


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | THURSDAY | 22 OCTOBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 28.5°C
Min: 25.1°C
RH: 95%
Rainfall: 47.7mm
Forecast: clear.
Max/Min temp. 38/25 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES (+56,149)
77,04,399

DEATHS (+701)
1,16,639

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,579)
TS: 2,26,124
AP: 7,93,299

(+5)
1,287
6,508

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

4,13,01,999

DEATHS 11,32,951

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Nija Ashwayujia Shuddha Shashiti till 7.41 am
Star: Poorvashada till 1.01 am (Friday)
Varjyam: 10.46 am to 12.21 pm
Durmuhurtam: 10.05 am to 10.51 am; 2.41 pm to 3.28 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
HJRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Awwal 4, 1442 AH
PRAYERS(SHAHI MASJID)
Fajar: 4:51 am
Zohar: 11:55 pm
Asar: 4:09 pm
Maghrib: 5:48 pm
Isha: 6:58 pm
SUNSET TODAY 5:46 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6:02 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 11:32 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW -

COUNTER POINT



Selling onions is more profitable and safe!

SHORT TAKES

PLA stumbles in high altitudes

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
HYDERABAD, OCT. 21

Extreme climatic conditions in the high altitude areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh — which has been witnessing massive build-up of troops both by Indian Army and the People's Liberation of Army (PLA) since the last few months — has started to take a toll on the PLA soldiers. Corporal Wang Ya Long of the PLA, who was apprehended by the Indian Army when he strayed across the LAC in Demchok sector on Monday.

Chinese corporal returned by Army

New Delhi: The Indian Army late Tuesday night handed over the Chinese soldier who had strayed across the Line of Actual Control to the People's Liberation Army at the Chushul Moldo meeting point in Ladakh. The Chinese soldier, identified as Corporal Wang Ya Long, was handed back to China after the completion of all formalities. He was caught by the Indian Army in the Demchok sector of eastern Ladakh on Monday. He was provided medical assistance, including oxygen, food and warm clothes, to protect him from the vagaries of extreme altitude and harsh climatic conditions.



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Farooq questioned by ED officials again



WORLD | 5
Pope endorses same-sex civil unions in documentary

SPORTS | 8
Holder rues lack of BLM solidarity in IPL



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Priests offer Pattu Vastrams (silk robes) to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy after Goddess Kanakadurga darshan in Moola Nakshtram as part of Dasara celebrations in Vijayawada on Wednesday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

YSR Bima will benefit 1.41 crore families: CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 21

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday launched the YSR Bima scheme, which would benefit 1.41 crore families by providing insurance cover. Speaking at the launch, Jagan said that the state government will be paying ₹510 crore every year as a premium, despite the Central government hav-

ing withdrawn from the scheme. Terming the loss of the primary bread earner as the worst nightmare for any family, Jagan said that the state government will stand by such families in the hard times by providing financial assistance through insurance cover. Assuming that the claim amount will be directly credited into their bank accounts within 15 days of the claim

being made, Jagan also announced that immediate assistance of Rs 10,000 to families through village and ward secretariats. All families with white ration cards are eligible for this scheme and village/ward volunteers will visit the families and enrol the names of the primary householders.

■ Page 2: CM moved by plight of poor families

LOW PRESSURE TO BECOME DEEP DEPRESSION

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, OCT 21

The low pressure area over central parts of Bay of Bengal and neighbourhood lay as well marked low pressure area over west central Bay of Bengal off Andhra Pradesh coast on Wednesday evening. It is likely to move north northeast towards north-west Bay of Bengal off Odisha and West Bengal coasts and concentrate into a depression during the subsequent 24 hours. Before crossing Odisha and West Bengal, the system would be intensified into a deep depression, the IMD report said.

Under its influence, rainfall with heavy falls is likely over coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha during the next two days. As the state of sea would be rough, fishermen were advised not to venture into the sea during the next three days.

● **HEAVY RAINFALL** is likely over coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha during the next two days under the influence of the low pressure in Bay of Bengal

Rajasthan to bring Bill against Centre's farm law

Jaipur, Oct. 20: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Tuesday said his government will bring a bill against the Centre's farm laws on the lines of Punjab. The chief minister announced this on Twitter, hours after the Punjab assembly unanimously passed four bills and adopted a resolution against the Union government laws. "INC under the leadership of Smt #SoniaGandhi ji & #RahulGandhi ji stands absolutely with our annadatas and will continue to oppose the anti-farmer laws passed by NDA Govt. Today Congress Govt in

#Punjab has passed Bills against these laws & #Rajasthan will follow soon," Gehlot tweeted on Tuesday night. Earlier, the Congress leadership had suggested states where the party is in power to pass laws of their own, negating the central legislation. In the meeting of the state council of ministers held at the chief minister's residence, the effects of Centre's three new laws on the farmers were discussed. The council of ministers decided that a special session of the Legislative Assembly will be convened soon and amendment bills will be brought to preserve the

interests of the farmers, an official statement said. The council also emphasised on the imperative of procurement of crops at minimum support price (MSP). The council observed that the removal of the maximum limit of stock of various agricultural commodities under normal circumstances under the ESMA after the implementation of the new laws will increase black marketing, unauthorised storage and rise in prices. It was also discussed that the provision of MSP in the Contract Farming Act will be in the interest of the farmers of the state, it said. — PTI

Police to be modernised: Shah

New Delhi, Oct. 21: The government is undertaking a comprehensive modernisation programme to prepare the country's police and paramilitary forces for newer challenges in terrorism, cyber-crime and border security, Union home minister Amit Shah said. Shah laid a wreath at the National Police Memorial in Chanakyapuri to pay

homage to the slain policemen and addressed a joint column of police and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) on the occasion of Police Commemoration Day. The day is observed in memory of 10 CRPF personnel who were killed in an ambush by Chinese troops in 1959 in Ladakh's Hot Spring area. Armies of the two countries are cur-

rently locked in a military standoff in the Ladakh area. "The work of police is witnessing new challenges and new dimensions in the areas of terrorism, fake currency, narcotics control, cyber-crime, arms smuggling and human trafficking. "It is a challenge to prepare the police forces for the new dimensions that have emerged in the last 2-3

decades," Shah said. "We have prepared a comprehensive modernisation programme for the police, and I am hopeful police will meet these challenges," he said. He said the government is bringing in technology to make the country's borders "impregnable" and detailed preparations are being made on this subject. — PTI

COWARDLY | COMBAT Suspected NSCN (I-M) militants believed to be behind attack

Jawan from AP killed in ambush

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, OCT. 21

In an ambush a rifle-man of Assam Rifle was killed by suspected National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M) militants near Sanliam village, about 10 kms south of Khonsa, in Arunachal Pradesh's Tirap district on Wednesday. Informing that heavily armed Naga rebels ambushed a patrolling team of the Assam Rifle, security sources said that a rifle-man Babu Rao, who was the resident of Andhra

Pradesh sustained grievous bullet injuries and died on the way to hospital. The development came three months after 6 Assam Rifles killed six NSCN (I-M) militants in an early morning encounter near Nginu village, close to Myanmar border, in neighbouring Longding district. Pointing out that Assam Rifle has launched a combing operation in the area, security sources said that there were reports of heavily armed NSCN (I-M) rebels camping along the international border with Myanmar. Indicating that

- **BABU RAO**, a rifle-man from Andhra Pradesh sustained grievous bullet injuries and died on the way to hospital.
- **THE DEVELOPMENT** came three months after 6 Assam Rifles killed six NSCN (I-M) militants in an early morning encounter near Nginu village, close to Myanmar border, in neighbouring Longding district.
- **SOURCES SAID** there were reports of heavily armed NSCN (I-M) rebels camping along the international border with Myanmar.

NSCN (I-M) militants have been targeting the Assam Rifle since July to retaliate the killing of its six cadres, security sources said that

several attempts of NSCN (I-M) to ambush Assam Rifle were foiled in the last three months. Earlier, on October 3, a

heavily armed rebel group, suspected to be Khaplang faction of NSCN had ambushed and killed an Assam Rifles jawan in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. Another jawan was injured seriously in the ambush near Hetlong village under the Jairampur police station. However, no militant group took responsibility, but district officials and the security forces suspected that the Khaplang faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-K) had carried out the attack.

Big mishap averted ahead of CM's visit

3 injured near Indrakeeladri temple

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 21

Big boulders fell from the hill beside a Durga temple on the hilltop Indrakeeladri minutes before the scheduled visit of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the temple on Wednesday in Vijayawada. Three persons were injured and officials started a rescue operation to see if anyone was stuck beneath the boulders.

The temple officials installed tents for the media and others and sanitation workers were pressed into work in view of Jagan's visit. Suddenly, big boulders fell onto the ground and people ran out of the tents to save themselves. Minister, Kodali Venkateswara Rao, alias Nani and Krishna district collector, A. Md. Imtiaz, rushed to the spot to speed up the rescue operation. A major mishap was averted as there were no rush of devotees due to cancellation of darshan to masses in view of Jagan's visit.

Scheduled to visit the Durga temple at 3.45 pm to present silk robes to the goddess, sanitation workers were engaged in clean-

Jagan presents silk robes at temple

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 21

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy visited a Durga temple to present silk robes on behalf of the government though it was delayed due to the sudden falling of boulders on the hilltop Indrakeeladri on Wednesday. Kanaka Durga, adorned as Saraswati devi, goddess of knowledge and music and arts, and also regarded as Vagdevi, goddess of sound, speech, consciousness and wisdom is prayed to on the auspicious moola nakshatram

day, on Wednesday. Temple officials decided to allow extra devotees due to auspicious day extending the time from 6 pm to 9 pm.

Jagan started from his house in Tadepalli at 4.45 pm and reached the Durga temple at 5 pm. He was welcomed by the temple trust board chairman, Pyla Somi Naidu, temple executive officer, M. V. Suresh Babu, and the temple chief priest, Siva Prasad Sarma, in a traditional manner.

■ Page 2: CM inspects landslide areas

ing the site for Jagan when the boulders fell to the ground, collapsing the temporary tents. The people in the tents ran in panic and three workers were stuck in the debris.

Few sanitation workers who miraculously escaped with simple injuries said that the incessant rains

for one week turned dangerous as boulders earlier also fell on October 13 on the temple ghat road. They said that they observed the slipping of the boulders and informed the temple officials.

■ Page 2 Officials rush to rescue of staff

Organic farming



Wayanad MP and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi visits the 200-acre paddy fields and organic farms in Wayanad on Wednesday. — PTI

Rajan cautions against import substitution

Mumbai, Oct. 21: Former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan on Wednesday cautioned against import substitution under the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative of the government.

"If the focus (under Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative) is on import substitution by erecting tariffs, then I think it is a direction we have tried before and it has failed. I would caution against going in that direction," Rajan said. He was addressing a webinar organised by the Centre for Financial Studies at Bhavan's SPJIMR. Rajan said in order to export, one needs to be able to import things that go into those exports as cheaply as it can. "China's rise as an export power came on the back of assembly. It brought in the stuff, put it together and exported it out. "In order to export, you have to import. Don't erect huge tariffs and focus on creating right

environment for production in India," he said.

According to Rajan, targeted spending by the government can be fruitful in the longer term. "I think it is good to keep an eye on the overall spending and to be careful. This is not the time to have a free cheque book. But targeted spending can repay a lot if it is done wisely and carefully," he said. He further said the country's growth was significantly hit but it is more important to understand the consequences of that slowdown on the economic system. "If a number of firms have shut down never to reopen again, the supply side of the economy is affected. If a number of households stopped sending their kids to school because they can't afford, that again inhibits our growth potential for the future as these are going to be poorly educated kids who are going to be capable of much less quality jobs," he stated. — PTI

OTHER STORIES

PRINCIPAL ADVISER LODGES COMPLAINT WITH DGP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 21

Principal Adviser to CM, Ajeya Kallam lodged a complaint with AP DGP Gautam Sawang against a gang misusing his name to deceive job aspirants. Mr Ajeya Kallam in his complaint said that he received many viral messages in WhatsApp groups stating a gang of few persons from Mangalagiri collected money from unemployed youth promising jobs of Junior Line Man etc. He said that these messages also state that the gang has allegedly used my name to give credence to their activities. He said that he don't know the truth behind these allegations and if the allegations are proved right on enquiry, there is an urgent need to take action on the culprits involved. He sought if the messages are fake, obviously, the source of origin of these messages need to be identified and the concerned have to be brought to book for further legal action. Mr Ajeya Kallam sought the concern to take immediate enquiry and take necessary action as required by law.

PRIORITY FOR PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENT: MIN

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 21

Minister for power, forest, science and technology, Balineni Srinivas Reddy said that the state government is giving utmost priority to environment protection besides industrial development. He said this after laying the foundation stone for the construction of a field and zonal office of AP Pollution Control Board at Vijayawada on Wednesday.

The minister warned of stern action against those causing pollution. The 20,000 sq ft zonal office will be completed in 18 months at an estimated cost of ₹22.47 crore.

Mr Reddy said that APPCB has constructed its own office buildings in Visakhapatnam and Kakinada while construction is in progress at Tirupati and Kurnool.

He said that as per the instructions of CM Jagan Mohan Reddy, it is now proposed to construct office buildings to accommodate zonal and regional offices with zonal laboratories for extending better services to people.

He said that the construction works are to be executed by AP Police Housing Corporation Limited, Mangalagiri.

He said that responsibilities of the Board have increased manifold as state PCBs are implementation authorities of water (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act.

TD SLAMS JAGAN'S ANTI-AMARAVATI GAME-PLAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 21

Telugu Desam politiburo member Varla Ramaiah on Wednesday accused Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy of resorting to baseless propaganda against Amaravati Capital City only out of political vengeance against his predecessor N. Chandrababu Naidu. He said that the Chief Minister has stooped so low that he is using caste factors to defame Amaravati during his recent visit to Delhi.

Addressing a press conference here, Ramaiah contended that an attack on Amaravati was an attack on Dalits, BCs and Muslim farmers who have given away their lands for the Capital city construction.

He said that over 20,490 out of the total 34,323 farmers who gave lands for Amaravati were those who gave below one acre and most of them are Dalits. He stated that BCs are mostly among those who gave one to two acres, and number 5,227. He claimed that the one caste referred to often by Jagan Mohan Reddy falls are those who gave 10 to above 25 acres and were just 157 in number. This shows that YSRC is spreading a vilification campaign.

Mr Ramaiah said that Thursday will mark the fifth anniversary of Prime Minister Narendra Modi laying the foundation stone for Amaravati at Uddandarayunipalem village. He recalled that at the time of foundation, Modi had said that Amaravati would be developed into a Capital far greater than Delhi but now it appears far-fetched because of the retrogressive policies of Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Protection of women, children and elderly is first priority: CM

Chief Minister says vacancies in the police force would be filled by Jan. next

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 21

Chief Minister, Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, affirmed that the protection of women, children and the elderly is the first priority of the government. He commented that anyone who committed a crime against them should be brought to justice immediately.

Addressing the police martyrs' day celebrations at the Indira Gandhi stadium in Vijayawada on Wednesday, Jagan said it is a day to remember police martyrs all over the country. He paid homage to the martyrs at the police memorial and took the guard of honour.

The government has taken a bold step in curbing crime against women by bringing in the Disha act, said Mr Jagan, and expressed hope that the centre would soon clear it. He said 18 Disha police stations were set up in the state, appointing women police officers and special public prosecutors to deal with cases of crimes against women. Steps were also being taken to set up special courts for women.

The reduced crime rate is also an indicator of development as is in the cases in Finland, Norway



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, home minister M. Sucharitha, DGP Gautam Sawang pay tributes to Martyrs at the Police commemoration day at IGM Stadium in Vijayawada on Wednesday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

and Switzerland. He stated that we cannot achieve that overnight, but our police force is working hard to bring down the crime rate. He added that vacancies in the police force would be filled by January next.

Notifications would be issued to fill vacancies in the police department and Mr Jagan directed the DGP to issue the schedule by next January to fill

6,500 posts annually in four years. He announced that the pending funds for the police welfare for the past three years will be cleared soon.

Maintaining law and order is a top priority of the government and no one would be spared on that count, Mr Jagan reiterated that special focus would be laid on the protection of children, women and the aged and

there would be no compromise in the protection of weaker sections.

He assured severe action would be taken against anti-social elements and crime in the name of caste, creed and against women would not be tolerated.

Recalling sacrifices by police personnel, Mr Jagan said, "The motto of *Satyameva Jayate* embedded on the caps of the police indicates their serv-

ice to the people. The police are in the forefront during the pandemic, bracing to meet the challenges being thrown by modern technology besides working hard in checking illegal activities in sand and liquor." Minister M. Sucharitha, DGP, Gautam Sawang, Chief Secretary, Nilam Sawhney, and other officials were among those present and contributed to the police welfare fund.

CM INSPECTS LANDSLIDE AREAS

From Page 1

Mr Jagan, in traditional attire, with the chanting of holy mantras by priests, offered the silk robes on his head, conducted a special puja to goddess Durga in Saraswati Devi avatar. Temple priests, Ch. Anjaneya Ghanapati, K. Narasimha Avadhani, Ramanath Ghanapati, Ch. Chandrasekhar Avadhani and Ramadatta Avadhani performed special pujas for the prosperity and development of AP.

Mr Jagan took blessings from the priests in the temple. He remained in the sanctum sanctorum till the completion of the rituals with ministers Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Kodali Venkateswara Rao, alias Nani, AP Brahmin welfare corporation chairman, Malladi Vishnu, and others. CM Jagan unveiled the 2021 calendar of Durga Malleswara Swamy temple.

The CM inspected the landslide-hit location at Durga Temple ghat road and directed officials to take measures for the safety of the pilgrims. He also instructed the officials to release funds for the master plan of the Durga temple.

Temple trust board chairman Somi Naidu said that Mr Jagan sanctioned ₹70 crore for the development of the temple, orders pertaining to the funds will be issued soon. The funds will be used for development activities like strengthening the hill through revetment works, establishing solar power for the Nitya Annadanam kitchen, establishing a tonsuring centre and other work.

Temple officials stated that there was a huge rush of devotees for darshan of the goddess on this auspicious day.

More than 13,000 devotees who obtained online tickets visited the temple to have darshan from 6 am to 9 pm with a break during Jagan's darshan.

● CHIEF MINISTER Jagan unveiled the 2021 calendar of Durga Malleswara Swamy temple.

● The CM sanctioned ₹70 crore for the development of the temple, orders pertaining to the funds orders will be issued soon. The funds will be used for the development activities.



Police and Fire Department personnel clear the boulders atop Indrakeeladri ghat road in Vijayawada on Wednesday.

—DC

Rajamahendravaram to get Heritage City tag soon

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 21

Rajamahendravaram is to get the Heritage City tag soon, with state archaeological authorities collecting concrete evidence of the city being once ruled by Chalukya dynasty in 10th and 11th centuries. Proof of this, along with evidence of ancient monuments, will be submitted to the centre, so that it could declare Rajamahendravaram as Heritage City.

Archaeological department has prepared a plan to look for remnants of Chalukya dynasty in the city. It is seeking permission from Archaeological Survey of India to undertake excavations near Chitrangi Palace for unearthing antiquities and relics. Authorities are confident of finding relics of Buddha underneath the city, as Buddhism was practiced in the area during the 2nd Century BC.

An underground tunnel was also there from Chitrangi Palace to Sarangadhara Metta, which could form part of the proof.

● State archaeological authorities are preparing a comprehensive project report, which will be submitted to the Union ministry of culture for declaring Rajamahendravaram as Heritage City.

Rajamahendravaram has many historic structures from subsequent periods, like Royal Mosque of 1353 A.D. near One Town police station, residential building of social reformer Kandukuri Veesalingam, Markendeya Swamy temple, Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple of 18th century, Mrukundeswara temple building in 1053, over 100-years' old Gautami Library, residence of Sir Arthur Cotton, Damerla Rama Rao Art Gallery, Kotilinga Ghat, Rallabandi Subba Rao Archaeological Museum, Havelock Bridge across Godavari River, Sir Arthur Cotton Barrage and Cotton Museum, among others.

Rajahmundry MP Mar-

gani Bharat Ram said, "As the city was ruled by Chalukyas in 11th and 12th centuries, and Buddhism was practiced in 2nd Century BC, we are trying to zero in on proofs in this regard. This will help us in getting Rajamahendravaram declared as Heritage City. I have already met the Union cultural secretary and explained to him the significance of the city."

State archaeology commissioner G. Vani Mohan said, "We are going to write to ASI seeking permission to take up excavations in the city for antiquities belonging to the Chalukya period as also to trace Buddhist relics. For that matter, the city already has several ancient structures. Once the centre declares Rajamahendravaram as Heritage City, it will help us to get funds from the centre under Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana. All findings discovered in the process will be preserved and put on display for general public," Ms Vani Mohan stated.

NAADU | NEDU

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, OCT. 21

Though the AP government has been contemplating opening all the state-run schools from November 2, Headmasters of the several schools across the state are wary over the move as works to give facility to the schools under Naadu-Nedu programme are incomplete in majority of the schools.

As per the government instructions classes will be held on alternative days for

Class 1,3,5 and 7 and Classes 2,4,6 and 8 that too till afternoon in the month of November and the students will be sent home after feeding midday meals.

Under the condition of anonymity, the headmaster of a school near Nellore said that his school is in a disarray with sand and blue metal in the premises and tiles stored in classrooms for Naadu-Nedu works.

"Leave alone running classes, there is no scope to cook and serve midday

● CUT IN syllabus and holidays to makeup loss of 80 working days.

● Special attention on Standard Operating Procedure to protect students from Covid-19.

meals also till the works are completed. Moreover, we are yet to receive furniture too," the HM said while stressing that the conditions are no different in most of the schools in the region.

Referring to the stipulation from the authorities to complete the development

works before October 31, he doubted over meeting the deadline.

When contacted, District Education Officer of Prakasam, V.S. Subba Rao has expressed confidence in finishing all the pending works before the end of October.

Fines for violations revised in state

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 21

The Andhra Pradesh transport department on Wednesday issued a GO No 21 under the provisions of the motor vehicles (amendment) act, 2019 revising the compounding fee (penalties) for better enforcement of the provisions of the enactment.

The order empowers officers of the transport department not below the rank of the assistant motor vehicle inspector and police officers not below the rank of inspector of police and also traffic SIs to levy the revised compounding fee on violators of transport rules.

The visible violations include not wearing helmets, not wearing seat belts, speeding, using cell phones while driving among others which attract heavy penalties.

Obstruction of the checking officer in the discharge of duties and refusal to give information would attract a fine of Rs 750 for motorcycles and light motorcycles and Rs 1,000 for heavy vehicles.

Allowing unauthorised people or an underage

person to drive vehicles would attract a fine of Rs 5,000 for any vehicle. Driving a motor vehicle by a person disqualified from holding a driving license or obtaining a driving license would attract a fine of Rs 10,000.

The penalty on persons who alter vehicles in contravention to the rules and regulations would be fined Rs one lakh per motor vehicle.

Driving dangerously or using hand-held communication devices would face a penalty of Rs 1,500 for the first offence and Rs 10,000 for subsequent offences. Not only driving dangerously, if anybody causes any person to drive at excess speed, Rs 2,000 would be fined. Racing or trials of speed would invite a fine of Rs 5,000 and Rs 10,000 for subsequent offences.

Rs 2,000 is the fine for plying a vehicle without insurance for the first offence and Rs 4,000 for subsequent offences. Driving vehicles exceeding permissible weight attracts a fine of Rs 20,000 plus Rs 2,000 per every tonne of excess load. Rs 40,000 is the fine for a driver who refuses to stop to have the load weighed.

SEC moves HC for release of funds

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 21

Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission has moved the High Court complaining about non-release of funds for conduct of free and fair elections and also non-cooperation from the state government to do so and sought direction to it for release of funds.

The High Court bench headed by justice B. Devanand heard the petition filed by the State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar here on Wednesday.

Counsels for state election commissioner and SEC D.V. Sitharama Murthy and N. Ashwani Kumar respectively informed the court that though an amount of ₹40 lakh was sanctioned by issuing GO RT No. 35 dated 17-01-2020 to the SEC, it was kept pending for release deliberately resulting in the SEC facing acute paucity of funds.

The petition mentioned that failing to release sanctioned amount and render proper assistance and cooperation to facilitate smooth conduct of elections, was arbitrary, abuse of power, position and process of law and also gross violation of the Article 243K of Constitution of India.

In reply, government pleader Suman informed the court that the state government had released more than ₹39 lakh to the SEC out of the sanctioned amount of ₹40 lakh and said that the writ petition

● COUNSELS FOR state election commissioner and SEC D.V. Sitharama Murthy and N. Ashwani Kumar respectively informed the court that though an amount of ₹40 lakh was sanctioned by issuing GO RT No. 35 dated 17-01-2020 to the SEC, it was kept pending for release deliberately resulting in the SEC facing acute paucity of funds

was not maintainable.

Counsel N. Ashwani Kumar asked the court to issue an order directing the state government to cooperate and assist the State Election Commission to discharge its duty to conduct elections in a free and fair manner.

However, the government pleader intervened and argued that such an order was not necessary.

But, another counsel D.V. Sitharama Murthy informed the court that the conduct of the state government for the last six to seven months reflected no cooperation to the SEC and asked for such an order as it was required.

The court directed the state election commissioner to file a counter affidavit with details on non-cooperation from the state government and posted the next hearing in the case to Thursday.

CM moved by plight of poor families

From Page 1

Jagan asked for the list of enrolled insurance holders to be displayed in the village secretariats. He explained that under this scheme, the insurance amount for accidental death and total permanent disability for people aged between 18-50 years is ₹5 lakh and for those between 51-70 years is ₹3

lakh. He stated that, similarly, for natural death cases (18-50 years) ₹2lakh and for partial permanent disability in an accident case (18-70 years) ₹1.5 lakh assistance will be provided.

Moved by the plight of poor families facing hardships due to the lack of insurance coverage, Jagan at the elections had promised to bring in an

insurance coverage scheme. YSR Bima fulfils that promise, provides security for families in need and stands by them.

Deputy CM Dharman Krishnaadas, ministers Botla Satyanarayana, Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Gummamuru Jayaram, chief secretary, Nilam Sawhney, officials and bankers were present at the launch event.

Meanwhile, education minister Adimulapu Suresh said, "we are planning to cut the syllabus as well as holidays for schools to cover the loss of 80 working days and NCERT has been working on the modalities."

He said they are also paying special attention to SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) to protect the students from the dreaded virus as the schools are being opened in the backdrop of prevailing Coronavirus.

IN BRIEF

Red sanders seized, 11 held

Tirupati: The Chittoor district police wing on Wednesday seized 2.5 tonnes of red sanders logs worth over ₹2 crore in the international market along with five vehicles carrying the contraband and nabbed 11 persons at three different locations under Thavanampalle limits in the district. The accused were identified as V. Siva Kumar, 21, Doraswamy, 47, P. Rajamani, 36, C. Chinna Swamy, 40, Murugan Sampath, 26, C. Chinnappa, 30, C. Ravi, 23, D. Devaraj, 18 of Tamil Nadu and S. Stalin, 20, K. Venugopal, 26 and V. Vinay, 19 of Chittoor district. Addressing a press conference at Chittoor on Wednesday, DSP Mr K. Eswar Reddy said, as per the instructions of SP S. Senthil Kumar, police officials have taken up vehicle checking across the district to curtail smuggling operations and other illegal transportations.

Planting mine foiled, one held

Visakhapatnam: The Chintapalli police of Visakhapatnam foiled an attempt of planting a land mine between Rallagadda and Korukonda in Balapam Panchayati of Chintapalli mandal. On information, a police team was dispatched immediately to foil the bid. The police team observed the militia members approaching the place and after serious efforts to apprehend them, they caught one person and the rest of them fled away. The person who was caught was identified as Koda Krishna Rao of Labadampalli village.

Demand for Saibaba release

Visakhapatnam: Several activists representing rights organisations demanded release of Prof. G.N. Saibaba who is serving life sentence in Nagpur jail after being convicted for sedition. Convener of Mahila Chetana K. Padma, POW convener M. Lakshmi and IFTU leader K. Venkateswarulu said Prof. Saibaba has been facing health problems and jail officials at Nagpur were not taking any care. Letters written by his wife is also not being delivered to him. Saibaba was arrested by the Maharashtra (Gadchiroli) police for alleged Maoist links in 2014.

MAN ARRESTED FOR CHEATING WOMEN ON SM

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM
DC
TIRUPATI, OCT. 21

The Pakala circle police have arrested a 27-year-old man for committing cyber fraud and cheating women. The accused Guna Sekhar, hailing from Gollapalli, used to befriend women on social media and after promising marriage, he used to borrow large sums of money from them.

According to Pakala CI Aseerwadam, a woman has approached the Pakala police after a woman cheated her by introducing himself as Vikram Siddharth Chowdary – a software engineer working at Google in Hyderabad.

“Gayatri, a native of Pakala mandal said in her complaint that she met the man some time ago online and they were in touch through Facebook for months. He started communicating with her on the phone recently and expressed interest in getting married to her. After a while, he told Gayatri that he needed money to meet his personal needs and borrowed ₹10 lakh from the victims in several part payments online,” the CI said.

When she asked him to return her money, he refused and threatened her of dire consequences if she approaches him again. She further filed a complaint with Pakala police, who immediately swung into action and arrested Guna Sekhar at Jangalapalli village. He has been booked for impersonation and extortion.

During the interrogation, police learnt that Guna Sekhar was in the habit of targeting women online and befriending them. He wins their trust and then cheats them by extorting money and gold jewellery. The accused is found to have cheated several women in AP and Telangana.

Meanwhile, police also seized two country made guns, which are in the possession of the accused. They also seized ₹5 lakh in cash and a high-end motorbike worth ₹1.5 lakh from the accused.

AP to touch 8L Corona cases

State recorded 3,746 Covid cases, 27 deaths taking the death toll to 6,508

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 21

Andhra Pradesh will touch eight lakh mark of total Covid-19 positive cases shortly. The state recorded 3,746 new Covid-19 cases, taking the tally to 7,93,299 and 27 deaths taking the death toll to 6,508, in the last 24 hours.

The state's Covid-19 bulletin on Wednesday reported that out of 74,422 samples tested, 3,746 individuals tested Covid-19 positive.

Out of 72,71,050 samples tested so far in the state, 7,54,415 patients were discharged after recovery from the hospitals while 32,376 patients are still active with the virus and are undergoing medical treatment.

Among daily cases of confirmed coronavirus, East Godavari continues to lead with 677, followed by 519 in West Godavari, 503 in Krishna, 437 in Chittoor, 396 in Guntur, 301 in Anantapur, 167 in Srikakulam, 166 in Kadapa, 138 in Visakhapatnam, 134 in Vizianagaram, 127 in Prakasam, 116 in Nellore and 65 in Kurnool.

In terms of cumulative cases of confirmed coronavirus, East Godavari continues to be the worst affected with 1,11,694, followed by 80,621 in West Godavari, 74,931 in Chittoor, 63,464 in Guntur, 63,111 in Anantapur, 58,961 in Kurnool, 58,542 in Nellore, 57,325 in Prakasam, 54,304 in Visakhapatnam, 50,374 in Kadapa, 43,010 in Srikakulam, 38,451 in Vizianagaram, 35,616 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery among Covid-19 infected patients has been good in East Godavari with 1,05,053 patients having recovered, followed by 76,864 in West Godavari,



Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney participates in Covid-19 awareness rally on Bandar Road in Vijayawada on Wednesday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

AP LAUNCHES 10-DAY COVID AWARENESS PROGRAMME

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 21

AP government on Wednesday launched a 10-day Covid awareness programme across the state, which will last till October 31. Chief secretary Nilam Sawhney, along with Krishna district collector A. Md. Imtiaz inaugurated a rally in this regard at PWD grounds on Wednesday.

Ms Sawhney expressed happiness that positive Covid cases are on the

decline in the state. The awareness programme will lay emphasis on the role of people and their cooperation in preventing Coronavirus from spreading.

She stated that as per instructions of Chief Minister, the district administration is conducting a special drive for the next 10 days starting from Wednesday to create awareness about the deadly disease.

The chief secretary suggested that everyone

should be made aware of what to do when a person contracts Covid-19. People must wear masks, maintain physical distance and wash their hands frequently to prevent Coronavirus from spreading.

District collector Imtiaz said for the past six months, doctors, health workers, police, village / ward volunteers, and sanitation workers have been working relentlessly in dealing with the Covid pandemic.

tnam and West Godavari.

Among cumulative death cases, Chittoor recorded the highest with 752, followed by 594 in Guntur, 593 in East Godavari, 563 in Prakasam, 542 in Anantapur, 537 in Krishna, 495 in Visakhapatnam, 485 in West Godavari, 483 in Nellore, 480 in Kurnool, 420 in Kadapa, 338 in Srikakulam and 226 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities discharged 4,739 Covid-19 infected patients after recovery from various hospitals in the last 24 hours. AP carried out 1,36,162 Covid-19 tests per one million population and recorded a positive rate at 10.91. Maharashtra tested 66,063 samples and has a positive rate at 19.51 and Telangana tested 99,207 samples and has a positive rate of 5.76.

70,313 in Chittoor, 60,764 in Anantapur, 59,118 in Guntur, 57,711 in Kurnool, 57,373 in Nellore, 53,946 in Prakasam, 51,632 in Visakhapatnam, 47,904 in Kadapa, 41,465 in

Srikakulam, 37,251 in Vizianagaram, 32,126 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Krishna registered five cases of death of Covid-19

infected patients followed by three each in Anantapur, Chittoor, East Godavari, Guntur, Nellore and Prakasam and one each in Kadapa, Srikakulam, Visakhapa-

Lord taken on 3 vahanams on Day 6

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, OCT. 21

On the sixth day of Srivari Navaratri Brahmotsavams, Lord Malayappa Swamy donned the Avatara Kodanda Ramudu and blessed devotees on Hanumantha Vahanam. The vahana seva was observed in Ekantham at Kalyanotsava mandapam inside the Srivari temple in Tirumala on Wednesday in view of Covid-19 restrictions.

Hanumantha Vahanam is usually considered as an icon of devotional bliss. Lord Hanuman symbolically stands for pure devotion, complete surrender and absence of ego. Hanuman represents the tenets of devotion and Sharanagathi in its both physical means and intellectual form. Lord Malayappa by riding Hanumantha vahana sent a message to his devotees that he always blesses people who were humble and surrendered to him.

Meanwhile, in the evening Lord Malayappa Swamy blessed devotees on Pushpaka Vimanam in the guise of Govardhana Krishnudu. The Pushpaka Vimana seva is a fete observed in Srivari temple once in three-years on the occasion of Navaratri Brahmotsavams, which falls on the Adhika



Lord Malayappa Swamy donned the avatara of Govardhana Krishnudu and blessed devotees on Pushpaka Vimanam on the sixth day of ongoing Navaratri brahmotsavams at Tirumala temple on Wednesday.

Masam.

This vahana seva is usually conducted inside the temple for Lord Malayappa and his consorts to take a breather after a busy schedule of events like Snapanams and vahana sevas etc. The 15x14 feet Vimanam (flight) weighing 750 kgs is made out of coconut leaves and decorated with 150 kgs of traditional flowers like jasmine, marigold, Kanaka, Abram, Lily, roses and scented leaves,

The Vimanam is decked with idols of Anjaneya and Garuda on both sides. The Idols of Asta Lakshmi are in the middle and in the second layer has elephants, parrots. Finally, the hooded servants embellish the Vimanam. Twenty workers from Salem in Tamil Nadu and 10 workers from TTD garden department strived for 10 days to build the Pushpaka Vimanam. The Sri Ramaprasad trust of Chennai donated material

for making the Vimanam. Meanwhile, the day has come to an end with Lord Malayappa taking ride on Gaja Vahanam, which is considered as the principal carrier of Lord Venkateswara's consort Padmavathi Devi. Like Garuda Vahana to Lord Venkateswara, Gaja Vahana is considered as the most important vehicle to Goddess Padmavathi Devi and this vahana seva signifies the grandeur and mightiness of Lord.

Parents unaware of Corona in kids

D SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL OCT. 21

Twenty nine high school going students of Srisaillam never knew that they had come in contact with the deadly Covid-19 virus. Nor did their parents and teachers in the school know. They were quite normal, not showing any glaring symptoms, from a running nose or high fever to coughing is how one teacher of the private school from where eight students tested positive sending shock waves among the student community across the state of Andhra Pradesh, described it.

Sixteen boys and 13 girls were tested positive in private schools in Srisaillam.

Srisaillam medical officer, Rangaiah, said they were randomly checking schools in the Sunnipenta area where out of 167 students, 29 tested positive. He said Wisdom school has 18, the highest number of positive students followed by Srisaillam Mata school with eight cases detected. DAV school has three positive cases, he said and all the students were home-isolated and are doing well.

A person who was working in the state tourism office said two of his children tested positive. His daughter, a student in the eighth standard, and son in the ninth, both tested positive. He said had the testing not been done, he

would never have known that his children were infected with the coronavirus. “My children were quite normal and did not even show the slightest unease,” he said. “The medical officials gave us medical kits with detailed instructions. I have kept my son and daughter in one room and myself and my wife are living in another room. We are feeding our children protein-rich food and monitoring them well.”

Yet another parent whose wife is a volunteer in Sunnipenta said his daughter was detected with coronavirus on October 12. “Ever since then, we have kept her in a secluded room in our house and provided all the required medicines and the food to keep her healthy.” He also said there were no visible symptoms of coronavirus. However, he received a message from the Covid-19 testing centre that his daughter's second sample was negative and she is recovered from it. He expressed happiness that a bad phase was over in their family.

The district medical and health officer, Dr Rama Giddaiah, said home isolation is an effective solution and asked parents to take care of their children during the coming days of winter. He said they should maintain physical distance and wear masks and sanitise their hands frequently.

Tributes paid to police martyrs

DC CORRESPONDENTS
TIRUPATI/NELLORE/
KADAPA, OCT. 21

As part of paying tribute to the fallen heroes, the Chittoor district and Tirupati Urban police wings observed the “Police Commemoration Day” at their respective headquarters in the district on Wednesday.

Red-sanders task force SP G. Anjaneyulu led the personnel in paying homage at the task force office near Kapilatheertham in Tirupati.

Notwithstanding

inclement weather conditions, senior police and revenue officials took out a rally along with ministers to mark their respect to Police Martyrs on the occasion of Police Commemoration Day in Nellore and Prakasam districts on Wednesday. District collector Chevuri Hari Kiran commended the role of Police personnel in controlling Covid-19 in the last seven months. He, along with district police superintendent K.K.N. Anburajan attended the police commemoration day.

New warship to be commissioned

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, OCT. 21

The last of four indigenously built Anti-Submarine Warfare stealth corvettes *INS Kavarratti* under Project 28 (Kamorta class) is scheduled to be commissioned into the Indian Navy by General Manoj Mukund Naravane, Chief of the Army Staff at Naval Dockyard in Visakhapatnam on Thursday.

Touted as a potent Stealth ASW Corvette, *Kavarratti* is indigenously designed by the Indian Navy's in-house organisation, Directorate of Naval Design and built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, and portrays the growing capability of the Indian Navy,

GRSE and the nation in becoming self-reliant through indigenisation accentuating national objective of “Atmanirbhar Bharat”. The ship has up to 90 per cent indigenous content and the use of carbon composites for the superstructure is a commendable feat achieved in Indian shipbuilding. The ship's weapons and sensor suite is predominantly indigenous and showcases the nation's growing capability in this niche area.

Kavarratti has state-of-the-art weapons and sensor suite capable of detecting and prosecuting submarines.

The ship also has a credible self defence capability and good endurance for long-range deployments.

Both groups fight ferociously with sticks on the last day of Dasara festival

Officials, villagers spar over Banni festival

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, OCT. 21

Come Dasara and Devaragatta village in Holagonda mandal of Alur constituency turns into a pool of blood and gore as scores of villagers get injured while observing their old custom of Banni festival or Karrala Samaram, (fighting with sticks). Usually celebrated on the last day of Dasara festival, this year's event is under a cloud as coronavirus has adversely affected villages.

Adoni RDO Ramakrishna Reddy said the Banni

festival is prohibited as huge gatherings would prove in the backdrop of Covid. The police have been prevailing upon the villagers to dispense with Banni fest, this time around. However, the villagers are reluctant, labour minister Gummanur Jayaram, in whose constituency the village falls, has also appealed to them to do away with the festival in view of the extraordinary situation prevailing in the state.

Davargatta villagers believe that Lord Siva took the form of Bhairava to



kill rakshasas—Mani and Mallasura. He killed the

two by fighting with sticks and ensured that there

was no further threat to humanity. People consider that severe injuries leading to discharge of blood, during a fight with sticks, are a good omen.

In accordance with the belief, marking the culmination of Dasara, the villagers of Neraniiki, Neranikitanda, Kothapeta representing the followers of the lord, take the idols of Mala Malleswara Swamy from Devaragattu to their respective villages when villagers of Ellarti, Arikera, Maddigeri, Nitrana, Sulavai and Hebbetam representing the followers of demons,

obstruct them. In this process, both groups fight ferociously with sticks. However, none of the groups file cases against the other despite severe injuries. Though they fight hard on this day, they bear no personal grudge against each other.

Chairman of Sri Mala Malleswara Swami temple of Devaragattu, G Srinivasulu said that the temple committee also has supported the officials in this regard. They had already explained to the local people about the need to cancel Banni Utsavams, he said.

SHORT TAKES

INDO-US 2+2
TALKS CONFIRMED
ON OCT. 26, 27DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 21

United States secretary of state Michael R. Pompeo and secretary of defense Mark T. Esper will indeed visit New Delhi on October 26 and 27 and will hold talks with their Indian counterparts S. Jaishankar and Rajnath Singh on October 27 as part of the Indo-US 2+2 talks at the foreign and defence ministerial level, New Delhi finally announced on Wednesday, adding that the agenda would "cover all bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest".

In a separate late evening statement, the US said the talks were "to advance the US-India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership and expand cooperation to promote stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and the world".

Pompeo, meanwhile, will separately visit Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Indonesia after his visit to India.

The tense situation on the Sino-Indian border in the Ladakh sector and Chinese military brinkmanship in Asia are bound to figure during the talks, observers point out.

FAROOQ ABDULLAH
INTERROGATED
AGAIN BY EDYUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, OCT. 21

Former chief minister and National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah was on Wednesday again summoned by the Srinagar wing of Enforcement Directorate (ED) where he was grilled by its officials in connection with an alleged multi-crore scam in Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA).

This was the second time in three days that the octogenarian politician and three-time chief minister of J&K had to face the cross-examination by the ED officials, termed by the NC as "part of a coercive plot." His son and NC vice president Omar Abdullah lamented, "This on a day when my father turns 84!"

On Monday, Senior Abdullah was interrogated by the ED for seven hours over his alleged role in misappropriation of ₹113.66 crore (including bank interest) received by J&KCA from the BCCI between April 2002 and December 2011.

NOTICE TO MP GOVT
OVER INDUCTION OF
NON-LEGISLATORSRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, OCT. 21

Madhya Pradesh high court on Wednesday issued notice to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and state Assembly speaker Rameswar Sharma over induction of 14 non-MLAs as ministers in the state government. 14 Congress MLAs had resigned from Assembly in March leading to the fall of 15-month-old Kamal Nath government. They later quit Congress and joined BJP.

They were inducted in the Shivraj ministry later. The court has set December 14 this year as the next date of hearing in the case. The court was responding to a petition filed by one Aradhana Bhargav seeking suspension of the ministers from their posts.

INDIA RECORDS
STEADY DIP IN
COVID-19 CASESDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 21

As several European countries have started witnessing resurgence of a second wave of Coronavirus, India seems to be slowly coming out of its first wave as the fresh Covid-19 cases and deaths in the country continue to decline. On Wednesday, India's overall Covid-19 tally crossed 76.51 lakh with 54,044 new cases and 717 fatalities in a day. Total deaths in India so far due to the virus has been 1.16 lakh.

"India has sustained its trend of maintaining the active cases below the 7.5 lakh mark for the 2nd successive day. With a high number of Covid-19 patients recovering every day, India's steady trend of posting high levels of daily recoveries also continues. 61,775 recoveries were registered in the last 24 hours in the country compared to 54,044 new confirmed cases," said the officials of Union health ministry.

HC relief



Dhakis, traditional drummers, wait to be booked by members of community puja pandals for performance during the Durga Puja festival, in Kolkata on Wednesday. The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday partly modified its order on community Durga Pujas, allowing drummers to perform within the no-entry zones of the marquees.

— PTI

PLA soldiers find it difficult
to adapt to high altitudes

Soldiers confused, completely disoriented due to hypothermia in cold

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
HYDERABAD, OCT. 21

Extreme climatic conditions in the high altitude areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh — which has been witnessing massive build-up of troops both by Indian Army and the People's Liberation of Army (PLA) since the last few months — has started to take a toll on the PLA soldiers.

Corporal Wang Ya Long of the PLA, who was apprehended by the Indian Army when he strayed across the LAC in Demchok sector on Monday — was heavily disoriented due to the extreme weather, which led him to cross over the LAC, hardly realising that he had walked over to the Indian side.

After more than 36 hours in custody of the Indian Army who interrogated him, the Corporal of the PLA was handed over to the Chinese military at the Chushul-Moldo border point on Tuesday night.

Sources in the know of the developments disclosed to *Deccan Chronicle* that Wang Ya Long was heavily disoriented and gasping for breath when he was caught by the Indian troops at Demchok on Monday. This was precisely why the Indian Army provided medical assistance including oxygen besides warm clothes

Indian Army hands over
captured Chinese corporalDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 21

The Indian Army late on Tuesday night handed over the Chinese soldier who had strayed across the Line of Actual Control to the People's Liberation Army at the Chushul Moldo meeting point in Ladakh.

The Chinese soldier,

and food. "But for the timely medical assistance, the Chinese soldier could have died," they said. Discounting the theory that the Chinese Corporal was on an espionage mission, they said there is nothing to suggest that it was a deliberate act by the Chinese side. However, all standard procedures of interrogating a Prisoner of War was followed by the Indian Army and it was only after making it extremely clear that there was nothing suspicious about the Chinese soldier that he was handed back to his military.

While China claimed that their soldier "went missing while helping the local herdsman find lost yak near the India-

identified as Corporal Wang Ya Long, was handed back to China after the completion of all formalities. He was caught by the Indian Army in the Demchok sector of eastern Ladakh on Monday. He was provided medical assistance, including oxygen, food and warm clothes, to protect him from the vagaries of extreme

altitude and harsh climatic conditions. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on Tuesday at a press briefing that China hoped India would hand over the soldier soon and works with China to promote implementation of the consensus reached at the seventh round of talks.

China border," there could also be a possibility of Corporal Wang Ya Long making an attempt to desert his Army, unable to bear the extreme climatic condition, but inadvertently ended up on the Indian side. "He appears to have genuinely lost his way and we do not rule out the possibility of him being a deserter or at least making an attempt at that," sources said adding that the Yak theory by the Chinese was not convincing.

Over the last month, ever since massive mobilisation of men and material began taking place on both sides, multiple obstacles and barbed wire fences have been put in place by both the armies, making it impossible for anyone to

reme altitude and harsh climatic conditions.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on Tuesday at a press briefing that China hoped India would hand over the soldier soon and works with China to promote implementation of the consensus reached at the seventh round of talks.

cross over from those points. But the Corporal in PLA is said to have strayed across the LAC from the mountainous terrain, away from the points where obstacles have been put up.

Deployment on the high altitude regions can have a tremendous impact on the mental health of the soldiers. "Confusion or disorientation which is a symptom of advanced hypothermia is the main problem in the extreme cold. In such a condition, the individuals do not realise what is happening to them. It has a dysfunctional impact on the personality and psychological integrity of an individual which leaves little or no control over the situation they are in," sources explained.

PAK INCREASES
FORCES ALONG
BORDER: INTELDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 21

Intelligence agencies have cautioned that Pakistan Army has increased its presence both along the International Border (IB) and the Line of Control (LoC) over the last few weeks.

Basis specific intelligence inputs, sources say Pakistan Army has deployed special units of Border Action Teams (BATs) close to the LoC, primarily to push more militants into the Kashmir Valley. It is a known fact that Pak Army deploys BATs to help militants sneak into the Valley.

Sudden increase in presence of Pakistan Army near the LoC and the IB is being linked to a major infiltration being planned before the onset of winter in Kashmir, when most mountain passes get blocked due to inclement weather.

Both intelligence agencies and Army have concrete inputs that at least 250 to 300 militants are waiting at their launch pads close to the border areas, waiting for an opportunity to sneak into India.

Cabinet approves
amendments to
J&K panchayat ActDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 21

In a significant decision, the Union cabinet on Wednesday approved the amendments made by the home ministry in the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act 1989, that enables setting up of a directly-elected 14-member district development council (DDC), which has led to fears that this will curb the powers of MLAs and members of legislative bodies. The amendments were made by the home ministry on October 16.

In another major decision, the Cabinet also approved the payment of bonus for 2019-2020 to 30.67 lakh Central government employees, which will cost ₹3,737 crore, and it is hoped will encourage spending during the festival season and add to demand in the economy. The government hopes that the bonus, ahead of Durga Puja, Dussehra and Diwali, will encourage the middle class to go out and spend, and thus add to demand in the economy, Union minister Prakash Javadekar told reporters after the Cabinet meeting. The bonus will be disbursed in a week's time.

The Productivity-Linked Bonus (PLB) for 2019-2020,

with a financial implication of ₹2,791 crore, will benefit 16.97 lakh non-gazetted employees of commercial establishments like the Railways, Posts, Defence, EPFO, ESIC, among others. The non-PLB, or ad-hoc bonus, which is given to non-gazetted Central employees, will benefit 13.70 lakh staff. It will cost the exchequer ₹946 crore.

In Kashmir, meanwhile, after the changes made in the panchayati raj law, the DDCs will replace the district development boards, which were chaired by a Cabinet minister or a minister of state, and included MPs, MLAs and MLCs.

The decision to accept the amendments to the legislation was taken at the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday. Javadekar said the decision was people friendly and another step towards assimilation of the region's people with the mainstream after Article 370 was abolished in August last year and J&K was made a Union Territory, separating it from Ladakh, which too was made a Union Territory.

There are no legislative bodies in the region as they were abolished when Jammu and Kashmir was carved up into two Union Territories.

GJM quits NDA,
to support TMCRAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, OCT. 21

In a dramatic move, absconding Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) founder Bimal Gurung on Wednesday took a U-turn and dealt a heavy blow to the BJP ahead of the Assembly election in West Bengal next year. Accusing the saffron party of not fulfilling its "commitment" towards the separate statehood demand of "Gorkhaland", he quit the NDA, leaving the BJP stumped.

With talk of an alliance with Trinamul Congress, Gurung also offered full support to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to help her return to power for the third consecutive time. His announcement came after he surfaced in Kolkata in the afternoon for the first time in three years,

when he was on the run with more than 150 cases, including under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, against him for spearheading a violent movement in Darjeeling for "Gorkhaland" in the middle of 2017.

Travelling by car, Gurung went to Gorkha Bhavan in Salt Lake first.

However, he could not enter as the police personnel were guarding the building.

Later, at a hotel, he alleged, "Though we were a constituent of the NDA 2009 onwards, the Central government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) did not fulfil its commitment of finding 'Gorkhaland' as a permanent political solution for the hills. It has not included 11 Gorkha communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes. We were cheated. So we are quitting the NDA."

Kaziranga National
Park open for touristsMANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, OCT. 21

Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Wednesday formally opened the Kaziranga National Park for the tourists and flagged off jeep safari which has been allowed to ply in two — Kohora and Bagori ranges of the national park while other two ranges would be opened from November for the visitors where elephant safari will also be started.

● SONOWAL HOPES that Assam's tourism sector will be able to overcome the setback of Covid-19 lockdown soon.

stopping rhino poaching to a great extent in the last four and half years and he thanked the people of the nearby areas for extending their full cooperation in eliminating poaching incidents. He also called on the people to maintain all Covid-19 protocols while visiting the Kaziranga National Park and other such places of tourist interest so that the spread of the pandemic can be contained.

He also requested the media to spread the news of the opening of Kaziranga National Park for the year 2020-21 so that tourists from various places of the country and abroad can come and enjoy the natural beauty of the park while also contributing to revival of Assam's tourism industry.

The Chief Minister also took a jeep safari into the national park and he was accompanied by local MLA and agriculture minister Atul Bora, water resources minister Keshab Mahanta, industries and commerce minister Chandra Mohan Patowary, MLA Rituparna Baruah, PCCF (Wild Life) A. M. Singh among others.

EC issues notice
to Kamal Nath
over 'item' jibeDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 21

The Election Commission of India has issued a notice to senior Congress leader and former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath for his derogatory comments against BJP candidate Imarti Devi. Kamal Nath, during a bypoll election rally at Dabra, Gwalior on October 18 had, without naming Imarti Devi, addressed her as "item," a comment that has not gone down well with the ECI.

The ECI has said that such a derogatory statement is a violation of the General Code of Conduct and construed as being repugnant to the honour and dignity of women and asked Kamal Nath to submit an explanation in the next 48 hours failing which the ECI will take its call.

The ECI has mentioned that it has received a complaint from National

MP CONG SPLITS,
DEMAND NATH'S
APOLOGYRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, OCT. 21

Veteran leader Kamal Nath's 'item' jibe against state women and child development minister Imarti Devi, which triggered outrage, has divided Congress in Madhya Pradesh with an influential section of leaders demanding apology from him for his 'outrageous' utterance.

Commission of Women chairperson saying Nath has used the derogatory remark for a woman minister and has "strongly condemned such irresponsible and disparaging statement by a person holding responsible office.

EC ticks off parties for
violating Covid normsDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 21

The Election Commission of India has ticked off political parties in Bihar for violating social distancing norms during their poll campaigns and addressing public meetings without wearing masks.

In an advisory to the presidents and general secretaries of the recognised national and state political parties, the ECI expressed unhappiness over the complete disregard of its guidelines issued earlier and said chief electoral officers and the district machinery would be expected to invoke appropriate and relevant penal provisions against candidates concerned as well as organisers responsible for such violations.

In its advisory on October 9, the ECI had asked political parties to follow instructions related to pandemic Covid-19 at all stages, especially wherever public interface in physical form is involved.

LJP releases party's
vision documentNAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, OCT. 21

LJP Chief Chirag Paswan on Wednesday released his party's manifesto for the upcoming Bihar Assembly elections.

During the event, Chirag Paswan said that the manifesto was based on his party's vision of "Bihar first Bihari first" which will resolve many serious

problems being faced by the people of the state. The manifesto promises to create job opportunities, better policies for education, health and industrial growth in the state. The vision document also emphasises on constructing a grand Sita temple in Sitamarhi on the lines of Ram Temple in Ayodhya to promote religious tourism in Bihar.

"Observance of the preventive measures including wearing a mask, use of sanitiser, observance of social distancing is a duty cast upon all the stakeholders in the larger interest of public health," the ECI had said.

However, visuals of huge gatherings at campaign rallies in Bihar have left ECI miffed.

"Instances of such public meetings have come to notice of the ECI, where large number of crowds have assembled in utter violation of social distancing and the political leaders/campaigners are addressing the gathering without wearing masks in complete disregard of the guidelines/instructions issued by ECI", it said.

IN BRIEF

Houston club shooting: 3 dead

Houston: Three people were killed in a shooting at a Houston nightclub where about 30 people had gathered for an open mic night and authorities were searching early Wednesday for suspects, police said. Police had been called to the DD Sky Club at about 9:45 p.m. Tuesday on reports of multiple people dead inside, Houston Police Commander Caroleta Johnson said. Once there, officers found three people dead at the scene and a fourth person in critical condition, Johnson said. Investigators believe two men opened fire after a fight broke out, but officers don't yet have a clear description of the shooters. Kade Trammell, who was inside the club attending the open mic show, said he heard seven to 10 gunshots before he and his friends dropped to the floor and then fled. "We got really scared, we ran for our ... lives," he said. "Everybody starting running for their lives after the gunshots," he said.

Five killed in Pak explosion

Islamabad/Karachi: A powerful explosion ripped through a four-storey building in Pakistan's Sindh province, killing at least five people and injuring 20 others, police said. At least two floors of the building near Maskan Chowrang in the Gulshan-e-Iqbal area in Karachi were severely damaged, leading authorities to fear that the toll may rise. The death toll in the incident has increased to five, Faisal Edhi of the Edhi Ambulance Service said. Seven of the injured are said to be in critical condition. The security forces have cordoned off the area after the explosion. Police chief Mushtaq Mahar said the bomb disposal squad and anti-terrorism officials are yet to determine the cause of the explosion. A police official said that initial investigations suggested that the explosion could have been caused due to a gas leak. The official said that no trace of an improvised explosive device (IED) was found at the scene. The incident happened a day after five people were injured when an IED bomb exploded.

UK navy seizes 450 kg meth

Dubai: A British royal navy vessel seized 450 kilograms (990 pounds) of methamphetamine in the northern Arabian Sea in the largest-ever bust by a joint maritime operation in the region, officials said Wednesday. The HMS Montrose seized the drugs hidden aboard a stateless dhow, a traditional cargo ship that plies the Persian Gulf and surrounding waters, the joint task force said in a statement. The seizure took place last Wednesday. The task force said it was unable to say where the drugs came from, who manufactured them or their ultimate destination. However, Iran over the last decade has seen an explosion in the use of methamphetamine, known locally as "shishah" or "glass" in Farsi. That's bled into neighbouring Iraq as well. While drug lab busts have dropped in recent years in Iran, there appears to be an uptick in meth drug labs in Afghanistan.

NASA CRAFT LANDS ON ASTEROID

Washington, Oct. 21: After a four-year-long journey, NASA's OSIRIS-REx spacecraft successfully touched down on the rugged surface of asteroid Bennu on Tuesday, and unfurled its robotic arm to collect a sample of rocks dating back to the birth of our solar system to bring back to Earth, the US space agency said. The Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security, Regolith Explorer (OSIRIS-REx) spacecraft briefly touched the near-Earth asteroid to collect dust and pebbles from its surface for delivery to Earth in 2023.

Asteroid Bennu is currently more than 321 million kilometres from the Earth. It offers scientists a window into the early solar system as it was first taking shape billions of years ago and flinging ingredients that could have helped seed life on Earth, NASA said. If Tuesday's sample collection event provided enough of a sample, mission teams will command the spacecraft to begin stowing the precious primordial cargo to begin its journey back to Earth in March 2021.

Pope nod for same-sex civil unions in interview

Says homosexual people have the right to be in a family

Rome, Oct. 21: Pope Francis endorsed same-sex civil unions for the first time as Pope while being interviewed for the feature-length documentary *Francesco*, which premiered on Wednesday at the Rome Film Festival.

The papal thumbs-up came midway through the film that delves into issues Francis cares about most, including the environment, poverty, migration, racial and income inequality, and the people most affected by discrimination. "Homosexual people have the right to be in a family. They are children of God," Francis said in one of his sit-down interviews for the film.

"What we have to have is a civil union law; that way they are legally covered." While serving as archbishop of Buenos Aires, Francis endorsed civil unions for gay couples as an alternative to same-sex marriages. However, he had never come out publicly in favour of civil unions as pope. The Jesuit priest who has been at the forefront in seeking to build bridges with gays in the church, the Rev. James Martin, praised the pope's comments as "a major step forward in the church's support for LGBT people."

"The Pope's speaking positively about civil unions also sends a strong message to places where



Pope Francis arrives for his weekly general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican on Wednesday. — AFP

the church has opposed such laws," Martin said in a statement. One of the main characters in the documentary is Juan Carlos Cruz, the Chilean survivor of clergy sexual abuse whom Francis initially discredited during a 2018 visit to Chile.

Cruz, who is gay, said that during his first meetings with the Pope in May 2018, Francis assured him that God made Cruz gay. Cruz tells his own story in snippets throughout the film, chronicling both Francis' evolution on understanding sexual abuse as well as to document the Pope's views on gay people. Director Evgeny Afineevsky had remarkable access to cardinals, the Vatican television archives and the Pope

himself. He said he negotiated his way in through persistence, and deliveries of Argentine mate tea and Alfajores cookies that he got to the pope via some well-connected Argentines in Rome.

"Listen, when you are in the Vatican, the only way to achieve something is to break the rule and then to say, 'I'm sorry,'" Afineevsky said in an interview ahead of the premiere. The director worked official and unofficial channels starting in early 2018, and ended up so close to Francis by the end of the project that he showed the pope the movie on his iPad in August. The two recently exchanged Yom Kippur greetings; Afineevsky is a Russian-born Jew who lives in Los Angeles. But

"Francesco" is more than a biopic about the Pope.

Wim Wenders did that in the 2018 film *Pope Francis: A Man of His Word*, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival.

"Francesco," is more a visual survey of the world's crises and tragedies, with audio from the pope providing possible ways to solve them. Afineevsky travelled the world to film it: the settings include Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh where Myanmar's Rohingya sought refuge; the US-Mexico border and Francis' native Argentina. "The film tells the story of the Pope by reversing the cameras," said Vatican communications director Paolo Ruffini, who was one of Afineevsky's closest Vatican-based collaborators on the film.

Ruffini said that when Afineevsky first approached him with the idea of a documentary, he tried to tamp down his hopes for interviewing the Pope. "I told him it wasn't going to be easy," he said. But Ruffini gave him some advice: Names of people who had been impacted by the Pope, even after just a brief meeting. "I told him that many of those encounters had certainly been filmed by the Vatican cameras, and that there he would find a veritable gold mine of stories that told a story," Ruffini said.

— AP

Trump paid \$1.8L tax in China for licensing deals

Washington, Oct. 21: President Donald Trump spent a decade unsuccessfully pursuing projects in China, operating an office there during his first run for president and forging a partnership with a major government-controlled company, *The New York Times* reported Tuesday.

China is one of only three foreign nations — the others are Britain and Ireland — where Trump maintains a bank account, according to a *Times* analysis of the president's tax records. The foreign accounts do not show up on Trump's public financial disclosures, where he must list personal assets, because they are held under corporate names.

The Chinese account is controlled by Trump International Hotels Management LLC, which the tax records show paid \$188,561 in taxes in China while pursuing licensing deals there from 2013 to 2015. In response to questions from *The Times*, Alan Garten, a lawyer for the Trump Organisation, said the company had "opened an account with a Chinese bank having offices in the United States in order to pay the local taxes" associated with efforts to do business there.

He said the company had opened the account after establishing an office in China "to explore the potential for hotel deals in Asia." "No deals, transactions or other business activities ever materialised and, since 2015, the office has remained inactive,"

THE COMPANY (Trump International Hotels Management LLC) had opened an account with a Chinese bank having offices in the US in order to pay the local taxes associated with efforts to do business there

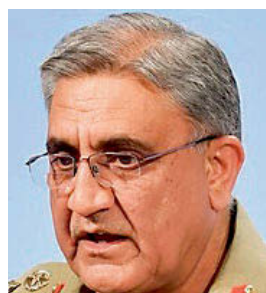
ALAN GARTEN, lawyer for the Trump Organisation

Garten said. "Though the bank account remains open, it has never been used for any other purpose." Garten would not identify the bank in China where the account is held. China continues to be an issue in the 2020 presidential campaign. — AP

Don says will win by 'bigger' margin

Erie (US), Oct. 21: US President Donald Trump has exuded confidence that he will win the November 3 election by a bigger margin than that of 2016 and urged his supporters to deliver a "thundering" defeat to his Democratic challenger Joe Biden. In his hour-long speech at an election rally here, Trump reiterated that his challenger Biden and his running mate Senator Kamala Harris, if elected, would convert the

US into a socialist country. "It's time to send a message to these wealthy liberal hypocrites by delivering Joe Biden, sleepy Joe, a thundering defeat on November 3rd. Got to get out and vote." Trump told his supporters in Pennsylvania on Tuesday. Trump asserted that his victory on November 3 is going to be bigger than that of 2016. "This is going to be bigger than four years ago." — PTI



Qamar Javed Bajwa

PROBE INTO ARREST OF NAWAZ KIN

Karachi, Oct. 21: Pakistan's Sindh Police chief has deferred his leave and asked his officers to set aside their leave applications for 10 days "in the larger national interest" after Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa ordered an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the arrest of former premier Nawaz Sharif's son-in-law, an issue that brought the paramilitary forces and police in direct conflict in the country's largest city.

In a series of tweets, Sindh Police said on Tuesday that the "unfortunate incident" that occurred on the night of 18/19 October caused "great heartache and resentment" within its ranks, referring to the circumstances surrounding the arrest of Sharif's son-in-law Capt (retd) Muhammad Safdar.

Opposition parties have alleged that the Sindh police chief was reportedly forcibly taken away by paramilitary Frontier Corps from his home in Karachi in the wee hours of Monday and pressurised to order for the arrest of Safdar. "As a result, IG Sindh decided to proceed on leave and subsequently all ranks decided that they would also apply for leave to protest the humiliation meted out to Sindh police," it said.

It added, "This was a spontaneous and heartfelt reaction and made on an individual rather than a collective basis, because every single member of the department felt an acute sense of disrespect." — PTI

PAK MAY NOT EXIT FATF GREY LIST: REPORT

Islamabad, Oct. 21: Pakistan may remain on the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) as it has been unable to comply with six of the 27 points in the global terror financing and money laundering watchdog's action plan, a media report said on Wednesday.

The Paris-based global watchdog will hold its virtual plenary session from October 21 to 23. It will review Pakistan's progress on the 27-point action plan. The FATF had placed Pakistan on the grey list in June 2018 and asked Islamabad to implement a plan of action to curb money laundering and terror financing by the end of 2019, but the deadline was extended later on due to the Covid-19 pandemic. — PTI

Support for Thai royals



Royalist supporters take part in a rally to show support for the Thai royal establishment in Su-ngai Kolok District in Thailand's southern province of Narathiwat on Wednesday. — AFP

Europe records weekly high of 927K cases

Geneva, Oct. 21: The World Health Organisation says Europe again reported a new high in the weekly number of Coronavirus cases during the pandemic last week, recording more than 927,000 cases.

The UN health agency said in its latest global report on the deadly Coronavirus pandemic that the continent saw a 25 per cent spike in confirmed cases last week and was responsible for 38 per cent of all new cases reported worldwide. Russia, the Czech

Republic and Italy accounted for more than half of new Coronavirus cases in Europe.

The WHO report says the number of deaths in Europe also "continues to climb," and increased by one-third from the previous week.

The health agency says Slovenia reported a 150 per cent increase in cases in a week with a record 4,890 cases.

Slovenia also reported 1,924 Coronavirus deaths, compared to one week before. — AP

CDC: 300K more deaths in US

New York, Oct. 21: A new government report shows that since the Coronavirus pandemic began, the US has seen 300,000 more deaths than it usually would. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention has been tracking how many deaths have been reported and comparing them with counts seen in other years. Usually, between the beginning of February and the end of September, about 1.9 million deaths are reported. This year, it's closer to 2.2 million — a 14.5 per cent increase. The CDC says the Coronavirus was involved in about two-thirds of the excess deaths. CDC officials say it's likely the virus was a factor in many other deaths too.

For example, someone with heart attack symptoms may have hesitated to go to a hospital that was

busy with Coronavirus patients. The largest segment of the excess deaths, about 95,000, were in elderly people ages 75 to 84. That was 21.5 per cent more than in a normal year. But the biggest relative increase, 26.5 per cent, was in people ages 25 to 44. Deaths in people younger than 25 actually dropped slightly. Deaths were up for different racial and ethnic groups. — AP

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NEW ANALYSIS

Sub-Saharan Africa has households that struggle to survive on \$1.90 a day

One in six children live in extreme poverty: UN

United Nations, Oct. 21: An estimated one in six children — or 356 million globally — were living in extreme poverty before the Covid-19 pandemic began, and this is set to worsen significantly, according to a new World Bank Group and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) analysis. Global Estimate of Children in Monetary Poverty: An Update', notes that sub-Saharan

aran Africa, with its limited social safety nets, accounts for two-thirds of children living in households that struggle to survive on an average of \$ 1.90 a day or less per person — the international measure for extreme poverty, while South Asia accounts for nearly a fifth of these children. The analysis shows that the number of children living in extreme poverty

decreased moderately, by 29 million, between 2013 and 2017.

However, UNICEF and the World Bank Group warn that any progress made in recent years, has been "slow-paced, unequally distributed, and at risk" due to the economic impact of the pandemic. "One in six children living in extreme poverty is one in six children struggling to

● **UNICEF AND the World Bank Group warn that any progress made in recent years, has been "slow-paced, unequally distributed, and at risk" due to the economic impact of the pandemic.**

survive," UNICEF Director of Programmes Sanjay Wijesekera said.

"These numbers alone should shock anyone. And the scale and depth of what we know about the financial hardships brought on by the pandemic, are only set to make matters far worse. Governments urgently need a children's recovery plan to prevent countless more children and their families from reaching levels of poverty unseen for many, many

years," Wijesekera said. Although children make up around a third of the global population, around half of the extreme poor are children. The youngest children are the worst off — nearly 20 per cent of all of them below the age of 5 in the developing world live in extremely poor households, the report highlights. — PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

22 OCTOBER 2020

Punjab makes a point, will other states follow?

The passage of four bills and a resolution by the Punjab Assembly seeking to undo the impact of the three recently passed Central laws to regulate farming could trigger a political war between the Opposition-ruled states and the Centre on agriculture, a state subject as per the seventh schedule of the Constitution.

While the unanimous resolution passed by the Assembly in the Congress-ruled state has asked the Centre to annul the Central laws and promulgate an ordinance making procurement of food grains on minimum support price (MSP) a statutory right of the farmers, the three state laws seek to address the grievances of the farmers who have been protesting against the Central laws. According to the Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services (Special Provisions and Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2020, no sale of paddy and wheat will be valid in the state unless the rate of payment is equal to or above the MSP and its violation could attract imprisonment of not less than three years and a fine. The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) (Special Provisions and Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2020, provides for a fee to be levied on traders or electronic trading and transaction platforms for trade outside the mandis run by the Agricultural Produce Market Committees. The Bill amending the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, seeks to protect the farmers from attachment of land below 2.5 acres in recovery proceedings, insulating small farmers from the provisions of the Central law that facilitates contract farming. The Essential Commodities (Special Provisions and Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2020, empowers the state to set stock limits under extraordinary circumstances, a power the Central law had reserved for the Union government.

While the Central laws concerned made the mandis redundant by allowing farmers to sell outside them, the state law makes such trade unviable by making it a costly deal.

That these laws followed the exhortation of Congress president Sonia Gandhi to the states her party rules to take legislative route to checkmate the Centre's move makes their fate uncertain as governors can sit on them or consult the President, as per the constitutional provisions. It is highly likely that courts will be called upon to decide on the constitutionality or otherwise of the bills and the farmers will have to wait to benefit from them, if there is any.

It's pretty clear that the Capt. Amarinder Singh government is making a political point by moving the bills. The BJP had claimed that the Modi government was doing what the Congress had promised in its manifesto—to free up the mandis from all controls. The Congress, however, had explained that the party was aiming at reforms of the markets that were long overdue. It may be noted that the Punjab bills offer pretty little in terms of reforming them. If it really wants to support the farmers and win the argument on the issue of farm bills, the Congress government should make the functioning of the mandis transparent and non-exploitative. Whether it will walk the talk is the moot question.

'Rapist' trolls: Shame them

The cyber wing of the Chennai police should not stop with registering the case against the Twitter user who issued a rape threat to the daughter of award-winning film actor Vijay Sethupathi. The police should pursue the pervert, going by the Twitter handle @tsirithikrajh, in all earnestness and arrest him. Earlier, the five-year-old daughter of cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni was threatened similarly by a 16-year-old boy from Gujarat on Instagram. Though the police cracked down quickly and caught the boy, it is not clear what action was taken under the law, which would serve as a deterrent to every other pervert lurking in the shadows of social media.

Traditionally, rape threat has been used as a weapon by roguish men to establish their gender supremacy and to intimidate women they disliked. That it is now used freely in social media to silence women who have a mind of their own is one of the banes of modern society. It is a tragedy that not much has been done by the enforcing agencies so far to put an end to this cheap tactic employed by men running short of ideas and words to counter women intellectually.

Now that the trend has degenerated further, touching such an abysmal level wherein men threaten children just because they do not agree with their fathers' behavior, whatever it is, the crime has to be seen in a new light. Rape threat should be treated as a felony and dealt with accordingly by the police. Also, such persons need to be exposed to society with a view to telling all men that as a civilised society we have zero tolerance to rape and rape threat. Above all, we need to enlighten young men that such threats come out of men's impotence in dealing with themselves and their problems.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

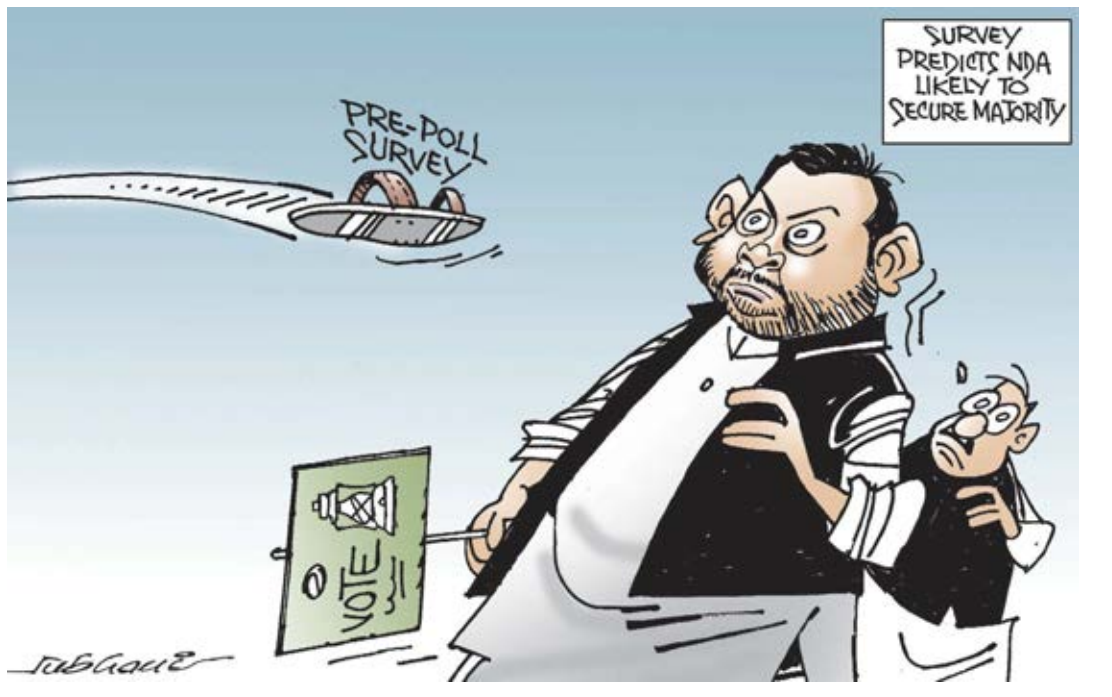
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Subhani



Step up pressure on Xi; bring France into Quad



Claude Arpi

Since five months now, Indian and Chinese troops have stood face-to-face in the high Himalayas; in all probability, the standoff will continue during the cold winter months ahead in Ladakh.

It has consequences at many levels, not just militarily.

The first: what has President Xi Jinping achieved by trying to advance a few hundred metres in Galwan, Gogra or Pangong Tso?

Different motives have been attributed to the Chinese chess moves.

To cite a few, Beijing wanted to stop the Darbuk-Shyok-DBO Road, protect China's projects in Gilgit Baltistan (and Shaksam valley occupied by China); gain strategic advantages on the ground; enhance Chairman Xi's prestige; boost the standing of the People's Liberation Army; humiliate an arrogant competitor (India) in a period of weakness; it was even rumoured that Gen. Zhao Zongqi, the Western Theatre Command chief, thought he would get a seat in the powerful Central Military Commission after Ladakh.

China is today the loser: infrastructure development will continue, India will not renounce its legitimate claims on Gilgit-Baktistan, and so on.

Further, Tibet, Taiwan, Hong Kong or Xinjiang may come up for discussion in the not-too-far future and the "One-China" policy may be questioned in many quarters.

This didn't stop Zhao Lijian, the Chinese foreign ministry's "wolf warrior" spokesman, to continue with his anti-India tirades: "China does not recognise the so-called 'Ladakh Central Territory' and 'Arunachal Pradesh' illegally established by India, and opposes development of infrastructure construction in border dispute areas for the purpose of

military control."

This diplomat had the cheek to add: "Neither party should take any actions in the border area that would complicate the situation in order to avoid affecting the efforts of both parties to ease the situation." This was the day Beijing announced a new strategic road leading up to Metok, north of the McMahon Line.

A Chinese TV report said the Pai-Metok Highway will be completed by the end of September 2022: "After completion, the length of the road from Nyingchi City to Metok County [North of Upper Siang of Arunachal Pradesh] through Bomi County will be shortened from 346 km to 180 km, and the driving time will be shortened from 11 hours to 4.5 hours."

At the same time, the world is fast becoming aware of the constant double standards in Chinese propaganda, and for the first time it is taking steps to counter Beijing's moves.

Take France for example. In the past, Paris was often reluctant to offend China as it was "doing business" with Beijing. But things are changing; realising the danger of Chinese hegemony for the planet, French President Emmanuel Macron recently appointed Christophe Penot, his ambassador to Australia, to the new post of ambassador for the Indo-Pacific.

The Sydney Morning Herald reported: "The coronavirus has catalysed European concern over Chinese government actions in Hong Kong, the treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, military incursions into the South China Sea and political interference." In June, Mr Penot had already warned that international standards were increasingly called into question, adding that the current Covid crisis was likely accelerate the process: "France and Australia have a particular

responsibility here to ensure that the post-Covid world does not get worse and, if possible, that it becomes better than the world before."

The Australian newspaper commented: "France is the last European power to change its vision of China and the region. In September, Germany, Europe's largest economy, which has long enjoyed close ties with Beijing, released its first Indo-Pacific strategy focused on increasing diplomatic pressure on China."

FRANCE IN THE QUAD?

A couple of years ago, I had asked an Indian observer why France was not included as a participant in the Quad. "Nobody thought of it", he had told me. This has changed after President Macron's visit to India in March 2018. Addressing a French gathering in New Delhi, the young President reminded his countrymen: "France is a power of the Indian and Pacific Oceans; we are present at Reunion, we are also there in French Polynesia and New Caledonia. And we are a maritime power, it is often forgotten but France is the second maritime power in the world. We have a strong navy, we have nuclear submarines equipped like few other powers in the world; a maritime surveillance capability through our own satellites and technologies; it is obvious we are a military and intelligence power ranking us among the first nations in the world."

France is ready to work with India on the oceans.

A few months earlier, C. Raja Mohan and Darshana Baruah had written for Carnegie India about *Deepening the India-France Maritime Partnership*: "As maritime security acquires greater salience in India's foreign policy, New Delhi is increasingly looking to

In the past, Paris was often reluctant to offend China as it was 'doing business' with Beijing. But things are changing...

leverage its strategic partnerships, particularly with Paris. Although India and France have joined forces on a number of issues since 1998, regional cooperation in the Indo-Pacific has never risen to the top of the agenda. However, this may be about to change."

After the Quad's last meeting in Tokyo last week, US spokesperson Cale Brown said the foreign ministers of the US, Japan, Australia and India had reaffirmed their collective efforts towards a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific: "they pledged to continue regular consultations to implement their vision of a peaceful, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific."

US deputy secretary of state Stephen Biegun more recently explained: "The Quad is a partnership driven by shared interests, not binding obligations, and is not intended to be an exclusive grouping. Any country that seeks a free and open Indo-Pacific and is willing to take steps to ensure that should be welcome to work with us."

It seems that Paris's vision could perfectly fit into this scheme. So why can't France join the four founding nations?

Emmanuel Lenain, French ambassador to India, answered the question in an interview with *India Today*: "Indo-Pacific is a priority. Both the leaders [Modi and Macron] have been working on that at least for the past four or five years. It is about values. We want an open, transparent Indo-Pacific. Now, what would be the framework. I don't think anything is exclusive... All like-minded countries should join efforts towards an open, transparent Indo-Pacific."

It sounds like the US secretary of state's definition.

Whether France joins or not, there is no doubt all these new collaborative efforts should be credited to President Xi and his reckless foreign policies. One more "loss" in his balance sheet.

The writer is based in South India for the past 42 years. He writes on India, China, Tibet and Indo-French relations.

LETTERS

REIN IN FESTIVITY

We are a happy lot when it comes to festivals and like to flaunt with family and friends (*Cut back on festivities, Covid threat is real, DC, Oct. 20*). Your editorial is timely and sane citizens must not ignore warnings of scientists and politicians on celebrating festivals with caution and not regret after a catastrophe. Let us not blame others for our stupidity.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

ITEM JIBE

One must appreciate Rahul Gandhi for expressing his displeasure over the comment of Kamal Nath who is a senior Congress leader against a Dalit woman minister. Stooping to such levels not expected of a senior leader like Nath. Trespassing limits of criticism has become the order of the day. The comment may be hilarious and sarcastic but doesn't result in any electoral benefit except momentary laughter. Rahul has shown political maturity and sagacity which is quite disarming and everybody wishes that others emulate him.

D.S.P. Rao
Kakinada

DEMOCRACY

It's disheartening to see how a powerful tool of democracy is being distorted and maligned on a day-to-day basis. Secularism is about tolerance of a country towards its citizens and also speaks about the tolerance of citizens towards the faith and belief of fellow citizens and when any of this framework is breached, automatically it's an indication that we are moving towards the demise of democracy.

Ratnaraj Jain
Rajahmundry

U.S. officials ignore arrival of Mrs. Gandhi

UNITED NATIONS, Oct. 21 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and party arrived here last night on a four-day visit for the 25th anniversary commemorative session of the United Nations General Assembly, now in progress.

Mrs. Gandhi is due to speak in the Assembly on

October 23. As already indicated by her during her stopover in London, Mrs. Gandhi has passed up President Richard Nixon's invitation to her to attend the mass dinner he is giving in Washington on October 24 for all visiting heads of State and Government.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



CIC sans chief, only 10 of 28 panels worked during lockdown

Fifteen years after the Right to Information (RTI) Act came into force, does the nation have more transparency or less? The story is quite sombre. More than 2.2 lakh cases are pending at the Central and State Information Commissions. Nine out of 29 information commissions are functioning without a chief, one-fourth of information commissioner posts are vacant and the state commissions in Jharkhand and Tripura are defunct. No new commissioners have been appointed.

Even the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has refused to disclose details on the PM-Cares Fund stating that the fund is "not a public authority" within the ambit of the RTI Act!

The absence of a commissioner has serious ramifications for the effective functioning of the information commissions. But even the Central Information Commission, which hears second appeals against all central government departments and UTs, has been without a chief since August this year. Bimal

Julka, who headed the CIC for barely six months, demitted office in August, upon reaching the age limit stipulated in the Act.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, only 10 of the 28 information commissions worked and even these hardly heard any appeals.

Yet, it is not just the transparency law that has suffered. There are other vacancies in key organisations that indicate a drift not usually associated with the Modi sarkar. Sources say that the Public Enterprises Selection Board (PSEB) has been headless for more than a month after Rajiv Kumar, a former finance secretary, demitted office at the end of August and was appointed Election Commissioner in place of Ashok Lavasa. Similarly, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal has been headless for more than seven months, among others.

Apparently, as many as six ministries and departments are awaiting regular secretaries. Some estimate that dozens of board-level positions in several central PSUs are lying vacant with no sign of

when these will be filled.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

The 360-degree method of empanelment of officers has been a major administrative "reform" introduced by the Modi sarkar to judge the performance of officers. However, not all officials have been happy with it, since it allows retired officers to influence their careers. Many careers have been marred as a result, say sources.

But that may have changed, with the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) deciding not necessarily to act on the advice of the 360-degree committees, and even rejecting their recommendations as and when required. The case of UT cadre IAS officer G. Narendra Kumar is often cited as an example of the subjectivity often behind recommendations of these committees.

In September 2017, Mr Kumar who was posted in Puducherry was booked by the CBI for alleged irregularities in admission to postgraduate medical courses in private colleges. Though the allegations turned out to be false, Mr Kumar's

career was damaged. It is only now that his name has finally put on the list of the review empanelment order issued last month, after missing the opportunity for empanelment in 2018 due to the case against him. The consensus among babus is that Mr Kumar is among the best officials but suffers from the "disability" to network. Mr Kumar had got caught in the political battle between the chief minister and then lieutenant governor of Puducherry and has paid a price. Some retired senior officers are said to have played a part in this episode and their advice proved costly to Mr Kumar, in career terms.

The damage may have been done, but observers say that the government's belated move does send out a message that fair dealings may be delayed for a while, but not forever.

NEW PORTFOLIOS FOR RBI DEPUTY GOVERNORS

The recent appointment of Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s senior-most executive director M. Rajeshwar Rao as the deputy governor of the bank, has now led to a reallocation

of portfolios of the four deputy governors. Mr Rao replaced N.S. Vishwanathan, who stepped down three months ahead of the end of his tenure on health grounds. Mr Rao will oversee the department of regulations and also the departments of communication, enforcement, inspection, legal and risk monitoring.

The RBI's other three deputy governors are B.P. Kanungo, M.K. Jain and Michael Debabrata Patra. While Mr Patra will continue to look after the monetary policy department, Mr Jain will be in charge of central security cell, corporate strategy and budget departments, while Mr Kanungo will oversee coordination, currency management and external investments and operations. In April this year, the government had extended Mr Kanungo's tenure by a year.

Deputy governors of RBI are appointed for an initial period of three years and can be reappointed.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	40,707.31	0.40
Nifty 50	11,937.70	0.34
S&P 500*	3,448.44	0.15
Dollar (₹)	0.87	-0.15
Pound Sterling (₹)	96.02	-0.96
Euro (₹)	87.25	-0.82
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	51,354,444	0.87
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	41.93	-1.23
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.912	-0.019
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.817	0.021

* As of 9:30 PM IST

AirAsia India starts flights on 6 new local routes

Budget carrier AirAsia India on Wednesday launched flights on six new routes, connecting Chennai with Ahmedabad, Goa, Mumbai and Visakhapatnam, Mumbai with Goa, and Jaipur with Kolkata as it expects an increase in demand during the festive season. All new routes are now open for bookings. It also offered 'Flex Fares' allowing customers the flexibility to change their travel dates unlimited number of times.

Fire breaks out at Royal Enfield's Jaipur stockyard



Eicher Motors on Wednesday said a fire broke out at Royal Enfield's Jaipur-based transit stockyard facility. Royal Enfield is a part of Eicher Motors. At around 12.30 pm on Wednesday, a fire incident occurred at Royal Enfield's transit stockyard facility at Kukas, Jaipur. "All manpower and personnel have been evacuated. There has been no harm or injury to personnel working at the facility," Eicher Motors said.

L&T Infotech shares zoom 5% on Q2 earnings

Shares of IT company L&T Infotech, the tech arm of L&T, gained nearly 5 per cent on Wednesday after the company reported a 26.7 per cent increase in consolidated net profit for the quarter ended September 2020. The stock jumped 4.73 per cent to close at ₹3,105 on the BSE. During the day, it rose by 5.88 per cent to ₹3,139. On the NSE, it gained 4.73 per cent to close at ₹3,105.

Bajaj Finance Q2 net profit drops 36% to ₹965 cr

Bajaj Finance Ltd (BFL) on Wednesday reported a 36 per cent drop in its consolidated net profit at Rs 965 crore for the second quarter of the 2020-21 fiscal year. The NBFC had posted a net profit of ₹1,506 crore in the July-September quarter a year ago. Its total consolidated income grew 3 per cent to Rs 6,523 crore during Q2FY21 as against ₹6,323 crore in the same quarter a year earlier.



Centre plans sops for industry

More sectors likely to get production-linked incentives to boost manufacturing

New Delhi, Oct. 21: Enthused by initial response of industry with regard to the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme, economic affairs secretary Tarun Bajaj on Wednesday said that the government is considering an extension of the scheme to 7-8 more sectors to promote domestic manufacturing. With the view to make India a manufacturing hub, the government recently announced the PLI scheme for mobile phones, pharma products and medical equipment sectors.

"I have a lot of confidence and hope on the PLI scheme that we have brought out for mobile phones, pharma products and medical equipment, and in the offing are about 7-8 sectors where the PLI scheme would be extended," Bajaj said while addressing a virtual CII conference.

The PLI scheme, unlike other schemes, is an outcome- and output-oriented programme where manufacturers get cash incentives over 5-7 years for production, he said.

Focus on investments, jobs, reskilling: Report

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, OCT. 21

The government should focus on increasing investments, creating jobs and skilling workforce for the next 10 years, else it may be on the path to a breakdown nation.

Since the 1990 reforms, six per cent real GDP growth in India was a given. It no longer is and the potential growth is estimated to be below 6 per cent from FY22-FY25, according to a report by Quantum India Advisors.

India's labour force participation rate and the demand in the world now, to have a diversification of supply chains, and India can definitely take advantage," he said.

employment rate have fallen consistently over the last five years. The employment situation has become worse. The Indian economy and its informal workforce suffered a major blow post the shocks of demonetisation, GST and the credit crisis.

Distress in rural India was ignited by demonetisation of November 2016. While rural areas haven't been hit as hard in the Covid-19 related lockdown, demand is yet to recover fully from past shocks. Lower aggregate demand in urban and rural India as a result of

the demonetisation suppressed corporate profits and gave little incentive to industry to invest in new capacity. This resulted in lower job creation.

Further, the government's self-imposed fiscal constraints have not helped in stimulating the flagging demand.

The report wants the country to focus on more investment and exports to drive growth and incomes. Emerging economies which have grown and broken out of the low income have all done it by investing, producing at large scale and exporting.

tant sectors are proposed to be covered in these areas," Bajaj said.

He added that "so, I think that with all these efforts and as finance minister (Nirmala Sitharaman) said we are seeing what all other things can we do (to boost manufacturing and economy)."

Speaking about raising infrastructure spending, Bajaj said the government is trying to cajole chairmen and managing directors of public sector enterprises to meeting their capital expenditure (capex) plan for the current financial year.

The government has been doing review meetings at all levels to push infrastructure spending, he said, adding that the finance minister recently announced another tranche of ₹37,000 crore going into the infrastructure spend. "While we are in the process of making our budget for the next year, we are also looking at what has been the expenditure this year and what is the extra requirement that is required by various sectors," he said. — PTI

1 in 2 adults worried about jobs, 2 in 3 expect reskilling

New Delhi, Oct. 21: More than half of the working adults globally are concerned about losing their job in the next 12 months, including 57 per cent in India, but more than two-thirds are hopeful that their employers will help them retrain for new employment opportunities, a global survey showed on Wednesday.

The survey, released at the World Economic Forum's *Jobs Reset Summit* being held online, showed wide variations between countries, while an average of three in four workers in Russia feared job losses, it was just one in four in Germany.

In India, nearly 57 per cent of respondents said they are 'concerned' about their jobs — over 25 per cent are 'very concerned' and 31 per cent are 'somewhat concerned'.

Globally, 54 per cent concerned about job losses in the next 12 months, the WEF-Ipsos global survey of more than 12,000 working adults in 27 countries showed.

The prevalence of job-loss concern was highest at 75 per cent in Russia, followed by 73 per cent in Spain and and 71 per cent in Malaysia. Germany

JOB WORRIES

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The prevalence of job-loss concern was highest at 75 per cent among people in Russia, followed by 73 per cent in Spain and and 71 per cent in Malaysia.

scored the best with 26 per cent, while it was 30 per cent in Sweden, and 36 per cent in the Netherlands and the US.

However, 67 per cent of workers worldwide said they can learn skills needed for the jobs of the future through their current employer. Nearly nine in 10 workers in Spain think they can gain essential new skills on the job, whereas fewer than half in Japan, Sweden and Russia.

Across the 27 countries, perceived ability to learn and develop those skills on the job was found to be the most widespread in Spain (86 per cent), Peru (84 per cent), and Mexico

(83 per cent) and the least common in Japan (45 per cent), Sweden (46 per cent), and Russia (48 per cent). India also scored very high at 80 per cent.

World Economic Forum managing director Saadia Zahidi said, "The current crisis means that the job creation rate has gone significantly down compared to two years ago but there is an optimistic scenario overall compared to the rate of job destruction."

The countries where those who can gain new skills on the job outnumber those who are concerned about losing their job by the largest margins are the US and Germany (by 40 points). — PTI

India needs bond market: Sebi

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, OCT. 21

Development of bond market is necessary to help the government to achieve its target of investment in infrastructure and there is an urgent need to diversify funding requirements from the banking sector," the Sebi chairman said.

The Sebi chairman also acknowledged that illiquidity in the bond markets was an issue and that it needed a long-term solution. "It would be a challenging task to achieve the government's target of achieving ₹100 lakh crore investment in infrastructure by 2024-25 unless the bond market is adequately developed," said the Sebi chief, while addressing

the CII Financial Markets Summit.

"The corporate bond market needs to become more robust because there is an urgent need to diversify funding requirements from the banking sector," the Sebi chairman said.

The Sebi chairman also acknowledged that illiquidity in the bond markets was an issue and that it needed a long-term solution.

The Sebi chief further mentioned that the recovery in capital markets after the initial hit by the pandemic in March 2020 has been broad-based.

"Retail participation has gone up with 63 lakh new

IT WOULD be a challenging task to achieve the government's target of achieving ₹100 lakh crore investment in infrastructure by 2024-25 unless the bond market is adequately developed

AJAY TYAGI, Sebi chief

demat accounts opened between April-September 2020 compared to 27 lakh demat accounts opened during the same period last year, marking 130 per cent rise. Also the Indian market has seen inflows

Small cities drive e-tail, sales up 48% in festive season

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, OCT. 21

The e-commerce sector has clocked ₹22,000-crore or \$3.1 billion worth business during the first four days of the initial festive season sales event, according to the data of RedSeer Consulting. The seven-day festive sales event began on October 15.

E-commerce players have achieved 77 per cent of the predicted sales of \$4 billion or around ₹28,000 crore for the first festive sales event.

While RedSeer expects that the festive month from October 15 to November 15 will see total sales of \$7 billion, Forrester has predicted the total sales to be around \$6.5 billion. Of this, 75 per cent of \$4.8 billion sales could happen in the first seven-day event.

Going by RedSeer's estimation of \$4 billion, the e-commerce sector has seen a 48 per cent growth at \$4 billion in sales during the first event compared to the last year's \$2.7 billion. "Sharper sales growth against the last year, especially in the first three days, indicates that the industry is on track to reach or even surpass our forecasts of \$4 billion," said a researcher at RedSeer.

Some of the factors that have helped the growth are the demand growth in tier-2 cities driven by reverse migration, digital adoption and value offers post Covid-19. Flipkart saw over 666

● GOING BY RedSeer's estimation of \$4 billion, the e-commerce sector has seen a 48 per cent growth at \$4 billion in sales during the first event compared to the last year's \$2.7 billion.

● SOME OF the factors that have helped the growth are the demand growth in smaller cities driven by reverse migration to hinterland, digital adoption and value offers post Covid-19 pandemic.

million visits with over 52 per cent of these visits recording from tier-3 cities and beyond. It has seen 51 per cent growth in customers from tier 2+ markets in fashion.

Tier-3 customers drove the sale of large appliances with nearly 50 per cent demand coming from these cities. Of the 35 per cent new seller base this time, around 60 per cent were from tier-2 and tier-3 towns.

"Over 1.1 lakh sellers receiving orders, 66 per cent sellers, 91 per cent of new customers, and 66 per cent of new Prime sign-ups from small towns, shopping in five Indian languages and orders from over 98.4 per cent of India's pin-codes in just 48 hours — it's truly Bharat's biggest celebration on Amazon ever," said Manish Tiwary, Vice President, Amazon India after two days of the event.

SBI slashes home loan rate by 0.25%

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, OCT. 21

State Bank of India on Wednesday announced up to 25 basis points (bps) concession on home loan rates as part of its festival offers. SBI home loan customers would get an interest concession of 25 bps for buying their dream homes of above ₹75 lakh based on CIBIL score and through YONO app.

"In an extension of its festive offers announced recently, SBI offers a credit score based concessions of up to 20 bps from 10 bps earlier, for a home loan of above ₹30 lakh to ₹2 crore across India. The same concession would also be

applicable for home loan customers for a loan amount of up to ₹3 crore in eight metro cities. An additional 5 bps concession for all home loans is given if applied through YONO," said the lender.

SBI now offers interest rates starting at 6.90 per cent for a home loan of up to ₹30 lakh and 7 per cent for above ₹30 lakh.

SBI commands nearly 34 per cent market share in home loans and nearly 33 per cent in the auto loans segment.

SBI has already announced a slew of special offers for its retail customers with 100 per cent processing fee waiver on car, gold, personal loans.

StanChart to lease biggest campus in TN

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, OCT. 21

In one of the largest commercial realty deals in recent times, Standard Chartered GBS is leasing 7.7 lakh square feet of office space in Chennai for its largest office globally.

The office space is located at DLF Downtown at Taramani in Chennai's IT corridor. DLF has inked an anchor deal with Standard Chartered GBS for their office building.

DLF and GIC, Singapore's sovereign wealth fund, had entered into a strategic partnership to develop a rental assets portfolio with GIC as one-third partner, under the consolidated portfolio of DLF Cyber City Developers Ltd (DCCDL), a subsidiary of DLF.

DLF Cyber City Developers, the joint venture of DLF-GIC and TIDCO, announced the launch of DLF Downtown, Chennai with an investment of ₹5,000 crore earlier this year.

According to reports, Standard Chartered could pay around ₹100 crore (\$14 million) each year for leasing the space. — AP

Australia may file anti-trust suit against Google

ROD MCGUIRK CANBERRA, OCT. 21

Australia's competition watchdog will consider its own antitrust case against Google, the commission chairman said on Wednesday after the US Justice Department sued the company for abusing its dominance in online search and advertising.

Competition and Consumer Commission chairman Rod Sims described the US case filed on

Tuesday as one of the world's biggest antitrust cases in the past 20 years.

"I'm delighted the Department of Justice's taking it on and we'll follow it really closely," Sims told the National Press Club, referring to the US Department of Justice.

"We're going to look at it and see whether there's any value in what we might do," Sims added.

Separately, Sims is drafting legislation to address the imbalance in bargaining

● AUSTRALIAN regulator is also drafting legislation to address the imbalance in bargaining power between Google and the Australian media businesses that want the tech giant to pay for journalism.

ing power between Google and the Australian media businesses that want the tech giant to pay for journalism.

The bills, that will be

ready to be introduced to Parliament by December, would empower an arbitrator to make binding decisions on how much Google and Facebook must pay media companies for news content.

Sims said his commission "had a lot of talk" with the US Justice Department before he released a report in July last year that recommended more government regulation on the market power of Google and Facebook that

would ensure fair deals for other media businesses and more control for individuals on how their data was used. Sim's commission launched Australian court action against Google in July alleging the company misled account holders about its use of their personal data.

The commission alleges the Google misled millions of Australians to obtain their consent and expand the scope of personal information that



SHORT TAKES

Anju vice-prez of athletics body

New Delhi: Incumbent Adille Sumariwalla is set to be elected unopposed as Athletics Federation of India (AFI) president for his third term while former long jumper Anju Bobby George will be made senior vice-president in the national governing body's polls on October 31. Sumariwalla and Anju were the only candidates who filed their nomination papers for their respective posts till the deadline of 4 pm on Wednesday. Returning officer Vijayalakshmy K. Gupta issued the list of nominated candidates after the deadline.

The deadline for withdrawal of nominations is 6 pm on Friday. For Anju, the lone Indian to win a medal in the World Championships (a bronze in 2003), it will be her highest post in the AFI executive committee. She was in the executive committee of last term by virtue of being a member of the Athletes' Commission. The AFI constitution mandates at least one woman among five vice-presidents, five joint secretaries and eight executive committee members. — PTI

Three U-19 Bangla players Covid +ve

Dhaka: Three Bangladesh U-19 national team cricketers have tested positive for the novel Coronavirus, while 15 others are symptomatic. In a report published in Dhaka-based *The Business Standard*, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) game development manager AEM Kawser was quoted as saying that all the players were part of the training camp being held at the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) as a part of Junior Asia Cup preparations, a tournament which now stands cancelled. "According to our protocol, we have to isolate everyone who has come into contact with symptomatic persons," Kawser said. The BCB has shut down the camp. — PTI

Covid-recovered F1 racer returns

Silverstone, England: Formula One driver Lance Stroll said he intends to race at the Portuguese Grand Prix this week after finishing a period of self-isolation following a positive test for the Coronavirus. Stroll, who drives for Racing Point, pulled out of the Eifel Grand Prix at the Nrburgring a day before the October 11 race because he felt unwell and said Wednesday he later tested positive for Covid-19. In a post on Instagram, Stroll said he spent 10 days at home in self-isolation with mild symptoms and returned a negative test on Monday. "I feel in great shape," the Canadian driver wrote, "and I can't wait to be back with the team and to race in Portugal." — AP

Coco in second round at Ostrava

Prague: American teenage sensation Coco Gauff beat Czech doubles specialist Katerina Siniakova in straight sets to clinch a second-round spot at the Ostrava Open WTA tournament on Tuesday. Gauff squandered her first three match points but the Czech hit the net on the fourth to bow out. Gauff will face third-seeded Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus, the world number 12, in the second round. Daria Kasatkina of Russia saw off sixth seed Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan 6-2, 3-6, 6-3, while her compatriot Veronika Kudermetova upset Croatia's Donna Vekic 6-2, 6-4. — AP

Live on TV

CRICKET

IPL: Rajasthan Royals vs Sunrisers Hyderabad from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

FOOTBALL

Europa League: Young Boys vs Roma from 10.25 pm on Sony Six; Rapid Wien vs Arsenal from 10.25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Leicester vs Zorya Luhansk from 12.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 3; Celtic vs AC Milan from 12.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 1; Tottenham Hotspur vs LASK from 12.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2; Hoffenheim vs Crevna Zvezda from 12.30 am (Friday) on Sony Six

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SUPER SIRAJ SHOW

Seamer wrecks KKR as RCB win big

Abu Dhabi, Oct. 21: Pacer Mohammed Siraj took three wickets upfront as RCB hammered KKR by eight wickets in an IPL match, here on Wednesday. Skipper Eoin Morgan's knock of 30 was the best batting effort in KKR innings.

Devidutt Padikkal top scored for RCB in their chase with his 17-ball 25.

Mohammed Siraj and Yuzvendra Chahal wreaked havoc in a stunning display of swing and spin bowling as Kolkata Knight Riders could just manage a paltry 84 for eight.

The masterstroke from skipper Virat Kohli to include Siraj in place of spinner Shahbaz Nadeem worked as Siraj (4-2-8-3) ran through the KKR top order to trigger a stunning batting collapse and became the first bowler in the history of IPL to bowl two maiden overs while Chahal (2/15) stymied their revival hopes.

It is KKR's second-lowest total after their 67 all-out against MI in 2008.

Playing without Windies star players Sunil Narine and Andre Russell, KKR struggled to get going after electing to bat and it was all over for them after skipper Eoin Morgan was dismissed by Washington Sundar for 30.

Siraj began with a double wicket maiden over in which he dismissed opener Rahul Tripathi (1) and Nitish Rana (0) off successive deliveries. — PTI



Mohammed Siraj (right) of Royal Challengers Bangalore celebrates taking the wicket of Tom Banton of Kolkata Knight Riders during their IPL match at Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday. — BCCI

SCORECARD

Kolkata Knight Riders: S. Gill c Morris b N. Saini 1, R. Tripathi c de Villiers b M. Siraj 1, N. Rana b M Siraj 0, T. Banton c de Villiers b M. Siraj 10, D. Karthik lbw b Y. Chahal 4, E. Morgan c Gurkeerat b Sundar 30, P Cummins c Padikkal b Y. Chahal 4, K. Yadav run out 12, L. Ferguson not out 19. **Extras:** (LB-2, WD-1) 3. **Total (for 8 wickets in 20 overs) 84.** **For:** 1-3, 2-3, 3-3, 4-14, 5-32, 6-40, 7-57, 8-84. **Bowling:** C Morris 4-1-16-1, M Siraj 4-2-8-3, N Saini 3-0-23-1, I. Udana 1-0-6-0, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-15-2, Washington Sundar 4-1-14-1.

Royal Challengers Bangalore: D. Padikkal run out 25, A. Finch c Karthik b Lockie Ferguson 16, Gurkeerat Singh not out 21, Virat Kohli not out 18. **Extras:** (LB-2, W-3) 5. **Total (for 2 wickets in 13.3 overs) 85.** **For:** 1-46, 2-46. **Bowling:** Pat Cummins 3-0-18-0, M. Prasad Krishna 2-3-0-20-0, Varun Chakravarthy 4-0-28-0, Lockie Ferguson 4-0-17-1

IPL POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Delhi Capitals	10	7	3	0	14	+0.774
Royal Challengers Bangalore	10	7	3	0	14	+0.182
Mumbai Indians	9	6	3	0	12	+1.201
Kolkata Knight Riders	10	5	5	0	10	-0.828
Kings XI Punjab	10	4	6	0	8	-0.177
Rajasthan Royals	10	4	6	0	8	-0.591
Sunrisers Hyderabad	9	3	6	0	6	+0.008
Chennai Super Kings	10	3	7	0	6	-0.463

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

Must-win game for SRH & RR

Dubai, Oct. 21: The inexperienced young guns of both RR and SRH would like to put their hands up in testing times when both teams square off in a must-win IPL game on Thursday. Whether it is Priyam Garg, Abdul Samad of Sunrisers or Kartik Tyagi, Riyan Parag of the Royals, the youngsters from both sides will be feeling the pressure of doing something out of the box in case their illustrious seniors fail in that pursuit.

SRH are currently tottering at the second last place in the eight-team table with just six points from nine game while Royals are a notch ahead with eight points after their comprehensive win over CSK in the previous game.

While SRH can't afford to slip up even one bit with five games remaining, RR would be hoping to continue the winning momentum. — PTI

NUMBERS GAME

HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL:
● Matches: 12
● Rajasthan: 6
● Hyderabad: 6

MEETING IN 2019

● Sunrisers Hyderabad beat Rajasthan Royals by 5 wickets at Hyderabad
● Rajasthan Royals beat Sunrisers Hyderabad by 7 wickets at Jaipur

MEETING IN 2020

● Rajasthan Royals beat Sunrisers Hyderabad by 5 wickets at Dubai

FOR THE RECORD

● David Warner who scored 331 runs at an average of 41.37 in nine innings of as many matches, is the highest run-getter for Sunrisers Hyderabad in this IPL.
● Steven Smith who hit 99 sixes in 178 innings of 202 matches, needs just one six to complete a century of sixes in Twenty-20 cricket.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

DHAWAN ON A HIGH AFTER TWO CENTURIES

Dubai, Oct. 21: In rampaging form, Delhi Capitals opener Shikhar Dawan says he is running faster, feeling fresher and has no fear of being dismissed this IPL season. Dhawan has scored two consecutive IPL hundreds, the first to achieve the feat, and slammed two fifties as well, making it a season to remember for him so far.

"I have been playing for 13 years, and this is the first (back-to-back hundreds). So, really happy," said Dhawan after the unbeaten 106 off 61 balls, albeit in a lost cause against Kings XI Punjab on Tuesday.

"I keep my mindset quite positive. Just look to score runs, and not think pitch is doing this or that. I play with courage. I am not afraid to get out," he added dissecting his approach to batting. — PTI

Bravo out of IPL with groin injury

Dubai, Oct. 21: Chennai Super Kings all-rounder Dwayne Bravo has been ruled out of the ongoing IPL with a groin injury, dealing a massive blow to the already struggling side which has very slim chances of advancing to the playoffs.

The 37-year-old Bravo, an integral part of the CSK team for years now, couldn't bowl the final over against Delhi Capitals in a match in Sharjah on October 17.

Skipper MS Dhoni was forced to bowl Ravindra Jadeja, who conceded three sixes.

"Dwayne Bravo is ruled out of the IPL due to a groin injury," CSK CEO Kashi Viswanathan said.

Bravo played six games and scored only seven runs in two innings. However, he got six wickets in as many



Dwayne Bravo

games with an economy rate of 8.57.

CSK's campaign has already been derailed after seven losses from 10 games. They are currently currently lying at the bottom of the league table. CSK were already hamstrung by absence of senior players Suresh Raina and Harbhajan Singh, both of whom pulled out citing personal reasons. — PTI

Holder sad with no BLM in IPL

Dubai, Oct. 21: West Indies captain Jason Holder has expressed his disappointment over none of the IPL teams taking a knee in solidarity with the "Black Lives Matter" movement, which, he feels, has gone unnoticed in the world's most glamorous cricket league.

Holder, who is member of Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL, made the statement while receiving the prestigious Peter Smith Award on behalf of the West Indies cricket team in a virtual ceremony organised by the Cricket Writers' Club.

The Peter Smith Award is an annual honour which recognises outstanding contribution to the presentation of cricket to the public.

"To be honest, I haven't had one conversation up here around it (BLM). Sometimes it seems it has gone unnoticed, which is a sad thing," Holder said in his address posted on Cricket West Indies website.

"Cricket West Indies has done an excellent job in continuing awareness of it. The women had a series in England where they wore the Black Lives



Jason Holder

Matter logo and continued to push the movement as well," he added.

Taking a knee as a gesture of support to BLM started in the West Indies' Test series in England this summer. It followed the global furore over African American George Floyd's death at the hands of a white police officer in Minneapolis.

But it was later discontinued for the subsequent tours of Pakistan and Australia.

"...it's a long debate, a long hard challenge, a long road. We as people need to continue to come together...and genuinely find ways to fix the inequalities in the world," Holder further added. — PTI

Iyer wants batters to be responsible

Dubai, Oct. 21: It's a wake up call, said Delhi Capitals skipper Shreyas Iyer as he urged his team's batsmen, with the exception of an in-form Shikhar Dhawan, to take "more responsibility" following a surprise IPL loss to Kings XI Punjab here.

Delhi Capitals lost by five wickets after putting 164/5 on the board. Opener Dhawan continued to be in great form and his sequence of scores now read 69 not out, 57, 101 not out, and 106 not out, the last one coming in a losing cause.

"This is like a wake-up call for us. Going forward we are going to face tough situations and tougher teams. We have played amazing cricket in the past but we have to leave that in the past," Iyer said at the post-match virtual press conference.

"We have to come out all guns blazing, play with freedom and take more responsibility. We need one match to qualify and keeping that in mind, we will

take one match at a time," he added.

Against KXIP, Dhawan alone scored 106 while the quintet comprising Iyer, Prithvi Shaw, Marcus Stoinis, Rishabh Pant and Shimron Hetmyer contributed 54 runs collectively.

"I am really happy for Shikhar Dhawan for the way he is going. He is creating an amazing platform for us as batsmen. We should be knowing our roles pretty well," the DC skipper said.

"Other than that, I feel all the batsmen are in really good frame of mind and few matches can go wrong here and there as fatigue creeps in. Keeping that aside we need to focus on our strengths," he further added.

Iyer didn't blame the Dubai track as he felt that it played the same in both innings.

Asked about what Dhawan is doing that others aren't able to do, Iyer spoke about clarity of mind and planning. — PTI

SYDNEY COULD BE INDIAN TEAM'S PORT OF ENTRY

Sydney, Oct. 21: Sydney and Canberra are emerging as potential venues to host India's limited-over series against Australia during the upcoming tour starting next month. The Indian team was initially supposed to land in Brisbane but apparently Queensland state health authorities won't allow the visitors to train during the mandatory 14-day quarantine period.

According to a report in *ESPNCricinfo*, Sydney could emerge as Indian contingent's port of entry and the city may allow them to train during their quarantine.

It is learnt that the SCG could be hosting four of the six white ball games (three T20 and three ODIs) while Canberra's Manuka Oval hosting two games.

New South Wales state's sports minister Stuart Ayres confirmed that they have received a request from Cricket Australia to allow the Indian as well as the Australian team to undergo its mandatory quarantine as well as training. If CA and the NSW state government are able to reach an agreement, a revised plan would then be submitted by Cricket Australia to the BCCI for approval. — PTI

Rash rocks PSG, Barca win

Paris, Oct. 21: Marcus Rashford once again sank Paris Saint-Germain after netting the decisive goal in a 2-1 Champions League win in the French capital on Tuesday, while Barcelona sent a message with a thumping 5-1 victory over Ferencvaros.

Rashford, who scored the winning spot-kick when United knocked PSG out in 2019, drilled home a low shot three minutes from the end which won a thrilling Group H contest at a near-empty Parc des Princes.

United had taken the lead in the 23rd minute when Bruno Fernandes slotted home from the spot at the second attempt, but Anthony Martial inexplicably headed Neymar's corner into his own net 10 minutes after the break.

THE RESULTS			
Barcelona (Lionel Messi 27-pen, Anshu Fati 42, Coutinho 52, Pedri 82, Dembele 89)	5	Juventus (Morata 46, 84)	2
Ferencvaros (Kharatin 70-pen)	1	Dynamo Kiev	0
Manchester United (Bruno Fernandes 23-pen, Rashford 87)	2	Lazio (Ciro Immobile 6, Hitz 23-og, Akpa Akpro 76)	3
Paris Saint Germain (Martial 55-og)	1	Borussia Dortmund (Erling Braut Haaland 71)	1
Chelsea	0	RB Leipzig (Angelino 16, 20)	2
Sevilla	0	Istanbul Basaksehir	0

The win sets United up nicely for next week's home clash with RB Leipzig, who are top of the group after beating Istanbul Basaksehir 2-0 in Germany. Meanwhile, Ronald Koeman got his first

Champions League campaign as Barcelona coach off to a winning start with a confident win over Ferencvaros that gives them control of Group G, top but level on three points with Juventus. Messi won and converted the penalty

to give the Catalans a 27th-minute lead and the match was as good as done when Ansu Fati clipped home Frenkie de Jong's sumptuous pass just before the break. Coutinho, Pedri and Dembele also scored for Barcelona. — AFP



Marcus Rashford (left) of Manchester United is poised to score a goal against PSG during their UEFA Champions League first-leg match at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris on Tuesday. Manchester United won 2-1. — AFP