mufti, the PDP leader used direct language to criticise the Centre's action of last August, calling the step "illegal" and "unconstitutional". She has good reason to speak her mind. The BJP first befriended her party, permitted her to be the leader in a coalition government with it, and then stabbed her in the back. But more than using sharp language, the PDP, weakened through defections and desertions, and the others, have to show through their action whether they can summon the ability to cohere in the face of possibly renewed repression. If they can, it is the Centre that will be on the back foot.

Dr Abdullah's defiant recent interviews, including the one in which he speaks of going to any lengths for the restoration of Article 370, his bringing in the China factor (on account of the Ladakh situation), although clumsily phrased thus permitting the BJP the short-term joy of politically hammering him, is apt to unsettle the ruling dispensation. The NC leader's reminder that it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who had cavorted on swings with Chinese leader Xi Jinping can hardly be a source of comfort. The Modi government's tenure as bailiff in J&K will now be tested. The economy is practically finished, terrorism is back under central rule, and there is incipient political unity against the BJP.

## GST: A win for states

The Union government's decision to borrow ₹1.10 lakh crores and end the impasse over the payment of compensation to state governments for the shortfall in the collection of Goods and Services Tax (GST) is welcome. The borrowing will be effected under a special window and the money will be passed to the states as back-to-back loans and will not impact the fiscal deficit targets of either governments. The Centre will service the loan and then repay it from the GST compensation cess, which will be extended beyond the scheduled term of 2022.

The GST Council was unable to find a way out of the dispute on how to bridge the estimated shortfall of ₹2.35 lakh crores in the GST collection for this fiscal. The Centre had suggested that the states borrow Rs 1.10 lakh crores, which it said was the share of the shortfall due to the implementation of the unified tax system, though it was mandated to bridge it as per the GST (Compensation to States) Act 2017. Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's attempt to wash her hands off it blaming it as an "act of God" did not help the matter either.

That the change in stance will ensure better rates and easy administration of the process is only part of the deal. More noteworthy is the political victory of the states, ruled mostly by Opposition parties, who refused to play ball and asked the Centre to see reason; they had even contemplated moving the Supreme Court. The pandemic has affected both the Centre and the states and it would have been graceful on the part of the former to have made this announcement earlier. Still, better late than never. The Centre should now take a similar magnanimous approach and help the states bridge the shortfall of ₹1.25 lakh crores lost due to the pandemic and let the spirit of federalism thrive.

Subhani



## Bollywood joins forces, but for what exactly?

Shobhaa De

I am still trying to wrap my head around the news item announcing the joint effort of Bollywood Biggies (34 top production houses and four industry bodies) against two prominent English language television channels. The 1,069-page petition was filed in the Delhi high court earlier this week. The document said that after examining various articles online, it was felt that the defendants were publishing and circulating false, disparaging and malicious allegations against key Bollywood personalities. The latest statement, however, now says that the lawsuit is not targeted at any particular news channel but the entire media industry! My, my! Such a wide-spread gag order? My first response was: "What took you so long?" And the second: "How will the filing of such a lawsuit in change the narrative?" Then came the question of representation. It comes as no surprise or shock that hardly any women were among the joint petitioners. That in itself says a lot about the entertainment industry, not just in India, but across the world. Under-representation of women in showbiz is an important and troubling issue, which does not generate a sufficient level of comment and debate, either in this country or elsewhere. In this particular show of unity, the media coverage of the lawsuit was also slanted, focusing almost exclusively on the three Khans being on the same page, rather than on the contents of the lawsuit. While every

industry is well within its rights to seek redressal, it is important to ask what exactly has miffed Bollywood? Is it just a question of being vilified? Or is there a bigger concern of business getting severely impacted? And why pick on just these two TV channels and their high-profile anchors? What about the muck that gets televised daily across the regional television channels, by equally out of control anchors? To say nothing of the cheap coverage on the dodgy websites? Why was Bollywood this shaken up now, and not earlier? The name calling is not new — describing Bollywood as "scum" and accusing actors of being "drugies" is also not a recent invention. My guess is that the impetus to go ahead and defend the territory through our courts came more from a sense of protectionism than any genuine outrage. It can be argued, of course, that television coverage had hit new lows in the wake of the Sushant Singh Rajput tragedy, and there seems to have been a specific agenda to implicate certain stars, producers, directors and lobbies. Yes, the hourly hounding of the handpicked few was aggressive and highly selective. Bollywood started to squirm when the heat got a bit too much. The standard noises were made by the usual suspects, pointing out that not "everybody" in Bollywood is a druggie. Come on, that's as childish as that old chestnut, "Not every Muslim is a terrorist". But the fact remains, Bollywood was being cut down to size.

And that hurt. The big move to go to court against television tormentors was met by a tepid response from the public. The media too relegated the big news largely to an inside page report. Since the announcement, the public has lost interest in both — this case, as well as the SSR imbroglio. This is how the media manipulates and drives pet agendas. Seasoned players learn to live with the turbulence. At the moment, there is nothing but turbulence to deal with in any case. And Bollywood reckons that it is time to close ranks and hang in there together, if business has to thrive down the line. That's called hardnosed, practical strategising — nothing wrong with protecting one's flanks when attacked. But one also wonders where this recent show of unity and solidarity had disappeared when one of their own had breathed his last on June 14. Or later, when his girlfriend was falsely accused by the very same television tormentors and spent more than a month in jail? Had the same people used their power and clout to stand up for a colleague (Sushant Singh Rajput) and his partner (Rhea Chakraborty), perhaps their petition would have received much

more notice. And even sounded credible. At the moment, it reeks of self-righteousness, and appears self-seeking, instead of being a legitimate grievance and a call to arms. Let's hand it to Bollywood for now. Perhaps this period has been the much-needed wakeup call to review everything — from its own standards of conduct, its dodgy representation of women and, of course, the way business is done. Drugs, booze and rock 'n roll — that's showbiz. Nobody sits in judgment over the private lives and consumption habits of movie folks. What would be wonderful (since Bollywood has come together on a common platform) would be to employ this newfound unity and togetherness to redress a few glaring inequalities, particularly when it comes to blatant discrimination, wage disparity, favouritism and yup — that dreaded word — nepotism. First get your own act together, and then try taming the press! The mediawallahs are not schoolchildren, and Bollywood does not rate as an exemplary class monitor or principal. It's going to be a huge challenge to the media in line. There will always be news stories that tickle and titillate — deal with it. Reputations get shredded in all walks of life, not just in the movies. Bollywood acting holier than thou and getting preachy with the press is a bit too twee! Listen, guys, you do your job and entertain the public, as you have all these many years. Leave the media to do its job. Errrrrr... in future remember to stick up for one of your own when the going gets rough for that person. That's what family is for!

Readers can send feedback to [www.shobhaade.blogspot.com](mailto:www.shobhaade.blogspot.com)

**The name calling is not new — describing Bollywood as 'scum'... is also not a recent invention. My guess is that the impetus to go ahead and defend the territory through our courts came more from a sense of protectionism than any genuine outrage.**

### LETTERS

#### COVID IN AP

A drastic decrease in the number of Covid cases is visible (AP registered 4,038 new Covid cases, 38 deaths, DC, Oct. 16). Nevertheless, the overall status of Coronavirus is still frightening. Hopefully, in the coming months we can envisage a Covid free world. At this juncture, the unexpected floods has jeopardised the Telugu states. We must take care and adhere to the norms.

**Neralla Venkata Rao**  
Vizianagaram

#### GST DUES

That the Centre finally agreed, after failing to persuade the states to borrow money, is a right step. The decision is appropriate as it is the prime responsibility of the Centre to give compensation on losses accrued by the states due to change of tax regimen as per the law.

**Dr D.V.G. Sankararao**  
Vizianagaram

#### SHOW TIME

It is certainly a good news for movie lovers who are totally fed up with bad politics, Coronavirus and lockdowns (*Theatres in AP to open on Oct. 22, DC, Oct. 16*). We have to welcome even if 30 per cent cinemas are commencing operations initially. Every state government should extend support to the industry by reducing taxes for a few months as this industry provides employment to many. Cinegoers must follow Covid protocols.

**Panchakarla Govardhana Rao**  
Kankipadu, Krishna district

## 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

### US silent on Indian protest: arms to Pak

NEW DELHI, Oct. 16 There was no response from the US on India's protest against its decision to give arms to Pakistan. Government of India are in touch with the Indian Embassy in Washington and with representatives of the US Government on resumption of American arms sales to Pakistan. An external affairs ministry spokesman said he did not know whether the Indian Embassy in Washington had received any reply to India's protest from the US.

Farrukh Dhondy  
Cabbages & Kings



"Are proverbs made in heaven, Or are they composed in hell? Their promise to the virtuous Words to guide and compel

Promises of paradise For the poor but not the rich So, stop playing the lottery — Proverbs are such a bitch!"

— From *Key Gal to Seagull* by Bachchoo

## Multi-ethnic casting rows nothing new, just look back

A question — if it is acceptable for a black actor to play Julius Caesar, is it just as acceptable for a white actor to play Othello? The answer, gentle reader, is "No"! In a recent performance of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Caesar was played by a black British actor. The audience wasn't bothered. Caesar delivered his lines perfectly. Years ago, I saw Lawrence Olivier playing Othello with a blackened face. He spoke his lines with a melodramatic conviction which would have made a Bollywood villain blush. "Put out the light, and put out the light!" — with deep sobs inherent in the throaty delivery. Olivier's hutzpah didn't elicit many comments. Times move on.

Before Olivier's principled disregard for blacking up, presumably on the grounds that actors are sui generis being somebody else, there was a public outcry against *The Black and White Minstrel Show*, in which white singers and musicians blacked up in costumes and caricatured African Americans, singing in peculiar accents and playing banjos. It was out of date and distasteful and did disappear from Britain's stages.

The reason for my answer to my earlier question is that Othello is a play in which race has a dramatic function. It matters that Othello is black. It doesn't matter whether Julius Caesar is black or white — as long as he doesn't speak in a Gujarati accent.

Last week a new film on Cleopatra was announced. The Egyptian queen is to be played by Gal Gadot, an Israeli star of Greek lineage. Her ethnicity has caused what the cliché appropriately calls a Twitter storm. One journalist, of ethnic origin herself, wrote something to the effect of "you steal Arab land and now you steal Arab roles in films".

This journalist is well within the flow of indignation, but a little investigation — Wikipedia is so good at providing the means — will

tell the world that Cleopatra VI was a descendant of the General Ptolemy, one of Alexander the Damned's heirs. When Alexander the Macedonian vandal turned back from the Western bank of the Indus, fearing the might and armies of the Nanda empire of Maghada on the eastern bank, he retreated, landed in Egypt, and died there. His General Ptolemy stayed in what was subsequently called Alexandria and founded the Greek dynasty, whose sons were all called Ptolemy and whose daughters, princesses and queens, Cleopatra. Was there any pre-Arab settlement, Berber blood mixed in with the Greek in Cleo's ancestry? No historian is certain. Nevertheless, the row progresses. My prediction is that the film will meet with protests, both well-meaning and misguided.

We live, gentle reader, in interesting times, but the era of ethnically blind casting didn't begin yesterday. I recall that in my schooldays in Poona (now Pune) an actor's company called Shakespeareana would perform in our schools and colleges. They were, when first I saw them perform, an all-white company, but as the years passed and their actors returned to Britain,

the company recruited Indian actors who played Shylock, Bassanio or Oberon with panache and without any murmurs from the audience.

Also, which play of late Mumbai maestro Alyque Padamsee, borrowed from the Western stage, had European actors in it? "Integrated casting" was not a choice for Indian dramatic productions in English. For Peter Brook, who in 1985 adapted the *Mahabharat* as a nine-hour stage epic, it was not a necessity but a choice. Impelled by liberal instinct, Brook cast Chinese, Caribbean, African, Japanese, French and British actors as Arjun, Karna, Duryodhan and the rest. His multi-ethnic universal cast was much applauded in the West.

At the time I was employed as a commissioning editor at Channel Four TV and one of my colleagues, Michael Kustow, proposed transforming Brook's stage play into a nine-hour TV serial. Michael approached me one morning and asked if I would accompany him and Brook to a meeting with Indian high commissioner P.C. Alexander (Indian, not Greek), whom they were approaching to propose a partnership with the Indian government in the project.

We went, and the high commissioner was very hospitable but was cagey when Brook asked him directly for funds and sponsorship. Alexanderji seemed to say that of course the government would support the venture by getting industrial houses and others to sponsor it. His commitment was designed to sound enthusiastic but was in fact very ambivalent.

As we stepped out, Brook and Kustow both grabbed me bodily. "Interpret!" Brook demanded.

"Buy me a drink at the pub and I'll tell you," I said.

They did and I said: "He was saying he welcomes the venture but won't commit the government to endorse or get close to a play which has different ethnicities playing Hindu gods and demi-gods. It will cause dissension amongst bigots, so the government will encourage private investors but won't commit to a direct association."

They understood. A year later, this meeting and theme suggested itself as the beginning of a novel which I wrote called *Bombay Duck*. I judiciously changed the *Mahabharat* to the *Ramayana* and called the Peter Brook character David Stream — but kept him white.



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39,982.98	0.64
Nifty 50	11,762.45	0.70
S&P 500*	3,499.18	0.45
Dollar (₹)	73.34	0.06
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.87	0.36
Euro (₹)	85.90	0.06
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	51,704.324	0.62
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	0.742	0.008
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.935	0.037
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	42.92	-0.24

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

Forex reserves at new high, cross \$550-billion mark

The country's foreign exchange reserves surged by \$5.867 billion to touch a record high of \$551.505 billion in the week to Oct. 9, according to RBI data. In the previous week ended Oct. 2, the reserves had increased by \$3.618 b to \$545.638 billion. The increase in forex kitty was on account of rise in foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves. FCA rose by \$5.737 billion to \$508.783 billion.

FinMin kick-starts budget making exercise



The finance ministry on Friday kicked off the exercise to prepare the annual budget for 2021-22 amid the urgency to push economic growth. As per the finance ministry schedule, the nearly one-month long exercise to finalise the revised estimate (RE) for 2020-21 and budget estimate (BE) for 2021-22 began on Friday. The meetings will conclude on November 12, according to an official statement.

Union Bank chief Rajkiran Rai new IBA chairman

The Indian Banks' Association (IBA) said Union Bank of India's MD and CEO Rajkiran Rai G. has been elected as the association's chairman for the term 2020-21. SBI chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara has been elected as the deputy chairman of the association.

Bajaj Auto launches Pulsar NS, RS versions

Bajaj Auto launched the refreshed versions of its Pulsar NS and Pulsar RS series motorcycles with new looks and fresh colours ahead of the festival season. The Pulsar RS 200 with dual channel ABS (anti-lock braking system) is priced at Rs 1,52,179, while the NS 200 is priced at Rs 1,31,219. Bajaj Auto Ltd said in a release. The refreshed version of Pulsar NS 160 is priced at Rs 1,08,589, the company said.



Rough imports grow, orders pick up Diamond hub busy again

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, OCT. 16

After a gap of seven months, rough diamond imports have seen positive growth in September. While the employment levels in polishing units are still lower than last year, import of polished diamonds by jewellery makers remains a worry. Festive season orders from most key markets are coming at last year's levels, except from the US.

The cutting and polishing industry imported Rs 9,905 crore worth rough diamonds in September against Rs 8,231 crore worth goods imported in the same month last year, thus, registering a positive growth of 20 per cent. In terms of carats, too, the imports were 7.5 per cent higher than the year ago month.

Imports have been declining from March. The nation-wide lockdown and the voluntary stoppage of imports by the industry to clear inventories have seen the imports declining for the past seven months. Even in August imports were down by 40 per cent. Easing of lockdown and an increase in festive season orders have supported imports in September.

According to Dinesh Navadiya, regional chairman, Gujarat, Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council, the units in Gujarat are operating with 70 to 75 per cent employees. Despite polishing activity recovering to similar lev-



DIESEL SALES ABOVE PRE-COVID LEVELS

NIDHI VERMA NEW DELHI, OCT. 16

India's diesel sales rose in October for the first time since March, signalling a pick-up in industrial activity.

Diesel sales by state-run fuel retailers rose 8.8 diesel year-on-year in the first half of October, provisional data compiled by IOC shows.

Sales of diesel totalled 2.65 million tonnes, up 24

per cent from September. An official at a state refiner, however, cautioned that diesel sales growth could be temporary.

"Typically, transportation of goods picks up ahead of festivals and dips during and after the key festivals. This year key festivals are towards the end of this month and early November; last year they were in October," he said. —Reuters

els, imports of polished diamonds are still continuing. Import of cut and polished diamonds in September was 124 per cent higher than the same month last year and that by the SEZs were 244 per cent higher.

According to Colin Shah, chairman of GJEP, jewellery manufacturing in SEZs has been happening with raw materials procured from overseas. The industry expects the import of polished goods to come down with the polishing activity picking up.

Another positive development is that festive season orders have started coming from the key markets. "Demand from China and Hong Kong has returned to normal levels. While orders are coming from the US, Europe and the Gulf region, the US demand is still down compared to last year," he said.

The industry expects the festive season sales to be 10 per cent lower than last year's. The total gems and jewellery exports for the year is expected to be 20 to 25 per cent lower.

Record kharif grain production expected

New Delhi, Oct. 16: Foodgrain production is pegged at record 144.52 million tonnes in the 2020-21 kharif season, agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar said on Friday. Foodgrain production stood at 143.38 million tonnes during the 2019-20 kharif season, as per official data.

Currently, harvesting of kharif crops is underway. Rice is the main kharif crop.

"Foodgrain production will be better than last year. As per the initial estimates, foodgrain production is projected to be 144.52 million tonnes in the 2020-21 kharif season," Tomar said addressing a digital conference.

Production of cash crops such as sugarcane and cotton is also expected to be good, he said.

According to the first estimate accessed by PTI, the ministry estimated a record rice output at 102.36 million tonnes during the kharif season of 2020-21 crop year (July-June) against 101.98 million in the previous year. Similarly, pulses output is likely to increase to 9.31

million tonnes this kharif season from 7.72 million tonnes in 2019-20, while the production of oilseeds is projected to increase to 25.72 million tonnes from 22.31 million tonnes.

However, coarse cereals production is estimated to be slightly lower at 32.84 million tonnes in the 2020-21 kharif season as against 33.69 million tonnes.

Among cash crops, cotton output is estimated to be at record 37.11 million bales as against 35.49 million bales of 170 kg, while sugarcane output is projected to increase to 399.8 million tonnes from 355.7 million tonnes in the said period.

Earlier Tomar said the bumper production is estimated following a record increase in kharif acreage notwithstanding the pandemic. Despite the Covid-19 crisis, there has been a record increase in area sown to kharif crops by 4.51 per cent to 1,121.75 lakh hectares this year, he said.

He said the agriculture sector grew 3.4 per cent during the first quarter of 2020-21 fiscal. —PTI

CIL TO GIVE OUT ₹1,700 CR AS PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE

New Delhi, Oct. 16: State-owned Coal India on Friday said it has declared a performance-linked reward (PLR) of Rs 68,500 per employee to all its non-executive cadre workforce for 2019-20 which would have an estimated financial implication of over Rs 1,700 crore.

This is linked to the attendance of the employees during the period, Coal India (CIL) said in statement.

The payment would be made before October 22. Around 2.62 lakh employees of CIL and its eight subsidiary companies who were on the company's roll in 2019-20 will stand to gain from the PLR. Despite the pandemic slowdown and crimp in coal sales, CIL offered a 5.87 per cent rise over the earlier year's PLR of Rs 64,700 per employee, the absolute increase being Rs 3,800.

Non-executive employees will also be eligible for the payment. —PTI

Urban consumption sees worst fall in 2 decades

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, OCT. 16

Urban consumption has contracted more than 25 per cent between April and August, witnessing the worst decline in two decades due to massive job losses and reduction in income levels.

Real private consumption expenditure declined 26.7 per cent in the June quarter against the same period last year. While urban consumption contracted 34 per cent, rural consumption shrank only 4 per cent. In July and August, while urban consumption declined 18 per cent, rural consumption was almost flat, says brokerage Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

From an average growth of 8 per cent during FY17-19, urban consumption declined 0.6 per cent for the first time in two decades in FY20 before collapsing by more than a quarter during April-August 2020. Rural consumption, on the other hand, grew at an average of 6 per cent during FY17-19 before easing to 3.4 per cent in FY20 and shrinking 4 per cent in during April-August.

According to Motilal Oswal, revival in private consumption is unlikely without a recovery in urban consumption. Covid-19 has affected the urban sector disproportionately, it said.

HCL Tech net up 18%, to hire 9,000 freshers

New Delhi, Oct. 16: IT firm HCL Technologies on Friday posted 18.5 per cent rise in September quarter net profit at Rs 3,142 crore, and said it is looking at hiring up to 9,000 freshers in the second half of this fiscal on the back of strong growth momentum.

The Noida-based company had registered a net profit of Rs 2,651 crore in the year-ago period (as per US GAAP).

Its revenue grew 6.1 per cent to Rs 18,594 crore in the quarter under review from Rs 17,528 crore in the year-ago period.

"We delivered a solid performance in Q2. Our stellar performance is broad-based across verticals, service lines, geographies and Mode 1, 2, 3 offerings. Our new bookings remained very robust, it increased 35 per cent compared to the last quarter, we won 15 transformational deals," HCL Technologies president and CEO C. Vijayakumar told reporters in a virtual



C. Vijayakumar

briefing. He added that the company's deal pipeline grew 20 per cent quarter-on-quarter, which is "an all-time high".

"We are implementing the salary increments effective October 1, up to E3 levels, and effective January 1, for E4 and above levels. This is only a one quarter shift from the regular increment cycles that we give our employees annually," he said.

The hikes—which were previously deferred amid business uncertainty on account of Covid-19 pandemic—will be similar to previous year. Last year, the company had offered

an average 6 per cent raise to its staff in India and 2.5 per cent increase in wages of overseas employees.

The board has declared an interim dividend of Rs 4 per equity share for the financial year 2020-21.

Sanjeev Hota, head of research at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said HCL Technologies reported strong quarterly results, beating its estimates on all fronts and its own margin guidance as well.

However, shares of the company fell 3.76 per cent on the BSE at Rs were trading at Rs 827.10.

In the second quarter, HCL Technologies recorded revenue growth at 4.5 per cent quarter-on-quarter in constant currency—higher than its estimate of 1.5-2.5 per cent sequential rise. It has maintained its revenue growth guidance of an average of 1.5-2.5 per cent increase quarter-on-quarter in constant currency for the third and fourth quarters. —PTI

Sanjeev Gupta targets Thyssenkrupp steel unit

CHRISTOPH STEITZ & TOM KÄCKENHOFF FRANKFURT/DUESSELDORF, OCT. 16

Liberty Steel, founded by commodities tycoon Sanjeev Gupta, on Friday said it had made a non-binding offer for Thyssenkrupp's steel unit, hoping to forge a European champion to master the transformation towards carbon-

neutral production.

A deal would combine the continent's fourth- and second-largest steelmakers after a planned joint venture between Thyssenkrupp and Tata Steel was blocked in 2019.

"I truly believe in the future of European steel," Gupta told journalists during a call. "By investing in green steel I believe the industry can transform

and thrive in the long-term."

He said that steel as a business needed time, adding that was one of the reasons why belonged in private hands. Gupta shied away from putting a number on expected synergies.

Essen-based Thyssenkrupp said it would carefully study the offer, details of which were not disclosed. —Reuters

Car sales recover in Sept., all eyes on festive demand

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, OCT. 16

After four straight quarters of decline, passenger vehicles dispatches from the factory-gates to dealerships in the second quarter registered a strong 17 per cent growth at 7,26,232 units albeit on a low base of last year when sales had declined by a record 29 per cent.

Also, in September, car makers dispatched 2,72,027 units from their factories to dealerships, a 26.5 per cent growth over last year and roughly the same level as that of September 2018, the latest data from the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturer-s, or Siam, showed on Friday.

Automakers typically produce and ship more vehicles in September to stock up at dealerships across the country in anticipation of bumper demand during the annual festive season in October-November. But the litmus test would be the retail sales at the dealerships.

However, the positive trajectory is visible across



other segments as well. Two wheelers saw an 11.64 per cent growth in September, and in the second quarter, the sales have recovered to the levels of last year.

In fact, motorcycles have led the growth, reiterating the stronger demand in rural markets.

But sale of commercial vehicles, the barometer of the economic activity and three-wheelers, these two segments that are dependent on freight availability and are a truer reflection of the overall state of economy in the country, remained deep in the red. The commercial vehicles saw a dip of 20.13 per cent at 1,33,524 units in the quarter under review and three-wheelers sales declined 74 per cent at 45,902 units.

"In September, auto

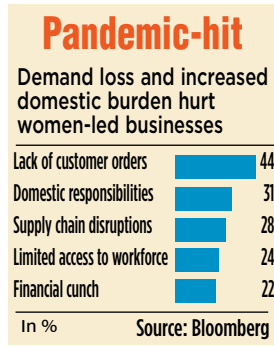
industry witnessed improvement in the sales of passenger vehicles by 26.45 per cent and two-wheelers by 11.64 per cent, while sales of three-wheelers registered a de-growth of 71.91 per cent, as compared to September last year," Rajesh Menon, director general at Siam said.

"Further, in the July-September quarter, passenger vehicles grew by 17.02 per cent, two-wheelers grew by 0.17 per cent, three-wheelers saw a de-growth of 74.63 per cent and sales of commercial vehicle declined by 20.13 per cent, compared to the same quarter in 2019," he pointed out.

Auto analysts said one has to wait and watch if the September wholesale figures would translate into retail sales and are sustainable.

They said factories across the country are now running at decent levels. Automakers are pinning their hopes on retail sales during the festive season which generally accounts for about 20 per cent of the total annual sales.

Biz women see Covid survival by remodeling business



SHWETHA SUNIL OCT. 16

Most female entrepreneurs in Indian cities were quick to change their business model and they predict their operations will survive after the pandemic ravaged revenues, according to a new study.

Bain & Co., Google, and AWE Foundation surveyed almost 350 women entrepreneurs and small businesses and found that 54 per cent had already made business shifts—including new products or services—and another 24 per cent planned to change by December. About 90 per cent said they believe they will survive the crisis.

Covid-19 had a disproportionate impact on women all over the world. In India, which has a vast gender gap across almost all social indicators, women are even more vulnerable. The nation has as many as 16 million women-owned businesses, fewer than 20 per cent of all enterprises, with most of them largely single-person operations, making survival crucial.

Women-owned businesses saw a sharp decline in revenue: 73 per cent reported being negatively impacted by the pandemic, and almost 20 per cent were nearly wiped out, according to the survey.

The changes made in business models include releasing new products or services, digital sales and delivery channels, as well as reorienting supply chains, sales and marketing. Some 60 per cent of the businesses reported including new products and services.

—Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

## India in 4th spot at Asian chess

**Chennai:** India enjoyed an unbeaten day with a win and two draws to move up to fourth place after six rounds in the Asian Online Nations (Regions) Cup Team Championship for men on Friday.

The top-seeded Indians, who were sixth after three rounds, were held to a 2-2 draw by a strong Kazakhstan team, seeded second, in the sixth round after having shared points with Iran in round four before beating Jordan 3.5-0.5. In the India-Kazakhstan match, the talented 16-year-old Nihal Sarin and the experienced K Sasikiran scored wins over Rustam Khusnutdiov and Denis Makhnev respectively. B Adhiban and captain Surya Shekhar Ganguly lost their games. — PTI

## Pak invites Eng for tour in 2021

**London:** England could tour Pakistan for the first time in over a decade after officials confirmed they had received an invitation to visit the Asian giants early in 2021 for a “short white-ball series”.

England have not played in Pakistan since 2005/06. An England and Wales Cricket Board statement issued Thursday said: “After discussions with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), we can confirm the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has received an invitation in respect of a short white-ball tour to Pakistan during the early part of 2021.” It is understood the proposed tour could consist of three T20 internationals, none of which would replace England’s rescheduled tour of Sri Lanka. — AFP

## Irani new chief of Weightlifting body

**Lausanne:** The crisis-hit International Weightlifting Federation (IWF), fighting to keep its place at the 2024 Paris Olympics, on Friday named a third president in a troubled week. The IWF said it had appointed Michael Irani, the British chair of the federation’s medical committee and a former chair of its anti-doping commission, as interim president. While Irani accepted the nomination, he insisted he was not interested in the job full-time, but committed to furthering reforms around the issue of drugs testing that has plagued the sport. “I am grateful to the IWF executive board for entrusting me with the presidency on an interim basis,” Irani said. — AFP

## Tokyo Olympics on, assures IOC

**Tokyo:** The International Olympic Committee tried to assure dozens of international sports federations on Thursday that the postponed Tokyo Games will open on July 23. The IOC and Tokyo organisers have been holding on-line sessions this week with about 200 national Olympic committees, and with the more than 30 summer sports bodies that are represented on the program. “We are very confident that the games in Tokyo next year will take place,” IOC sports director Kit McConnell told delegates in the on-line seminar. It’s still unclear if fans will be allowed to populate venues, and if non-Japanese fans will be allowed to enter the country. — AP

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**IPL:** Rajasthan Royals vs Royal Challengers Bangalore from 3.30 pm; Delhi Capitals vs Chennai Super Kings from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

## FOOTBALL

**English Premier League:** Everton vs Liverpool from 5 pm; Chelsea vs Southampton from 7.30 pm; Manchester City vs Arsenal from 10 pm; Newcastle vs Manchester United from 12.30 am (Sunday) on Star Sports Select 2, HD

**Italian League:** Napoli vs Atalanta from 6.30 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD; Sampdoria vs Lazio from 9.30 pm on Sony Six, HD; Inter Milan vs AC Milan from 9.30 pm from 12.15 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

## UFC FIGHT NIGHT

Brian Ortega vs Chan Sung Jung and other bouts from 4.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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## QUINTESSENTIAL!

## Quinton cracks whip as MI thrash KKR

**Abu Dhabi, Oct. 16:** The Mumbai Indians juggernaut rolled on unabated as they recorded their fifth straight win with an eight-wicket mauling of Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL here on Friday.

A tidy bowling effort by Mumbai Indians ensured that KKR were restricted to 148 for 5 after an unbeaten 53 by pace spearhead Pat Cummins. Then, the defending champions rode on a blistering 44-ball 78 by Quinton de Kock, to chase down the target with 3.1 overs to spare.

De Kock, who struck nine fours and three sixes and skipper Rohit Sharma (35 off 36 balls), laid the foundation for the emphatic win with their 94-run first-wicket stand.

The two openers took the KKR attack to cleaners with de Kock being the more aggressive one. The South African notched up his fifty in just 25 balls, with a maximum over deep-square leg.

It rained boundaries for Mumbai as the two dominated the KKR bowling attack.

Pacer Prasidh Krishna (0/30) faced their brunt, conceding three fours in the third over and de Kock followed that up by hammering Cummins (0/28) for two successive fours, both pull shots, in the next.

De Kock kept playing shots all around the park and was again brutal on Prasidh, whom he hit for two fours and a six, in the seventh over. — PTI



Quinton de Kock (right) of Mumbai Indians gestures after scoring a fifty against Kolkata Knight Riders during their Indian Premier League match at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Friday. — BCCI

## SCORECARD

**Kolkata Knight Riders:** R. Tripathi c Suryakumar Yadav b Boult 7, Shubman Gill c Kieron Pollard b Rahul Chahar 21, Nitish Rana c Quinton de Kock b Nathan Coulter-Nile 5, D. Karthik b Rahul Chahar 4, Eoin Morgan not out 39, Andre Russell c Quinton de Kock b Jasprit Bumrah 12, Pat Cummins not out 53, Extras (LB-2, W-5) 7. **Total (for 5 wickets in 20 Overs) 148.**

**FOW:** 1-18, 2-33, 3-42, 4-42, 5-61.

**Bowlers:** Trent Boult 4-0-32-1, Nathan Coulter-Nile 4-0-51-1, Jasprit Bumrah 4-

0-22-1, Krunal Pandya 4-0-23-0, Rahul Chahar 4-0-18-2.

**Mumbai Indians:** Rohit Sharma c Dinesh Karthik b Shivam Mavi 35, Quinton de Kock not out 78, Suryakumar Yadav b CV Varun 10, Hardik Pandya not out 21. Extras (LB-5) 5. **Total (for 2 wickets in 16.5 Overs) 149.**

**FOW:** 1-94, 2-111.

**Bowlers:** Chris Green 2.5-0-24-0, Pat Cummins 3-0-28-0, Prasidh Krishna 2-0-30-0, Andre Russell 2-0-15-0, CV Varun 4-0-23-1, Shivam Mavi 3-0-24-1.

## IPL POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Mumbai Indians	8	6	2	0	12	+1.353
Delhi Capitals	8	6	2	0	12	+0.990
Royal Challengers Bangalore	8	5	3	0	10	-0.139
Kolkata Knight Riders	8	4	4	0	8	-0.684
Sunrisers Hyderabad	8	3	5	0	6	+0.009
Chennai Super Kings	8	3	5	0	6	-0.390
Rajasthan Royals	8	3	5	0	6	-0.844
Kings XI Punjab	8	2	6	0	4	-0.295

Tabulated as Played, Won, Lost, No Result, Points, Net Run Rate

## Karthik passes on KKR captaincy baton to Eoin

**Abu Dhabi, Oct. 16:** Wicketkeeper-batsman Dinesh Karthik on Friday stepped down as captain of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, handing over the reins to his English deputy Eoin Morgan hours before the IPL match against Mumbai Indians here.

Karthik told the KKR management that he wants to “focus on his batting and contributing more to the team’s cause.” Appointed skipper in 2018, the 35-year-old led KKR in 37 matches.

“We are fortunate to have leaders such as DK, who has always put the team first. It takes a lot of courage for someone like him to take a decision such as this,” team CEO Venky Mysore said in a statement.

Midway into the ongoing season, KKR find themselves at fourth place in the points table with four wins and three losses. Morgan was widely tipped to take over at some point from



Dinesh Karthik

Karthik given the topsy-turvy run.

“...DK and Eoin have worked brilliantly together during this tournament and although Eoin takes over as captain, this is effectively a role swap and we expect that this transition will work in a seamless manner,” Mysore said.

Even though Mysore termed Karthik’s decision surprising, the move was always on the cards with a World Cup-winning captain in the mix.

The veteran Indian wicketkeeper-batsman’s captaincy had come under intense criticism due to the team’s erratic campaign so far. — PTI

## Pooran all praise for great Gayle

**Sharjah, Oct. 16:** Chris Gayle’s presence in the middle had the team brimming with confidence and the ‘Universe Boss’ with a cracking half-century proved his worth during Kings XI Punjab’s win over Royal Challengers Bangalore, said batsman Nicholas Pooran.

Gayle, who was playing his first competitive match since January, overcame a sluggish start against RCB to smash five sixes and a boundary in his 53-run knock, helping KXIP snap a five-match losing streak.

“He started slowly, which is acceptable because he has played cricket in a long while. He has shown once more why he is the greatest T20 batsman. It’s wonderful to see him get runs,”

Pooran told teammate Mayank Agarwal during a post-match show for IPL T20.com.

He added that when Gayle is out in the middle, there’s a different mood in the camp.

“To me, he is the greatest T20 player. When Chris is batting, you always feel you have a chance of winning the game. Once he is there, it’s a different mood in the camp. We, as a batsman, would want someone like him in the middle,” Pooran said.

In their first match of the tournament against Delhi Capitals, KXIP had failed to score the required single run of the last three balls and the game headed to a Super Over where they lost the game. — PTI

## Virat &amp; Co. take on reeling RR

**Dubai, Oct. 16:** Royal Challengers Bangalore would aim to get their strategy right after some inexplicable decisions during the loss to Kings XI Punjab when they take on an erratic Rajasthan Royals in an IPL match here on Saturday.

The Virat Kohli-led RCB has won five of its eight games on the back of all-round performances but seemingly blundered in the eight-wicket defeat to lag-guards KXIP on Thursday.

Against KXIP in Sharjah, AB De Villiers, who has been in fine form, was sent in to bat at number six, a baffling decision by the RCB. The experiment didn’t work as all three batsmen struggled with the South African scoring just two off five balls. However, Kohli and his men will look to shrug off the defeat.

On the other hand, the Royals’ campaign this season has been marred by numerous top-order collapses, forcing the lower half to pull them across the finish line.

After failing in his first match of the season, Ben Stokes hit 41 before he was run out against the DC.

## NUMBERS GAME

## HEAD TO HEAD

## OVERALL:

- Matches: 21
- Rajasthan: 10
- Bangalore: 9
- No result: 2

## MEETING IN 2019

- Rajasthan Royals beat Royal Challengers Bangalore by 7 wickets at Jaipur
- No result at Bangalore

## MEETING IN 2020

- Royal Challengers Bangalore beat Rajasthan Royals by 8 wickets at Abu Dhabi

## FOR THE RECORD

- Abraham de Villiers who scored 3954 runs at an average of 42.06 in 124 innings of 134 matches, needs 46 runs to become only second batsman after Virat Kohli (5716) to score 4000 runs for Royal Challengers Bangalore in IPL.
- Sanju Samson 18 sixes in eight innings of as many matches is the highest in this IPL.

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

Jofra Archer spearheads the RR bowling unit, along with the spin duo of Tewatia and Shreyas Gopal, who have consistently figured in an XI that has gone through a lot of chopping and changing. — PTI

## Rejuvenated CSK face in-form DC

**Sharjah, Oct. 16:** Their campaign is back on track, courtesy Mahendra Singh Dhoni’s smart captaincy but a stiff test awaits Chennai Super Kings when they face a dominant Delhi Capitals in their next IPL match, here on Saturday.

Every tactic that Dhoni employed against Sunrisers Hyderabad, worked, and they are expected to continue in the same vein as they battle to salvage the season.

Whether it was promoting Sam Curran to the opener’s slot or finishing pacer Deepak Chahar’s quota upfront while using seven bowlers to dry up runs, every move produced desired result.

The three-time champions will look to build on the win over Sunrisers Hyderabad as the league phase moves towards the

business end.

However, they are up against a team which is high on confidence and well-served by the South African pace duo of Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje, who bowled a 156.2 kmph delivery during his spell against Rajasthan Royals.

Add the wily R. Ashwin and Axar Patel to the mix and DC has a rather impressive bowling unit.

Pacer Tushar Deshpande, who made a memorable debut in the win over the Royals on Wednesday, adds teeth to the attack and the focus will be on how he follows up that performance.

The Capitals side would be a tad worried about fitness status of Shreyas Iyer, who hurt his left shoulder in the previous game. The skipper has been in good form with the bat and has led well too. — PTI

## NUMBERS GAME

## HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL: ● Matches: 22 ● Chennai: 15 ● Delhi: 7

## MEETING IN 2019

- Chennai Super Kings beat Delhi Capitals by 6 wickets at Delhi.
- Chennai Super Kings defeated Delhi Capitals by 80 runs at Chennai.
- Chennai Super Kings beat Delhi Capitals by 6 wickets at Visakhapatnam (Qualifier 2).

## MEETING IN 2020

- Delhi Capitals beat Chennai Super Kings by 44 runs at Dubai

## FOR THE RECORD

- Shikhar Dawan who hits 549 fours in 166 innings of 167 matches, needs just one four to become first batsman to hit 550 fours in IPL.
- Mahendra Singh Dhoni scored 587 runs at an average of 34.52 in 23 innings of 25 matches against Delhi Capitals in IPL.

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

## Srikanth bows out in quarters

**Odense, Oct. 16:** Top Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth bowed out of the Denmark Open badminton tournament with a 22-20, 13-21, 16-21 defeat to Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei in the men’s singles quarterfinals here on Friday.

The world number two Taipei player came back after losing the first game and took the next two to win the match in one hour and two minutes and storm into the semifinals.

With the defeat of Srikanth, seeded fifth, India’s campaign ended in the \$750,000 Super 750 tournament, the only world tour event happening this year in a calendar thrown haywire by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Srikanth took the early lead at 7-4 but Chen fought back to 11-10 midway into the first game. The Indian made his way back to 19-19 and then 20-20 before taking the first game 22-20.

The second game saw Chen dominating Srikanth as the Taipei player zoomed ahead from 10-9 to win it 21-13 and take the match to the decider.

Srikanth put up some fight in the early exchanges of the decider but seemed to have lost way later. Chen left the Indian behind to take the third game and wrap up the match. Lakshya Sen had lost in the second round on Thursday while Subhankar Dey and Ajay Jayram had made first round exits. — PTI

## OPELKA DUMPS TOP SEED

**Saint Petersburg (Russia), Oct. 16:** World number 36 Reilly Opelka came back from dropping the first set to defeat defending champion and top seed Daniil Medvedev 2-6, 7-5, 6-4 at the St Petersburg Open on Thursday. The giant American also saved four break points in the deciding set before going on to complete the biggest win of his career against the world number six. Elsewhere in Cologne, Alexander Zverev defeated Fernando Verdasco 6-4, 6-1. — AFP