

IN BRIEF

Assembly, Council from Nov. 30

Vijayawada: Andhra Pradesh Assembly and Council sessions are scheduled to commence on November 30 at 9 am and 10 am respectively. Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan summoned the 15th Session of the Legislative Assembly and 37th Session of the Legislative Council to be held at their respective halls at Velagapudi in Amaravati. The sessions of both Assembly and Council are expected to continue for five days.

STATE CABINET MEET TO BE HELD TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 26

The AP Cabinet meeting, to be chaired by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, will be held at 11 am on Friday. The Cabinet is expected to discuss on the extent of damage to the crops under the influence of cyclonic storm Nivar and relief to be provided to the affected farmers. It will also discuss about the issues related to State Election Commission's move to conduct local body polls in February and also arrangements to be made for distribution of Covid-19 vaccine once it becomes available for distribution from the Centre. Moreover, the Cabinet will also discuss about several bills on various issues to be introduced in the legislature as the sessions for both Assembly and Council are scheduled to be held from November 30.

STAMP DUTY ON LOANS WAIVED OFF FOR PETTY TRADERS

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 26

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy directed the revenue authorities to waive off stamp duty for documentation to obtain bank loan by petty traders who are being covered under Jagananna Thodu scheme to get interest free loan of ₹10,000 each.

Village and ward secretariats and housing principal secretary Ajay Jain in a release here on Thursday said that based on a request from the beneficiaries to waive off the stamp duty as they had to spend ₹324 each for carrying out documentation for getting the bank loan, the Chief Minister directed the revenue officials to take measures to waive off stamp duty for loan documentation.

Accordingly, 10 lakh beneficiaries under the scheme would get the benefit of ₹32 crore once the stamp duty was waived off.

NIVAR STRIKES A BLOW TO CROPS IN NANDYAL DIVISION

DC CORRESPONDENT KURNOOL, NOV. 26

Heavy rains lash out several areas in Nandyal division as Nivar cyclone strikes. Mala Vagu and Vakkileru expected to swell by Thursday night hampering traffic on Rudravaram and Siliveru.

People were banned from entering Kundu and Tungabhadra rivers and cautioned not to go near tanks which are 80 per cent full. Holiday was declared for schools and Pushkar ghats have been strictly monitored by the SDRF personnel.

The Nivar cyclone damaged paddy in at least 20,000 hectares which was ready for harvest in Allagadda Assembly segment of Nandyal revenue division in Kurnool district on Thursday.

Heavy rains and chilly winds started blowing from morning hours and these rains have thrown the normal life out of gear at various parts of the district particularly Allagadda, Chagalamarri, Sirivella, Rudravaram Sanjamala, Uyyalawada and Mahanandi mandals.

The Nandyal division which has been worst affected by the Nivar cyclone received a total rainfall of 81.40 mm in the last 24 hours. A highest rainfall of 13.20 mm was recorded in Allagadda mandal, followed by Sanjamala 12.80 mm and Bandi Atmakur 8.60 mm. Flood water breached several causeways at various places in the said mandals.

Four control rooms including command control room at Kurnool collectorate - 08518 277305 and each one at three revenue divisions like Kurnool RDO office - 83339 89011, Nandyal sub collector office - 08514 221550 and 83339 89013 and Adoni RDO office 83339 89012 have been established.

Nivar lashes Tirumala, landslide on Ghat Road

Boulder falls on edge of Bolero vehicle, devotees escape unhurt; huge trees also uprooted at a couple of spots

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, NOV. 26

Tirumala-bound devotees had a miraculous escape when a boulder fell on the edge of their vehicle near 14th km on the ghat road leading to Tirumala on Thursday due to the impact of very severe cyclonic storm Nivar.

The incident has brought back the fears of falling boulders and rocks to devotees and locals, who go all the way to Tirumala via the second ghat road (Tirumala-Tirupati). The incessant heavy rains since Wednesday resulted in landslips at a couple of places on the second ghat road during the late hours on that day. The TTD authorities immediately cleared the boulders and resumed the vehicular traffic on the ghat road.

Again on Thursday morning, a boulder fell on the edge of a Bolero vehicle - carrying devotees to Tirumala, at the 14th km. However, no casualties were reported in the incident and devotees escaped unhurt. On being informed, the TTD vigilance and engineering wing staff swung into action and cleared the boulder, before shifting the devotees to Tirumala.

On the other hand, huge trees were also uprooted at a couple of spots on the first ghat road leading to Tirupati.

The vehicular traffic was interrupted for a while; however, it was later resumed after the TTD staff cleared the debris. The TTD officials have cautioned the devotees taking the twin ghat roads to be alert and drive cautiously.

Meanwhile, the incessant rains poured non-stop and have caused inconvenience to the devotees. They were seen drenched even before reaching the queue complex for darshan as well as after coming out of the temple. The low-lying areas across the hill town

RAIN LASHES PRAKASAM DISTRICT

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, NOV. 26

Rain lashed Prakasam district under the influence of the cyclone Nivar on Thursday. The average rainfall between 6 am and 6 pm on Thursday was 87.4 mm (8.7 cm) with Kandukururu recording highest of 160.6 mm (16 cm) and Ardha-veedu mandal recording 29.0 mm (2.9 cm).

Ulavavapadu, Kandukururu, Singarayakonda, Gudlur, Lingasamudram, Zarugumalli, Ongole and Tanguturu mandals abutting SPSR Nellore district recorded heavy rainfall compared to other mandals.

District Collector Pola Bhaskar has activated the official machinery to be on alert to deal with any situation as rains are forecasted for next two days. He told the special officers posted to mandals to remain in the mandal headquarters. Meanwhile District SP Siddharth Kaushal visited the coastal villages of Kottapatnam, Etamukkala, Sanku Vani Kunta and Sura Reddy Palli to review the cyclone preparedness and safety procedures.

He inquired the Ongole DSP about the current situation.

REVIEW | MEETING

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 26

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed the officials to complete execution of the three ports coming up at Ramayapatnam, Bhavanapadu and Machilipatnam in two-and-half-years.

The CM held a review meeting on development of ports and industrial corridors at his Camp Office here on Thursday.

The officials informed



Water gushes out from Kanupuru canal following a breach at South Mopuru village in Nellore rural mandal on Thursday.

CM reviews impact of Nivar

From Page 1

About 21 varieties of horticulture crops suffered damage in about 2,834.52 hectares located in Prakasam, Nellore, Chittoor and Kadapa, affecting nearly 5,689 farmers.

The loss of horticultural crops was estimated to be ₹38.18 crore and the estimated input subsidy to be given to the affected farmers was estimated to be as per norms of State Disaster Response Fund to be ₹460.46 lakhs.

With IMD predicting further rainfall, the farmers are worried over the fate of their crop. Farmers

and few parts surrounding the temple were flooded, while all the water bodies atop the hill were brimming with water.

● The cyclone has also disrupted normal life in East and West Godavari districts, which received moderate to heavy rains. Cargo operations have stopped in Anchorage Port at Kakinada.

who raised paddy late in the Kharif season and those who are raising various crops in the current rabi season have become victims of natural calamity. Teams of officials have started visiting areas where crops were damaged to assess the extent of loss. Earlier, Chief Minister

Following heavy rains in the last two days, the TTD has decided to close down Srivari Mettu footpath route for two days. This

Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy reviewed the impact of Cyclone Nivar with concerned officials at his Camp Office. He directed them to take all necessary measures to provide relief to the affected people.

The CM ordered the officials to support the family members of a person, who died due to electric shock in Nellore district and called for enumeration of crop damages to provide relief to the affected farmers. The officials informed the CM that they were taking steps to rescue people trapped near the Mallemadugu reservoir in Renigunta.

temporary closure of the pedestrian route at Srinivasa Mangapuram is owing to felling of huge rocks.

Two farmers rescued in Chittoor

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, NOV. 26

Tirupati urban police wing, along with the fire personnel, have rescued two out of the three young farmers who were marooned in floodwaters of Mallemadugu reservoir near Kummarapalli village of Yerpedu mandal in Chittoor district on Thursday.

The two rescued farmers Venkatesh, 21, and Ramesh, 21, along with another farmer Prasad, 30, had gone to their farmlands at around 6 am to retrieve their agriculture motor starters. With the incessant rains caused by Cyclone Nivar since Wednesday, Mallemadugu reservoir was overflowing, inundating the entire stretch under the reservoir in the Yerpedu and Renigunta mandals.

The young farmers were caught in the floodwaters at around 6.30 am when they were returning to the village after retrieving their motor pumps. On being informed, Renigunta circle inspector Anju Yadav reached the spot immediately and spotted farmers holding on to the branches of trees to save themselves. She called upon the police and fire teams for a rescue operation.

The police, along with the fire brigade, rushed to the place and commenced rescue operations to save



Farmers, who got marooned in floodwaters of Mallemadugu reservoir near Kummarapalli village of Yerpedu mandal in Chittoor district on Thursday, hold on to the branches of trees to save themselves.

the farmers stranded in the floodwaters. As the canal was overflowing due to non-stop heavy rains, rescue operation was halted for a while.

On learning about this, Tirupati SP Avula Ramesh Reddy, MLAs Chevreddy Bhaskar Reddy and B. Madhusudhan Reddy reached the spot and requested the state authorities for a chopper to rescue the farmers.

Joint-collector-2 Veera Brahmam, RDO Kanakanarasa Reddy, DSP Ramachandra, fire official Adhinarayana Reddy joined the rescue teams to evacuate the farmers. "Firstly, we sought the help of authorities to send a chopper to

rescue the farmers, but due to the heavy rain it wasn't possible at that time. However, we have requested the district authority for a speed boat, which reached the spot by afternoon and helped us in rescuing two farmers. Rescue operation is still underway for the third person," SP Ramesh Reddy said.

While the Chandragiri legislator Chevreddy Bhaskar Reddy along with the rescue teams got down into the flood stream in the speedboat and rescued two farmers, Srikalahasti MLA Madhusudhan Reddy has rewarded the rescue personnel with ₹1 lakh cash.

SCR RESTORES CHARMINAR EXPRESS SERVICES

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, NOV. 26

The South Central Railway (SCR) has restored the services of Charminar Express, operating between Tambaram (Chennai) and Hyderabad, from Thursday and cancelled two other trains on November 28 in view of cyclonic weather conditions in South Coastal AP and Tamil Nadu. Train No. 06012 operating between Hazrat Nizamuddin and Kanyakumari has been cancelled on November 28 while Train No. 05119 running between Rameswaram and Manduadih was cancelled on November 26.

3,363 EVACUATED FROM LOW-LYING AREAS IN NELLORE

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, NOV. 26

District collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu said that as many as 20 kutchahouses were damaged fully and 56 damaged partially while 43 houses are either marooned or inundated because of heavy rains since Wednesday.

With respect to damage to agriculture, paddy nurseries and Blackgram crop was inundated in 420 hectares and 500 hectares respectively apart from transplanted paddy in 200 hectares.

Tada tank and Lingala tank were breached.

Mr Chakradhar Babu said they have evacuated 3,363 people belonging to 1,035 families from low-lying areas and shifted them to 92 relief camps.

He said road breaches took place between Venkatagiri - Kurjagunta, Koduru - Pattapupalem Road and Pidathapoluru - ST Colony Road.

He informed that rescue and relief works are in progress with the assistance of 44 NDRF Men and 45 SDRF men across the district.

Normal life crippled in temple town

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, NOV. 26

Normal life was crippled in Tirupati as the unabated rains due to the very severe cyclonic storm Nivar has inundated several parts in the temple city on Thursday.

The incessant downpour in the Tirumala forest area as well as in the city since Wednesday led to inundation of many houses located on the banks of Kapilatheertham and Malavadi Gundam streams and few other low-lying colonies.

Municipal commissioner P.S. Girisha personally visited these areas and ordered for immediate evacuation of people in vulnerable locations. They have shifted nearly 468 persons from 154 families to relief centres, set-up at schools in Tiruchanoor and Mangalam.

Meanwhile, adding fuel to the distress caused by the rains, power remained disrupted in a few areas all day. People were forced to remain indoors and most of the shops remained closed. On the other hand, the ongoing works of elevated corridor - Garuda Varadhi, passing through the Tirumala bypass road has obstructed the flow of rain water, adding much inconvenience to commuters.

Winds, heavy rains batter Godavari dists

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, NOV. 26:

Cyclone Nivar has disrupted everyday life in East and West Godavari districts, which received moderate to heavy rains throughout the day accompanied by very chilli winds.

Most people kept indoors, and traffic was also disrupted in many places. There was extensive waterlogging at many places, and roads and agriculture fields with harvested paddy crops were inundated in many areas. Farmers suffered heavy losses once again.

Amalapuram (88.4mm), Allavaram 77.4 mm, Uppalaguptam 77.6 mm, Katrenikona 65.8 mm, Rajahmundry 16.2 mm and Kakinada 24.22 mm rainfall was recorded in East Godavari and Polduru 38.2 mm, Mogalturu 36.7 mm Palakollu 35.22 rainfall was recorded in West Godavari district for the past 24 hours.

The sea was very rough and turbulent at Uppada shore, and the waves swept over the geo-tube wall onto the road. The traffic was disrupted on the beach road. Lord Rama Temple, which was partially damaged in last time rains, has now totally collapsed with these rains.

Some of the damaged houses near the shore in Uppada mandal washed away into the sea.

The tahasildar L. Sivakumar said that the U. Kothapalli mandal received continuous rains for the past 24 hours, but lowest rainfall was recorded. He said that the temple was partially damaged.

● Adding fuel to the distress caused by the rains, power remained disrupted in a few areas all day. People were forced to remain indoors and most of the shops remained closed.

Drains were overflowing at many areas in the city and roads submerged with water resembled tiny canals at various arterial junctions.

The impact of cyclone was felt in the form of water-logging in many parts of the city including Subbareddy nagar, Korlagunta, Satyanarayana-puram, Akkarampalli, Reddy and Reddy colony, Bhavani nagar and Tirumala bypass road etc. In Tirupati rural, drainage overflowed at Vaikuntapuram, Padmavathi Nagar and Lakshmiapuram junctions.

The railway under-bridge near the railway station was submerged with water and the Karakambadi and Tiruchanoor roads were among the worst-hit areas in the city. This forced the urban police to suspend vehicular traffic along these roads, while the staff of municipal corporation of Tirupati tried to restore normality, by deploying earth movers and cranes.

● Sea waves swept over geo-tube wall ii) A temple at Suradapet was destroyed due to sea waves

aged last time and now totally collapsed due to these rains. He said that nearly 2,000 fishermen families including 800 families residing at the seashore in U. Kothapalli mandal would be given house sites and also houses at Kenapa Peta and Machavaripalem villages to sort out the sea-erosion problem to them permanently on December 26 irrespective of rules. He said that all the families of the seashore would be shifted to these new houses.

Meanwhile, the cargo operations have stopped in Anchorage Port for the past two days due to large waves and chilli winds. Due to the heavy gales, the steel barges are not in a position to a standstill at sea.

The Port Officer-in-charge Mr Raghava Rao said that the port had not suspended the operations, but due to bad weather conditions, the workers were bringing barges to the shore without making any operations.

He said that nearly 17 ships have been waiting for the handling of rice cargo in anchorage port.

The farmers in East and West Godavari districts incurred significant losses as their harvesting crops were inundated their respective fields due to heavy rains.

The farmers say that they lost the entire Kharif crop and they are not able to get even investment and even labourer expenses.

Officials told to prepare DPR on supply of drinking water from Polavaram project to Visakhapatnam

CM tells officials to expedite execution of three ports

him that tenders for execution of Ramayapatnam port would be finalised by December 15 to ensure that the works begin in February 2021. They said that in the first phase, the port would come up with four berths with a capacity to handle 15 million tonnes of cargo.

On Bhavanapadu port, the officials said the tenders will be finalised by December 15 and start works in March, 2021. They said that in the first

phase, four berths would be executed to handle 25 million tonnes of cargo.

With regard to Machilipatnam port, the officials said that tenders for its execution would be finalised by February 15 so that works could be commenced in April, 2021, and added that in the first phase, six berths would be developed to handle 26 million tonnes of cargo.

The CM also asked the officials to find out feasibility for developing a port

at Rambilli area so that it could bring down pressure on Visakhapatnam port in terms of handling cargo and help reduce pollution.

The CM made it clear to the officials that works related to development of the three ports, eight fishing harbours, Kopparthi industrial cluster, development of Bhogapuram airport, Visakhapatnam metro rail and supply of drinking water from Polavaram project to Visakhapatnam through

pipeline, to be given top priority for their expeditious execution.

With regard to development of Bhogapuram airport, the CM felt the need to develop a beach road also so that people after landing in Bhogapuram airport could reach Visakhapatnam early through beach road.

He directed the officials to prepare a Detailed Project Report on supply of drinking water from Polavaram project to

Visakhapatnam. He laid stress for making efforts by the officials to lay foundation stones for the three projects including Bhogapuram airport, beach road and drinking water supply by Sankranti festival.

The officials informed the CM about the progress of works related to development of Visakhapatnam-Chennai industrial corridor with an emphasis on development of Atchutapuram and Nakkapalli clusters. The CM laid stress

for enhancing air cargo facilities in Tirupati, Nellore and Kadapa airports.

The CM asked for usage of desalinated water for industries as it would cost just ₹4 per litre and directed the officials to ensure setting up of sewage treatment plants in industrial corridors and industrial estates and also asked for taking steps to avoid pollution of groundwater tables with untreated effluents from industries.

SHORT TAKES

WORKERS TAKE OUT RALLIES IN VIZAG

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 26

Workers belonging to public and private sector organisations, organised and unorganised employees participated in the nationwide strike in Visakhapatnam on Thursday. Left parties spearheaded the strike. Members of INTUC, AICTU and IFT were also present.

Braving the rain, a huge rally was taken out from the railway DRM office in Dondparty and culminated into a public meeting at Asilmetta. Addressing the meeting CPM state committee member Ch. Narsinga Rao said workers were angry and frustrated over the NDA anti-workers policies and the nationwide strike success was an indication.

He said it was unfortunate that the Modi government made eight crore daily wage earners to walk back their homes during the lockdown.

Joint secretary of CPI State committee J.V. Satyanarayana said the prime minister was appeasing the corporate entities and trying to hand over industries and agriculture to the private agencies. This will lead to more unemployment and poverty in the country.

53 FEMALE LIFE CONVICTS TO BE RELEASED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 26

Fifty-three life convicted female prisoners, who were to be released from the jails on special remission on the eve of Independence Day, 2020 in the state, will walk free after the administrative procedures.

The state government on Thursday issued GO Ms No. 142 here, granting special remission of sentence to the life convicted female prisoners who had been convicted for offences against the laws based on recommendation of the Standing Committee constituted for the purpose.

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan under Article 161 of Constitution of India, read with Section 432 of Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, remitted the unexpired residual sentence to 53 life convicts.

SHILPARAMAM WEBSITE TO BE LAUNCHED TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 26

Minister for tourism and culture M. Srinivasa Rao will launch the Shilparamam website in his chamber at Secretariat on November 27.

The move is aimed to link all Shilparamam projects in the state to help people know about the significance of Telugu art, craft and culture in addition to providing marketing facility to the artists.

CONSTITUTION DAY: CALL FOR EQUAL TREATMENT IN CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, NOV. 26

Equality before the law is one of the most abused constitutional guarantees even after 70 years of adopting the Constitution of India,

said senior advocate K. Nagendranath.

Speaking on the occasion of Constitution Day on Thursday, he said Constitution holds the fulcrum of the dispassionate dispensation of powers

between the executive, legislative and judiciary. However, the practical democratic constraints often see the overlapping of the executive into the other organs. He called for equal treatment of litigation.

TD slams AP govt for poor arrangements for pushkar

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 26

District unit president of Telugu Desam and MLC Beeda Ravichandra rebuked the AP State Government for not paying any attention to hold the Tungabhadra Pushkarams with usual fanfare.

In a statement on Thursday, he expressed surprise over not releasing water into the river, except on the first day of Pushkarams, to enable devotees to take baths.

He alleged that the state government has pursued Karnataka to release water on the first day for inaugural function in the presence of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and ignored the subject later.

Stressing that pilgrims going for the sacred bath are returning homes with dissatisfaction, he said former minister

● TD MLC said the government had failed to create a spiritual ambience at the venue of the Pushkarams.

● He alleged small traders were worst hit due to negligence of the state government

Chandrababu Naidu had set a benchmark on how to organise Pushkarams and the entire country lauded him for holding Krishna Pushkarams in a grand manner.

He said the government had failed to create a spiritual ambience at the venue of the Pushkarams. He alleged that small traders banking on the event were worst hit because of the negligence of the government towards the holy event.

He demanded the government to rescue the affected small traders.

12 TEST POSITIVE FOR CORONA AT PUSHKAR GHATS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, NOV. 26

Twelve people have been affected with Covid-19 at the Pushkar ghats in the district in the past six days, and scores of people have been found symptomatic, said DMHO Dr Rama Giddaiah.

The Pushkar ghats have been monitored closely, and 800 to 1,000 Rapid Antigen tests were conducted daily on the staff and visitors at the ghats, he said.

Of the 12 affected, two were Purohiths and six others were police officers who came from Kadapa for Pushkar duties, he said.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy pays tributes to the portrait of Dr B.R. Ambedkar on the occasion of Constitutional Day at the camp office on Thursday.

Andhraites in Hyd urged to vote for TD nominees

TD followers in AP make fervent appeal in 20 GHMC divisions

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 26

In an innovative move, die-hard Telugu Desam fans, leaders, activists and sympathizers residing in Andhra Pradesh have started an oral campaign among Andhris in Hyderabad urging them to ensure that TD candidates would win in the GHMC elections, slated for December 1.

They are contacting Hyderabad-based Andhra people over phones, mes-

sages and social media groups appealing to vote for TD as Andhra settlers are crucial in several wards of GHMC.

Various groups were formed under TD social media wing with CBN Army, TDP warriors, TDP Army, TDP Youth, TDP Mission 2022, TDP Yuvasena, Vote for TDP and others, which are actively working for the yellow party.

They started the campaign on Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram,

● Telugu Desam supporters pointed out that Andhris are largely settled in Kukatapally, LB Nagar, Rajendranagar, Uppal and other adjacent areas and they were a deciding factor in the elections in 20 municipal divisions.

Instagram, Twitter and other social media platforms asking them to work for TD win. They are reminding the

electorate that it was TD, which developed Hyderabad and had established Hitec City.

They pointed out that Andhris are largely settled in Kukatapally, LB Nagar, Rajendranagar, Uppal and other adjacent areas and they were a deciding factor in the elections in 20 municipal divisions.

TD supporters Kesani Suresh, Bobba Premnath and G. Jayaram Chowdary said that TRS leader K.T. Rama Rao was

trying to woo Andhra settlers by giving statements in support of Amaravati but Andhris know the truth. They said that there is a good response to TD in those 20 divisions.

They condemned the statement of MIM about removal of NTR statue in NTR Gardens and his memorial.

They said that as YSR Congress is not contesting GHMC elections, Andhris would support TD.

AP records 1,031 Covid cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 26

AP registered 1,031 new Covid-19 cases raising the tally to 8,65,705 and eight deaths taking the toll to 6,970 in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities released Covid-19 bulletin here on Thursday reporting that out of 67,269 samples tested, 1,031 persons were found infected with Covid-19. Out of a total number of 98,55,315 samples tested so far, 8,46,120 patients were recovered while 12,615 patients are still active with the virus.

Among the daily cases of Covid-19 infections, Guntur reported the highest of 172 followed by 162 in Krishna, 126 in West Godavari, 117 in

East Godavari, 102 in Chittoor, 84 in Visakhapatnam, 56 in Anantapur, 55 in Kadapa, 43 in Prakasam, 41 in Nellore, 29 in Vizianagaram, 23 in Srikakulam and 21 in Kurnool.

East Godavari continues to top the state with 4,143 cumulative cases of Coronavirus active cases followed by 1,694 in Krishna, 1,481 in Guntur, 1,057 in West Godavari, 1,046 in Visakhapatnam, 830 in Nellore, 617 in Chittoor, 454 in Prakasam, 364 in Srikakulam, 309 in Anantapur, 253 in Kadapa, 191 in Kurnool and 176 in Vizianagaram.

The rate of recovery of Covid-19 patients has been steady in East Godavari with 1,17,308

followed by 90,472 in West Godavari, 82,003 in Chittoor, 70,437 in Guntur, 65,697 in Anantapur, 60,356 in Prakasam, 59,988 in Nellore, 59,488 in Kurnool, 56,373 in Visakhapatnam, 53,523 in Kadapa, 44,688 in Srikakulam, 42,728 in Krishna, 40,164 in Vizianagaram, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Among the daily cases of Covid-19 deaths, Krishna reported two followed by one each in East Godavari, Guntur, Kadapa, Kurnool, Visakhapatnam and West Godavari.

Maoist leader killed in encounter

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 26

A Maoist leader was killed and another injured in an exchange of fire between security personnel and the Maoists in Thotaguda forests Malkangiri on Thursday, a senior police officer said.

BSF jawans, acting on a tip-off, had launched a combing operation at Jantri forest in Swabhimana Anchal, a remote part of the district, earlier in the day, Malkangiri Superintendent of Police Rishikesh Khilari said.

Maoists fired at the security personnel, who then retaliated by killing one of the rebels on the spot. One Maoist suffered injuries,

while the rest managed to flee the scene, Khilari said.

The deceased Maoist has been identified as Kishore, Area Commander of East Division, who was involved in a series of criminal activities, he said.

The police have intensified combing operations in the area to flush out leftwing extremists from Swabhimana Anchal.

Taking to Twitter, Odisha DGP Abhay said, "There was an exchange of fire between security forces and Maoists today in Swabhimana Anchal. The dead body of one Maoist with an AK 47 has been recovered and one injured Maoist is being evacuated. Security force personnel are safe. Well done security forces."

Mock drill held on toxic gas release

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 26

Coromandel International Limited, Visakhapatnam on Thursday organised an off-site emergency mock drill on ammonia toxic gas release scenario in Mulagada village, near to its vicinity as per the instructions of the District Collector V. Vinay Chand.

For the last one-week, emergency preparedness awareness activities were carried out for the Mulagada and all nearby villagers through village leaders, the Sachivalayam staff and volunteers.

As part of the mock drill at 3.25 pm, ammonia release scenario has been postulat-

ed in the plant premises and which in turn lead to an off-site emergency in nearby Mulagada village. Ambulances and fire tender reached the incident spot from Coromandel.

As part of mutual aid ambulances and fire tender from Andhra Petrochemicals Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited and also St Anns hospital aided in the rescue operations.

Mulagada villagers were evacuated by Coromandel rescue team to the nearest Assembly point. Personnel from district crisis group and officials from Police, Village Sachivalayam team and NGO's participated in the drill as part of an off-site emergency plan.

NMDC Limited
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 'Khanji Bhavan', 10-3-311/A, Castle Hills, Masab Tank, Hyderabad-500028
 CIN: L13100TG1958GOI001674.

CONTRACTS DEPARTMENT
 Tender Enquiry No: HO(Contracts)/NISPO&M/RMHS/A2 Dated: 27/11/2020
 NMDC Limited, A "NAVARATNA" Public Sector Company under Ministry of Steel, Govt. of India, invites online bids from experienced domestic bidders for "Operation & Maintenance of Ore, Flux, Sinter and Slag area (A2) at Raw Material Handling System (RMHS) of 3 MTPA ISP at Nagarnar".
 The detailed NIT and Bid documents can be viewed and /or downloaded from NMDC website <http://www.nmdc.co.in>, Central Public Procurement portal <http://www.eprocure.gov.in> and MSTC portal <http://www.mstccommerce.co.in> from 27/11/2020 to 18/12/2020.
 For Accessing the Bid document from NMDC website, the bidder has to register as 'New User' in Bid section at NMDC's website link <http://www.nmdc.co.in/nmcdtender/default.aspx>
 For Accessing the Bid document from Central Procurement Portal www.eprocure.gov.in, the Tenderer has to click on "Latest active Tenders".
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 For further clarification, CGM (Contracts), NMDC Limited Hyderabad can be contacted through Fax no. +91-040-23534746, Tel No. +91-040-23532800, email: steelcontracts@nmdc.co.in
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SHORT TAKES

COVID-19 PATIENT JUMPS OFF HOSP BUILDING, DIES

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, NOV. 26

A Covid-19 patient in Chhattisgarh on Thursday jumped off the building of All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), Raipur. The deceased, identified as Muralidhar Sahu (49) of Janjir-Champa, was admitted in AIIMS, Raipur on November 22 after being tested positive for Covid-19. He was put on a ventilator a couple of days ago when his condition worsened. However, the ventilator was removed on Thursday morning when his condition started improving. According to the Raipur police, Sahul had gone to washroom at around 1.30 in the afternoon and then jumped off the second storey of the AIIMS building. He was later admitted in the intensive care unit. He died during treatment. The reason for his extreme step was yet to be ascertained, police said. As on Thursday, Chhattisgarh has reported 2,29,203 Covid-19 positive cases and 2,783 deaths.

GROOM ARRESTED FOR LINK IN IIFL LOOT CASE

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 26

A 30-year-old youth serving as manager in a private gold loan firm was on Thursday arrested in the middle of his marriage rituals by the Crime Branch in connection with dacoity at the IIFL Finance Ltd branch office in Cuttack city. The arrested youth was identified as Pitambar Sahoo of Nischintakoiili, Cuttack. Following Pitambar’s arrest, the police seized a large quantity of stolen gold and investigation is underway to ferret out more information on the IIFL Finance loot case, said Prateek Singh, deputy commissioner of police, Cuttack. Following the manager’s arrest, the bride and her family who were waiting at a hotel had to pack up and cancel the event. According to reports, the police had obtained the custodial remand of five accused persons in the loot case. Their preliminary questioning revealed that more than 10 employees of IIFL Company had direct links with the crime that took place on November 19. According to sources, the interrogation of other suspects was on and many more are likely to be arrested. On the other hand, people who had deposited gold in IIFL Company Ltd with the hope to get more returns have become skeptical whether they would get their deposits back in view of scam and police action.

‘NO AUCTION OF NIRAV PENTHOUSE BEFORE DEC. 14’

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, NOV. 26

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday made it clear before the Bombay High Court that it will not auction a luxurious penthouse — Samudra Mahal belonging to Nirav Modi — before December 14. The HC was hearing a petition filed by Modi’s son Rohin challenging ED’s move to confiscate Samudra Mahal property. In his petition, Rohin informed the court that his father is nowhere concerned with the said property and it belonged to a trust set up by him. Few months back, the ED had filed an application before the special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court. The agency had brought to the notice of the court that as per provision under Fugitive Economic Offenders (FEO) Act 2018, it can confiscate immovable and movable properties belonging to Nirav Modi. According to the ED, Modi has properties worth ₹1,396 crore in India, England and UAE. Subsequently, in June 2020 PMLA court had passed order to confiscate Modi’s properties. Petitioner Rohin’s counsel Amit Sibal argued that property belongs to Rohin Trust and not any individual. He also argued that as per FEO Act, a notice must have been issued to Rohin if ED wants to auction the property and he must be heard before the auction, but no notice was issue to Rohin.

Farmers are up in arms



Members of various farmers organisations try to cross Shambu Border in Patiala district on Thursday during the ‘Delhi Chalo’ protest march by farmers against the new farm laws. Farmers faced water cannons and broke police barriers at the state’s border with Haryana and by late evening, a large group of them had reached the road toll plaza at Panipat, about 100 km from Delhi.

— PTI

DIDI EXTENDS SUPPORT TO ONGOING FARMERS STIR

RAJIB CHOWDHURI & PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI | DC KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE, NOV. 26

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday extended her support to the ongoing farmers’ protest rally to New Delhi over the Centre’s three bills which has deregulated the essential commodities. Calling the use of tear gas and water canons on the farmers’ rally in Haryana “unfortunate”, the Trinamul Congress supremo also offered to join their agitation, if invited, with an eye on the Assembly Election in the state. She said, “This is unfortunate. I am sorry to say this is the first time the central government wants to capture all the fundamental rights of all sections of people. It can not curb the farmers’ democratic rights. The bills are illegal as they are aimed to help the hoarders for black-marketing, not the farmers. Why did the central government snatch their rights? To allow the people of the country to die? Only one man, one party, one election, one nation!! We were, are and will be with the farmers. If we are invited, we will participate in their rally to Delhi.” Banerjee, however, supported the cause behind the nationwide strike of the Congress and Left trade unions against the Centre’s economic policies. “Today a workers’ movement happened. We support the cause, not the bandh as it is against our policy,” she added. This prompted the BJP to foresee another “Mahagatbandhan” (grand alliance), in line of what happened in Bihar recently, against it in Bengal.

Phase II trial of India-made ‘Covaxin’ begins at AIIMS

Around 15,000 volunteers will receive the shot over the next few days

DC CORRESPONDENT WITH agency inputs NEW DELHI, NOV. 26

With 44,489 new confirmed cases in the last 24 hours, India’s Covid-19 caseload crossed 92 lakh, while the number of recoveries surged to 86.42 lakh. The number of total Coronavirus cases rose to 92,22,216, while the death toll due to the disease climbed to 1,34,699 with 481 new fatalities. Phase three trial of India-made Coronavirus vaccine Covaxin, meanwhile, began at AIIMS in New Delhi on Thursday with Dr M.V. Padma Srivastava, the chief of Neurosciences Centre at the premier institute, and three other volunteers receiving the first dose. Dr Srivastava was the first one to receive the shot, which would be given to around 15,000 volunteers at the medical institute over the next few days. Bharat Biotech has been

The first dose of 0.5 ml Covaxin intramuscular injection was given to four volunteers. They were under observation for two hours and will be monitored for the next few days. Dr Srivastava said, “Covaxin is the first indigenously-developed anti-coronavirus vaccine and on top of that, my institute is participating in the trial. I am honoured to be the first volunteer to receive the shot. I am happy to be a part of such a great cause. I am perfectly fine and I’m working.” As part of the trial application, a dose of 0.5 ml would be given on day 0 and on day 28. The phase three randomised double-blind placebo-controlled multicentre trial would cover around 28,500 subjects aged 18 years and above. It would be conducted in around 25 sites across 10 states. The trial has already started at a few sites.

given the permission for conducting phase 3 human clinical trials of the Covaxin from the Drugs Controller General of India. According to the Union health ministry, the active caseload shot up to 4,44,746, an increase of 6,079 cases from Tuesday, even though it remained below five lakh for the 15th consecutive day, accounting for 4.82 per cent of the total cases. The number of people who have recovered from the disease surged to 86,42,771, pushing the national recovery rate to 93.72 per cent, while the Covid-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.46 per cent. Of the 1,34,699 deaths reported in the country so far due to the disease, Maharashtra accounts for 46,683, followed by Karnataka (11,695), Tamil Nadu (11,639), Delhi (8,621), West Bengal (8,121), Uttar Pradesh (7,615), Andhra Pradesh

(6,956), Punjab (4,653) and Gujarat (3,892). The Union health ministry on Thursday said 60.72 per cent of the 44,489 fresh cases registered in a span of 24 hours have been contributed by six states and UTs, with Kerala leading the tally followed by Maharashtra, Delhi, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. It said 60.50 per cent of the 524 latest fatalities are concentrated in six states and Union territories — Delhi, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Kerala leads the tally with 6,491 new Covid-19 cases registered in a span of 24 hours, while Maharashtra has reported 6,159 new cases followed by Delhi with 5,246 new cases. Delhi with 99 deaths reported the maximum new fatalities. Maharashtra saw a fatality count of 65 followed by West Bengal with 51

deaths, the ministry said. According to the ministry, 65 per cent of the active cases are in eight states and UTs which have contributed to the maximum daily new cases and deaths. It said 61 per cent of the total deaths are concentrated in these eight states/UTs. The case fatality rates of Punjab (3.16 per cent), Maharashtra (2.60 per cent), West Bengal (1.75 per cent) and Delhi (1.60 per cent) are higher than the national average of 1.46 per cent, the ministry said. Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Kerala have a case fatality rate of 1.43 per cent, 1.02 per cent, 0.87 per cent and 0.37 per cent, respectively. Delhi has 29,169 Covid-19 cases per million followed by Kerala with 16,201 cases, Maharashtra with 14,584 and Haryana with 7,959 cases per million population.

Trinamul leader wants Governor removed

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, NOV. 26

Ahead of the Assembly election in West Bengal, the Trinamul Congress has demanded governor Jagdeep Dhankhar’s removal from his post by President Ram Nath Kovind after accusing him of having “connections with criminals of the BJP.” The ruling party also sought Dhankhar’s prosecution by the Kolkata police on criminal charges over his alleged support on Twitter to two accused, Govind Agarwal, a dubious chartered accountant, and Sudipta Roy

Chowdhury, a businessman, after their arrests in two separate cases of financial offences into several crores. On Thursday, Sreerampore TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee claimed at Trinamul Bhavan, “the Governor, as a public servant, is creating obstruction in the ongoing investigation against the two accused. He is trying to indulge criminals of the BJP with whom he has connections. The way Dhankhar is giving threats to the Kolkata police and Bidhannagar police through his tweets, he is liable for prosecution under section 186 and 189

of the Indian Penal Code. The police must initiate a criminal case against him. No sanction is required for this.” He said, “the President must intervene in the matter to see if the two IPC sections were violated by the Governor or not. If so, Dhankhar should be removed by the President as the Governor with immediate effect. He is not entitled to remain as the Governor anymore. According to my reading of the statute, since the Governor has violated two IPC sections, the President should not allow him to continue in his chair further after considering all

aspects.” Asked of the TMC’s plan of any memorandum to Kovind for Dhankhar’s removal from the Governor’s post, Banerjee added, “It will be decided later.” Countering the TMC’s demand Dhankhar, now in North Bengal, stated, “my attention has been drawn to press release and conference by a ruling party leader. To the extent Governor role or actions are concerned, the reflections are wide off the mark, betraying ignorance of elementary constitutional and legal aspects and factually untenable. A classic case of “memory lapse of law and constitu-

tion”. “This is unfolding of a strategy to take diversionary route so that burning issues can be put on back burner. This shall not happen. It deserves no serious note except for being ill informed on law, fact and constitution. In summation it is part of ongoing vituperative campaign to cover up monumental lapses and constitutional indiscretions. These cannot be impactful. I cannot help if some can not even read and understand the tweets. I dismiss any assertion made that indicates otherwise than my commitment for accountability and transparency.”

The survey was conducted between June 17 and July 17 in India

India has highest bribery rate in Asia: Report

New Delhi, Nov. 26: India has the highest bribery rate in Asia and the most number of people who use personal connections to access public services, according to a new report by corruption watchdog Transparency International. The Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) Asia, found that nearly 50 per cent of those who paid bribes were asked to, while 32 per cent of those who used personal connections said they would not receive the service otherwise.

The report is based upon the survey which was conducted between June 17 and July 17 in India with a sample size of 2,000. “With the highest bribery rate (39 per cent) in the region, India also has the highest rate of people using personal connections to access public services (46 per cent),” the report said. Bribery in public services continues to plague India. Slow and complicated bureaucratic process, unnecessary red tape and unclear regulatory frame-

works force citizens to seek out alternate solutions to access basic services through networks of familiarity and petty corruption, the report said. “Both national and state governments need to streamline administrative processes for public services, implement preventative measures to combat bribery and nepotism, and invest in user-friendly online platforms to deliver essential public services quickly and effectively,” the report said. Although reporting

cases of corruption is critical to curbing the spread, a majority of citizens in India (63 per cent) think that if they report corruption, they will suffer retaliation, it said. In several countries including India, Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia, sexual extortion rates are also high and more must be done to prevent extortion and address specific gendered forms of corruption, the report said. Sextortion is extorting money or sexual favours

from someone by threatening to reveal evidence of their sexual activity through means like morphed images. In India, 89 per cent think government corruption is a big problem, 18 per cent offered bribes in exchange for votes and 11 per cent experienced sextortion or know someone who has. About 63 per cent of surveyed people think the government is doing well in tackling corruption while 73 per cent said their anti-corruption agency is

doing well in the fight against corruption, it said. Based on fieldwork conducted in 17 countries, the GCB surveyed nearly 20,000 citizens in total. The report said the results showed that nearly three out of four people think corruption is a big problem in their country and the survey also found that nearly one in five people who accessed public services, such as health care and education, paid a bribe in the preceding year.

— PTI

BJP FILES COMPLAINT AGAINST LALU YADAV

DC CORRESPONDENT PATNA, NOV. 26

A complaint case has been registered against RJD Chief Lalu Yadav at the vigilance police station in Patna. BJP MLA Lalan Paswan who had accused Lalu Yadav of making strategies to topple the newly elected NDA government in Bihar filed the complaint on Thursday under the prevention of corruption act. On Wednesday, BJP leader and former deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi had released an audio clip in which Lalu Yadav was heard talking to Lalan Paswan and asking him to abstain from the voting during the speaker’s election. Sources said that the Jharkhand administration has also asked the officials to ascertain the veracity of the audio clip which was released by the BJP on Wednesday.

Amid the political turmoil in Bihar and Jharkhand over the issue, Lalu Yadav who is serving his jail term after being sentenced in several fodder scam cases has been sent back to the paying ward of Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences, Ranchi. He was shifted to the director’s bungalow last month due to Coronavirus. “This is an attempt to stop the opposition RJD from raising questions against the NDA. The allegation against Lalu Yadav is baseless and the NDA leaders cannot prove anything. The opposition parties in Bihar would continue to expose the failures of the NDA government in Bihar”, RJD spokesperson Chitrnanjan Gagan told this newspaper. Sources, however, said that the RJD is concerned as Lalu Yadav’s bail hearing in the fodder scam case is also scheduled on Friday.

INDIA, NEPAL TO ADVANCE MUTUAL COOPERATION

Kathmandu, Nov. 26: India and Nepal on Thursday agreed to step up efforts to advance mutual cooperation during a “productive” meeting between Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and his Nepalese counterpart Bharat Raj Paudyal. Shringla began his two-day official visit to Nepal on Thursday. He was accorded a warm welcome on his maiden visit to Nepal which is happening at the invitation of Nepal Foreign Secretary Paudyal, amid a strain in bilateral ties following a bitter border row between the two countries. “FS @harshvshringla had a productive meeting with @PaudyalBR during which they took stock of bilateral cooperation and discussed issues of mutual interest,” the Indian embassy in Kathmandu said in a tweet. “Both sides appreciated the progress made on the numerous bilateral initiatives and projects. It was agreed to take further steps to advance mutual cooperation,” it said in another tweet. Shringla arrived at Tribhuvan International in Kathmandu on Thursday morning. While interacting with local journalists, he said, “I have wanted to come here earlier also, but because of Covid-19, I couldn’t do so. I am very happy to be here. I was here in Kathmandu earlier too, though this is my first visit to Nepal as a Foreign Secretary. We have very strong relationship. Our endeavour will be to see how we can take that relationship forward”. Shringla’s visit will be a continuation of the regular exchange of high-level visits between the two friendly neighbour.

IN BRIEF

40 miners stuck at Zimbabwe mishap

Harare: At least 40 informal miners in Zimbabwe have been trapped underground after a shaft in a disused gold mine collapsed, the country's miners' federation said on Thursday. The incident occurred late Wednesday in the town of Bindura, around 70 kilometres (43 miles) north of the capital Harare, said Wellington Takavarasha, head of the Zimbabwe Miners Federation. Takavarasha said the miners were working inside the disused Ran Gold Mine when a shaft caved in. Six miners have since been pulled from the rubble and taken to hospital.

Flydubai lands 1st scheduled flight

Tel Aviv: A flight operated by budget airline flydubai landed in Tel Aviv on Thursday, the first scheduled commercial service between the two cities following the normalisation of ties between the UAE and Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on hand for the arrival of the inaugural flight after its nearly four-hour trip, called it "a moment of history." "As-salam alaikum (Peace be upon you)," he said to arriving passengers. "Come again and again." The United Arab Emirates in September signed a landmark US-brokered deal to formalise relations with Israel, the first such agreement by an Arab state in the Gulf.

Greek oil tanker hit by blast at Saudi

Riyadh: An explosion rocked a Greek-operated oil tanker docked at Saudi Arabia's port of Shuqaiq on Wednesday, Greek officials said, in an attack that a Riyadh-led military coalition blamed on Yemeni rebels. The blast on the Maltese-flagged Agrari tanker follows a string of attacks by the Iran-linked rebels on Saudi oil infrastructure, highlighting the growing perils of a five-year military campaign led by the kingdom in Yemen. The tanker was "attacked by an unknown source" while it was preparing to depart from the Red Sea port of Shuqaiq, its Greece-based operator TMS Tankers said, adding that no injuries were reported. "The Agrari was struck about one meter above the waterline and has suffered a breach," TMS Tankers said in a statement. "It has been confirmed that the crew are safe and there have been no injuries. No pollution has been reported." An investigation was underway after Saudi authorities, including the coast guard, boarded the stricken vessel, it added.

PALESTINIAN WHO WAGED 103-DAY FAST FREED

Nabulus, Palestinian Territories, Nov. 26: Israel on Thursday released a Palestinian who waged a 103-day hunger strike to protest Israeli rules allowing his detention without charge, the Palestinian Prisoner's Club said.

Maher al-Akhras, arrested over alleged membership of a militia group, was transferred from a Tel Aviv hospital to Nabulus's Al-Najah University Hospital in the occupied West Bank, the prisoners' rights group said in a statement. A decision on releasing him to return home will follow "a medical assessment of his condition". Al-Najah hospital medical director Abdul-Karim Al-Barqawi said.

Akhras, 49, was arrested near Nabulus in July and put in administrative detention, a policy that Israel uses to hold suspected militants without charge. He is suspected of links to the armed Palestinian group Islamic Jihad, labelled a terrorist group by Israel, the United States and the European Union. The father of six launched his fast to protest a four-month detention order, which had been due to end on November 26.

Akhras, who been arrested by Israel several times previously, ended his hunger strike after Israeli authorities committed to not extending his detention beyond that date. Israel's administrative detention policy, inherited from the British mandate of Palestine, allows the internment of prisoners without charge for renewable periods of up to six months each time. Israel says the procedure allows authorities to hold suspects and prevent attacks while continuing to gather evidence, but critics and rights groups say the system is abused.

Trump reiterates voter fraud allegations amid transition

Calls into Pennsylvania Republican event to probe charges

Washington, Nov. 26: US President Donald Trump has baselessly claimed anew that he had won the election and uttered repeated falsehoods as he called into an event held by Pennsylvania Republicans to investigate unproven allegations of voter fraud. "This was an election that we won easily. We won it by a lot," Trump declared to the group gathered at a hotel in Gettysburg on Wednesday.

Trump, in fact, lost to President-elect Joe Biden by about 1,50,000 votes in the state, and Pennsylvania certified Biden as the winner on Tuesday. The Pennsylvania event was the latest attempt by Trump and his lawyer Rudy Giuliani, a former New York City mayor, to try to cast doubt on the results of the democratic election, even as the formal transition process has begun and a growing number of Republicans are recognising Biden as president-elect.

Similar events have been scheduled in Arizona and Michigan. State election officials across the country and international observers have said there is no evidence of widespread voter fraud, and Trump's legal team has lost repeatedly in court, in addition to making numerous elementary errors.

Wednesday's event, organised by local Republicans, including Pennsylvania state Sen. Doug Mastriano, an outspoken Trump supporter, came with trappings of an official hearing — flags, a gavel, and "witnesses" who "testified" in person and by phone. Among them was a special guest — the president — who at one point had been expected to attend in person, but did not after another member of his legal team announced that he had tested positive for the coronavirus on Wednesday morning. — *AP*



Two women pray on their knees as they gather with other supporters of President Donald Trump, most without masks, outside of the Wyndham Gettysburg hotel prior to a Pennsylvania Senate Majority Policy Committee public hearing to discuss 2020 election issues and irregularities with President Trump's lawyer Rudy Giuliani in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. — *AFP*

Trump pardons Flynn, his ex-NSA who lied to FBI

Washington, Nov. 26: US President Donald Trump has signed an executive order granting pardon to his former national security adviser Michael Flynn, who had been charged with making false statements to the FBI over possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia during the 2016 presidential polls. Trump signed the executive order on Wednesday.

"It is my Great Honor to announce that General Michael T. Flynn has been granted a Full Pardon. Congratulations to Gen Flynn and his wonderful family. I know you will now have a truly fantastic Thanksgiving!" Trump said in a tweet.

White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said, "The President has pardoned General Flynn because he should never have been prosecuted.



Michael Flynn

An independent review of General Flynn's case by the Department of Justice — conducted by respected career professionals — supports this conclusion." In fact, the Department of Justice has firmly concluded that the charges against Flynn should be dropped, she said. "This Full Pardon achieves that objective, finally bringing to an end the relentless, partisan pursuit of an innocent man," she said. "General Flynn should not require a pardon. He is

an innocent man. Even the FBI agents who interviewed General Flynn did not think he was lying. "Multiple investigations have produced evidence establishing that General Flynn was the victim of partisan government officials engaged in a coordinated attempt to subvert the election of 2016," McEnany said. These individuals sought to prevent Trump from being elected, to block him from assuming that office on his election, remove him from office after his inauguration, and undermine his administration at every turn, she said. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in a statement said Trump's pardon of Michael Flynn, who twice pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his dealings with a foreign adversary, is an act of grave corruption and abuse of power. — *PTI*

Russia oil giant declares Arctic project open

Moscow, Nov. 26: Russian oil giant Rosneft on Wednesday announced the start of operations for its giant Vostok oil project in the Arctic, part of the country's strategic energy plan which has been criticised by environmentalists.

"It is with great pleasure that I inform you of the start of the practical implementation of the project," Rosneft chief executive Igor Sechin told President Vladimir Putin at a meeting in Moscow.

He thanked Putin, with whom he has close relations, for the adoption of a law facilitating Russian investments in the Arctic.

"The prospecting and exploration work are now underway, in accordance with our timetable," Sechin said, adding that the design work for a 770-kilometre (480-mile) oil pipeline and a port had

been completed. The strategic plan for Russia's mineral resources stretches to 2035 and is banking on growing global demand, though it does predict that natural gas will partially replace oil and coal.

"Mineral resources will remain a competitive advantage of Russia's economy, and will determine the place and role of the country in the world," it says.

Environmentalists urged the Russian government last year to stop granting licenses to exploit several Arctic deposits. The Vostok project, the cornerstone of Russia's Arctic ambitions, brings together several Rosneft activities in the Russian Far North, near the northern sea route that the company intends to exploit to deliver to Europe and Asia. — *AFP*

PUBLISHING | GIANT

Bertelsmann's rival News Corp., which owns HarperCollins, slammed the deal

Penguin to buy Simon & Schuster for \$2bn

Berlin, Nov. 26: German media giant Bertelsmann said on Wednesday that its Penguin Random House division is buying rival Simon & Schuster in a megadeal that would reshape the US publishing industry.

Penguin Random House, already the largest American publisher, will buy the New York-based Simon & Schuster, whose authors include Stephen King, Hillary Clinton and John Irving, from TV and film company ViacomCBS for \$2.17 billion in cash.

"Simon & Schuster strengthens Bertelsmann's footprint globally,

and (particularly) in the US, its second-largest market," the Guetersloh, Germany-based company said in a statement.

The purchase of Simon & Schuster would reduce the so-called Big Five of American publishing — which also includes HarperCollins, Hachette Book Group and Macmillan — to four.

The companies said the deal is expected to close in 2021, subject to regulatory approval.

No US publisher in modern times would approach the power of the new company. ViacomCBS said Bertelsmann will pay a

Iran swaps Australian for 3 Iranians

Tehran, Nov. 26: Iran has freed a British-Australian academic who had been detained in the country for over two years in exchange for three Iranians held abroad, state TV announced.

The television report on Wednesday was scant on detail, saying only that the three Iranians freed in the swap had been imprisoned for trying to bypass sanctions on Iran. Kylie Moore-Gilbert, 33, was a Melbourne University lecturer on Middle Eastern studies when she was picked up at the Tehran airport as she tried to leave the country after attending an academic conference in 2018.

She was sent to Tehran's Evin prison, convicted of spying and sentenced to 10 years behind bars. Moore-Gilbert had vehemently denied the charges and maintained her innocence. Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne confirmed the release

Thursday, saying Moore-Gilbert would soon be reunited with her family. "Dr. Moore-Gilbert's release has been an absolute priority for the government since her detention," Payne said in a statement. "The Australian government has consistently rejected the grounds on which the Iranian government arrested, detained and convicted Dr. Moore-Gilbert. We continue to do so."

Payne said the release

was achieved through "diplomatic engagement" with the Iranian government and was done in consultation with Moore-Gilbert's family. Moore-Gilbert was one of several Westerners held in Iran on widely criticised espionage charges that activists and UN investigators believe is a systematic effort to leverage their imprisonments for money or influence in negotiations with the West, which Tehran denies. — *AP*

● THE CHAOTIC attempt

was swiftly followed by a fierce government crackdown spanning years and resulting in tens of thousands of arrests.

Turkey's largest courtroom was packed with dozens of security personnel and the presiding judge ordered one protesting defendant to "Sit down!" several times before reading the verdict.

He issued multiple life sentences to 27 disgruntled air force pilots who bombed the capital

swiftly followed by a fierce government crackdown spanning years and resulting in tens of thousands of arrests.

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He issued multiple life sentences to 27 disgruntled air force pilots who bombed the capital

FACEBOOK FIGHTS WITH ELECTION DISINFORMATION

San Francisco, Nov. 26: The US presidential election is finished: votes cast, the transition — though delayed — begun.

But on Facebook, the fight against election misinformation continues, thanks to "super spreaders" — accounts that disseminate rumours and fabrications, falsely spreading the idea that the 2020 election was beset by organised, extensive fraud by the Democratic Party.

The US non-profit Avaaz has identified 25 pages in particular, including those of Donald Trump Jr and Eric Trump — the president's sons — White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany and combative conservative commentators Dan Bongino, Lou Dobbs and Rush Limbaugh, along with pro-Trump organizations such as Turning Point USA.

These are sowing doubt about the President-elect Joe Biden's White House win earlier this month — taking their lead from the building's current resident, who has also taken to social media to tweet that he will not "concede" and to outline his so-far unfounded claims that the election was "stolen." Unproven allegations of fraud from these accounts have been "liked," commented on and shared more than 77 million times since November 3, according to a study from Avaaz.

And that doesn't take into account the Facebook accounts of the "super-spreader" in chief, Donald Trump himself, nor that of his former adviser Steve Bannon, which was recently removed by the network. — *AFP*

‘Infodemic’ risks jeopardising Covid vaccines

Paris, Nov. 26: As early as February, with the global pandemic spreading fast, the World Health Organisation issued a warning about an "infodemic", a wave of fake news and misinformation about the deadly new disease on social media.

Now with hopes hanging on Covid-19 vaccines, the WHO and experts are warning those same phenomena may jeopardise roll-out of immunisation programmes meant to bring an end to the suffering. "The Coronavirus disease is the first pandemic in history in which technology and social media are being used on a massive scale to keep people safe, informed, productive and connected," the WHO said.

"At the same time, the technology we rely on to keep connected and informed is enabling and amplifying an infodemic that continues to undermine the global response and jeopardises measures to control the pandemic." More than 1.4 million people have died since the pandemic emerged in China late last year, but three developers are already applying for approval for their vaccines to be used as early as December.

Beyond logistics, though, governments must also contend with scepticism over vaccines developed with record speed at a time when social media has been both a tool for information and falsehood about the virus. The WHO defined an infodemic as an overabundance of information, both online and offline, including "deliberate attempts to disseminate wrong information". Last month, a study from Cornell University in the United States found that US President Donald Trump has been the world's biggest driver of Covid-19 misinformation during the pandemic.

In April, Trump mused on the possibility of using

PANDEMIC OR NOT, PEOPLE MUST STAY ACTIVE, SAYS WHO

Geneva, Nov. 25: The Coronavirus pandemic is no excuse for not getting enough exercise, the World Health Organisation said on Wednesday, warning that even before the crisis many were getting too little physical activity.

In an update of its physical activity guidelines, the UN health agency stressed that exercise was vital to physical and mental health, while sedentary behaviour can have serious repercussions.

"WHO urges everyone to continue to stay active through the Covid-19 pandemic," the agency's head of health promotion Ruediger Krech told reporters. "If we do not remain active, we run the risk of creating another pandemic of ill-health as a result of sedentary behaviour." There are still no clear statistics on what impact the pandemic has had on physical activity, but lockdowns, movement restrictions, gym closures and other measures have clearly forced many people to stay home and have disrupted regular activities and exercise routines. — *AFP*

disinfectants inside the body to cure the virus and also promoted unproven treatments.

Since January, *AFP* has published more than 2,000 fact-checking articles dismantling false claims about the Coronavirus.

"Without the appropriate trust and correct information, diagnostic tests go unused, immunisation campaigns (or campaigns to promote effective vaccines) will not meet their targets, and the virus will continue to thrive," the WHO said. — *AFP*

Turkish coup accused get life terms

Ankara, Nov. 26: A Turkish court jailed more than 300 former pilots and other suspects for life in a mass trial stemming from a bloody 2016 coup attempt against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Fethullah Gulen, a US-based Muslim preacher who was once an Erdogan ally, is accused of ordering the failed putsch. His movement has been proscribed as a terrorist group by Ankara, but the 79-year-old denies all

charges.

A total of 251 people died and more than 2,000 were injured in what has turned into the defining moment of Erdogan's rule and contemporary Turkish politics.

The chaotic attempt was

swiftly followed by a fierce government crackdown spanning years and resulting in tens of thousands of arrests.

Turkey's largest courtroom was packed with dozens of security personnel and the presiding judge ordered one protesting defendant to "Sit down!" several times before reading the verdict.

He issued multiple life sentences to 27 disgruntled air force pilots who bombed the capital

Ankara and civilians who orchestrated the coup attempt from inside the Akinci military base near the capital.

Court documents subsequently obtained by *AFP* showed 337 defendants handed life sentences for murder, violating the constitutional order and attempting to assassinate Erdogan.

Sixty suspects were given jail sentences of various lengths while 75 were acquitted. — *AFP*

GAMES

DECCAN CHRONICLE | NELLORE | FRIDAY | 27 NOVEMBER 2020

DIEGO MARADONA

DATE OF BIRTH: October 30, 1960

PLACE OF BIRTH: Buenos Aires, Argentina

DATE OF DEATH: November 25, 2020

PLACE OF DEATH: Tigre, Argentina

HEIGHT: 1.65m

PLAYING CAREER

- Argentinos Juniors (1976-81)
- Boca Juniors (1981-82)
- Barcelona (ESP/1982-84)
- Napoli (ITA/1984-91)
- Sevilla (ESP/1992-93)
- Newell's Old Boys (1993)
- Boca Juniors (1995-97)

INTL GOALS: 34

Position: attacking midfielder/playmaker

INTL CAPS: 91

(1977-94)

Honours

- FIFA World Cup winner (1986)
- FIFA World Cup Golden Ball (1986)
- UEFA Cup winner (1989)
- Italian champion (1987, 1990)
- Argentine champion (1981)
- Spanish Super Cup (1983)
- Spanish Cup (1983)
- Italian Cup (1987)
- Italian Super Cup (1990)
- Top scorer in Italy (1988), Argentina (1979, 1980)
- FIFA Player of the Century (2000)

Coaching career

- Textil Mandiyu (1994)
- Racing Club (1995)
- Argentina (2008-2010)
- Al Wasl (UAE/2011-12)
- Al-Fujairah (UAE/2017-18)
- Dorados (MEX/2018-19)
- Gimnasia Esgrima La Plata (2019-20)

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Uncontrollable Argentina cries

Country mourns death of favourite son Maradona

“It is a very sad day for all Argentines and football. He leaves us but he does not go because he is eternal. I am left with many of the nice moments we shared and I want to send my condolences to all his family and friends.”

— Lionel Messi, six-time Ballon d’Or winner

“Today I say goodbye to a friend and the world says goodbye to an eternal genius. One of the best ever. An unparalleled magician. He leaves too soon, but leaves a legacy without limits and a void that will never be filled. Rest in peace, ace. You will never be forgotten.”

— Cristiano Ronaldo, five-time Ballon d’Or winner and Juventus forward

“RIP Legend. You will stay in the history of football forever. Thanks you for all the pleasure you gave to the whole world.”

— Kylian Mbappe, French World Cup winner and Paris Saint-Germain forward

Buenos Aires (Argentina), Nov. 26: Impatient fans were confronting police as thousands lined up to say goodbye to Diego Maradona on Thursday at the Argentine presidential mansion staging the funeral of one of football’s greatest stars.

Fans threw bottles and metal fences at police near the Casa Rosada in the heart of Buenos Aires.

Open visitation started at 6.15 am local time after a few hours of privacy for family and close friends.

Maradona’s wooden casket was in the main lobby of the presidential office, covered in an Argentine flag and a No.10 shirt of the national team. Dozens of other shirts of different football teams were thrown in by visitors who passed by in tears.

Maradona died on Wednesday of a heart attack in a house outside Buenos Aires where he recovered from a brain operation on November 3.

The first to bid farewell were his daughters and close family members. Then came former teammates of the 1986 World Cup-winning squad including Oscar Ruggeri. Other Argentine footballers, such as Carlos Tevez of Boca Juniors showed up too.

The lines started outside the Casa Rosada only hours after Maradona’s death was confirmed. Among those present were the renowned barrabravas fans of Boca Juniors, one of his former clubs.

The first fan to visit was Nahuel de Lima, using crutches to move because of a disability. At the same time, a wave of people tried to get ahead and confronted police, who used tear gas to contain them.

Bodyguards were stopping fans from taking pictures and controlling access to the building. Many fans were breaking down as soon as they left.

Fans who walked past the casket blew kisses into the air, struck their chests with closed fists, and shouted ‘Let’s go Diego.’ Most, but not all, wore masks due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A giant black screen in front of the Casa Rosada was showing historic photos of Maradona as fans go.

Fans also gathered outside the humble home where Maradona was born and raised in the Villa Fiorito neighbourhood. They went to the stadium of Argentinos Juniors, where he started as a professional footballer in 1976. They stood at the historic La Bombonera stadium of his beloved Boca Juniors. More were at the headquarters of Gimnasia La Plata, the team he was coaching.

— AP

People react as they leave the presidential palace in Buenos Aires, Argentina, after paying tribute to football legend Diego Maradona’s coffin. — AFP

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Coaching career

- Textil Mandiyu (1994)
- Racing Club (1995)
- Argentina (2008-2010)
- Al Wasl (UAE/2011-12)
- Al-Fujairah (UAE/2017-18)
- Dorados (MEX/2018-19)
- Gimnasia Esgrima La Plata (2019-20)

A LIFE IN 10 KEY DATES

From his birth in 1960 to Argentina’s World Cup triumph in 1986 and his positive drug test at the 1994 finals — here are 10 key dates in the colourful life of Diego Maradona.

OCTOBER 30, 1960: Maradona is born in Lanus, to the south of Buenos Aires. The son of Diego Maradona and Delma Franco, he was one of seven children.

OCTOBER 20, 1976: Makes his debut in Argentina’s top flight for Buenos Aires side Argentinos Juniors, just before his 16th birthday. He went on to win his first cap for Argentina in February 1977, selected by coach Cesar Luis Menotti for a 5-1 win against Hungary. His first goal for Argentina came in a 3-1 win over Scotland in Glasgow in 1979.

SEPTEMBER 7, 1979: Wins the World Youth Championship, scoring the third goal as Argentina beat the Soviet Union 3-1 in the final in Tokyo.

JUNE 13, 1982: Maradona takes part in a World Cup match for the first time as the holders lose 1-0 to Belgium in the opening game at the tournament in Spain.

JUNE 22, 1986: Scores his two legendary goals against England in the World Cup quarter-final in Mexico, the “Hand of God” and then his stunning high-speed slalom that was later named “Goal of the Century” by FIFA. Argentina went on to win the trophy, beating West Germany 3-2 in the final.

JULY 8, 1990: Captains Argentina to a 1-0 defeat against West Germany in the World Cup final in Rome.

JUNE 25, 1994: Skippers Argentina to a 2-1 win over Nigeria at the World Cup in the United States. After the match he tests positive for ephedrine and is suspended for 15 months. He had already been suspended for 15 months for cocaine use in his Napoli days. Maradona retired from playing in 1997.

NOVEMBER 4, 2008: Becomes coach of Argentina, leading them to the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. Eliminated in the quarterfinals by Germany.

NOVEMBER 3, 2020: Four days after his 60th birthday, Maradona undergoes brain surgery on a blood clot.

NOVEMBER 25, 2020: Dies of a heart attack at home in the Buenos Aires.

— AFP

FOOTBALL TOURNEY IN DIEGO MEMORY

Hyderabad, Nov. 26: A football tournament is being conducted in Hyderabad in memory of Argentine legend Diego Maradona at the weekend.

The Under 15 boys knockout tournament will be played on November 28 and 29 at Skykings football ground in Bowenpally. Players born on or after 01.01.2006 are eligible to participate. They have to furnish a valid Date of Birth certificate.

The last date for entries is November 27. For further details, contact All India Football Federation ‘D’ Licence coach Shashikanth on phone number 9703674343.

STADIUM IN NAPLES AFTER MARADONA

Naples (Italy), Nov. 26: The mayor of Naples proposed that the Stadio San Paolo be renamed in honour of the city’s beloved footballer, Diego Maradona. “Let’s name the San Paolo Stadium for Diego Armando Maradona!!!” Mayor Luigi de Magistris wrote on Twitter.

The stadium on Wednesday was illuminated in honour of the former Napoli player who died of a heart attack at age 60, as fans gathered outside to mourn.

Maradona led Napoli to their only two league titles in 1987 and 1990, becoming a legend in the working-class city, where fans on Wednesday poured into the streets after hearing of his death.

— AFP

WHEN MARADONA GRIPPED KOLKATA

Kolkata, Nov. 26: His promise to bring “big-time” football to India remained unfulfilled as Diego Maradona died after cheating death more than once, leaving a cricket-mad nation devastated in an appropriate reflection of his immortal status.

A lot many in the ‘City of Joy’ will recall how a little bulky version of Maradona huffed and puffed during a charity football game here three years ago.

The Argentine legend, who was 57 when he came here, had managed to dribble,

In this photo taken on December 6, 2008, Diego Maradona gestures as he attends a felicitation programme at Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata. — AFP

show glimpses of his deft left foot and even crooned Spanish songs, as he sweated it out with a bunch of school children and bid them adieu with a promise to “bring football” to India.

In December 2017, he turned up in shorts, enjoyed every bit of the maddening attention even though the gruelling session literally drained him as he was seen drenched in sweat, pouring water on his head. But he had no complaints and was eloquent in his three-minute Spanish speech.

— PTI

Live on TV

CRICKET

Australia vs India: First ODI from 9.10 am on Sony Six, Ten 1, HD

Lanka Premier League: Jaffna vs Galle from 8 pm on Sony Six, HD

South Africa vs England: First T20 from 9.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

WWE

Smackdown: Bouts from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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India take on Oz in top ODI clash

Sydney, Nov. 26: India are promising to play “hard, aggressive” cricket when they emerge from coronavirus quarantine to face Australia in a blockbuster limited-over series beginning in Sydney on Friday.

The first of three ODIs, followed by three Twenty20s next week, comes after the visitors had to endure wrangling over quarantine requirements and an outbreak of the virus in Melbourne, which delayed confirmation of the tour until just weeks ago.

Virat Kohli’s squad have been in isolation since their arrival a fortnight ago, although they have been allowed to train with-

in a bio-secure bubble. It has been an equally odd build-up for Aaron Finch’s Australia, with the likes of David Warner, Steve Smith and Pat Cummins, who played in the Indian Premier League, also undergoing the mandatory 14 days of quarantine, which ended Thursday.

The lack of international cricket this year makes it hard to determine form, although Australia head into the white-ball series on the back of beating 50-over world champions England in September.

India haven’t played together since a tour of New Zealand in February, when they clinched the Twenty20 series but were

whitewashed 3-0 in the ODIs. But they can take solace from winning their last Test and ODI series in Australia two summers ago, although Smith and Warner were banned for ball-tampering.

India have separate squads for the one-dayers and T20s, both led by Kohli, but without Rishabh Pant, an explosive batsman who became a viral sensation on India’s 2018-19 tour with his banter behind the stumps.

Injured star opener Rohit Sharma and fast-bowler Ishant Sharma are also missing.

Shikhar Dhawan is likely to open the innings, potentially alongside Mayank Agarwal with wicketkeeper Rahul pushed down the order.

The potent combination of Mohammed Shami and

Six Pak players test positive for Covid

Wellington, Nov. 26: Six of Pakistan’s squad tested positive for Covid-19, hosts New Zealand Cricket said on Thursday, throwing preparations for their five-match tour into turmoil and causing a scare in a country that has largely eradicated the virus.

The squad’s “exemption to train while in managed isolation has been put on hold until investigations have been completed,” the governing body said, adding that the six positive players would be moved into strict quarantine.

New Zealand’s ministry of health said 53 team members passed a symp-

tom check before leaving Lahore and were tested on arrival in Christchurch on November 24.

Six of those results have come back positive, although two of the six cases are believed to be “historical”.

New Zealand Health also revealed that “several team members have been seen on CCTV at the facility breaching managed isolation rules, despite clear, consistent and detailed communication of expected behaviours”.

“The team as a whole has been issued with a final warning,” it said.

— AFP