


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

ANANTAPUR | MONDAY | 23 NOVEMBER 2020




WEATHER

 **Max:** 33.0°C
Min: 19°C
RH: 56%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Cloudy sky. Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 33/19 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+47,216)	(+530)
91,39,560	1,33,750
<i>covid19india.org</i>	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+873)	(+4)
TS: 2,63,526	1,430
(+1,121)	(+11)
AP: 8,62,213	6,938

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

 5,87,72,521
DEATHS
 13,90,958
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
 217

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Shudda Navami till 12.34 am (Tuesday)
Star: Satabhisam till 1.06 pm
Varjyam: 8.09 pm to 9.55 pm
Durmuhurtam: 12.24 pm to 1.09 pm; 2.37 pm to 3.22 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
HILARI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Akhir 7, 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 6.17 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.49 PM
MOONSET 12.40 PM
MOONRISE 2.02 AM

COUNTER POINT



No pollution, no Covid...
I don't need no rescue!

IN BRIEF

Power outage hits bank ops

New Delhi: Operation of some banks like HDFC Bank were hit on Saturday due to power outage at Dhirubhai Ambani Knowledge City, in Mumbai which has data centres of several firms. The services were later restored. However, power was later restored and banking services were functioning normally, sources said. According to sources, banking operations are now up and running. — PTI

MP plans cess for cow welfare

Bhopal/Agar Malwa: The Madhya Pradesh government is planning to levy a cess to raise money for the welfare of the cow, CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Sunday. "I am thinking of imposing some minor tax to raise money for the welfare of the gaumata" and for the upkeep of cow sheds....Is it alright?" he asked.

Shed five-star culture: Azad

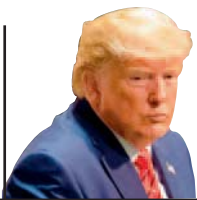
New Delhi: There is a huge disconnect between people and Congress leaders and "five-star culture" has crept into the party, Congress veteran Ghulam Nabi Azad said on Sunday. There is an urgent need to overhaul the party structure by conducting elections from block to district and state level, Azad said.

NATION | 5

Milk instead of 'egg' to fight malnutrition in MP



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Trump suffers setback in Pennsylvania plea

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Rohit ready to bat anywhere in Test



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Security personnel stand guard beside an underground tunnel near the international border in Samba sector, suspected to have been used by terrorists killed in a recent encounter in Nagrota, in Jammu district, on Sunday. — PTI

BSF finds tunnel bringing JeM terrorists into J&K

DC CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, NOV. 22

The Border Security Force (BSF) on Sunday claimed detecting yet another 'suspected tunnel' along the 198-km stretch of International Border (IB) with Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district. The tunnel may have been used for pushing in militants by Pakistan, it said.

J&K's director-general of police Dilbag Singh said the tunnel was 150 metres long and was unearthed following investigations into the recent encounter near a toll plaza in Nagrota area along the Jammu-Srinagar highway in which four militants were gunned down by the security forces. Singh after inspecting

the tunnel along with BSF Inspector General, Jammu frontier, N.S. Jamwal, and Inspector General of Police, Jammu range, Mukesh Singh, said, "The J&K police shared some vital inputs found from the encounter site with the BSF which after hectic efforts managed to find the tunnel."

The BSF claimed it found cement bags with a Pakistani factory markings on these deep inside the tunnel. BSF officials said that a patrolling party of the paramilitary force found

the small tunnel in Regal area of Samba on the IB.

"The tunnel is located close to the IB and is suspected to have been used for infiltration," they said.

The BSF is tasked to guard the 198-km stretch of the India-Pakistan border in Jammu region.

Meanwhile, a security alert was on Sunday sounded along the Line of Control in J&K's Poonch after a flying object was spotted in the district's Mendhar sector. Official sources said that the object was probably a drone which was reportedly shot by the Army. SDPO Mendhar Z.A. Jafri told local news agency GNS that Army and police's counterinsurgency Special Operations Group (SOG) were conducting searches in the area.

Covid-hit schools seek govt bailout

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 22

The AP Private Schools Association (APPSA) sought the government to help private budget schools to recover from the corona impact by providing financial assistance of ₹10,000 per month for six months to the staff.

APPSA representatives, who met here on Sunday, lamented that private budget schools were the worst sufferers of Covid-19 pandemic.

Addressing the gathering, CPM state secretary P. Madhu said budget schools were pushed to deep problems due to Covid-19 pandemic and the government should support them. He said the government has implemented many schemes to strengthen government schools and sought the government to take responsibility to support private schools that are in trouble. He alleged that

authorities were harassing private managements and demanded an instant end to this highhandedness.

He said that budget schools are imparting quality education and collecting fees that are less than those charged by corporate institutions.

Madhu said that there were 15,000 schools in the State in which about 36 lakh students are studying and managements of budget schools are not in a position to run their institutions.

Former MLC Chigurupati Varaprasad sought chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy to resolve issues of budget schools sympathetically. APPSA president Komarigiri Chandrasekhar said 40 per cent of students were studying in private schools, mainly in budget schools. He appealed to the government to help them recover from the corona impact on their revenue.

U.S. LETS DOCS USE UNDERTRIAL ANTIBODY DRUG

Washington, Nov. 22: US health officials have agreed to allow emergency use of a second antibody drug to help the immune system fight Covid-19, an experimental medicine that US President Donald Trump was given when he was sickened last month.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorised use of the Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc. drug on Saturday to try to prevent hospitalisation and worsening disease from developing in patients with mild-to-moderate symptoms.

The drug is given as a one-time treatment through intravenous method. The FDA allowed its use in adults and children, aged 12 and over, who weigh at least 88 pounds (40 kg) and who are at high risk of severe illness from Covid-19 because of age or certain other medical conditions. — AP

Cyclone to hit AP's south coastal area

Nivar may cross south Andhra on Nov. 25

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 22

Cyclone Nivar, presently brewing in south Bay of Bengal, is moving north-west and may cross the north Tamil Nadu coast and south Andhra around Wednesday, November 25. India Meteorological Department (IMD) has advised agriculture and horticulture farmers to harvest their crops without delay in the south coastal AP and Rayalaseema districts. This is because winds during landfall may reach more than 100 kmph, wherein chances of damage to crops will be high.

IMD director (for AP) S. Stella said Cyclone Nivar may cause heavy to extremely heavy rains at isolated places in Rayalaseema and south coastal AP districts on Wednesday (November 25) and Thursday (November 26). Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts would get light to moderate rains on these two days.

On current progress of the cyclone, Stella said the storm appeared on Sunday as a well-marked



Children and elders have fun at the Rushikonda Beach in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. — K. MURALIKRISHNA

low pressure over south west and adjoining south east Bay of Bengal.

The present system will very likely turn into a depression by Monday and further intensify into a cyclone on Tuesday. It will slowly move north-westwards before crossing land between Karaikal and Mahabalipuram of TN around Wednesday afternoon, he added.

The cyclone has been named Nivar on suggestion of Iran.

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Halt in admission worries BE students

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 22

Around 1,33,066 aspirants, who qualified in the Eamcet-2020 engineering stream, are a distressed lot following the halting of admission process and are demanding its completion. A total of 1,56,899 appeared for the exam.

The Eamcet-2020 results were declared on October 10 and the percentage of those who made it was 84 per cent.

Although, certificate verification and option registration process were announced and the certi-

● **ACCORDING TO the sources, finalising of fee for engineering colleges according to category, closure of several engineering colleges due to poor admissions and revisions of seats were the causing the delay.**

cate registration started on October 22, the option registration process is yet to commence. This is adding to their worries as they are unsure of counselling and admission scheduled and when the first year classes would get

underway.

The Andhra Pradesh State Council for Higher Education has already announced the academic calendar under which first year B. Tech, B.Pharmacy and degree classes are to start on December 1.

There are 392 engineering colleges in the State and approximately 1,53,978 seats are available.

The parents are lamenting that uncertainty over admissions through convener quota is compelling them to opt for management quota seats which is putting a huge extra financial burden on them.

According to the sources, finalising of fee for engineering colleges according to category, closure of several engineering colleges due to poor admissions and revisions of seats were the causing the delay.

Parents like S.N. Meera and G. Ganesh said that the private engineering colleges were demanding ₹4 lakh to ₹8 lakh per seat in CSE, ECE and information technology branches for B. Tech admissions under management quota.

■ **Page 2: Admission schedule soon: Officials**

Alampur scores over Kurnool for Tungabhadra Pushkaralu

D. SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC KURNOOL NOV. 22

Visitors to the Tungabhadra Pushkaralu are heading to Alampur in Jogulamba Gadwal district of Telangana state for baths as the Kurnool ghats allow only sprinkle baths. The third day of the event drew a good number of visitors but they left for Alampur, which is also a Shakti Peetham.

Many pilgrims criticised the government for spending ₹230 crore in Kurnool but that had little practical value.

An official release said

on Sunday that 11,351 persons were at the ghats in the district. The cumulative number of visitors in the past three days stands at 32,695. The Sankal Bagh ghat in Kurnool, the main Pushkaralu ghat, attracted 5,604 visitors on Sunday. This is said to be low on a holiday. The ghat over the three days saw 11,012 visitors take shower baths after they tested negative for Covid-19.

Mokila Subramanyam, a visitor from Chirala, said the water in the river was stagnant. The shower water seems to be entering in the stream, he said.

Alampur town, which is situated on the other side of the Tungabhadra, has become an attractive spot for Pushkaralu visitors. The Telangana state government has released just ₹2 crore and made available four pushkar ghats on its side of the river. Since a holy dip is permitted for Coronavirus negative people, visitors are thronging there, said a visitor. Mantaralayam and Sangameshwaram pushkar ghats saw good numbers of visitors. Some people ventured to take a dip near Panchalingala but police stopped them, said another visitor.

PEOPLE SEEK TO STOP TRUCKS ON ROADS

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, NOV. 22

A WhatsApp group comprising youth and traders have started a movement against moving of heavy vehicles, including those with 10 tyres, through Indrapalem and Chidiga villages towards the newly constructed 216 National Highway. This is badly damaging roads laid along these villages in the Kakinada Rural mandal. People are also complaining that they are unable to bear sounds of heavy vehicles during night times.

People are demanding that vehicles meant only for Indrapalem, Chidiga, Rameswaram and other villages be allowed on this route.

"We have made several representations to officials about heavy vehicles moving along our village roads and damaging them. People are afraid their buildings may collapse because of such movement," said CPM leader P. Veerababu. He said an agitation has been launched against movement of heavy vehicles by people of the area irrespective of their party affiliations. A signature campaign has also been launched.

■ **Page 2: Vehicles ply on road on daytime too**

TN | ELECTIONS

Minister wants BJP not to depend on celebrities

Rajini, Alagiri in touch with Shah

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR and D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, NOV. 22

After the long night of meetings and tete-a-tetes that Union home minister Amit Shah had with state BJP functionaries and others after his official meeting at Kalaivanar Aranganam on Saturday, actor Rajinikanth's message was conveyed to Shah by the auditor and magazine editor S. Gurumurthy.

The same was the case with M.K. Alagiri, the DMK strongman in Madu-

rai and son of the late former chief minister M. Karunanidhi. Alagiri is said to have sent a message through K.P. Ramalingam, an ousted DMK leader who joined the BJP.

Shah's visit is being seen as a major success both by the BJP and the AIADMK, which announced that their poll tie-up would continue in the 2021 state Assembly polls. The BJP had left no stone unturned to have Shah greeted warmly in the city. According to sources, Gurumurthy was closeted with Shah for

over two hours. Rajinikanth is said to have told Gurumurthy what his plans were for the next Assembly elections when the two of them met very recently.

However, Shah did not seem to have missed meeting Rajinikanth, going by his remarks at a party meeting. Shah said that the party should not be dependent on celebrities and should be built on the strength of its ideological moorings.

Prior to addressing party members, Shah met lead-

ers from the AIADMK, PMK and the DMDK and reportedly settled the seat sharing question with them. The AIADMK leaders had agreed to give 20 to 25 seats to the BJP, another 25 to the PMK and 15 to the DMDK. Though none of this information was confirmed by any of the leaders involved in the talks, sources say the AIADMK is keen on contesting close to 165 of the 234 seats in the Assembly as it wants to form a government on its own without support from allies.

TS promises to help Telugu film industry

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, NOV. 22

Chief Minister K. Chandrababbarao on Sunday assured captains of the Telugu film industry including megastar K. Chiranjeevi and A. Nagarajuna that the TRS would include measures being taken for the benefit of Tollywood in the poll TRS party's manifesto for the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation elections.

He assured the delegation led by the two stars

that the state government will take all measures required to protect and support the industry in a meeting held at Pragathi Bhavan.

Addressing the film fraternity in the meeting, Rao said concessions and exemptions would be given to support the industry and its workers, since they had suffered losses due to the suspension of film shootings and closure of theatres on account of the lockdown following the Covid pandemic.

SHORT TAKES

RANJI SELECTION COMMITTEE CHAIR FELICITATED

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, NOV. 22

K.S. Shahabuddin, who was appointed as Ranji Trophy Selection Committee chairman was felicitated by players and officials from Kadiri, at RDT stadium here on Sunday. CID DSP Srinivas, P. Sai Krishna, sports director, RDT, P. Mallikarjuna, president, ADCA K. Madhu, Secretary, ADCA, Jonna JayaPrakash, President, Elite Club Kadiri and several others participated.

EX-MP HARSHA KUMAR TO JOIN CONGRESS TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM, NOV. 22

Former MP of Amalapuram G.V. Harsha Kumar will join the Congress party on Monday in a meeting here. The PCC president S. Sailajanath, former Union minister J.D. Seelam, AICC member Christopher Tilak, the former chief minister of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh incharge Oommen Chandy and others will arrive at the meeting.

ADMISSION SCHEDULE SOON: OFFICIALS

FROM PAGE 1

They stated that payment of fee for certificate verification and online/offline certificates verification was completed by October 27 and officials had announced the commencement of counselling through options registration by November 2.

Students T. Narayana and D. Suresh said that as the classes have been scheduled to start on December 1, the government should complete the admission process immediately. They said that students who get seats in other areas will have no time to attend classes if the admission process is further delayed.

Officials informed that revision of fee curriculum and proposals for seat adjustments were sent to the government. They are hoping to shortly announce the schedule for option registration and admission.

CONVOCATION OF SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE HELD

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, NOV. 22

Due to prevailing Coronavirus pandemic, the 39th Annual Convocation of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL) has been held on Sunday with a limited number of students and faculty at Poornachandra Hall in Prasanthi Nilayam premises of Puttaparthi.

Sri Sathya Sai Trust celebrates the annual convocation of the institute every year a day before the birthday celebrations of Sri Sathya Saibaba in a grand manner.

SSSIHL is a Deemed to be University that normally holds its convocations in a grand manner at the Poornachandra Hall. The trust, however, restricted the number of invitees and students for Sunday's occasion. The event began with the invocatory Veda chanting by institute's vice chancellor C.B. Sanjeevi.

Chief guest on the occasion was Dr Soumya Swaminathan, chief scientist with Geneva-based World Health Organisation in Switzerland, who delivered the convocation address to students virtually. She also gave away gold medals and awards to meritorious students in the virtual mode.

I HAVE EVIDENCE, COMPLAINANT TELLS CBI

FROM PAGE 1

Later, Lakshminarayana also filed a contempt petition in AP High Court against social media activists of YSR Congress. Dondedi Venkata Rami Reddy, Kishore Reddy Darisa, Balakrishna Reddy Kuthati and Jalagam Venkata Satyanarayana, against their posts denigrating judges.

The complaint was referred to the state CID but later transferred to CBI by the High Court. CBI has since made inquiries and has formally started its investigation by col-

lecting evidence from advocate Lakshminarayana here on Sunday at the bureau's camp office in Vijayawada.

The lawyer informed the CBI about objectionable comments made against judges by also other YSR Congress leaders, including Rajya Sabha MP V. Vijaya Sai Reddy, MP Nandigam Suresh and Speaker T. Sitaram.

Lakshminarayana maintained that he has submitted all evidence to CBI. He was told that he will have to appear once again before the CBI on a later date.

Health hazard



Motorists face problem with dust at Soorampalli near Polavaram canal in Krishna district on Sunday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

Two TD men critical after attack by YSRC activists

Addanki MLA Gottipati Ravikumar blames YSRC leaders for the incident

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 22

Two persons belonging to the Telugu Desam, are battling for life after suffering grievous injuries when their rivals, owing allegiance to the ruling party, attacked them with lethal weapons near Sagar canal at Mamillapalli in Santamaguluru mandal late on Saturday night.

The injured have been identified as Bommineni Krishnaiah and Gorantla Veera Swamy of Kundurru village in Santamaguluru mandal. Both are in a critical condition in a hospital at Narasaraopeta in Guntur district, locals said.

According to police, the accused Jada Venkateswarlu and four others escaped from the scene after the attack. Though the attack was reportedly because of long-standing dispute between Venkateswarlu and Krishnaiah, it took political colour because Krishnaiah's wife,

Naidu decries murder attempt, demands release of arrested

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 22

Telugu Desam Chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday condemned the murder attempt on the husband of TD's MP candidate Raghavamma in Santamaguluru mandal in Prakasam district. He telephoned the victim's family members and enquired about the incident and also about the health conditions of the injured persons. MP's husband Krishnaiah Yadav and one Veera Swamy Yadav came under attack by miscreants who inflicted serious knife injuries on them.

Raghavamma, is contesting for the MP's post on behalf of TD the and

Mr Naidu called up the families of the victims who were receiving treatment in the hospital. He asked the doctors to provide the best medical care available to them. He slammed the ruling YSRC for turning Andhra Pradesh into a state of criminals and anti-social elements, but as a responsible opposition party, the TD would not keep silent.

Regarding the arrest of CPI leaders on Sunday preventing them from protesting at the Polavaram project, Mr Naidu accused the YSRC government of not just destroying the state development but also suppressing

the democratic rights of the opposition leaders to protest against its anti-people activities.

He condemned the arrests of the CPI leaders from protesting in Polavaram and stated that the time has come for all sections of people to condemn and confront the misdeeds of this government unitedly.

Mr Naidu claimed that Polavaram dam was not a prohibited area hence the government had no right to arrest the opposition leaders just for trying to take part in protests. He demanded the immediate release of the CPI leaders from illegal detention.

Venkateswarlu is in the YSRC Congress. Addanki circle inspector

Anjaneya Reddy along with sub-inspector Audinarayana Reddy

● Though the attack was reportedly because of long-standing dispute between Venkateswarlu and Krishnaiah, it took political colour because Krishnaiah's wife, Raghavamma, is contesting for the MP's post on behalf of TD the and Venkateswarlu is in the YSRC Congress.

● Naidu promised full support to the families

rushed to the village and shifted the injured to hospital. Anjaneya Reddy said they would nab the culprits within 24 hours.

Meanwhile, former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu spoke to the injured and their relatives over phone on Sunday. He promised full support to the families of the victims.

Addanki MLA Gottipati Ravikumar blamed YSRC Congress leaders for the incident during a visit to the hospital on Sunday.

Hardly any takers for Karthika Vana Mahostavam

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 22

Coronavirus has impacted the traditional Karthika Vana Samaradhana (garden worship) in the auspicious Telugu Karthika month as participation of people has been low, even on holidays and Sundays unlike in earlier years.

Vana Samaradhana popularly called as Karthika Vanabhojanam is a kind of annual ritualistic picnic undertaken during Karthika Telugu month. The plants are considered to be of divine nature and worshipped as Gods for centuries. Hindus consider Tulsi, Amla, Bilva and Durva as divine and use them extensively in pujas.

People would gather in large numbers for Karthika Vana Mahotsavam, including at Kondapalli fort, Kotappakonda, Kondaveedu fort, Hamsaladevi of Bay of Bengal sea, Machilipatnam beach, Suryalanka beach, Kothapatnam beach and Nagarjunasagar. However, this time around, only a few people were seen at Kondapalli fort and other popular places on Sunday. The rush of people was slightly higher at Hamsaladevi as the public also came to take a holy bath in Bay of Bengal.

Priest M.V. Sastry said that Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi prefer to reside under Amla trees during Karthika month, which is why during Vanabhojanam, amla trees are worshipped by Telugus, who also perform pujas to Lord Vishnu and recite Vishnu purana and Karthika purana. He explained that traditionally people cook food under these trees after puja and consume them as prasadam. This year it has not been so because of Covid fears.

Also missing were organisations who arranged Karthika Vana Mahotsavam outings.

● Vana Samaradhana popularly called as Karthika Vanabhojanam is a kind of annual ritualistic picnic undertaken during Karthika Telugu month. The plants are considered to be of divine nature and worshipped as Gods for centuries. Hindus consider Tulsi, Amla, Bilva and Durva as divine and use them extensively in pujas.

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Also missing were organisations who arranged Karthika Vana Mahotsavam outings. A.V. Ramana, an organiser, said that Corona fear still haunts society and following the protocol has affected this year's programme. He said that even owners of gardens are refusing to give their

Vehicles ply on road on daytime

FROM PAGE 1

Sources said hundreds of heavy vehicles carry gravel and soil through these roads to various construction sites belonging to the government and private parties.

Generally, these vehicles used to pass through Kakinada City and Jagannaikpur only during nights. Due to the passing of such heavily loaded vehicles, the Kakinada-Samalkot road has got badly damaged.

As a result, vehicles have now started going through Kakinada, Indrapalem and Chidiga villages and then taking NH 216, which has not yet been formally opened yet.

This is the reason why roads in Indrapalem and Chidiga have got badly damaged. There is a serious threat to Indrapalem

Bridge too because of this. Sources point out that heavy vehicles are not allowed into Kakinada City from 9 am to 9 pm. But this stipulation is being violated and vehicles are passing through day and night.

Auto and taxi drivers are refusing to carry passengers on these roads as their vehicles get damaged and have to be frequently repaired. However, if they do take passengers along these roads, they are collecting three times the usual charges.

Roads and Building Department officials say proposals have been sent costing ₹8 crore to government for repairing these roads.

They are waiting for approval of their proposals and funds from the government.

ANIL PRAYS FOR 'WELL-BEING' OF FORMER CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 22

Water resources minister Dr P. Anilkumar Yadav said he offered prayers to Lord Shiva urging the almighty to give a positive mindset to former CM N. Chandrababu Naidu apart from those doing cheap politics.

Speaking to the media after offering prayers at the Lord Shiva shrine at Nawabpet in Nellore on Sunday, he ridiculed TD leaders for their comments against YSRC over the selection of the candidate for Tirupati parliament seat while stressing that the decision is an internal matter of their party.



Ganga has harathi is being given on Sunday as part of Tungabhadra Pushkarams at Sankalbagh ghat in Kurnool on Sunday.

- DECCAN CHRONICLE

Barrage-cum-bridge on Penna river by Jan. '21

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 22

Despite claims by the ruling party bigwigs to complete the barrage works on Penna river in Sangam and Nellore in SPSR Nellore district before the end of 2020, both the projects continue to be delayed.

This time the blame for the snail pace of progress is heavy rains and floods to Penna river which led to

a flow of 100 tmc ft of water through both the barrages into Bay of Bengal affecting the works for over two months.

Reminding that both the projects were launched in 2007 by then chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, water resources minister Dr P. Anilkumar Yadav maintains that the works are speeded up after Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy took the reins of the state.

Expectedly, he has been



attributing the unusual delay in the execution of the projects to the previous Congress and TD governments.

Addressing the media after performing Puja to

fix the crust gates at the barrage in Nellore on Sunday, he expressed confidence in installing all the 57 gates to the barrage cum bridge before the end of December.

He said the Chief Minister would dedicate the project to the nation in January 2021.

"Chief Minister gave his nod for several irrigation projects in the district, and they include Submersible Causeway at

an estimated cost of ₹94 crore at Mudivarthi in Kovur segment, modernisation of Sarvepalli and Kanigiri reservoirs at an estimated cost of ₹12 crore and ₹21 crore apart from

completion of Kavali canal works," Dr Anilkumar informed.

He said they have stored 60 tmc ft of water in Kandaluru reservoir for the first time and their target is to increase the storage to the project optimum

of 68 tmc ft. Referring to the requirement of ₹50 crore to achieve the target, he promised to mobilise the funds to take up the works.

Kovur legislator Nallapareddy Prasanna Kumar Reddy, Collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu, Chief Engineer of Telugu Ganga Project Harinarayana Reddy and Chairman of Vijaya Dairy Kondreddi Ranga Reddy were present



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OTHER STORIES

COP SEEKS CM'S
NOD TO RETIRE IN
SELFIE VIDEODC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 22

In a strange move, an Armed Reserve Head Constable Srinivas Rao took a selfie-video seeking Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to permit him for voluntary retirement objecting to the behaviour of his higher officials. In his video addressed to the CM, Srinivas Rao expressed deep dissatisfaction over the action taken by his superiors. Srinivasa Rao said that on complaining about the inefficiency and poor performance of sniffer dogs to the seniors, they put him into trouble by issuing transfer orders.

Srinivas Rao said that he has been working in Vijayawada Police Commissionerate since 2005 and has been serving as Dog Handler until April 2020. He said the complaints about the sniffer dogs were rejected and he was transferred by saying that it was a regular transfer. Meanwhile, police commissioner B. Srinivasulu said that the allegations made by AR Head Constable and Dog handler Srinivas Rao through a selfie-video on the performance and efficiency of sniffer dogs are baseless and incorrect.

In a statement the CP said that the City Police personnel were constantly facing mental and physical pressures to maintain public peace and security, prevent crime, protect public money, property and lives, as well as VIP / VVIPs, are always on duty.

The CP said that the role of police sniffer dogs is crucial during VIPs / VVIPs moments and to crackdown sensational cases such as murder and theft. He claimed that the sniffer dogs performed well.

MAN HELD FOR
LURING WITH
PMGY LOANSDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, NOV. 22

The Srikalahasti police have arrested a 43-year-old man for allegedly duping several people on the pretext of getting them loans under the Prime Minister Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY).

According to Srikalahasti DSP D. Viswanath, so far about 33 cheating cases were booked against the accused Thota Balaji Naidu, across the two Telugu states. A PD Act was also opened against him in the past at Hyderabad.

The accused Naidu is hailing from Nazarpet in Tenali but lives at Kirlampudi in East Godavari district. He worked at the NTOC and was removed from services a few years ago. He used to cheat the public by posing himself as an officer working at the AP Finance Department.

The accused confessed to have duped near 60 people, including a few political leaders.

He used to contact people over the phone and assure them loan under the PMGY in the range of ₹1 lakh to ₹25 lakh.

He targets gullible loan seekers but then sought money from them in the name of file charge, commission, insurance, GST, agreement, etc.

After the loan seekers pay him the said amount, he would disappear and go for the next target. On April 17, this year the Srikalahasti I town CI D. Nagarjuna Reddy received one such complaint from a town resident.

Based on the complaint, the police have launched a search and nabbed the accused Naidu on Sunday.

A detailed interrogation is underway and the accused was sent on remand to Nellore Central jail.

MISCREANTS
DECAMPED SILVER
ARTICLESDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 22

Unidentified miscreants decamped with silver articles weighing seven kgs and two gold bangles from a locked house of a retired bank employee Ch. Vincent at NGO Colony in BV Nagar at Nellore during the early hours of Sunday.

Vincent and his wife Jhansi Lakshmi were in a private hospital at Nellore for treatment to Vincent when the theft took place. The accused gained entry into the house after breaking open the locks and the incident came to light when Jhansi Lakshmi returned home on Sunday morning. Police have put the value of the stolen items at ₹1.60 lakh.

1,121 new Covid-19 cases,
11 deaths in a day in AP

Positivity rate dropped to 1.56%, lowest in past 5 months

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 22

AP registered 1,121 new Covid-19 cases and 11 new deaths in the past 24 hours on Sunday. The infection of new Corona positive was stable and the overall tally has increased to 8,62,213 and the total deaths increased to 6,938 registering a death rate of 0.80 per cent.

The number of recoveries crossed 8.40 lakh and reached 8,41,026 as 1,631 patients were discharged in the past 24 hours and the recovery rate has been slightly increased to 97.54 per cent.

As many as 71,913 samples were tested in the past 24 hours and the positivity rate has been dropped to 1.56 per cent which is the lowest in the past five months and the overall positivity rate of the 96.15 lakh samples came down to 8.97 per cent.

AP is on top in the country in conducting tests per million ratio which crossed 1.80 lakh, highest among the states. As many as 11 new Corona

Covid patient infects 17
farmers in Vizag AgencyDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 22

In a rare case of negligence, an asymptomatic patient walked out of home isolation and infected 17 farmers of his village Tajangi in Chintapalle mandal in Visakhapatnam Agency. All of them in the age group of 20 and 35 were brought to Covid care centre at Youth Training Centre in Paderu.

The incident was reported when the positive cases were coming down in the Agency.

Additional District Medical and Health Officer P. Leela Prasad said during a sentinel surveillance conducted in Tajangi recently, they detected six positive

cases who had shown no symptoms. During an inquiry on the contacts, the villagers told the medical personnel that the patient who was under home isolation walked out before stipulated time and began working in the paddy fields along with others.

The medical team lost no time in checking the groups with whom the patient was associated mostly.

During a test it was found that 17 were positive and had no symptoms. They were immediately brought to Paderu and put in the Covid care centre. "We may ask them to go home in another four to five days as they were found healthy," Dr Prasad said.

deaths were registered in which two deaths registered in Chittoor and Krishna districts, one

each Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, Guntur, Kadapa, Vizianagaram, Anantapur and West



Policemen forcibly arresting Guntur CPI and CPM leaders restraining them from touring to Polavaram village from Guntur city on Sunday.

CPI leader Ramakrishna
put on house arrestDC CORRESPONDENT
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM, NOV. 22

CPI state secretary K. Ramakrishna was put on house arrest late Saturday night by the police as he came to Rajamahendravaram to visit the Polavaram Project on Sunday. He was put on house arrest while he lodged at a hotel.

Upon learning the information, the CPI leaders Ravula Venkaiah, T. Madhu, T. Prasad, N. Ramarao and others along with the party workers staged dharna and condemned the police act. They questioned the police on the arrest that prevented their leader from going to the Polavaram project. The police arrested 20 CPI activists in this incident.

Mr Ramakrishna said that he never faced such action and he can't imagine why even visiting the Polavaram Project is a crime. He said that after observing the police act, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is afraid of the people and

Every citizen have a right to visit the Polavaram Project and it was not correct for the police to prevent them, say leaders.

agitators and there were several doubts on construction of the Polavaram project. He said that on the pretext of reducing the inundation threat of seven mandals, it is not correct for reducing the Polavaram project size. If the Polavaram project height is reduced, there is no use for Rayalaseema and North Andhra districts and the purpose would not be served due to the project. He said that the CPI would visit the project and launch an agitation for justice to the project victims. He said that the party submitted a letter to the water resources minister Anilkumar Yadav for seeking permission for their visit and the minister responded positively. He questioned the government if the Polava-

Godavari districts.

The Kadapa district was on top in single day highest Corona cases of 167 on Sunday and registration of a huge number of Corona cases continuing in the duo Godavari districts. Further 1,631 patients were discharged after the cure in the past 24 hours.

East Godavari registered a total of 1,21,624 cases and topped among all districts and West Godavari in the second place with reaching 91,575 total positive cases.

The single day highest number of 167 new Corona positive cases was registered in Kadapa district in the past 24-hours increasing the total to 44,477 in which 1,978 were active cases.

The second single day highest number of 164 Corona positive cases was registered in Guntur district in the past 24-hours increasing the total to 90,258 in which 72,061 were active cases.

The third single day highest number of Corona positive cases of 142 registered in WG.

Karthika vanabhojanam
organised at TirumalaDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, NOV. 22

TTD on Sunday observed the annual Karthika vanabhojanam programme in the lush green woods at Paruveta mandapam in Tirumala.

As part of the occasion, the utsava idols of Lord Malayappa along with his consorts Sridevi and Bhudevi were brought to the Paruveta mandapam in a colourful procession and *snapanam thirumanjanam* was performed amidst the rhythmic chanting of Purusha, Narayana, Sri, Bhu, and Neela Sooktams by Vedic pandits.

Later the artists of Annamacharya Project presented some melodious sankeertanas followed by the instrumental rendition of some more kritis while Harikatha Parayanam on Garudadri Vaibhavam was an added attraction to the event. After the puja and Nivedana to deities, the



Women play at mango gardens as part of Karthika Masam 1st week celebration near Vijayawada on Sunday.

community dining programme, Karthika Vanabhojanam was organised.

Additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy said, usually tens of thousands of devotees

converge in the green woods for the community dining programme. But due to Covid restrictions, we have limited this number to just a couple of hundreds.

BJP, VHP ACTIVISTS
BATHE IN RIVER
DESPITE BANDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, NOV. 22

The 'Chalo Tungabhadra' march of the VHP, Bajrang Dal and BJP supporters to take a pushkaralu bath in the river was foiled by the police on Sunday.

The protesters alleged that the government was being insensitive when it barred the holy dip in the river during the pushkaralu, which they said was a Hindu ritual.

In view of Covid-19, the state government has banned pilgrims from taking a holy dip in the river and has only allowed to shower baths.

The Opposition parties particularly BJP, VHP and Bajrang Dal condemned this decision.

Tension prevailed at the Sankal Bagh pushkar ghat when police arrested leaders of the BJP, VHP and Bajrang Dal who were heading to the river.

Though the police took at least 20 key persons on Saturday night into custody, the activists led by BJP state leader K. Harish Babu arrived at the ghat on Sunday and proceeded to the river.

When police objected, Harish Babu asked them why YSRC MLAs were not prevented when they took out a padayatra recently with thousands of supporters.

TWO KILLED,
EIGHT HURT IN
MISHAP ON NH 6DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 22

Two persons killed on the spot and eight others injured critically in a road accident on The National Highway 16 near Ongole during the early hours of Sunday.

According to the traffic police, a wedding party of ten members was travelling to Penupadu village in Tenali mandal of Guntur district after performing the marriage in Tirumala on Saturday.

The bride and bridegroom S. Anusha and K. Hemachandra Kumar were travelling in a car and following the van. The van carrying the relatives rammed into a lorry after the latter came to a sudden halt. Even before the inmates realised what was happening, another vehicle hit the van from behind.

Relatives of the bridegroom, Ch. Sathyanaarayana Moorthy, 61, of Ravendrapadu in Dugirala mandal of Guntur district and Pothuri Kasi Annapoornamma, 55, of Tirupati died on the spot and six others injured in the incident.

The police had a tough time extracting the injured and the dead from the mangled van with the help of a crane.

The injured persons have been shifted to KIMS Hospital in Ongole for treatment.

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 22

A gang of dacoits attacked a family with deadly weapons and decamped with gold and cash in Chodapalle village of Achyutapuram mandal in Visakhapatnam late on Saturday night. The house owner and his son were injured in the attack and admitted to the hospital.

Circle inspector of Yellamanchili K Narayana Rao, who is investigating the case, said a group of six unidentified miscreants have allegedly attacked the family and escaped with around ten tolas of gold, eight tolas of silver and Rs 80,000 cash.

The culprits tied the inmates with ropes and threatened to kill them if they raised the alarm or retaliated. Two of the three injured inmates have been shifted to Anakapalle corporate hospital for treatment.

Giving further details, the CI said the six unidentified people gained entry into the house of Sita Ramayya in Chodapalle around night. Sita Ramayya's wife Kumari, who was in the verandah of the house, was tied with ropes and gagged,

THE CULPRITS tied the inmates with ropes and threatened to kill them if they raised the alarm or retaliated.

to prevent her from raising the alarm. They later allegedly snatched the gold ornaments from her person.

Later, they entered the house and beat up both Sita Ramayya and his son, Satyanarayana, with iron rods. Threatening them at knife-point to remain silent, the miscreants had also allegedly made good with cash and other valuables, as per the complainant. After the burglars left, the injured Satyanarayana came out of the house and raised the alarm. The locals shifted them to the corporate hospital in Anakapalle.

The circle inspector said the gang members could be local as they spoke Telugu with a local accent. There were three such incidents in the past in the same police circle, and all have been solved. Crime teams and fingerprint experts were taken to the spot from Visakhapatnam. A case has been registered, and further investigation was on.

8-YR-OLD, 19-YR-OLD YOUTH WASHED
AWAY IN PINJARAKONDA RIVULETDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, NOV. 22

An eight-year-old girl Vasamsetty Mouna Sai Sri and 19-year-old A. Mahesh washed away in the Pinjarakonda rivulet near Addateegala in the Agency area of East Godavari District on Sunday evening.

According to the Addateegala police, the girl's father and mother are working in the Police Department and they came to Pinjarakonda along with his neighbour Mahesh to enjoy Pinjarakonda rivulet.

However, the flow of the

When the girl was seeing the waters in the rivulet by climbing a rock, she accidentally slipped into the river and washed away. Seeing this, Mahesh jumped into the waters

rivulet is very high. When the girl was seeing the waters in the rivulet by climbing a rock, she accidentally slipped into the river and washed away. Seeing this, the youth Mahesh jumped into the waters to catch the girl.

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SHORT TAKES

BHARTI SINGH,
HUSBAND SENT TO
JUDICIAL CUSTODY

SAURABH JOSHI | DC
MUMBAI, NOV. 22

A day after the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) arrested comedian Bharati Singh, the officials arrested her husband Harsh Limbachiya following his 15-hour long marathon grilling. The NCB produced the couple before the court on Sunday and they were remanded to judicial custody till December 4. The comedian was arrested on Saturday following raids at their Versova residence.

The NCB officials had seized 86.5 gram of cannabis from the couple's residence. The officials took them for questioning at the NCB office where the couple revealed they procured and consumed the banned substance. The agency subsequently arrested Singh stating that her place was searched based on the information given by one of the peddlers who was arrested during the drugs probe.

"The duo was questioned in connection with the ongoing probe. They have been remanded to judicial custody. The magistrate's court would hear the bail pleas on November 23," said an officer.

During the court proceedings, the officials sought Limbachiya's custody but did not seek Singh's as she was questioned by the NCB ahead of the arrest.

TARUN GOGOI'S
HEALTH CONDITION
REMAINS CRITICAL

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, NOV. 22

Veteran Congress leader and former Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi's health condition continues to remain critical despite minor improvement in his health parameters on Sunday.

The 86-year-old was admitted to Guwahati Medical College Hospital (GMCH) on November 2 following breathing problems because of post-Covid-19 complications.

The superintendent of Guwahati Medical College and Hospital Dr Abhijit Sarma on Sunday told reporters that he is on a mechanical ventilator with multi-organ dysfunction (MOD) and is experiencing difficulty in passing urine normally.

"Since Saturday, there has been no deterioration in his health and his laboratory parameters have improved marginally. But his condition is still critical and we will observe him closely for another 48 hours," he said.

"At present, he is passing around 100-120 ml of urine in 24 hours. It would be good if the quantity increases. A large group of specialists are constantly monitoring his health and we are also in touch with experts from AIIMS, Delhi, and they are satisfied with the treatment protocol," he added.

MERCURY DIPS
IN MOST PARTS
OF NORTH INDIA

New Delhi, Nov. 22: Minimum temperatures dipped in most parts of north India on Sunday with Srinagar recording a low of minus 3 degrees Celsius, while a cold wave swept parts of Delhi which recorded its coldest November morning since 2003.

The national capital's minimum temperature dropped to 6.9 degrees Celsius while the air quality remained "poor" and government agencies said it is likely to deteriorate further due to unfavourable meteorological conditions.

"The Safdarjung Observatory which provides representative data for the city, recorded a minimum of 6.9 degrees Celsius. It is Delhi's lowest minimum temperature in the month since November 2003, when the city recorded a low of 6.1 degrees Celsius," said Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) regional forecasting centre.

For the plains, the IMD declares a cold wave when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees Celsius or below and is 4.5 notches less than the normal for two consecutive days.

Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar recorded the coldest night of the season as the minimum temperature dropped several degrees below the freezing point across Kashmir region, while the weather department predicted a spell of wet weather in the Valley from Monday.

Central teams visit high Covid risk states

Efforts on to strengthen containment, surveillance, testing, infection prevention and control measures

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

With Covid-19 caseload in the country crossing the 91 lakh mark, high-level central teams were on Sunday deputed to Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh to support them in response and management of the virus. These states have been either reporting a rise in the number of active cases — those who are hospitalised or are in home isolation under medical supervision, or demonstrating a rise in the daily new cases of Coronavirus infections. Earlier, high-level teams were sent to Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Manipur and Chhattisgarh.

A senior health ministry official said that these three-member teams will visit districts reporting a high number of Covid-19 cases and support the state efforts towards strengthening containment, surveillance, testing, infection prevention and control measures, and efficient clinical management of the positive cases. He said that the teams will also guide in effectively managing the challenges related to timely diagnosis and follow up.

With 45,209 fresh Covid-19 cases reported in the last 24 hours, the infection tally in the country has mounted to 90,95,806. The death toll has also gone up to 1,33,227 with 501 more fatalities. The silver lining is that the total recoveries have surged to 85,21,617, pushing the national recovery rate to 93.69 per cent. Even the Covid-19 case fatality rate has declined to 1.46 per cent. There are now 4,40,962 active cases in the country, which comprise 4.85 per cent of the total caseload.

The country's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5. It went past 50 lakh on September 16, 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, and surpassed 90 lakh on November 20.

According to the ICMR, over 13.17 crore samples were tested up to November 22 with 10,75,326 samples being



Visitors walk beside closed shops in Shimla on Sunday after authorities ordered closure of markets due to spike in the Coronavirus cases. — PTI

tested on Saturday.

Of the 501 new fatalities, 111 were reported from Delhi, 62 from Maharashtra, 53 from West Bengal, 25 each from Kerala and Haryana, 24 from Uttar Pradesh, 23 from Punjab, 22 from Chhattisgarh and 20 from Karnataka. Total 1,33,227 deaths reported so far in the country include 46,573 from Maharashtra followed by 11,641 from Karnataka, 11,586 from Tamil Nadu, 8,270 from Delhi, 7,976 from West Bengal, 7,524 from Uttar Pradesh, 6,927 from Andhra Pradesh, 4,595 from Punjab and 3,846 from Gujarat. The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

At 3.2 per cent, Punjab's fatality rate is the maximum among all states and UT. Maharashtra (2.6 per cent), Sikkim (2 per cent), Gujarat (2 per cent), West Bengal (1.8 per cent), Puducherry (1.7 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (1.6 per cent) and Uttarakhand (1.6 per cent) have recorded more deaths per 100 confirmed cases than Delhi.

Ahmedabad city currently has 2,906 active cases, led by its west zone with 479, and followed by 464 in north-west and 457 in south-west. The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation said there was no need to panic as 1,500 beds were available and it was in the process of requisitioning another eight to ten hospitals to enhance the numbers further.

It said some private hospitals were admitting Covid-19 patients who did not require hospitalisation in a bid to fill up beds and create "artificial scarcity".

Don't create scarcity of beds, pvt hosps told

Ahmedabad, Nov. 22: Amid a spike in Covid-19 cases in Gujarat's Ahmedabad city, the local civic body on Sunday warned private hospitals not to create an artificial shortage of beds for treatment.

Ahmedabad city currently has 2,906 active cases, led by its west zone with 479, and followed by 464 in north-west and 457 in south-west.

The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation said there was no need to panic as 1,500 beds were available and it was in the process of requisitioning another eight to ten hospitals to enhance the numbers further.

It said some private hospitals were admitting Covid-19 patients who did not require hospitalisation in a bid to fill up beds and create "artificial scarcity".

The civic body said it had reached out to private hospitals across the city after a review meeting was chaired by additional chief secretary Rajiv Gupta, who is the special officer for Covid-19 in Ahmedabad city, and directed them to stop any such "unscrupulous and illegal practice".

The AMC said the office-bearers of Ahmedabad hospitals and nursing homes association have been intimidated about this issue as well.

The civic body also told providers of 108 ambulance service to ensure, as much as possible, that members of a family are admitted in the same hospital and not different ones. On Saturday the city witnessed 354 new cases, among the highest single-day additions since the outbreak began in March, and five deaths. — PTI

GEHLOT ACCORDS TOP PRIORITY TO SAVE LIVES

Jaipur, Nov. 22: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Sunday reviewed the Covid-19 situation in the state and reminded officials of the government's top priority to save lives and ensure strict compliance of anti-pandemic precautions by people.

Holding an extensive meeting to review the #Covid19 situation across the state, Taking stock of the prevailing conditions & ongoing efforts to contain the virus. Our top-most priority is to save lives, provide adequate treatment & encourage people to strictly follow health protocols, Gehlot tweeted. Reviewing arrangements to contain the infection, ensure compliance of decisions including that of the night curfew & also to make sure that people are not inconvenienced, he said. — PTI

Uddhav warns of 'tsunami' of Covid cases in Maha

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
with agency inputs
MUMBAI, NOV. 22

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday warned the people of the second wave of Covid-19 in the state. In the wake of the rising numbers of Coronavirus cases in the last five days, the Chief Minister said that the state is staring at "Tsunami of new cases" and told people to strictly follow the safety protocols.

Coronavirus cases across Maharashtra have been rising over the last few days, especially after Diwali. In the last 24 hours, 5,753 fresh Covid-19 cases and 50 fatalities were reported in Maharashtra.

Mumbai, which was at the centre of the pandemic not so long ago, had 12,448 active cases. In view of this, the government directed the officials to act fast to contain a fresh wave of infections in the state.

Thackeray said that the state is standing at a 'dangerous turn'. "Now we have to decide whether to go for lockdown again. Some people are suggesting me to impose curfew at night in the state, but I believe that everything cannot be done by imposing laws," he said.

According to him, there would be 'Tsunami' instead of the second-third wave of Coronavirus.

"We have celebrated all the festivals with patience so far. I had urged everyone to take all the precautions during Diwali celebrations as well and everybody obeyed it. I would like to thank everyone for that. Even during Chhath Puja celebrations, people behaved patiently. In Maharashtra, we are able to control the Covid-19 situation in many ways but we will have to avoid visiting crowded places," he

● THE GOVERNMENT directs the officials to act fast to contain a fresh wave of Coronavirus infections in the state.

added. Slamming the BJP over the demand to unlock everything, Thackeray said that some people demand to start all the activities but if the state opens everything, would they be ready to take responsibility for it?

Meanwhile, deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar said that the lockdown will be decided after taking a review of the situation in the next 8-10 days. He said that a second wave of Covid-19 is expected.

The health department said on Sunday said the state's overall infection count increased to 17,80,208.

A total of 4,060 patients were discharged during the day. With this, as many as 16,51,064 patients have recuperated across the state till date. There are 81,512 active cases in the state at present.

Maharashtra's recovery rate is now 92.75 per cent, while the fatality rate is 2.62 per cent. Of the 5,753 total cases reported on Sunday, 1,135 were detected in Mumbai alone, which took the city's case count to 2,75,714, while 19 deaths pushed the toll to 10,675.

In Mumbai, as many as 2,51,804 patients have recovered so far. The Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), which includes Mumbai and its satellite townships, reported 1,975 fresh cases.

This took its overall tally to 6,17,474 with 18,504 deaths. Nashik city reported 119 fresh cases, Pune city 323 cases, Pimpri Chinchwad 206 cases and Nagpur city reported 418 cases.



INDIAN NAVY PARTICIPATES IN SITMEX-20

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 22

As part of effort to strengthen India's strategic maritime, Indian Navy participated in trilateral maritime exercise SITMEX-20, with Singapore and Thailand on November 21 & 22 in Andaman sea.

The 2020 edition of the exercise is being hosted by Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN).

This exercise comes soon after multilateral Malabar Naval war game in which Indian, US, Australian and Japan navies conducted complex and exhaustive exercises. Indian Navy (IN) ships including indigenously built ASW corvette Kamorta and missile corvette Karmuk participated in the second edition SITMEX.

The first edition of SITMEX, hosted by Indian Navy, was conducted off Port Blair in September 2019.

The SITMEX series of exercises are conducted to enhance mutual interoperability and imbibing best practices between Indian Navy, Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) and Royal Thai Navy (RTN). RSN is being represented by the 'Formidable' Class frigate 'Intrepid' and 'Endurance' Class Landing Ship 'Tank 'Edeavour' and RTN by the 'Chao Phraya' Class frigate 'Kraburi' in the exercise.

FORMER K'TAKA MINISTER BAIG HELD IN IMA SCAM

VINAY MADHAV | DC
BENGALURU, NOV. 22

Former Karnataka minister R. Roshan Baig, who had resigned as Congress MLA and joined the BJP, which helped Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa form government, has been arrested by the CBI in I Monetary Advisory (IMA) gold scam.

On Sunday morning, the CBI took Baig for questioning. Late in the evening, the agency produced him before a CBI special court judge and Baig was remanded to judicial custody for 14 days. He was taken to the Parappana Agrahara jail.

IMA director Mansoor Ali Khan had started a gold investment scheme and collected over ₹4,000 crore from over 40,000 investors and cheated them.

The state government had handed over the investigation to the CBI, after Khan spilled the names of politicians and bureaucrats, including two IPS officers, as being beneficiaries.

TMC says it is rectifying its mistakes ahead of polls

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, NOV. 22

Following the BJP's fierce campaign of misrule against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the Trinamul Congress said on Sunday that its government has started "rectifying" its mistakes ahead of the next year's Assembly elections. It however acknowledged that securing the total satisfaction of all the people is difficult for any ruling party, either at the Centre or in the states.

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said, "the BJP or its leader Kailash Vijayvargiya does not have anything to say against the TMC because of the work that has taken place here. But it is difficult for any party in the country, be at the Centre or the state, to make all the people 100 per cent happy. Somewhere, errors and dissent exist. This government is identifying them, working on them and rectifying them."

"I dare Vijayvargiya to publicly take the name of the person he calls bhatija. Otherwise, he should stop character assassination of our youth leader who is a two-time MP. Can't there be another person from a politician's family, be in politics?"

The former TMC Rajya Sabha MP also pointed to

● THE TMC admits that it is difficult for any party in the country, be at the Centre or the state, to make all the people 100 per cent happy. Somewhere, errors and dissent exist. This government is identifying them, working on them and rectifying them.

● TMC SPOKESPERSON Kunal Ghosh also points out the dynasty politics and nepotism in the BJP.

the dynasty politics and nepotism in the BJP to counter the saffron party's "bhatija (nephew)" jibe about the CM's nephew Abhishek Banerjee's clout in the TMC.

"I dare Vijayvargiya to publicly take the name of the person he calls bhatija. Otherwise, he should stop character assassination of our youth leader who is a two-time MP. Can't there be another person from a politician's family, be in politics?"

Doesn't the BJP have a similar history? They have many family members in the Rajya Sabha, Lok Sabha and the Union Cabinet. Who is Akash Vijayvargiya? He is an MLA in Madhya Pradesh who had hit municipal workers with a bat and was arrested in the case. Mukul Roy's son Shubhrangshu Roy (Bijpur MLA) is also in their party," he said.

Training guns on the BJP on corruption charges, Ghosh, a key accused arrested by the CBI in the Saradha chit fund scam earlier, demanded the arrest of Roy in the Narada sting operation case.

"Is the BJP a washing machine? In the Narada case, arrested IPS officer S.M.H. Meerza's statement under Section 161 of CrPC should be considered and Roy must be arrested by the CBI because Meerza spoke about the money he handed over to Roy. I am also ready to face Roy at a joint interrogation in Saradha case," he added.

MID-DAY | MEALS

Child health experts doubt feasibility of Gau Cabinet substituting egg with milk

Milk instead of 'egg' to fight malnutrition in MP

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, NOV. 22

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivaraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday reiterated his government's decision to not introduce the egg in the mid-day meal provided to children in schools and anganwadi centres in the state to combat malnutrition among them.

Chairing the first meet-

ing of the Cabinet committee on protection of cattle, christened 'Gau cabinet', Chouhan said milk, instead of egg, would be introduced in the menu to tackle malnutrition.

"Cattle resource development will be the cornerstone of the self-reliance policy being implemented by the government. The move will give a fillip to milk production. This will make the proposal to introduce milk in midday meal

● CHILD RIGHT activists have been demanding introduction of eggs in the midday meals.

● THE BJP claims that any attempt to change the dietary habits of children belonging to a particular section of communities may lead to cultural conflict.

a viable proposition", he said.

Child right activists have been demanding introduction of eggs in the midday meals.

The BJP has been maintaining that any attempt to

change the dietary habits of children belonging to a particular section of communities by adding egg to the menu may lead to cultural conflict.

"The BJP has always maintained that suitable

alternatives to eggs should be made available for children so as not to hurt religious sentiments. Milk is a good alternative to egg for the purpose," BJP spokesman Rajneesh Agrawal said here.

Child health experts have expressed apprehensions over feasibility of the proposal to introduce milk. "The availability and self-life of milk raise question mark over feasibility of the proposal,"

said child health expert Sachin Kumar Jain.

As many as 72,87,819 children including around 1 lakh tribal children are enrolled in 97,135 anganwadi centres in the state.

Madhya Pradesh has 42 per cent stunted, 18.6 per cent severely stunted, 25.8 per cent wasted, 9.2 per cent severely wasted, 42.8 per cent underweight and 14.3 per cent severely underweight children under the age of five.

DECCAN Chronicle

23 NOVEMBER 2020

Avoid partisan approach, apathy to conquer Covid

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was spot on, calling Covid-19 the biggest threat to humanity after World War-II, as nations across the globe stare at the possibility of another wave of the pandemic. India is no exception; several states have started showing signs of a new wave. It is welcome that the Union government, realising the threat, has launched a series of measures to lessen its impact.

The work has started right in the national capital, which is in the throes of a third wave, and the Union and the state government have promised to work in tandem. The Delhi government has no plans to reintroduce a lockdown but will tighten the rules and rigorously enforce them. It has decided to keep a special watch on markets where more people congregate, and will hike the fine for not wearing a mask from ₹500 to ₹2,000. And most importantly, there will be a house-to-house survey for testing.

The Union government has sent expert teams to several states, which are now witnessing a new surge in the number of infections. The government had done so in the past, too, but it faced the allegations that there were political motives behind it. The teams' behaviour in several states ruled by parties opposed to the BJP had given credence to the allegations, too. Hopefully, the government has learnt its lessons and would not use the opportunity for politicking this time around. The teams should limit themselves to helping the local administration benefit from their expertise.

We have said in these columns earlier, too, that public health is a matter of concern for the public first, and that a government can do only so much without its cooperation. Reports say people have started taking it easy. Festivals, markets, public transport and entertainment avenues have been flooded. Even political leaders, elected representatives and senior bureaucrats appear in the public either with no masks or wearing them in the wrong way. Such callous attitude will undo all the good work done so far. There must be better awareness among all ranks of the people about the need to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour such as maintenance of social distancing, washing of hands and wearing masks.

The best lesson the micro-organism has taught humanity is that it can be stopped only by the joint efforts of all of its victims; a partisan approach helps it thrive. The United States, which is facing another dreaded run of the virus, is an example. Back home, the Kerala experience tells a similar story. The state, which performed remarkably in the first phase in containing the pandemic, failed the moment partisan politics took over. Onam was not the only culprit; anti-government agitations too contributed to the spread with the result that the state today contributes more than 10 per cent of the country's total daily caseload.

Concerted efforts by all the stakeholders is the need of the hour, for there are no human enemies in this war.

BJP's pointless exertions

In the popularity sweepstakes, the two top honchos of Tamil Nadu, Edappadi K. Palaniswami and O. Panneerselvam, gained nothing from turning up early at the Chennai airport to personally receive the Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday. In fact, they were only trotted for breaking a convention and seen as kowtowing to a Big Brother political ally for no apparent collective common cause. If the two AIADMK leaders had any genuine reason for appeasing the BJP leader by going the extra mile and even hailing him as "Chanakya", they have not yet revealed it to the people of the state.

The people might ask about it when the time comes — perhaps, when they would go to them to seek their votes in 2021. But prior to that, what will be the fallout of the much-hyped visit of Amit Shah, for whom it was an extraordinarily long night with BJP functionaries and other visitors till 2.30 am on Sunday? The BJP cadre who stayed awake listening to one of their most prominent leaders may have returned home enthused over their party's projected future prospects in the state where their candidates have been generally vying with Neta in the vote count.

But beyond that what did the state BJP gain? In the run-up to the visit, the state leadership had said that the news of Mr Shah coming to town itself was sending shivers down the spines of Opposition leaders. Whatever he meant by that, a "Go Back" hashtag trended on Twitter for a day and even a man was arrested for hurling a placard towards the visiting dignitary from the welcoming crowd. Nothing, however, interfered with Mr Shah's engagements and nothing helped the BJP's popularity to soar either. For, more than visitors, it's local leaders who need to gain people's confidence, which definitely can't be done by taking out disruptive marches carrying spears, even if they are blunt.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

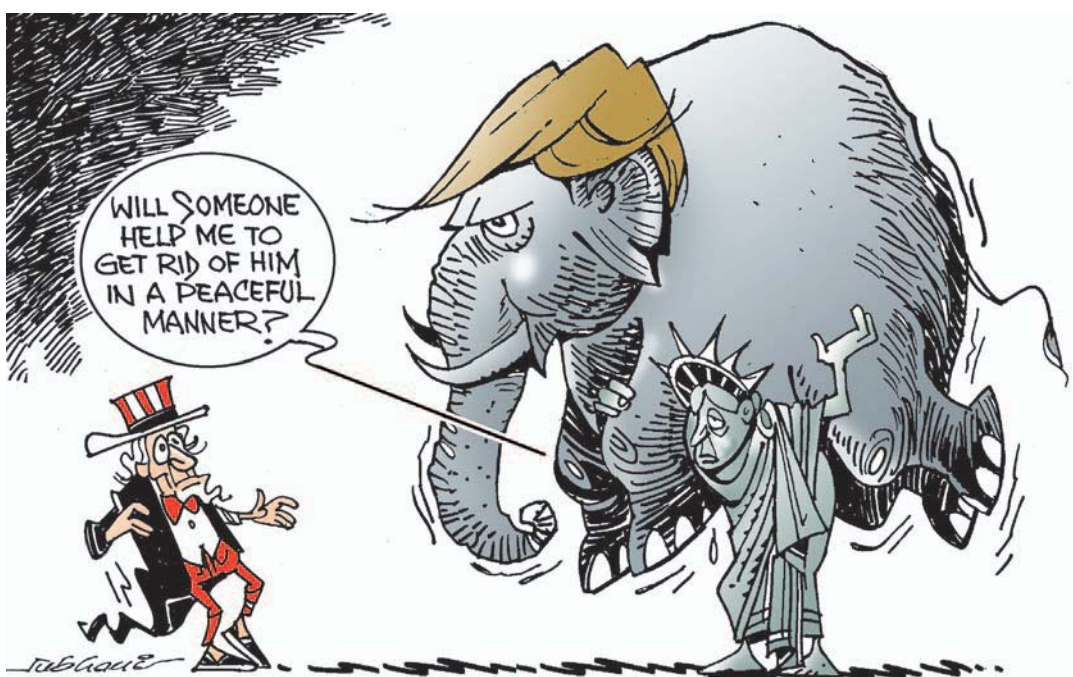
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Subhani



Theatres of the New Cold War



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

What would the new Cold War look like as China attempts to achieve its misconceived trust with the destiny of becoming the world's pre-eminent power by 2049, completing one hundred years as a modern Communist state albeit with capitalist characters?

Where then would China's push points lie? The first and obvious one — is the Western Pacific. China has been now for decades trying to break out of the first and the second island chains as well as surmount the Malacca dilemma effectively.

What are these island chains and do they serve any strategic purpose today in containing or constraining China? The first one embraces Kuril Islands, main Japanese archipelago, Okinawa, northern part of the Philippine archipelagos, Malay Peninsula and Taiwan. The second one comprises the islands of Japan stretching to Guam and the islands of Micronesia. China has so far succeeded in establishing a robust presence through its grey zone actions in the first island chain only. In the Spratly and Paracel Island chain in the South China Sea, China is growing land to augment its entitlement to the waters of the region. It is landfilling submerged reefs building artificial islands that are being fashioned into outlier military bases.

Herein lies the rub. These two island chains are strategically significant for the US and its hub and spoke security relationships from Japan all the way down to Australia. As General Douglas MacArthur, in his farewell address to the US Congress as far

back as 1951, explained, "All this was changed by our Pacific victory, our strategic frontier then shifted to embrace the entire Pacific Ocean which became a vast moat to protect us as long as we hold it. Indeed, it acts as a protective shield for all of the Americas and all free lands of the Pacific Ocean area. We control it to the shores of Asia by a chain of islands extending in an arc from the Aleutians to the Mariannas held by us and our free allies. From this island chain we can dominate with sea and air power every Asiatic port from Vladivostok to Singapore and prevent any hostile movement into the Pacific..."

Maybe not so much militarily but geo-politically this thesis is as relevant today as it was in 1951. For the Chinese, therefore, it is equally important to break through this perimeter if they want to become a serious blue water power.

It would be instructive to note that China's shipping imperatives traverse the Taiwan Straits, pass through the South China Sea, and into the Indian Ocean via the Malacca Straits. West of the Indian subcontinent, it splits in two. One track skirts the northern tier of the Arabian Sea and transits through the Hormuz Strait into the Persian Gulf. The other lane continues on to the Horn of Africa and cones through the Bab al Mandeb Strait into the Red Sea. From there, it exits through the Suez Canal into the Mediterranean. These crucial sea lanes of communication and Commerce (SLOCs) are China's nemesis as 80 per cent of China's oil imports and crucial minerals flow from Africa and the Middle East, and to the major export mar-

kets of Europe along these waterways.

The North Arabian Sea is therefore a critical area for China. To protect its interests and project power Gwadar in southwest Pakistan seems the obvious answer to its problem. East of Hormuz it is already seen as China's sentinel in the Indian Ocean. Though economically unviable it enables direct transport linkages between China and the Indian Ocean thereby helping it overcome the choke points of the Straits of Malacca.

However, the moment China converts Gwadar into a full-fledged military base it would come in conflict with the entrenched powers in the region namely Iran, GCC countries and most importantly the US whose Fifth Fleet is headquartered in Bahrain and it maintains its biggest concentration of military personnel in the Middle East at the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. China will also have to contend with a new dynamic in the region the new-found relationship between the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Israel. India that sits on the other side of the Arabian Sea would be a natural antagonist of any Chinese presence in these waters.

The next theatre of the Cold War would be Africa where the Chinese have invested resources much before the formal commencement of the Belt and Road Initiative. China's first internationally acknowledged military facility was established in August 2017 at Djibouti in the Horn of Africa. The Chinese People's Liberation Army Support Base is oper-

The next theatre of the Cold War would be Africa where the Chinese have invested resources much before the formal commencement of the Belt and Road Initiative

ated by the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). This hub will facilitate the movement of the Chinese Navy across the entire Indian Ocean. However there are traditional powers in that area namely Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, to name but a few. They are not going to be comfortable with an alien military presence in their lands. Why would they want China to replace the United States as the outside power balancer in the region? It, therefore, will create multiple friction points for China, were it to flex its muscles.

The most portentous challenge lies in South Asia. China is already in a tense stalemate with India in Eastern Ladakh. Maldives has been targeted by China's voraciousness. Maldives debt to China is estimated to be at least \$1.5 billion that represents more than 30 per cent of its GDP. Under the Abdulla Yameen administration (2013-2018), massive BRI infrastructure loans were taken and contracts subsequently awarded to Chinese companies at inflated prices. Though things seem to look a tad more balanced after Ibrahim Mohamed Solih became President but the debts do remain on the Maldives national balance sheet. Similarly, the cumulative value of Chinese infrastructure investment to Sri Lanka amounts to \$12.1 billion between 2006 and July 2019. Were the Chinese to push these two countries for military concessions and with the US showing an interest in both Maldives and Sri Lanka the Chinese may have to deal with both India and the US in South Asia. This though is not in India's best interests as both these nations are considered within its eminent domain.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

PROHIBITION IN AP

The CM deserves a pat for his resolve to introduce prohibition at all cost. It was women who forced late NTR to introduce prohibition earlier. Now, by using 90 lakh women for the purpose, the government should easily be able to achieve the goal. It survived the revenue loss in lockdown and fulfilled poll promises.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

ANGRY BJP

It seems that the BJP is angry with the people of AP. Their comment that the state of affairs of AP will remain the same as long as regional parties rule the state is untenable. As a national party we expect the so called national party to understand that regional parties also play a role. Public are happy to know who should rule whom?

D.S.P. Rao
Kakinada

PENSIONERS PLIGHT

The Central government pensioners, especially those who are in the lower rungs, are put to hardships due to freezing of Dearness Relief from January 2020 to June 2021. DA and DRs are usually paid to compensate for the rising inflation. If we look at the present cost of living, prices of several essential commodities have shot up. Besides this, pensioners' expenses are increasing due to illness in this Covid period. In these circumstances, is it fair to impound the Dearness Relief till June 2021?

P.V. Prasad
Vijayawada

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

People warned against cycle-theft

HYDERABAD, November 22 From September there has been 91 cases of cycle-thefts from various localities in the city. A majority of them are committed in busy areas like shopping centres, cinema theatres, hotels, and other places where owners left them unattended and unlocked, the police said. The police arrested several criminals and recovered many cycles from them. The bulletin asked people to co-operate with the police by locking their cycles and not leaving them unattended. In some cases criminals who were caught redhanded are being let off after the lost cycles are returned.

Kishwar Desai
London Diary



Anti-Semitism is why Meghnad quit; all hope for Christmas shots

Finally — the good news is that a vaccine is coming, hopefully by Christmas! Indeed not just one, but six are running a close race and are likely to touch the finishing tape almost simultaneously. Our own Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine was off to an early start but ran into a few problems. The UK has ordered 100 million of them. No one had foreseen Pfizer/BioNTech would get in ahead. So very quickly, we have ordered 40 million of these. The poor health minister has scrambled together enough money to also order five million of the Moderna vaccine. It looks like we may be vaccinating by late December. Maybe we need to be singing, "On the First Day of Christmas My True Love Gave to Me an AstraZeneca vaccine..."

On the personal front, it was quite a tumultuous week for us, as my husband, Meghnad Desai, left the Labour Party after 49 years! It had been a decision he had been mulling over for while as he felt that the anti-Semitism in the

party had not been dealt with and needed to be rooted out. He has fought against this racism his entire life. And when Jeremy Corbyn was recently readmitted to the Party (most of the trouble over anti-Semitism had been during his tenure as the head of the Labour Party) Meghnad felt enough is enough. Of course, it came after discussions and was not a sudden decision — as he has always been a well-respected member of the Labour Party, and has numerous friends within it. But most of them, even if they don't admit it, will know why he felt it was essential to quit. The irony is that Meghnad's autobiography is out this month — and one wishes he had been able to include a chapter on this very important move on his part! But perhaps he can discuss it now at the book launches.

So look out for some interesting revelations as Meghnad talks about his book, *Rebellious Lord*.

One is never sure if lifting the lockdown is good news or bad news. We now hear that

in early December we will go back to a partial lifting of the various restrictions. Everyone is fighting the big fear that it may be a dull winter, with seven days of Christmas celebrated with no more than six people. Since the government has been (as are other governments) befuddled by the virus and does not know what it is doing or can do, we just have to bump along.

Even Boris is in isolation because Tory MPs have not learnt about distancing. When he met a bunch of them, one of them was infected so "test and trace" pinged Boris and told him to isolate. As he already had Covid, he should be immune and not require isolation. But you can never be too careful. He does seem to enjoy his isolation as he can do his parliamentary business from his flat at the top of Number 11.

Last week we went through a perfect storm as one of Boris' closest advisers, Dom Cummings, was asked to leave along with his second in command. Apparently Carrie Symonds, the

Prime Minister's partner, decided it was time for a Christmas cleanup and took over the reins. She is an environmental activist and suddenly Boris was supporting a Green economy. He announced that all petrol and diesel cars would be gone by 2030 and only electric cars will be allowed. This calls for a reality show called the "Kitchen Cabinet Files" Of course, no one knows what the economy will be like in 2030 — and one wonders why we are still talking about private cars — when we should be discussing more and more public transport.

One always has the fond hope that the UK government would be corruption-free. But the pandemic seems to have brought a sleaze virus into the system. We now hear about a host of scams in which cronies have been given millions in fees and contracts to deliver dubious supplies. The latest to come to light is a contract given to a fashion store in Florida which promised to

deliver three truckloads of PPE suits as the health service did not have enough PPE suits in stock. But the appointed contractor got a subcontractor who did not deliver. It was in a court case in Florida between the contractor and his subcontractor that it was revealed the contractor had collected millions in his fee in addition to the money for the supplies. Of course, in the panic over the pandemic many unfortunate decisions were taken the world over — but it seems these cases may have revealed some deeper malaise. I appeal to Carrie Symonds to cast a glance at this. All our hopes rest with her now... I suggest we start writing "Dear Carrie" letters to Downing Street, and action will undoubtedly be taken.

Kishwar Desai is an award winning author, and playwright. Her latest book, The Longest Kiss: The Life And Times of Devika Rani, will be published shortly.

IN BRIEF MAN DIES IN SHARK ATTACK IN AUSTRALIA

Sydney, Nov. 22: A man died Sunday after being attacked by a shark in Western Australia, the eighth fatality in the county this year.

Police were called to Cable Beach, a popular tourist spot on Australia's Indian Ocean coast, at about 8:40 a.m. The 55-year-old was pulled from the water with serious injuries and treated by police before paramedics arrived.

He died at the scene, police said. Park rangers immediately closed the beach. The man was the eighth to die in a shark attack in Australia this year, the highest toll since 1929 when nine died. The introduction of shark nets at popular beaches in the 1930s led to a significant fall in fatal attacks.

14 PRO-IRAN FIGHTERS IN SYRIA KILLED

Beirut, Nov. 22: At least 14 pro-Iran militia fighters from Iraq and Afghanistan were killed in air strikes in war-torn eastern Syria, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Sunday.

The strikes on Saturday night in Deir Ezzor province, on the border with Iraq, were likely carried out by Israeli war planes, the Observatory said.

The Israeli army said it doesn't comment on foreign reports. More than 10 strikes hit positions of Iran-backed militias outside the border town of Albu Kamal, according to the war monitor.

The attack killed eight Iraqis and six Afghan fighters, it said.

It also destroyed two bases as well as several military vehicles, the Observatory added.

Iran-backed fighters are heavily deployed in a stretch of territory between the Syrian towns of Albu Kamal and Mayadeen, both former strongholds of the Islamic State group.

Along with Russia, Iran has been a key backer of the Damascus regime in its nine-year-long civil war. Israel has carried out hundreds of air and missile strikes on Syria since the civil war broke out in 2011, targeting Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah forces.

NINE KILLED IN ISLAMIC STATE AMBUSH IN IRAQ

Samarra, Iraq, Nov. 22: Six Iraqi security personnel and three civilians were killed in an ambush Saturday carried out by the Islamic State group north of Baghdad, police and a local official said.

A police source said a roadside bomb hit a car and that jihadists opened fire on a rescue team of policemen and state-aligned paramilitary forces when they arrived at the scene, about 200 kilometres (120 miles) from the capital.

Four members of the Hashed al-Shaabi and two policemen died along with three civilians, Mohammed Zidane, the mayor of Zouiyah, 50 kilometres from the city of Tikrit, told AFP.

He updated an earlier civilian death toll of two.

There was no immediate word of casualties among the assailants, but Zidane said those killed among the Hashed, a coalition of mainly Shiite forces, were Sunni tribesmen.

Both the mayor and police said the ambush was the work of IS jihadists.

NIGERIA AMBUSH TOLL RISES TO 8, 2 BODIES FOUND

Kano, Nigeria, Nov. 22: The death toll in a jihadist ambush on a military convoy in northeast Nigeria's Borno state on Saturday rose to eight after two more bodies of soldiers were recovered, security sources said. Three security sources had initially told AFP six people, including five soldiers and an allied militiaman, were killed in the attack.

"The death toll from the ambush is now eight. The bodies of two more soldiers were recovered," said one of the sources. "It is now seven soldiers and one militiaman killed," he said. The toll was confirmed by another source.

Islamic State West Africa Province fighters armed with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades opened fire on a convoy of soldiers and an anti-jihadist militia in Kwayamti village, 60 kilometres (36 miles) north of the regional capital Maiduguri.

The convoy was on its way to the town of Baga as a security detail for the state governor, Babagana Umara Zulum who flew by helicopter earlier in the day.

England plans tougher tiered steps on Covid from Dec. 2

UK media speculates PM will declare week of freedom around Christmas

London, Nov. 22: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will set out a "Covid Winter Plan" to control the spread of Coronavirus in a speech on Monday, when he is expected to set out some tougher tiered measures to come in as England's lockdown officially ends on December 2. More areas are set to be placed into the higher tiers of tougher movement and household mixing restrictions and some tiers will be strengthened to safeguard lockdown progress to keep the deadly virus under control, Downing Street said.

Ahead of the nearly month-long stay-at-home lockdown, England had been placed in a three-tier system of graded social distancing rules based on the infection rates in particular regions. The government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) is expected to publish research on Monday saying that measures in the previous tiers were not strong enough.

More details of the so-called Covid Winter Plan are expected on Monday in a speech to the House of Commons, after Cabinet discussions on Sunday which Johnson will be conducting virtually as he continues to self-isolate following contact with an MP who later tested positive for Covid-19.

Some UK media reports also suggest that Johnson is expected to announce up to a week of freedom from Covid-19 restrictions at Christmas, subject to

an agreement with the devolved governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It will involve a UK-wide relaxation of rules, reportedly from December 22 to 28, so that several families can join in one "bubble" to celebrate Christmas on December 25.

"Everyone's efforts during the current national restrictions have helped bring the virus back under control, slowed its spread and eased pressures on the NHS," a Downing Street spokesperson said. "But the Prime Minister and his scientific advisers are clear the virus is still present — and without regional restrictions it could quickly run out of control again before vaccines and mass testing have had an effect. That would put in jeopardy the progress the country has made, and once again risk intolerable pressure on the NHS," the spokesperson said.

Downing Street also said that the Winter Plan will set out how people will be able to see their loved ones at Christmas, adding that ministers will be warning that this will not be a normal festive period. There are reports that the 10 PM curfew for bars and restaurants could be extended by an hour. Last orders would still be called at 10 PM, but people would have until 11pm to finish their food and drink. Johnson faces a rebellion from some MPs from within his own Conservative Party.

— PTI

US surpasses 12 million cases, 2.5 lakh deaths

Washington, Nov. 22: The United States surpassed 12 million Covid-19 cases Saturday, according to the Johns Hopkins University real-time tracker. The world's largest economy currently has 12,019,960 cases and 255,414 deaths, both by far the worst global tolls. The new toll comes just six days after the US crossed the 11-million case threshold.

Cases have been surging in the US at an alarming rate, forcing many cities to re-impose punishing lockdown measures.

Health authorities have

urged people to stay home for next week's Thanksgiving holiday, when Americans usually travel from coast to coast to be with their families.

New York City has shut down schools for its 1.1 million students, while California began imposing a 10:00 pm to 5:00 am curfew from Saturday.

Chicago — the US' third-largest city — has been under stay-at-home orders since Monday.

On Friday, President Donald Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr, announced he had tested positive for Covid-19.

— AFP

DUTCH CULL 1.9 L CHICKENS AFTER BIRD FLU

The Hague, Nov. 22: Dutch authorities have culled some 190,000 chickens after a highly-contagious strain of bird flu broke out at at least two poultry farms, the agriculture ministry said Sunday.

Health workers slaughtered around 100,000 hens at a poultry farm at Hekendorp outside Gouda while 90,000 chicks were culled at Witmarsum, in northern Friesland.

In both cases "a highly-contagious strain of the H5 variant" was suspected, the ministry said in a statement.

There were no other poultry farms within a one kilometre radius of the outbreaks, it added.

"Both farms were cleared to prevent further spread of the disease," the ministry said.

Seasonal bird flu has been detected at various farms around the Netherlands since October, blamed mainly on migratory birds.

Dutch Agriculture Minister Carola Schouten on October 23 imposed preventative indoor containment on all commercial poultry farms after two dead swans were discovered carrying the highly contagious H5N8 variety of bird flu.

— AFP

Don Pennsylvania lawsuit dismissed

Washington, Nov. 22: Donald Trump presented "strained" legal arguments without merit and "speculative accusations" that were not supported by evidence, a federal judge has ruled as she dismissed the Pennsylvania lawsuit of his campaign, in a major setback to the US president's efforts to challenge the November 3 election results.

US Middle District of Pennsylvania Judge Matthew Brann on Saturday turned down a request for an injunction in the case in Pennsylvania to challenge the poll results, which has been won by Trump's Democratic rival Joe Biden. Judge Brann, who had a few days ago alleged that she had received harassing phone calls, ruled that the Trump campaign "presented strained legal arguments without merit and speculative accusations that were unsupported by evidence."

"In the United States of America, this cannot justify the disenfranchisement of a single voter, let alone all the voters of its sixth most populated state. Our people, laws, and institutions demand more," the judge wrote dismissing the lawsuit filed by the Trump campaign earlier this month alleging irregularities in the voting process. In her scathing opinion, Judge Brann said the Trump campaign asked the court to "disenfranchise" almost seven million voters.

"This court has been unable to find any case in which a plaintiff has sought such a drastic remedy in the contest of an election, in terms of the sheer volume of votes asked to be invalidated," she said. "One might expect that

TRUMP CAMPAIGN FOR RECOUNT OF VOTE IN GEORGIA

Washington, Nov. 22: The Trump Campaign has filed a petition for recount of votes in Georgia, days after US President-elect Joe Biden wrested the Republican stronghold by a little over 12,000 votes.

Democrat Biden became the first Democrat to have won the key battleground state since 1992 after a hand recount of nearly five million votes, that lasted for several days. Georgia hadn't voted for a Democratic presidential candidate since Bill Clinton in 1992.

In case of a recount, election officials in Georgia will have to re-count the five million hand-recounted and audited legal ballots. "We are focused on ensuring that every aspect of Georgia State Law and the US Constitution are followed so that every legal vote is counted," the Trump campaign said.

— PTI

when seeking such a startling outcome, a plaintiff would come formidably armed with compelling legal arguments and factual proof of rampant corruption, such that this court would have no option but to regrettably grant the proposed injunctive relief despite the impact it would have on such a large group of citizens," the judge said. Trump has refused to concede the November 3 election and has filed multiple lawsuits.

— PTI

POMPEO MEETS TALIBAN, AFGHAN NEGOTIATORS

Washington, Nov. 22: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has met negotiators from the Afghan government and the Taliban in Doha, amidst signs of progress in their stalled talks and an uptick in violence that threatens to jeopardise the peace push in the war-torn country.

This was the first meeting of the top American diplomat with the Taliban and the Afghans representatives after the US' recent announcement that it will reduce the number of American troops in Afghanistan and Iraq to 2,500 each by January 15 next year. The US currently has a little over 4,500 troops in Afghanistan. "Met with both Taliban and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's negotiating teams in Doha," Pompeo said in a tweet.

— PTI

Biden admin might engage more with India, says expert

Washington, Nov. 22: The incoming Biden administration will have a more deliberate and thoughtful engagement with India, a noted foreign policy expert has said, asserting that there will be an opportunity to work with New Delhi to balance the burgeoning influence of China in the region. Sohini Chatterjee, a faculty member at Columbia University who previously served as senior policy advisor in the Obama administration, said in some cases, there will be a "little bit of consistency" as both US President Donald Trump and President-elect Joe Biden believe that India is an important strategic partner in the region.

But Trump's relation-

ship with India was a bit more short-term and reactive, the Biden administration is likely to have a slightly more deliberate and thoughtful engagement with India, Chatterjee told PTI.

"I think there'll be an opportunity to really work with India to balance the kind of burgeoning influence of China in the region, and structure a dialogue that that seeks, in some ways to counter-balance that burgeoning influence," she said, adding that the QUAD engagement involving Japan and Australia would continue. Chatterjee said for the Biden administration at the minimum human rights will now be "on the table as a critical issue to address."

— PTI

Protesters set ablaze part of Guatemala Congress building

Guatemala City, Nov. 22: Hundreds of protesters broke into Guatemala's Congress and burned part of the building Saturday amid growing demonstrations against President Alejandro Giammattei and the legislature for approving a budget that cut educational and health spending.

The protest came as about 7,000 people were

demonstrating in front of the National Palace in Guatemala City against the budget, which protesters say was negotiated and passed by legislators in secret while the Central American country was distracted by the fallout of back-to-back hurricanes and the Covid-19.

Video on social media showed flames shooting out a window in the leg-

islative building. According to media reports, security agents fired tear gas at protesters and there were people injured. Giammattei condemned the fires in his Twitter account Saturday.

"Anyone who is proven to have participated in the criminal acts will be punished with the full force of the law."

— AP



People hold a pig model with "I am a ractopamine pig" written on it during a protest in Taipei, on Sunday.

— AP

Thousands take to the streets in Taiwan against US pork imports

Taipei, Nov. 22: Thousands of people marched in Taipei's streets on Sunday demanding the reversal of a decision to allow US pork imports into Taiwan, alleging food safety issues.

President Tsai Ing-wen's administration lifted a long-standing ban on US pork and beef imports in August, in a move seen as one of the first steps toward possibly negotiat-

ing a bilateral trade agreement with the US.

The ban is due to be lifted in January. That decision has met with fierce opposition, both by the opposition Kuomintang party and individual citizens. The new policy allows imports of pork with acceptable residues of ractopamine, a drug added into animal feed that promotes the growth of lean meat that some farmers

use in pigs.

The drug is banned by the European Union, but is legal in the United States. Demonstrators marched in front of the Presidential Office Building as part of an annual labor march. "I came here today to oppose the import of ractopamine," said Kelvin Chen, a 54-year-old computer engineer who was marching.

"I feel these days many

who do business are not ethical. If they mix the US pork with Taiwan pork and then sell it to us average consumers, we as individuals have no way to know the source of the pork." "I have a child and when we eat things with ractopamine, it's not good for our bodies," said Jacky Tsui, a 37-year-old factory worker. "I hope the government can see that we citizens oppose this."

— AP

COVID | IMPACT

Coronavirus pandemic has reduced the annual gathering of world top leaders into a webinar

Masks, screens, empty chairs at virtual Saudi G20 summit

Riyadh, Nov. 21: Mask-clad reporters filed into a Riyadh ballroom-turned-media centre Saturday after mandatory temperature checks, to cover physically a virtual G20 summit originally conceived as a grand coming-out party for host Saudi Arabia.

The media room in the capital's Crown Plaza hotel would have been buzzing with hundreds of international reporters were it not for the Coronavirus pandemic that has reduced the annual gathering of

world leaders into a giant webinar.

As the summit opened, the handful of foreign media present pointed their cameras to a large flickering screen where world leaders popped up in multiple tiny windows — one shuffling papers, another seen calling for technical help and one casually chatting to an aide.

For Saudi Arabia, the first Arab nation to host the summit, the media centre — a cavernous chandelier-studded room

filled with mostly unoccupied work stations — is emblematic of a lost opportunity to showcase its ambitious modernisation drive.

"This is an act of God," said Adel al-Jubeir, the kingdom's minister of state for foreign affairs, referring to the pandemic that made a physical summit impossible.

The austere kingdom has seen a sweeping transformation in the past three years — a driving ban on women has been lifted,

cinemas reopened and social mixing of the genders has become increasingly common as the once-feared religious police were rendered toothless.

"It would have been nice to have thousands of people come to Saudi Arabia, walk the streets, meet Saudi men and women, see the changes that have happened in the country, feel the changes," Jubeir said at a media briefing ahead of the summit.

A physical summit would also have been an

opportunity to highlight the kingdom's tourism potential — the new "white oil" the petro-state is keen to develop to diversify its revenues.

Saudi Arabia is endowed with stunning landscapes, but tourism remains a hard sell in a country with strict social codes and an absolute ban on alcohol.

Still, the government sought to make the most of the physical media centre.

Adorned with portraits of Saudi destinations, the centre could be mistaken

for a tourism fair.

Liveried waiters offered four different types of Arabic coffee — each from a different corner of the kingdom.

Coffee table books extolling Saudi culinary delights were placed next to guides on destinations such as the historic city of Al Ula and the mountain resort of Abha — places of immense natural beauty but little known outside the country.

The kingdom hosted a media dinner on the eve of

the summit in the historic town of Diriyah, close to Riyadh and known for its traditional mud-brick architecture.

Dressed in loose fitting traditional thobes and clutching daggers, dancers bobbed and swayed amid the ruins.

To highlight other government projects, journalists were offered official interviews and briefings on the sidelines of the summit that were unrelated to G20.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

Herrmann parts ways with AFI

New Delhi: Athletics Federation of India's High Performance Director Volker Herrmann, whose contract was extended by the Sports Ministry till the end of 2024 Olympics, has relinquished the post, saying he "could no longer meet the self-imposed expectations coming along with the role." An AFI source said that Herrmann resigned a few weeks ago but he did not give any "specific reason". The German was appointed in June 2019 for a term till the end of the postponed Tokyo Olympics in 2021. In September, the ministry extended his contract till the end of 2024 Olympics but AFI sources said he did not sign the new contract. "After one-and-a-half fruitful and inspiring years in India, the day has come when I could not any longer meet the self-imposed expectations coming along with the role of AFI's high-performance director, which is why I resigned from my position three weeks ago," Herrmann wrote on his Facebook page. — PTI

It's Medvedev vs Thiem in final

London: Instead of No 1 Novak Djokovic vs No 2 Rafael Nadal for the ATP Finals trophy, it'll be No 3 Dominic Thiem against No 4 Daniil Medvedev. Nadal had won 71 matches in a row when grabbing the opening set, and he served for the victory in Saturday's semifinals when leading 5-4 in the second set. But Medvedev broke at love there and came all the way back to win 3-6 7-6(4) 6-3. That came after Thiem frittered away four match points in his semifinal against Djokovic because he was "tight and nervous" during a second-set tiebreaker. Thiem gathered himself and eventually reeled off seven of the match's last eight points after trailing 4-0 in the last tiebreaker, winning 7-5 6-7(10) 7-6(5). — AFP

Afridi to lead Galle Gladiators

Karachi: Former Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi will lead Galle Gladiators franchise in the coronavirus-hit inaugural Lankan Premier League (LPL) Twenty20 tournament to be played in Hambantota, Sri Lanka from November 26 to December 16. Afridi was on Saturday named captain of the Galle Gladiators team, which has been brought by Pakistani businessman, Nadeem Omar who also owns the popular Quetta Gladiators franchise in the Pakistan Super League. Initially, Omar had announced Sarfaraz Ahmed as captain of Galle Gladiators but he had to alter his decision after the wicket-keeper batsman was named in the Pakistan squad for the tour of New Zealand. The inaugural LPL has been in trouble as several leading players withdrew from the event. — PTI

Ronaldo scoring streak continues

Milan, Nov. 22: Cristiano Ronaldo continued his scoring streak with another two goals as Juventus won 2-0 against Cagliari to move second in Serie A. Ronaldo has now scored eight goals in his last five matches. "When you have a champion like Ronaldo you can achieve any result, he is an example for everyone and he only has to continue like this," Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo said. Juventus moved a point below league leader AC Milan, which visits Napoli on Sunday. Third-place Sassuolo is a point further back ahead of its match against Hellas Verona. Atalanta and Lazio are among four clubs on 14 points, three fewer than Milan. Lazio won 2-0 at Crotone earlier on Saturday and Atalanta was surprisingly held 0-0 at Spezia. — AP

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Odisha FC vs Hyderabad FC from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

English Premier League: Burnley vs Crystal Palace from 11 pm on Star Sports Select 1, HD

WWE

Raw: Bouts from 6.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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RED-HOT SPURS

Tottenham on top of EPL after beating Man City

Manchester, Nov. 22: Pep Guardiola admitted Manchester City played perfectly into Tottenham's hands as Spurs shot to the top of the table with a 2-0 win thanks to goals on the counter-attack from Son Heung-min and Giovanni Lo Celso.

Spurs have not won an English top-flight title in 60 years, but showed their title credentials with a defensive resilience to frustrate City's domination of possession and ruthlessly take their chances as they scored with their only two shots on target.

Defeat leaves City already eight points off the leaders, albeit with a game in hand, down in 10th with just three wins from their opening eight games.

The writing was on the wall for the visitors after just five minutes when one simple ball over the top from Tanguy Ndombele caught Joao Cancelo sleeping and Son had the pace and precise finish under Ederson to register his sixth goal in 11 games against City.

"The stats speak for themselves, we were better in many departments but we conceded a goal we cannot concede," said Guardiola.

"It was the perfect scenario for them. We knew (Harry) Kane drops and Son runs in behind. We have to defend better."

Everton win 3-2
Aided by another embarrassing missed penalty by Fulham, Everton ended their three-match losing streak with a 3-2 win on Sunday as Dominic Calvert-Lewin scored twice.

Two weeks after Ademola Lookman failed with a scuffed, injury-time "Panenka" penalty at West Ham, Ivan Cavaleiro took over spot-kick duties for Fulham but slipped as he attempted his shot, kicked the ball against his standing foot and saw it loop



Giovanni Lo Celso (right) celebrates his goal with fellow goalscorer Son Heung-min during their EPL game against Manchester City. — Twitter

RESULTS

Fulham (Bobby Reid 15, Ruben Loftus-Cheek 70)	2
Everton (Dominic Calvert-Lewin 1, 29; Abdoulaye Doucoure 35)	3
Tottenham (Son Heung-min 5, Giovanni Lo Celso 65)	2
Man. City	0
Man. United (Bruno Fernandes 56 P)	1
West Brom	0
Sheffield Utd West Ham (S. Haller 56)	0 1

over the crossbar. Everton was leading 3-1 at the time and although Fulham set up a tense finale with a second goal in the 70th minute by Ruben Loftus-Cheek, the visitors held on to return to winning ways. — AP

Atletico edge past Barca

Madrid, Nov. 22: Atletico Madrid delivered a major boost to their hopes of winning La Liga on Saturday by beating Barcelona 1-0 and consigning their opponents to their worst start to a league season in 29 years.

Yannick Carrasco finished brilliantly from range after mistakes from Gerard Pique and Marc Andre ter Stegen left the goal gaping but Barca, and a below-par Lionel Messi, failed to respond at the Wanda Metropolitano.

Instead, Atletico recorded their first league victory over Barcelona in 10 years, which puts them three points ahead of Real Madrid, with a game in hand, and second in the table, level on points with early leaders Real Sociedad.

Like any coach. I am responsible. We know we have to improve the results.

— RONALD KOEMAN
Barcelona coach

It also leaves their opponents languishing in 10th, with Barcelona's 11 points from their first eight games their worst tally at this stage since the 1991-92 season.

"Like any coach, I am responsible," said coach Ronald Koeman. "We know we have to improve the results. I continue to trust the players I have."

Real Madrid had earlier been held to a 1-1 draw by in-form Villarreal, another slip-up for the reigning

champions to enforce the sense that this could be Atletico's year.

And beating Barcelona in La Liga for the first time since 2010 — before Simeone arrived as coach — will do wonders for the team's belief and extends what is now a considerable advantage in the table.

It also extends Atletico's unbeaten run in the league to 24 matches.

"Today we were able to win but it absolutely doesn't change anything," said Simeone. "We're working well and I'm excited about this team."

Another disappointing day for Barca was soured further by the sight of Pique hobbling off in tears with what the club said was a "sprained right knee". — AFP

HYDERABAD FC, ODISHA SEEK FRESH START

Bambolim (Goa), Nov. 22: A fresh start will be the mantra for both Odisha FC and Hyderabad FC when the two sides clash in the ISL, here on Monday. Both teams had seasons to forget the last time. Hyderabad ended a miserable campaign in which they lost 12 games and conceded 39 goals. And while Odisha did manage to do the double over their opponents, they too did not fare too well overall, letting in 31 goals. But these stats are just a number for Odisha coach Stuart Baxter. — PTI

BAYERN FRUSTRATED

Bundesliga leader Bayern Munich fought back to draw with Werder Bremen 1-1 as their nine-game winning run across all competitions ended. Maximilian Eggstein fired Bremen ahead before the break, but the visitors were unable to hold on. — AP

16-year-old Moukoko sets record

Berlin, Nov. 22: Erling Haaland scored four goals and Youssoufa Moukoko became the youngest player in Bundesliga history as Borussia Dortmund beat Hertha Berlin 5-2 to move second.

The buildup had been all about Moukoko, who was eligible for his debut after turning 16 on Friday. But Haaland stole the show on a cold night in Berlin on Saturday before making way for the youngster's debut in the 85th minute.

"I think he's the biggest talent in the world right now. 16 years and one day, that's quite amazing. He has a big career ahead of him," Haaland said about Moukoko to ESPN.

"I'm over 20 years, I'm getting old now. That's



Youssoufa Moukoko

how it is." The first half was a hard-fought contest between two teams determined to close down the other's space. Dortmund dominated possession but struggled to find gaps in Hertha's committed defense.

In contrast, Hertha's Dodi Lukebakio was allowed too much room

when he surged forward in the 33rd minute and Matheus Cunha let fly from outside the penalty area to break the deadlock. It was a different story after the break. Haaland very quickly equalized when Emre Can sent a low cross to the far post for the Norwegian to convert from close distance.

Hertha was still recovering when Julian Brandt surged down the left and played a clever ball in to set up Haaland for his second in the 49th. Dortmund's players suddenly seemed to find plenty of space, and the visitors' attacks kept coming. A careless back pass from Marvin Plattenhardt led to Haaland's third goal in the 62nd.

Haaland got ahead of Omar Alderete and rounded the goalkeeper to complete his hat trick. Raphaël Guerreiro scored Dortmund's fourth in the 70th. Cunha pulled one back with a penalty in the 79th, but Haaland replied a minute later with his fourth, set up by the 17-year-old Jude Bellingham.

Lack of red-ball preparation a concern for India



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

The news coming out of the National Cricket Academy (NCA), Bengaluru, augurs well for Indian cricket, as far as their Test squad is concerned. The first was that India pacer, Ishant Sharma's progress was charted as 'looking good' by those in charge of his recuperation process at the Academy. The Delhi speedster was caught by a video showing him going through the paces under the watchful eye of former India seamer, Paras Mhambrey, the current India Under-19 bowling

coach. Ishant had checked into the NCA post getting an abdominal muscle tear during the IPL that recently concluded at the United Arab Emirates. The second bit of cheer came from the other Sharma, Rohit, who is also going through a procedure of strengthening exercises at the NCA to toughen his hamstring and get ready to take the fight to Australia in time to walk out to open the Indian innings in the first Test slated for December 17.

Both Rohit and Ishant

are important cogs in India's wheels for their Test campaign. With skipper Virat Kohli being available for the first Test only and leaving on paternity leave post that match, having the wounded warriors back in the squad will bolster the team chances of retaining the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Having a fully fit team for red ball cricket, a complete deviation from the game that's played with the white ball, is something the team management must be looking forward to.

Facing-off against the number one Test team in the world is always going to be very difficult especially in conditions that are way different from those that the Indians have experienced while playing the IPL. The big issue that Indian boys will face is the

lack of actual match practice which is way different from intra-team matches played by the squad before the real thing. For starters many members of the Test side have not had a chance to get competitive, real-time match practice.

The only opportunity (of actual match practice) they will get will be in the form of a warm-up match against an Australia 'A' team starting six days before the Adelaide Test. The problem the Indian team facing is that a core group of its members have not had a competitive game of cricket since the lockdown. Those who are in the squads for the shorter formats — One Day (ODI) and Twenty20 (T20) Internationals — will have had a bit of time out in the middle unlike a few who last played the IPL (more

than a month before the Test series) and those who have directly joined the team to Australia.

As far as batsmen are concerned, apart from Kohli, KL Rahul, Mayank Agarwal and Shubman Gill, who will get a taste of competitive cricket, the others in Test squad will get an apology of a (warm-up) match before the first Test. Which effectively means Rohit, Prithvi Shaw, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane and Hanuma Vihari — virtually the Indian top and middle order — will be coming in from the cold to face the match-ready Aussies who have been playing the Sheffield Shield from October 10.

Never has the preparation of an Indian team, poised to play the current leaders of the World

Championship of Test Cricket (WTC), has been so bad, thanks to the extreme circumstances caused by a worldwide pandemic. Modern cricketers go from one international series into another without the luxury that players of the past got by playing many serious first-class matches at the start and in-between Test matches in a long (and tough) series. Today, a player will hope and pray that he finds his form from the start as there are no side matches to try and regain the same before the next Test.

The bilateral series and their schedules, that have been prepared over the last decade, are very tight. The reason being the game today is being driven purely by commercial interests and the attention of the authorities is more on the

bottom line than furthering the game per se. Going forward, the new normal will have many more series packed like a can of sardines which will slowly lead to the demise of the game, particularly the long format versions like Test cricket and first-class cricket.

Considering the circumstances, the two cricket boards could have rejigged the ODI or T20 series to accommodate a few practice matches. The good news of the chance of key Indian players being fit and able to play for the Border-Gavaskar trophy is being welcomed by the team's million fans.

The moot point is will they be able to deliver (according to expectations) against the toughest opponent, coming in straight from the cold?

Rohit ready to bat anywhere in Test

New Delhi, Nov. 22: He has enjoyed and revelled in his new role as a Test opener but Rohit Sharma is ready to be flexible about his batting position in the eagerly-anticipated Test series against Australia as per the demands of the team management.

The senior batsman is expected to play a big role alongside Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane and Cheteshwar Pujara when skipper Virat Kohli returns to India after the opening Test for the birth of his first child.

"I will tell you the same thing that I have told everyone all this while. I will be happy to bat wherever the team wants me to but I don't know if they would change my role as an opener," Rohit said.

He believes that the team management will have figured out his role in the batting order by the time he would reach Australia after completing the strength and conditioning work at an National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru. He had picked up a minor hamstring injury during the IPL.

"I am sure the guys already in Australia must have figured out what are options when Virat leaves and who are the guys who will open the innings," Rohit said.

"Once I reach there, I will



Rohit Sharma

probably have a clearer idea of what's going to happen. I will be okay to bat wherever they want," added Rohit.

Rohit needs to leave for Oz in 3-4 days: Shastrri

India head coach Ravi Shastri has expressed his apprehensions about senior players Rohit Sharma and Ishant Sharma's participation in the upcoming Test series if they don't reach Australia in the next few days.

"He (Rohit) was never going to play the white-ball series, they were just looking to see how long he needed the rest, because you can't afford to be resting for too long," Shastrri told ABC Sport.

"If you need to play in the Test series or any red-ball cricket, you've got to be on the flight in the next three or four days. If you aren't, then it's going to be tough," Shastrri said that NCA's medical team is currently assessing Rohit.

— PTI



Cleiton Silva celebrates after scoring a goal for Bengaluru in their ISL match against Goa on Sunday. — ISL

Angulo inspires Goa comeback

Goa, Nov. 22: Clever substitutions did the trick for FC Goa as the Gaurs rescued a hard-fought point after an entertaining 2-2 draw against Bengaluru FC in match four of the ISL 7 at the Fatorda Stadium here on Sunday. Cleiton Silva (27') and Juanan Gonzalez (57') put Bengaluru ahead before Goa hit back through a brace from Igor Angulo (66', 69').

Goa dominated possession early on, with Bengaluru happy to sit back and maintain their defensive shape. However, both teams failed to create clear-cut opportunities in the opening quarter.

Bengaluru registered their first shot on goal in the 11th minute when Ashique Kuruniyan cut inside from the left, beating three men, before switching onto his weaker right foot. However, his tame attempt on goal was well collected by Goa custo-

dian Mohammad Nawaz. Three minutes before the half-hour mark, the visitors got their lead in unusual fashion, a throw-in creating confusion in the Goa box. Harmanjot Khabra's throw from the left was flicked on towards the face of goal after Jorge Ortiz Mendoza's clearance. Silva was the first to react and headed home to hand Bengaluru the lead.

It wasn't until the 45th minute that Goa got their first shot on goal. Seriton Fernandes' cross found Angulo, whose deft flick went straight to Bengaluru keeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu.

The visitors made one change after the change of ends, with Deshorn Brown replacing Kristian Oseth. Bengaluru soon doubled their lead and it came through a set-piece again, with Juanan getting on the scoresheet — the club's 100th goal in ISL history. — Agencies