

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
HYDERABAD | TUESDAY | 17 NOVEMBER 2020



Boris self-isolates after MP tests +ve

Dustin Johnson wins Augusta Masters golf

‘What’s life without adventure?’



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Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Haze, mist likely.
Max/Min temp. 31/20 °C

coronavirus

Sabarimala: Strictly adhering to Covid-19 protocols, devotees of Lord Ayyappa trekked the holy hill Sabarimala and offered prayers at the temple here as the shrine opened for the annual Mandala-Makaravilakku season on Monday.

■ **Report on Page 8**

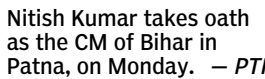
Human Phase 3 trials of Covaxin, the anti-Covid-19 vaccine being developed by Bharat Biotech and the National Institute of Virology, commenced at the Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (Nims) here on Monday.

The test vaccine will be tested on 26,000 volunteers across 25 centres in India. This is the first and largest efficacy study in the country for Covaxin. Nims is the first centre in India where the Covaxin Phase 3 trials are being carried out.

■ **Report on Page 2**

to protect as many people around the world as possible. All along, we have known that each day matters,” said Stephane Bancel, CEO of Moderna. “This positive interim

analysis from our Phase 3 study has given us the first clinical validation that our vaccine can prevent Covid-19 disease, including severe disease, Bancel said. —PTI



NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, NOV. 16

JD(U) president Nitish Kumar was on Monday sworn in as the Chief Minister of Bihar for the fourth straight term in the presence of top leaders of the NDA. Two BJP leaders — Tarkishore Prasad and Renu Devi — also took oath as Kumar's new deputies at the Governor house.

Apart from them 12 others were sworn in as ministers among whom five each are from the JD(U) and the BJP, and one each from the Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) and Vikasheel Insan Party (VIP). The BJP appeared to have extracted its pound of flesh keeping for itself the post of the Speaker of the Assembly which has remained with the Chief Minister's party in the last decade and a half.

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

In an indication that they mean business, the second phase of the naval exercises Malabar 2020 involving the Quad countries (India, the United States, Japan and Australia) starting from Tuesday is going to get bigger with the partici-

pation of the Indian Navy's aircraft-carrier *Vikramaditya* and the US Navy's nuclear-powered aircraft-carrier *Nimitz*.

Beijing sees such exercises as a militarisation of the informal Quad, that it sees as an anti-China alliance. India invited Royal Australian Navy this year to join the Malabar exer-

cises, in a clear message to China. "Phase 2 of Exercise Malabar 2020 will witness joint operations, centered around the *Vikramaditya* carrier battle group of the Indian Navy and the *Nimitz* carrier strike group of the US Navy," said Indian Navy spokesman Commander Vivek Madhwal.

Plan is to give less campaign time to rivals

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

In all likelihood, come Friday, December 4, registered voters of the twin cities might be casting their paper ballots to elect 150 corporators to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), who will then elect the mayor of the city.

Living up its reputation of springing uncanny surprises and catching the Opposition unawares, the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) is nearly set for December 4 as polling day at a time when Opposition parties, the BJP and the Congress, were expecting the pink party to schedule it late, possibly in February.

The other date considered, as per the excited conversations that have

been raging across political parties for the last two days, was December 9. The decision is nearly final and will be sprung as a surprise any day, most likely on November 19.

The motivation of the ruling party leadership, besides giving the least time for the two key

Opposition parties to prepare and avoid any exodus of candidates and cadre, is

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

A non-government organisation has asked all political parties not to nominate candidates with criminal antecedents for the upcoming GHMC elections. The NGO, Forum for Good Governance (FGG), said parties had fielded 72 candidates with criminal records in the 2016 GHMC polls, of whom 30 had won. The FGG said that of the winning candidates, 16

were from the TRS, 13 from the MIM and one from the BJP. The forum said that people become disinterested in the election process if criminals contest, especially in the urban areas. This leads to a low polling percentage.

Political parties have a moral responsibility to not give tickets to candidates with a criminal background, the forum said.

■ **Page 3:** In 2016, 72 with criminal records were in fray

also to avoid a long-drawn campaign in the city, which will give time to various leaders to target the government.

As ever, astrology and numerology played their due role, a senior leader of the TRS revealed, adding, "The BJP was calculating that we will delay the election date. This shows how confident the TRS is to repeat its performance of February 2016, when we swept the twin cities."

The final notification, which has to come from the State Election

Commission, will mark the return of the paper ballot papers instead of EVMs. "Why is the TRS opting for a low-tech election for hi-tech Hyderabad," a BJP leader asked.

In 2016, less than one-and-a-half years of winning the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections of 2014, the TRS won 99 out of the total 150 seats in the GHMC, while the MIM won 44.

■ Page 3: BJP to focus on TRS failures



SHORT TAKES

₹7L LOOTED FROM ATM AT V'PURAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

A burglar broke open an ATM cash chest and decamped with approximately ₹7 lakh in Vanasthalipuram before dawn on Monday. Investigating officials said that a gas cutter was used to break open the chest. The burglar reportedly took less than 45 minutes to complete the operation.

It looked like a one-man job, police said after checking CCTV footage from nearby cameras. The burglar entered the ATM kiosk at about 2.30 am on Monday and closed the shutter. "The accused also took away the hard disk connected to the CCTV camera, which was kept inside the kiosk. He was seen on roadside CCTV cameras coming out of the kiosk and entering a car. The visual is not clear. We are working on the leads," said Vanasthalipuram inspector Murali Mohan, adding that the suspect had his face covered.

The lack of security guard and the late hour gave the offender time to steal the cash and leave without any alarm being raised. The police were called by locals who noticed the damaged machine on Monday morning.

COP SHUNTED FOR ABUSING TWO YOUTHS

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

Two youngsters sitting near a temple in Nagarkurnool were verbally abused and threatened by a constable, who was later attached to headquarters by the superintendent of police. The video of the incident, shot by one of the boys, was widely shared on social media, and netizens demanded action against the cop.

In the video, the men were seen asking the cop why they were being asked to leave the place. To this, constable Shiva Shankar abuses them. The video purportedly shows the men asking the constable to mind his language, to which he retorts, asking them to take his photo and "do whatever you wish to."

The footage was used as evidence against Shiva Shankar. When asked whether the cop was under the influence of alcohol, Sai Shekar, the SP of Nagarkurnool, said he had checked with the constable's colleagues who confirmed that he was not drunk.

"I was told that he is used to talking in a rude manner. He has been working as a constable for the past one year. We have removed him from the station and attached him to headquarters, where he will face disciplinary action," said the official.

UNIQUE KNEE REPLACEMENT AT APOLLO

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

A first-of-its-kind 'fast track total knee replacement' in south India was performed at Apollo Health City here. The procedure is such that the hospital stay of a patient is cut to less than a day, as compared to the traditional total knee replacements surgeries that see patients stay in post-operative care for three to four days.

The new surgical procedure was performed on a 65-year-old diabetic woman by a team of Apollo Hospitals' doctors, led by Dr K.J. Reddy, senior consultant and orthopaedic surgeon, on November 2. The patient was discharged after a few hours of post-surgery observation, and she has fully recovered, according to the hospital.

"The latest advances in peri-operative management revolutionises this surgery, reduces hospital stay and enables the patient to be on his or her legs quickly," Dr Reddy said.

The fast track surgery is set to revolutionise knee replacements in India, and the traditional knee surgery may become redundant soon. Surgeons and support teams adept at latest techniques, aided by state-of-the-art E-ICU facilities, can bring about a rapid transition, Dr Reddy added.

The patient, after discharge, was closely monitored at her home for the next two days and round the clock E-ICU facility at Apollo was also provided. The post-operative care enabled the patient to walk pain-free the very next day, the hospital said.

Ringing in the holy month



A large number of devotees perform Satyanarayana Vratam on the occasion of the beginning of Kartika Masam on Monday at the Ganapathi temple in Secunderabad.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

Many viruses likely to hit humans globally

Big task to restrict infections, experts at ISB meet opine

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

Another 9,999 different viruses are expected to strike humans and SARS-CoV-2, which causes Covid-19, is only an example of what can happen, experts said at the Deccan Dialogue organised by the Indian School of Business (ISB) here on Monday. The topic was, "Crisis and Cooperation: Imperative in times of Pandemic".

The jump of viruses from different animal species to humans is to be expected, they said. There are various reasons across the globe for viruses are seeking human bodies as hosts to survive. Hence, outbreaks across the world are to be expected. To be alert to the infections and confine them to one place will be a huge task for the international community.

Dr Krishna Ella, chairman and managing director at Bharat Biotech International Limited, said, "We need to have accurate models in place to predict the manner in which these outbreaks could spread. The government needs to have an epidemiologist in the ministry of external affairs who will be able to identify hotspots where there are small disease outbreaks. This can help in protecting the country and guarding them."

The outbreak of chikungunya, yellow fever, Zika and dengue were the first indications but these were not taken seriously.

Cross border terrorism faced by India in 2020 has made the world aware of the nature of international terrorism. Relentless efforts helped in easing tensions, said external affairs minister Dr S. Jaishankar at the Deccan Dialogue organised online by Indian School of Business.

By keeping the spotlight and attention on cross-border terror and clearly marking out those who indulged in it, India has been able to make the world aware of its dangers. Jaishankar said, "We have been able to bring out the related aspects of terror like finance, radicalisation and cyber recruitments."

On the one side India has

The ministry of external affairs (MEA) has for the first time in its history prioritised health security which has been a very different work mode. To adapt to this development required a change in the mindset both in terms of thinking and execution. Ambassador Rahul Chhabra, secretary, economic relations, MEA, said, "Health security was not a main table agenda in international discussions

but, post-pandemic, it has become a top agenda. It has now been realised that nobody is safe until all are safe. We are seriously going to look into having an epidemiologist on board to understand how it will help us look at health security in a better form."

The health aspect is now deep-rooted with medicines like hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) and paracetamol supplied to 150 coun-

tries in the world by India. There was also technological collaboration in terms of programs where healthcare workers in SARCC and African countries were trained in e-counselling. Telemedicine is another avenue where Indian companies are providing technology support to these countries. Pandemic has now opened India's technological and healthcare expertise to the world.

Hardeep Singh Puri, minister for housing and urban affairs, said, "Atmanirbhar Bharat is not an inward-looking trade policy but a thought-after strategy that would enable a stronger self-reliant India. Technology will play an important role and its boost during pandemic and post-pandemic will play a crucial role."

The focus of the government is now towards reviving the economy by accelerating growth and creating better conditions for production. World business practices will change and the more self-centered views of world politics will have to come to terms with the needs of the day, stated Dr Jaishankar without naming any country.

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Cricketer poses as KTR secy, held

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

A former Ranji cricketer who posed as the personal assistant to IT minister K.T. Rama Rao and was trying to dupe a company of ₹15 lakh was nabbed by the Task Force on Sunday night.

The accused, Budumuru Nagaraju, 25, who represented Andhra Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy tournament 2014-16, has a history

of committing similar offences where he poses as the PA of influential persons and demands money from different companies.

Nagaraju, an MBA graduate, has been booked seven times by the police of the two Telugu states, officials said.

This time, he was impersonating Tirupathi Reddy, PA to Rama Rao, to extort money from the management of a drugs and pharmaceuticals company in

Hyderabad.

"He made the call to the company on November 7 and informed them that the Pollution Control Board would issue a closure notice to their factory. He told them that he could help out if they pay him ₹15 lakh," said DCP, Commissioner's Task Force, P. Radhakrishna Rao. The company went to the police.

On Sunday night, the Task Force officials, along

with the Jubilee Hills police, nabbed Nagaraju and seized the mobile phone used in make the extortion call.

"He had previously impersonated the PA of several ministers in the state and siphoned off huge amounts from companies in Hyderabad, Cyberabad, Machavaram, Vijayawada, Guntur, Nellore and Visakhapatnam," said the official.

No Covid containment zones in 26 districts

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

As many as 26 of the state's 33 districts no longer have Covid-19 containment zones, according to the state health department.

These districts between them reported 4,691 fresh infections of the Coronavirus in the week ending November 15 as per Monday's edition of the daily Covid-19 bulletin issued by the health department.

Rajanna-Sircilla district had the most containment zones - 66 - followed by 63 in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area with 63 as on 8 pm on Sunday, the bulletin said. The only other districts with containment zones are Jagtial, Mahbubnagar, Nirmal, Ranga Reddy and Wanaparthy.

In the GHMC limits, Charminar zone had 16 containment zones, Khairatabad 20, Serilingampally 16, Kukatpally 11 and Secunderabad zone had one.

Data provided in the bulletin showed that Sangareddy topped list of containment zone-free districts with 593 cases for the week ending November 15, followed by Medchal-Malkajigiri with 560.

Bhadrachari-Kothagudem had 410 cases, Nalgonda 380, Karimnagar 316, Khammam 293, Warangal Urban 251, Siddipet 170 and Suryapet had 161 cases.

Mancherial had 154 cases, Nizamabad 143, Nagarkurnool 142, Peddapalli 126, Mahbubnagar 111, Kamareddy 101, Jayashankar Bhupala-

State reports only 502 new infections

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

New Covid-19 cases witnessed a further drop on Sunday, with the state health department reporting 502 fresh Coronavirus infections, and three deaths. With these, the total cases rose to 2,57,876 and deaths from Covid-19 to 1,407 so far.

The steep fall in cases, nearly a half or more of those reported on weekdays over the past couple of weeks, correspond with an equally steep reduction in the number of tests. For Sunday, the health department said, only 17,296 tests were done compared to the around 40,000 a day during normal weekdays.

palli 100 among such districts.

The districts reporting fewer than 100 cases where containment zones were removed included: Mulugu with 99 cases, Vikarabad 95, Yadadri-Bhongir 88, Warangal Rural 87, Medak 79, Jangaon 77, Adilabad 64, Jogulamba-Gadwal 49, Komaram Bheem-Asifabad 25 and Narayanpet had 17 cases for the week ending November 15.

Containment zones restrict the movement of people confirmed to have contracted Covid-19 outside of their homes or localities who can act as potential spreaders of the

There were 14,385 active cases of Covid-19 as on Sunday 8 pm, and 11,948 infected persons were in isolation. As many as 1,539 persons were declared to have recovered from the disease on Sunday taking the total recovered cases to 2,42,084 thus far.

The Greater Hyderabad area, as it has been doing ever since the disease took hold in Telangana state, continued to have the most cases, even on a day when far fewer tests were done. According to the Covid-19 bulletin issued by the department, the GHMC area reported 141 new cases, followed by 72 in Ranga Reddy, and 33 in Medchal-Malkajigiri districts.

disease. All commercial and other activities are prohibited in containment zones, while, in areas that do not fall in this category, life can go on as normal as long as people follow Covid-19 guidelines such as wearing a face mask properly and maintain physical distance of two metres from each other, as per the state health department norms.

The establishment of a containment zone or its removal is decided by the civic authorities who, with information provided by the state health department on Covid-19 patients in such zones, take a call.

Remove GH as Covid centre or face stir: Docs

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

After Osmania General Hospital, junior doctors at the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) at Adilabad have taken the stand that if Gandhi Hospital is not delisted as a nodal centre they will be forced to go on strike.

The Junior Doctors Association has stated that it will wait till November 18. If till then the government does not take the decision they will also join the strike.

Junior doctors in Gandhi Hospital continued their strike on Monday and are not attending duties to press for their demand to open up surgical departments in the hospital.

A senior doctor on condition of anonymity said, "Surgical departments are suffering and the academics of the junior doctors are affected. They have not done surgeries for eight months. This will affect their bedside learning practice. To make up for this lost time is going to take them a few years." For this reason the junior doctors are

demanding that surgical departments must be started immediately at Gandhi Hospital. But this is difficult if the hospital continues to be a Covid-19 nodal centre. With high-risk and high viral load patients in the hospital, restarting non-Covid-19 surgery units is difficult.

Housing both these groups of patients under one roof and seeing that infections do not spread is difficult. The number of Covid 19 patients at Gandhi Hospital must be restricted to 200 to facilitate this. If this number is maintained, only then can other services be started at the hospital.

Senior doctors are deliberating with health officials to convert the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences into a nodal centre for Covid-19 for Telangana state. This will help solve the problem and allow for smooth functioning of academic and surgical departments in Gandhi Medical College and Hospital.

HUMAN PHASE 3 TRIALS OF COVAXIN BEGIN AT NIMS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

Human Phase 3 trials of Covaxin, the anti-Covid-19 vaccine being developed by Bharat Biotech and the National Institute of Virology, commenced at the Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (Nims) here on Monday.

The test vaccine will be tested on 26,000 volunteers across 25 centres in India. This is the first and largest efficacy study in the country for Covaxin. Nims is the first centre in India where the Covaxin Phase 3 trials are being carried out.

The volunteers will be randomly attached to either of the two groups: One will be given a placebo, where no vaccine is administered, and the other will receive the vaccine dose. The volunteers will not be aware who got what, that data will be known only to the researchers and the company.

Volunteers will be given two intramuscular injections approximately 28 days apart. Both the groups will be tracked for the next year.

The placebo group will be given injections without Covaxin; those who get the vaccine will be administered 6 microgram of Covaxin.

The trials will be carried out in two sites each in New Delhi and Mumbai and one site in all other states.

The outcome of Phase 1 and Phase 2 clinical trials and evaluation for safety and immunogenicity data on 1,000 subjects was said to be promising following which Bharat Biotech was allowed to proceed with largescale human trials.

The vaccine if approved will be manufactured at Bharat Biotech's Bio-Safety Level 3 high containment facility. It will be a highly purified and inactivated vaccine, manufactured in a vero cell manufacturing platform with an excellent safety track record of more than 300 million doses supplied.

SLOW | DEVELOPMENT TS shelves tie-up with US for a new wireless communication system

Fund crisis hits police tech upgradation plan

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

Lack of funds with the government has put the grand plans of the police to revamp their decades-old wireless communication system in cold storage.

Taking a cue from the police of the United States, who use APCO 25 — a digital trunked radio system developed by the US-based Association of Public Safety Communications (APCO) — the TS police had finalised a deal to replace the existing wireless communication

system.

Informed sources told Deccan Chronicle that a group of officers had visited the US to study the functioning of APCO 25 and met several officials in the US police last year. After several rounds of meetings, a decision was taken to go ahead with the purchase which would have given the state police seamless communication. As per the plan, the new system should have been in place by February this year.

Post September 11, 2001, when passenger airlines crashed into the World

● AFTER SEVERAL rounds of meetings, a decision was taken to go ahead with the purchase which would have given the state police seamless communication.

Trade Centre, communication failures were identified as the critical element that undermined the response to the deadly attacks. The first responders struggled to communicate with each other as their radios operated on different frequencies and so did the fire-fighters. Thereafter, the US govern-

ment went in for a revamp of the communication systems and opted for APCO 25. Closer home, glaring lapses in communication between different agencies hampered the response of the security forces when terrorists carried out multiple attacks in Mumbai on November 26, 2008.

The requirement for the entire state was projected at 20,000 wireless sets and equipment. In the first phase, 2,000 sets were to be procured besides walkie-talkie sets, repeaters and towers. The project costs several crores of rupees. Sources said that the

APCO 25 allows seamless communication over multiple channels. "A key feature is that the operator can listen to two frequencies instead of the existing system of switching to one frequency at a time. For instance, the user can listen to the updates from the West Zone of Hyderabad and another major event in Cyberabad.

The frequency channels will be divided by time slots depending on what information comes in first," sources said. The new system is stated to be interoperable. Also, it allows a separate chan-

nel to be kept for communication between senior police officers. The protocols also include security options in which voice and data traffic can be cryptographically protected from eavesdropping.

"The new system is compatible and can be integrated with systems being used by all other agencies like the GHMC, Fire, revenue department which will ensure that officers of multiple departments can talk to each other," they said. The walkie talkies were to be purchased from either Motorola or Kenwood.

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Shuddha Tadiya till 1.20 am (Wednesday)
Star: Jyeshtha till 12.25 pm
Varjyam: Nil
Durmuhurtam: 8.40 am to 9.25 am;
 10.44 pm to 11.35 pm **Rahukalam:** 3 pm to 4.30 pm
HJRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Akhir 26, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.19 am
Zohar: 12.11 pm
Asar: 4.04 pm
Maghrib: 5.46 pm
Isha: 6.56 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.22 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.39 PM
MOONSET TODAY 7.48 PM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 8.25 PM

COUNTER POINT



Our leader is swearing... at their ceremony!

IN BRIEF

IMD: City to remain warm for 48 hrs

Hyderabad: The city would continue to remain warm and humid for 48 hours, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) said. On Monday, the minimum temperature rose by 4° Celsius and stood at 21.6°. “The wind pattern over the state has changed. We are now getting humid winds from the eastern direction. It would continue this way for the next two-days,” Dr K. Nagarathna, director, IMD-Hyderabad, told *Deccan Chronicle*. The mercury had dropped to 12.8°C earlier this month. The highest temperature ever recorded for this month was 34°C on November 12, 1986.

MANUU TO HOLD URDU ONLINE WORKSHOP

Hyderabad, Nov. 16: The Centre for Professional Development of Urdu Medium Teachers (CPDUMT) and the Office of Dean, Research and Consultancy of Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), will be conducting an online workshop, ‘Action Research’ from November 23 to 27 from 2 pm to 4 pm.

There is no registration fee and e-certificate will be given to participants who attend the workshop daily.

Prof S.M. Rahmatullah, Vice Chancellor, and Prof. Siddiqui Mohd Mahmood, registrar, will take part in the inaugural session. The experts, M. Vanaja, Prof. Amirullah Khan, Khwaja Moinuddin and Jameel Ahmed will discuss practical research during the workshop. — *INN*

VP INAUGURATES UoH AMENITIES CENTRE

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated the amenities centre at the University of Hyderabad on Monday.

The centre is spread over 3,260 square metres and accommodates the office of the dean of students welfare, chief warden and chief proctor, among others. It also has an amphitheatre and a multi-cuisine food court. It provides students with space to socialise and interact with their peers.

Speaking on the New Education Policy (NEP) at the inaugural, Venkaiah Naidu said: “Even after 73 years of attaining freedom, we have yet not achieved 100 per cent literacy rates. There is a need for concerted efforts from all the stakeholders to promote literacy and achieve the goal of having a fully literate society.”

He pointed out that the NEP not only focuses on improving the quality of education but also seeks to develop character, inculcate scientific temper, promote creativity, spirit of service, equip students to meet 21st century challenges.

“If we all work together, follow discipline; focus on education and improving the level of standards, all the other things can follow later,” the Vice President said.

No e-voting, only ballots for civic body elections

GHMC encountered problems in e-voting, claim sources

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

The State Election Commission (SEC) has dropped the idea of going for e-voting in the ensuing elections to Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC). The commission feels returning officers (ROs) have not been sufficiently trained to ensure foolproof e-voting.

According to highly placed sources in the corporation, SEC indeed explored the option of e-voting. But it encountered a series of problems in executing the plan for the GHMC polls. The first

requirement was that entire e-voting process had to be entrusted to one person (RO). There would be a major problem if he or she is not skilled enough. There also has to be coordination between the computer operator at one end and the voter sitting at an unknown end. There could be loss of coordination among them. There were also fears of political parties influencing voters taking the e-path.

Officials felt that till an alternative foolproof mechanism is not built up, the State Election Commission should opt

for elections will ballots, including postal ballots.

A senior election official said SEC will follow the norms it applied for Dubbak byelection with regard to postal ballots. Further, elderly persons will be brought to polling stations with PPE kits after 6 pm or 7 pm to exercise their franchise. In addition, counting will be at the designated counting centres in all 150 divisions. Though the counting process will be expedited at all 14 tables, it will be possible to declare the results only after 11 pm going by experience of GHMC elections held in

2002 using ballots.

The official said including police, over 1.5 lakh persons will participate in conduct of civic body elections both on polling and counting day. “GHMC officials, along with police, are identifying sensitive polling stations to avoid untoward incidents”, he underlined.

The official said e-voting could be used only after the Election Commission of India provides a nod to the process. e-Voting will not be implemented even in the MLC polls from the graduates’ constituency, he added.

BJP to focus on TRS failures, says it will sweep elections

From Page 1

The BJP has four seats, the Congress two and the TD won a lone seat. The elections will also bring a woman mayor for Hyderabad, who will replace the incumbent Bonthu Rammohan.

The BJP’s Nizamabad member of Parliament D. Arvind said, “The BJP will sweep the elections. We will highlight the failure of the TRS in handling the Covid and cyclones, the domination of the MIM in running all affairs of the city and the state and the massive development and re-imagining of the city. Lakes have been occupied. Land grabbing is rampant. Hyderabadis know that

only the BJP can end this mafia raj.”

TRS leaders were confident of retaining 75 seats out of the 99 they hold. “The Congress is hardly a problem. We only expected the BJP to win in some pockets,” a TRS leader confided. “Our surveys show that Brand KTR trumps all factors in Hyderabad.”

The TRS is expected to highlight the Metro Rail, development of roads, flyovers and bridges, women safety, basthi dawakhanas, dignity housing, welfare schemes for poorer sections, investments brought into the city and the rising power of Brand Hyderabad in their bid to win the confidence of the urban voters.

The TRS, which is ahead in the preparations, is likely to nominate most corporators whose performance is satisfactory or above.

The BJP is expected to put together a high-powered team of senior leaders and the party’s efforts are being looked at closely by the Central leadership, which wants to use the elections to declare their intent of winning Telangana as their second state in south India.

“The TRS has money and official machinery on their side. We have the support of the people,” said Arvind.

The battle, if Dubbak was a precursor, will be tense and nail-biting, feel most observers.

Flood victims



Flood victims queue up at the Mee Seva centre in Sultan Bazaar, Hyderabad, to apply for the ₹10,000 financial assistance announced by the state government, on Monday.



Minister K.T. Rama Rao launches the Telangana State Building Permission Approval and Self-certification System (TS-bPASS), at the Dr M. Channa Reddy Himan Resource Development Institute, Hyderabad, on Monday.

— *S. SURENDER REDDY*

TS-bPASS exclusively for building approval: KTR

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

Municipal administration minister K.T. Rama Rao has formally launched the TS-bPASS initiative at a

function held at Dr M. Channa Reddy Human Resource Development Institute here on Monday. According to TS-bPASS, no building permissions are required to construct a house on plots with area up to 75 square yards, where height of the building will be limited to seven metres. The system also provides for instant approval of building on plots above 75 square yards and up to 600 square yards based on self-certification.

Addressing a gathering soon after launch of the initiative, Rama Rao asserted that after formation of Telangana state, Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao has brought in various progressive policies and reforms. These include reforms for developing

infrastructure in urban spaces while, at the same time, ensuring de-centralisation of administrative power for welfare of people living in rural areas.

“This is the reason why the state government has come up with new districts, mandals, revenue divisions, and panchayats,” he stated. He said even central and other state governments have emulated schemes and policies of the Telangana state government. The minister said the government has launched TS-bPASS exclusively for building approvals, similar to TS-IPASS, which is a single window approval system for industries. He pointed out that about 43 per cent of the population lives in towns and cities, which will only increase in the coming five years. As such, TS-bPASS will be a great opportunity for such people.

Rama Rao said the government has complete trust on its citizens and that is why it has brought

in the self-certification system. He appealed to people not break this trust by registering illegal or encroached constructions. He said Hyderabad has affordable houses, which no other metro in the country has. He appealed to real-estate leaders to ensure this trend continues.

The minister asked citizens and real estate sectors to utilise the initiative launched by the state government. He stated that as per feedback received, amendments will be brought into the system.

CREDAI president Rama Krishna said, “We are thankful to the Telangana government, minister KTR and officials of Municipal Administration Department for bringing in this initiative. Nowhere in the country is there a self-certification system for constructing buildings. This is a dream come true for builders like us,” Rama Krishna added.

HC refuses to stay GHMC elections

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

The Telangana High Court on Monday refused to stay the ensuing GHMC elections and chided the petitioner, Congress spokesperson Dr Dasoju Sravan for his last-minute rush to the court. The court opined that the petition was designed to create hurdles for the democratic process, and warned Dr Sravan that it will impose heavy costs for resorting to the practice of filing politically motivated petitions.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice B. Vijayen Reddy was hearing a lunch motion petition filed by Dr Sravan in which he urged the court to stay the GHMC election notification.

His argument was that the GHMC and the government were heading to conduct the elections without undertaking a comprehensive survey and identifying politically backward communities that are entitled to reservations in the elections as per Article 243(T) of the Constitution as interpreted by the Supreme Court in *K. Krishnamurthy v Union of India*.

Dr Sravan said in the peti-

tion that one-third reservations provided to the OBCs in the elections were being grabbed by the few castes whereas there were more than 100 castes in the category. For the fruits of reservations to reach the most backward classes, categorisation should be done for the seats, he submitted.

The bench asked the petitioner that when the judgment of the Supreme Court in *K. Krishnamurthy v Union of India* was delivered in 2010, with directions to take up the exercise of identifying politically backward classes of citizens prior to holding elections, why had the petitioner rushed to the court in the “eleventh hour fifty fifth minute”. “What had he done all these days,” the court asked.

The court opined that the petition had been filed for political benefits and refused to stay the GHMC elections. However, the bench said it would hear the petition and issued notices seeking the response, with four weeks, from the principal secretaries of municipal administration and BC welfare, the State Election Commission, the TS Telangana State Commission for BCs and the GHMC commissioner.

HUSBAND MURDERS WIFE, SETS BODY ON FIRE OVER MARITAL DISPUTE

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

A 27-year-old woman was murdered and her body was set ablaze in the forests of Ananthagiri Hills by her husband, who confessed to the crime on Sunday.

The accused, Banala Prabhu, 32, had married the victim, Santosha, 13 years ago and the couple had four children, said the Vikarabad police.

Prabhu murdered Santosha on November 6 allegedly due to marital dis-

putes. He approached the Vikarabad police and claimed that his wife had gone missing, following which the police booked a case and started investigation. “It was during questioning that he confessed to the murder and showed us the body on Sunday night,” the police said.

Based on a complaint, cases were booked against Prabhu under Section 302 (murder) and 201 (concealing evidence) of the IPC and he was placed under arrest.

More colonies threaten NOTA approach

ATHER MOIN | DC
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

Taking cue from residents of Surya Nagar Colony, associations from neighbouring colonies have decided to reject all candidates in the next GHMC elections.

President of Aditya Nagar Welfare Association, Sofia Kaleem said “we stand with the decision taken by the residents of Surya Nagar Colony for maximum utilization of NOTA button in the ensuing GHMC elections”.

She alleged that the residents of the area have

been raising their civic problems for many years and on different platforms but to no avail. She alleged that their welfare did not matter to the authorities, though they rank among the highest building tax payers.

“Our elected representatives are not in a position to provide basic civic amenities. That being the ground reality, it is better for us to reject everyone. Probably this kind of protest may attract the attention of the government.”

She said the area comes under a school zone. The open nala and heaps of garbage always spew

filth, which can affect the health of kids studying in schools. The roads in the lanes are damaged, drainage is overflowing and the park is under threat of encroachment, she said while adding that unless these issues were addressed, they would resort to NOTA in the polls.

Syed Majid Ali, a resident of Deluxe Colony said a section of the residents advised their Association to adopt a strategy to put pressure on the contestants so that they undertake to fulfill the charter of demands. The residents opined a ‘No Work-No

Vote’ approach can bring accountability and make the public representatives responsible.

President of Deluxe Colony Welfare Association, Khaja Qasimuddin Junaidi said that the last time the local corporator visited them along with officials of GHMC and electricity department, he informed that certain civic works have been sanctioned and they would start soon.

He said “our area counts as one of the higher tax paying localities in the city but we are far behind in development compared to other posh colonies.”

TSPCB says higher wind speed helped contain pollution

DIWALI | BLAST

City air cleaner than last year post-fest

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

The air in the city after Diwali was cleaner than it was last year, the TS Pollution Control Board confirmed on Monday. The board had studied the air and noise pollution levels before, on the day of the festival, and post-Diwali.

The board said that the concentration of Particulate Matter 2.5 and 10 (PM2.5 and PM10) had

increased marginally when compared to a seven-day average before the festival.

“The wind speed was higher than during Diwali last year, which helped in the dispersion of pollutants. The major pollutants were particulate matter of less than 2.5 and 10 microns in thickness,” an official of the board said.

While, the board had recorded 64 microns/cubic metre of PM2.5 on

● **APART FROM** having comparatively cleaner air, the sounds levels in the city were within the permissible limits.

the day of the festival, it was 72 microns/m3 last year. Similarly, PM10, was recorded at 128 microns/m3 this year against 163.4 microns/m3 last year.

When it comes to chemicals in the air, the board had recorded, 8.4

microns/m3 on Diwali this year while it was 6 microns/m3 last year. The board said oxides of nitrogen were recorded at 65 microns/m3 last year which had reduced to 41.3 microns/m3 this year.

Apart from having comparatively cleaner air, the sounds levels in the city were within the permissible limits.

The highest noise level was 70 decibels in commercial zones. The lowest noise level was 42

decibels in sensitive zones. The permissible decibel levels at sensitive, commercial, industrial, and residential zones are 50, 65, 75 and 55 decibels, respectively.

“There is a decrease in the noise levels during the day which may be attributed to decreased activity owing to a holiday, while at night there was a marginal increase when compared to normal day,” a report from the board said.

BHARAT INSTITUTE OF ENGG. & TECHNOLOGY	
Mangalagiri, Ibrahimpatnam, R.R. Dist., 501510, Ph: 9963475773, 6309448893	
B TECH - SPOT ADMISSIONS 2020-21	
Course CSE IT CSE(AI & ML) CSIT ECE EEE MECH CIVIL	
Eligible Candidates can attend for the Spot admission with Original Certificate along with photocopies in the college premises before 23-11-2020. Admission will be made as per guidelines given by the Convener, EAMCET 2020.	

IN BRIEF

Rowdy-sheeter opens fire

Hyderabad: A rowdy-sheeter, who is an associate of a businessman, allegedly opened fire following a dispute with a man over ownership of an agricultural land, police said on Monday. The incident happened in Zaheerabad mandal in neighbouring Sangareddy district after the businessman objected to the man fencing around 30 acres of the land, they said. This led to an argument between them after which the rowdy-sheeter opened fire with a country-made pistol, police said.

HC SEEKS EXPLANATION FROM RGV ON FILM

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

The Telangana High Court on Monday sought an explanation from the Censor Board, film director Ram Gopal Varma and others on the release of a film titled *Disha Encounter*, which is reportedly based on the rape and murder of an city veterinarian and the subsequent killing of the accused in a police encounter.

Disha's father filed the appeal challenging the single judge order, which did not restrained the film-maker from releasing the film. According to reports, the film is scheduled for release on November 26. A trailer has been launched on social media platforms. The petitioner sought directions from the court that the film should not be released and the trailer should be removed.

COPS ARREST 859 PERSONS FOR GAMBLING

NARENDER PULLOOR | DC
NIZAMABAD/KAMAREDDY,
NOV.16

The Nizamabad commission-erate police arrested 859 persons in 161 gambling cases during the Diwali festivities and seized ₹15.23 lakh in cash from gambling points in Nizamabad district.

Nizamabad police commissioner Kartikeya constituted special teams to nab the gamblers. In Nizamabad police division, the highest number of 75 cases were registered and 407 persons arrested and ₹8.62 lakh seized from the gamblers.

In Bodhan division 314 persons were arrested in 57 cases and ₹3.62 lakhs seized. In Armour police division, ₹3.62 lakh was seized from 138 gamblers in 29 cases. Kartikeya directed police officers to be vigilant on gambling and arrest the accused. The gambling point organisers and gamblers were arrested.

In Kamareddy district, police arrested 322 gamblers in 61 cases and ₹7.55 lakh seized. In Banswada police sub division, the highest number of 41 cases registered and 54 persons caught while playing gambling. Superintendent of police N. Swetha directed Kamareddy, Banswada and Yellareddy sub division police officers to initiate action against gamblers.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby informed that our client is desirous of purchasing the property described in schedule hereunder from Mr. Mohammed Sajid Pasha, S/o.Late Mohammad Abdul Majeed and Mrs. Najma Unnisa, W/o. Mr. Mohammed Sajid Pasha, both residing at Flat no.501, Sajid Majestic Heights, Beside Old MLA Quarters, Hyderabad-500029.

Any person(s) claiming any right, title, claim, interest or any objection with regard to the sale/purchase of the Schedule property may approach the undersigned with all relevant documents within 7 (Seven) days from the date of publication of this notice. Any claims, objections received after 7 (Seven) days shall not be entertained.

SCHEDULE OF PROPERTY

All that property bearing Municipal Nos. 8-2-293/82/A/1355/G1/A, 8-2-293/82/A/1355/G1/B and 8-2-293/82/A/1355/G1/C constructed on Plot no. 1355-G1, admeasuring 455 Sq.yards in Sy.no.403/1(Old), 120 (New) of Shaikpet Village and 102/1 Hakimpet Village, situated within the approved layout of Jubilee Hills Co-operative House Building Society Limited, Hyderabad, Road No.45 Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad-500 033, Telangana, India and bounded on the North By 100 Feet wide Road no.45

South By Plot No.1, Nandagiri Hills Layout East By Plot no. 1355-G1 Sd/-
M.NagaDeepak, Advocate
Bar Council enrollment No.TS/1079/2016
Flat-D, 1st Floor - 2084
"Uma Enclave", Road no.8
BanjarahHills, Hyderabad - 500 034
Tel: 040-2335 5905 / 2335 5907

HC slams Wakf CEO on land-grab

Court says official does not know laws, accuses him of complicity; wants him replaced

VUJJINI
VAMSHIDHARA I DC
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

The Telangana High Court on Monday denounced the Wakf Board and charged that its Chief Executive Officer Md. Kasim was involved in rampant encroachments of Wakf properties by conniving with land grabbers. The court asked the government to replace the officer with an individual who could save the properties dedicated to Allah.

While dealing with three PILs related to encroachments of Wakf properties and the impetuous attitude of some muttavalis (caretakers), a division bench, comprising Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Bollam Vijayen Reddy came down heavily against the CEO for not protecting huge swathes of Wakf properties from the clutches of land sharks.

The bench said that the CEO had failed in protecting the properties, ostensibly on the ground that he was unaware of the basic Criminal Procedure Code, under which he could have approached a jurisdictional magistrate and filed a private complaint against the

encroachers. Md. Kasim, who appeared before the High Court on being summoned, failed to explain why he could not take criminal action against the encroachers. He said that the station house officers of the police stations concerned refused to file FIRs stating that these were civil matters. The court termed the explanation as being vague. "This court is of the opinion that the Telangana state government will take serious action against the

encroachers. Md. Kasim, who appeared before the High Court on being summoned, failed to explain why he could not take criminal action against the encroachers. He said that the station house officers of the police stations concerned refused to file FIRs stating that these were civil matters. The court termed the explanation as being vague. "This court is of the opinion that the Telangana state government will take serious action against the

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Nizamabad gets a facelift



Central lighting installed on the Hyderabad road in Nizamabad illuminates the road on Monday. Beautification work at Nizamabad has received applause from different sections of people.

— DC

Dubbak outcome will impact GHMC polls, says BJP MLA

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

BJP MLA-elect Madhavaneni Raghunandan Rao said the impact of the Dubbak byelection result would be reflected in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections. "The BJP will get a majority of seats," he said at a Meet-the-Press event organised by the Telangana Union of Journalists on Monday.

"Hyderabad is a cosmopolitan city. North Indians live in the city. Most of the North Indians support the BJP. We are going to raise the BJP flag over Hyderabad," he said and claimed that GHMC voters would deliver a shock to Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and K.T. Rama Rao.

He mentioned that after heavy rains, the government distributed ₹10,000 as compensation to the victims but the distribution process was haphaz-

ard. GHMC officials directly distributed cash to people, which is ill-advised. As per government norms, officials can withdraw government funds up to a maximum of ₹2 lakh. Raghunandan Rao wondered how GHMC officials had withdrawn around ₹500 crore to give as flood relief.

"We will file cases and the GHMC officials have to respond. Why are they not following online cash distribution to people? The KCR government misused power only to derive advantage during GHMC elections," he said.

Raghunandan Rao stated that BJP will get good results if it puts in hard work under leadership of state party president Bandi Sanjay Kumar and Union minister of state H. Kishan Reddy. He also said that several national leaders will participate in the campaign and explained nation development and Prime Minister Narendra Modi schemes.

He appealed to disgruntled TRS candidates to join the BJP. The state government had filed illegal cases against BJP cadre during the Dubbak bypolls. He said some mediapersons had acted like TRS cadre and had written anti-BJP stories. "I have not promised to bring Central funds for development of Dubbak during the elections. I also pointed out that the state government does not pay a single rupee to village panchayats. The 14th Finance Commission released funds to village panchayats. In the same way in our

constituency there are nearly 150 village panchayats. I will try to bring more funds from the Centre. The state government diverted Union Government funds and made them seem as state contributions for welfare schemes," he said.

He said that the Centre had released ₹2 crore to handloom workers for procuring yarn. But IT minister K.T. Rama Rao had spent ₹1.25 crore of that amount on Sircilla constituency and the remaining was allocated to Gajwel and Siddipet constituencies. Handloom workers in Dubbak constituency were not given a single rupee, he said.

He alleged that the TRS had neglected his constituency for past six years compared to Gajwel, Sircilla and Siddipet.

Telangana Journalist Union state president Kappara Prasad, NIT chairman Dayanand and others participated.

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Telangana Journalist Union state president Kappara Prasad, NIT chairman Dayanand and others participated.

Revanth: Why hasn't Kishan filed complaint against TRS?

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

State Congress working president A. Revanth Reddy asked why Union minister of state G. Kishan Reddy had not lodged a complaint against the TRS government for allegedly misusing flood relief funds.

The question came against the backdrop of his allegation that the BJP and the TRS had colluded and helped each other.

Speaking to the media here, Revanth Reddy

pointed out that the Centre was sending money to the poor into their Jan Dhan accounts via online transactions and said that Kishan Reddy and TS BJP president Bandi Sanjay should demand that the Centre order a CBI or CVC probe into the flood relief fund scam in the state.

He said the Dubbaka bypoll result was a one-time event, and recalled the Mahbubnagar Assembly bypoll outcome which happened in 2012 during the Telangana

statehood agitation.

He said that Kishan Reddy should reveal the details of his meeting with Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao in August 2018.

Revanth Reddy also asked why Kishan Reddy had only spoken about alleged phone tapping and had not lodged a complaint. Phone tapping is a serious crime, and Kishan Reddy should complain to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and home minister Amit Shah, the Congress MP said.

Woman farmer attempts suicide before Palair MLA

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM, NOV. 16

A woman tenant farmer, Tummala Divya, tried to end her life in front of Palair MLA Kandala Upender Reddy at Bodulabanda in Nelakondapalli mandal in Khammam district on Monday.

Divya was aggrieved that she had been asked to pay compensation to the family of a farm labourer couple who had got electrocuted while working on her field some time ago.

Grama peddalu (village

elders), who deliberated on the issue, asked Divya to pay ₹6 lakh as compensation to family members of the deceased couple. Divya explained her financial situation and paid ₹2 lakh. It is learnt that the elders insisted that she pay the amount.

On Monday, Palair MLA Kandala Upender Reddy arrived at Bodulabanda. The family members of the deceased couple sought his help in getting their remaining compensation. Divya too reached the spot and explained her problem.

She suddenly consumed some portion of pesticide from a bottle that she had brought along with her. She was stopped by others from consuming the rest. Divya informed the MLA too that as she is unable to pay the amount, there is no other go for her.

The MLA asked party workers to save Divya first, and the other issue could be resolved later. She was then shifted to a hospital in Nelakondapalli and later to Khammam, where she is stated to be recovering.

FARMER DIES IN MISHAP ON FIELD

Warangal: A farmer was killed when his tractor overturned while he was working in his farm along with his son in Nallabelli village of Wardhanapeta Mandal on Monday. He was identified as Banoth Veeranna (49). He was tilling his land when he lost control of the vehicle.

OBITUARY



Mrs. ROSY DALAVAI
W/o Rev. Dr. Raja Deen Dayal Dalavai
Slept in the Lord on 13th November 2020.
Funeral at Boiguda, Cemetery on 18th Nov. 2020 (Wednesday) at 3:00 PM.
Ph: 7386911226, 8970826301

(S/2021/D00830)

SAD DEMISE



JALOO RUSY TARAPOREWALLA
DOB: 31-08-1925, DOD: 16-11-2020

W/o LATE RUSY (EX HUL)
M/o LATE MINOO / CYRUS & DOLLY VEJANA
GRAND MOTHER OF: DARIUS-ZUBIN
DINSHAW-PIRAN
GREAT GRAND MOTHER OF:
SEAN-SELENA
JULIAN-LUKAS

SHRADDANJALI



TELUKUNTA GOVIND RAO
S/o Late T.Narayana
DOB: 14-11-1934 DOD: 14-11-2020

Inserted by:
M/s. Shree Om Sai Enterprises
M/s. Raja Lakshmi Agencies
M/s. Sree Om Sai Enterprises

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants." *Psalms 116:15*



Mrs. KOTHA VIJAYA LEELA
W/o Late K. Ruben
DOB: 30-11-1943 DOD: 17-11-2018
Inserted by: All Family Members & Relatives, 8309531432

(S/2021/D00829)

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." *Rev 21:4*

In Loving memory of our Sister



SHALINI N MODY
Who passed away two years ago on this day.
Your spirit lives in me and everything I do
Miss you deeply
Inserted by: Viven S Victor (Sister) and
Rudolph Victor (Brother)

(S/2021/D00810)

2nd DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR LOVING MOTHER



Late KELLY ARMSTRONG
DOB: 19-11-1936 DOD: 17-11-2018
Mom: Could U come back and stay a while, we want to hear your voice and see U smile. We want to hold U tight and never let U go. And tell U we love U and Miss U everyday.
Inserted by: Loving Daughters, Son, Grand Children and Great Grand Children.

(S/2021/D00813)

6th DEATH ANNIVERSARY

"We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" - *1 Thessalonians 1:3*



CH. MANIKYA RAO
Asst. Manager (Retd.) - RBI
DOB: 21-07-1948 DOD: 17-11-2014
Inserted by:
Loving Wife, Children & Grand Children
Ph # 7702533340

(S/2021/D00833)



SHORT TAKES

SC TELLS AP TO
MOVE SEC OVER
WELFARE SOPSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the state government to approach the State Election Commission for permission to execute development works and schemes.

A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde was hearing an interim application filed by the state government seeking modification of an earlier order in which the apex court while defending the SEC's decision to postpone elections to local bodies in February, directed the state to implement development works and schemes after obtaining the election body approval.

Senior counsel Mukul Rohtagi, appearing for the state government, argued that prior permission is not required as there is no code of conduct. The bench sought to know from the counsel if the state made any attempt to approach the SEC. Following this, Rohtagi sought the SC permission to apply to the SEC for carrying out specific works.

DAY AFTER DIWALI,
AP SEES HIGH AIR
POLLUTION LEVELSSAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

Parts of Andhra Pradesh witnessed high air pollution levels when firecrackers were burst on Diwali day.

Based on direction from the Central Pollution Control Board, AP Pollution Control Board authorities monitored Air Quality Index (AQI) in real time for 24 hours on the day through their monitoring stations located at Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry, Amaravati and Tirumala. The authorities have taken AQI values recorded on November 9 as base values to compare them with those recorded on Saturday.

Accordingly, in Visakhapatnam, the maximum AQI of 425 was recorded at 8 pm, indicating high levels of air pollution after people started fireworks. The average AQI for the day was recorded at 117. On November 9, the city had recorded the maximum AQI of 290 at 3 pm, also indicating high levels of air pollution.

In Rajahmundry, the maximum AQI recorded was 503 at 8 pm. The average AQI for 24 hours was 115 on Diwali day while it reached a maximum of 230 at 9 pm on November 9.

In Velagapudi, the maximum AQI recorded was 378 at 8 pm while the 24-hour average AQI was 113. On November 9, the maximum AQI recorded was 184 at 9 am. In Tirumala where there was no permission for bursting of fireworks, the maximum AQI was recorded at 61 which is very low. However, the 24 hours average AQI was recorded at 103 and on November 9, the town recorded AQI of 115 at 11 pm.

Police rescue kidnapped
3-yr-old in less than 24 hrs

CCTV cameras come in handy for cops to track the child quickly

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

The Afzalgunj police of Hyderabad traced and rescued a three-year-old girl within 24 hours of her kidnap by a couple from the Mahatma Gandhi Bus Station in the city. Footage from the CCTV cameras that showed the child being taken away helped the police crack the case quickly.

According to the police, Sangati Jaya, a native of Kurnool district, had reached the city along with her daughter Avanthika on Saturday night and boarded a bus to Karnataka from MGBS. Jaya's sister Laxmi, her husband



Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar along with the three-year-old girl Avanthika, who was rescued from kidnappers on Monday. — P. SURENDRA

Nagaraju and their children were with them.

Nagaraju stepped out of the bus stating that he did not want to travel to Karnataka. Jaya and Laxmi followed him to

talk to him. Avanthika got left behind in the bus, said Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar.

"Shivudu and the Parvathamma, the

accused couple, were at the bus station to catch a bus to Mahbubnagar, when they noticed Avanthika alone and kidnapped her. To avoid police attention, they headed to Dabberpura railway station and spent the night there. The next day, by noon, they went to the Puranapul bus stand and took a bus to Mahbubnagar," the police commissioner said.

Upon realising that her baby was missing, Jaya filed a complaint with the Afzalgunj police. The police formed seven special teams and started tracking the kidnappers with the help of surveillance cameras.

After CCTV footage revealed that they had

taken the child in a bus to Mahbubnagar, the teams alerted the local police. "Our special teams tracked the kidnappers in Mahbubnagar and rescued the child from there. The couple had got married six years ago but did not have children. They kidnapped Avanthika to bring her up as their own child," added the commissioner.

Shivudu was earlier convicted in five property offences in Cyberabad and Rachakonda police limits. The couple revealed that they resorted to kidnapping as they were unable to conceive a child. The Afzalgunj police booked the couple and placed them under arrest.

TD FILES MEMO
IN DEFAMATION
SUIT AGAINST
DEEKSHITHULUDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, NOV. 16

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) on Monday filed a memo in connection with the defamation suits filed against Dr A.V. Ramana Deekshithulu and others at the X additional district judge court here.

In the memo, TTD appealed to the court not to press the I.A 158/2020, filed in September to withdraw defamation suits, in connection with the case - O.S No.264/2018. TTD prayed the court to dismiss the I.A 158/2020 without costs as not pressed and pass necessary orders as the court may deem fit and proper in the circumstances, the memo read.

In 2018, Dr Ramana Deekshithulu made startling allegations against the then TTD trust board, which was appointed by the previous state government. He alleged that a pink diamond from the temple treasury had gone missing and there was an attempt to excavate the temple for hidden treasures.

YSRC MP Vijaya Sai Reddy also accused former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu of taking away the pink diamond and demanded a search of his house.

In this regard, the then trust board led by its chairman Putta Sudharaka Yadav, passed a resolution (Res. No. 109, 05-06-2018) to issue notices to Deekshithulu and others and to file a suit against them for damages.

In a counter filed by the TTD recently, it was stated that Deekshithulu and Vijay Sai Reddy have given written statements, saying that they did not make any statement to cause defame or disrespect either to Lord Venkateswara Swami or to TTD.

Taking into consideration the pleadings of the defendants and also to save money and time in further proceeding the matter, the present trust board passed a resolution (Res. No. 227,29-02-2020) seeking withdrawal of the suit.



16 feet long and weighing 1,600 kgs, Sartaj, the prize bull, which is a special attraction at the Sadar celebrations was brought from Haryana for the annual buffalo carnival in Hyderabad on Monday.

6-foot-tall Sartaj steals limelight
at Narayanguda Sadar festivalDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

Standing a majestic six-and-a-half feet tall, 16 feet long and weighing 1,600 kgs, Sartaj, the prize bull, was the special attraction at the Sadar celebrations at Narayanguda. Sartaj was brought all the way from Haryana

Thousands of Yadav families gathered at the Narayanguda Sadar, the annual buffalo carnival that has been celebrated for the past 74 years. However, the procession

of male buffalos was a low-key affair, given the pandemic conditions.

Members of the Yadav community perform 'dunapoti puja' to the male buffaloes, which are dressed in brilliant colours and brought in a procession to the festival venue at Narayanguda YMCA crossroads.

Gada Swarupa Rani Yadav, a retired college employee, recalled her childhood when her parents took the entire family to the Sadar, which was also an opportunity to

catch up with relatives and friends.

"We would excitedly await the festival where all our community people congregate and have a good time. Over the years, the festival has emerged as a grand occasion and this has spread to other places," she said.

The five-year-old 'Sartaj' is valued at ₹27 crore and is owned by Karamveer Singh, a landlord in Haryana. Edla Hari Babu Yadav of Musheerabad, was excited to parade his animal.

He said "I have been participating in the Sadar for 12 years. The total cost for the procession and bringing the male buffalo is around ₹25 to ₹30 lakh. This time we are keeping it low-key, given the severity of the pandemic."

He added, "We do not give alcohol to Sartaj. Buffaloes are friendly. When alcohol is consumed by human beings, some tend to behave like beasts. You can imagine what would happen if buffaloes are given alcohol."

GSLV MkIII picked for Gaganyaan mission

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, NOV. 16

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) GSLV MkIII rocket has been identified as the vehicle to launch the Gaganyaan Mission and the process for its human rating is in progress.

GSLV MkIII is a three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle developed by ISRO. It has two solid strap-ons, a core liquid booster and a cryo-

genic upper stage. It is designed to carry four-tonne class of satellites into geosynchronous transfer orbit (GTO) or about 10 tonnes to low earth orbit (LEO), which is about twice the capability of the GSLV Mk II.

The two strap-on motors of GSLV Mk III are located on either side of its core liquid booster. Designated 'S200', the high-thrust solid propellant strap-on boosters play an important role

in the human-rated GSLV Mk III. Each S200 booster carries 205 tonnes of composite solid propellant and their ignition results in vehicle lift-off.

S200s function for 140 seconds. During strap-ons functioning phase, the two clustered Vikas liquid Engines of L110 liquid core booster will ignite 114 sec after lift-off to further augment the thrust of the vehicle. These two engines con-

tinue to function after the separation of the strap-ons at about 140 seconds after lift-off.

According to an ISRO statement on Monday, many new design features have been introduced in the hardware in order to human rate the S200 booster. In a fruitful industry collaboration, the first critical booster segment of the motor case with a diameter of 3.2 metre, 8.5 metre in length

and weighing 5.5 tonnes has been indigenously developed and delivered by L&T.

This is the first step towards the unmanned space mission and was flagged-off by ISRO Chairman Dr K. Sivan, who is also secretary, department of space, and Jayant Damodar Patil, director and senior executive vice president, defence & smart technologies, L&T, on November 13.

NET EFFECT Supreme Court, AP High Court judges were abused online

CBI books 16 for defamatory content

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

The Central Bureau of Investigation has registered a case against 16 individuals and other unidentified persons for allegedly making defamatory comments against judiciary on different social media platforms.

The CBI, following the directions of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, took over the case from the state Crime Investigation Department which had already registered 12 cases and clubbed them into a single case.

Significantly, none of the serving and former public

representatives who figured prominently in the HC hearings for their outburst against the High Court and apex court judges have been made accused by the CBI.

The CBI had mentioned in the FIR that these cases were initially registered by the CID based on the complaints of the Registrar General on the allegation that key personnel who are occupying posts of prominence in AP gave interviews and issued statements targeting judges and posted abusive and intimidating comments against judges over the recent orders of the HC.

The HC on October 12

● THE CBI, following the directions of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, took over the case from the state Crime Investigation Department which had already registered 12 cases and clubbed them into a single case.

directed the CBI to probe the case and submit a report to it in a sealed cover within eight weeks. The next hearing of the case is on December 14.

The HC expressed displeasure over the CID investigation before handing over the case to the central agency.

The CBI office in

Visakhapatnam registered the case under various Sections, including 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation), of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Section 67 of the Information Technology Act.

A division bench comprising Justices Rakesh Kumar and J. Uma Devi observed that "The postings were made to bring hatred, contempt, incite disaffection and ill-will against the High Court and Hon'ble judges."

It had noted that the Speaker of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly and the Deputy Chief Minister had not

restrained themselves from making "scathing remarks" against the judiciary and "member of Rajya Sabha, namely, Vijayasai Reddy, has joined together in a move to make scathing remarks against the High Court."

It also named YSRC MP (Lok Sabha) Nandigam Suresh, former MLA Amanchi Krishna Mohan, standing counsel for the Andhra Pradesh Assembly Metta Chandrasekhar Rao and others in the case and found fault with the CID that no proper action, as mandated under the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), was taken against the accused till date.

PUBG's return gets lukewarm response

SANJAY SAMUEL
PAUL I DC
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

The news of the possible resumption of the PUBG has evoked mixed reaction. When it was banned by the Union Government on September 2, many of those who had become near-addicts of the popular award-winning game lamented the decision. There are no dates about the re-launch of the game that had crossed 100 million downloads but the company is set to invest ₹100 crore in India.

Before it was suspended, many, mostly teenagers and youth, confessed that they used to spend 10 hours a day. However, many parents applauded the decision taken by the Centre. Balaji Vasantha, a young entrepreneur, said "our gang of friends used to spend countless nights playing the game, but now we feel that

● THERE ARE no dates about the re-launch of the game that had crossed 100 million downloads but the company is set to invest ₹100 crore in India. a single case.

we had wasted most of our time."

Mohan, a graduation student, said "The games were such that when we were playing in a team we used to be able to communicate with each other. People who are staying in different places can join and play together. I am not sure if now that game will have the same craze."

Hemanth Kumar, whose son used to play PUBG for hours together, said "the news of its ban gave us relief. Our son used to murmur about the game in his sleep. Now he sleeps early and is busy playing outdoor sports."

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
DIVISION NO. 17, K.Z. GHMC
KHAIRATABAD, HYDERABAD

e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE

NIT No.	Name of Work	Estimate Amount / ECV	Start Date / Download End Date & Time	Name & Address of the Officer
48/EE/Div. No. 17/ KZ/ GHMC/ 2020-21	Civil Works (R No.)	Rs. 15.70 Lakhs	For Work at SL 1 to 3 16-11-2020 @ 3:30 PM 23-11-2020 upto 3:30 PM only	Executive Engineer, Division-17, GHMC,

Date: 13-11-2020

Further details can be seen at e-procurement @ <https://www.tender.telanganagov.in/> So, **SE** <

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation

OFFICE OF DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
L.B. NAGAR ZONE, GHMC

e-Procurement Notice No: 03/ABO/LBZ/GHMC/2020-21 Dt: 16-11-2020

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Estimated Amount / ECV	Start and End Time of Tenders	Name and Address of the Officer
1	Raising of Avenue, Open, Institutional, Lake, and Other Plantations in L.B. Nagar Zone, GHMC	Rs. 123.93 Lakhs	16-11-2020 @ 10:30 AM 17-11-2020 @ 10:30 AM	Sr. V. Ashok Reddy, M. Tech (Executive Engineer) L.B. Nagar, Circle-4, GHMC (M): 9849060733

Further details can be seen at e-procurement @ <https://www.tender.telanganagov.in/>

e-mail address: sec4.ghmc@gmail.com, dyubee.ghmc@gmail.com

RO No: 7134-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2020-21

DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
L.B. NAGAR ZONE, GHMC

INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY BOARD OF INDIA
(A Statutory Body of Government of India)

NOTICE

Applications are invited for filling up 04 (four) posts of Chief General Manager (CGM) / General Manager (GM) on deputation basis. The detailed vacancy may be seen at www.ibbi.gov.in.

davp 07121/11/0006/2021

Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority
7th Floor, East Wing, Swarnajayanti Commercial Complex, Amberpet, Hyderabad-500 038.

Tender Notice No.: HMDA/DEV/CE/2020-21 Date: 16.11.2020

Name of the work: Project Management Consultancy Services for Proof Checking, Construction of Down ramp of PVNR Expressway at Laxmi Nagar, Hyderabad under EPC basis.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

HMDA proposed to take up the Construction of Down ramp of PVNR Expressway at Laxmi Nagar, Hyderabad under EPC basis and desired to engage Leading Consultant for Proof Checking, Construction Supervision and Project Management Services. Proposals are hereby invited from eligible Consultants for Project Management Consultancy for Proof Checking, Construction Supervision, Quality Assurance, Quality Control and Quality Audit for Construction of Down ramp of PVNR Expressway at Laxmi Nagar, Hyderabad under EPC basis. The letter of invitation and terms of reference including RFP is available on <https://tender.telanganagov.in>. Bid must be submitted online on e-procurement portal on or before 24.11.2020 upto 15:00 Hrs. IST. Following is the schedule of dates: 1) Start date for downloading of bid: 17.11.2020. 2) Last date for submission of Bids: 24.11.2020.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer, HMDA

भारत सरकार / Government of India

परमाणु ऊर्जा विभाग / Department of Atomic Energy

इंदिरा गांधी परमाणु अनुसंधान केंद्र
/ Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research

कल्पाककम / Kalpakkam - 603 102.

e-Tender Notice Number : IGC/ESG/ESD/T-1449/2020

Superintending Engineer, ESG, IGCAR, invites item rate e-Tender for "Refurbishment of electrical installation in FRTG job shack and other facilities at IGCAR, Kalpakkam" at an estimated cost of **Rs. 71,00,000/-** with a completion period of **11 [Eleven] Months**. Tender details will be available for view & download from **16/11/2020 to 24/11/2020**. Last date of submission of e-bid through e-portal is up to **15:00 hours on 03.12.2020**.

For further details, please visit IGCAR website: **www.igcar.gov.in/tenders** or e-portal **www.tenderwizard.com/DAE**. Contact No : 044 - 27480500 - 22101 / 22854.

Superintending Engineer

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001
Corporate Identity Number (CIN): U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website: www.pspcl.in

E-Tender Enquiry No. 295/P-2/EMP-W-11752 dt 09-Nov-2020 & ID: 2020_POWER_56098_1

Scope of Work: Preventive / Breakdown maintenance of lighting equipment and cables connected with the same of cabling system of four units of GGSSTP Roopnagar, lighting and cabling of Stage-I, Micro Hydel Project including street, fencing / boundary Lighting and cleaning and up keeping of cabling system and preventive / Breakdown maintenance of 415V LD system its lighting equipment and cables connected with the same, cabling system of residential & non-residential buildings & street lights of Nuhoon Colony, Power Colony, Work Charge Colony, Sarsa Colony & along Nangal Hydel Channel of GGSSTP, Roopnagar.

EMD: Rs. 3,00,000/- (Three Laacs only)

Time period: As per NIT
Date & time up to which tender shall be received: 17.12.2020 & 11:00 AM
Date & time of opening of tender: 24.12.2020 & 11:30 AM

Tender specification can only be downloaded from website <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in/> & no hard copy of the same will be issued by this office.

Note:

- In case any difficulty regarding uploading of the tender the prospective bidders are requested to get clarification from this office or M/s e-procurement system Government of Punjab. Contact No. +91-(172)-2970284/63. It is also requested to get their digital signature well in time so as to submit tenders through e-tendering only.
- It is informed that in case tender process is not completed due to any reason, no corrigendum will be published in newspapers. Details regarding corrigendum may be seen on website: eproc.punjab.gov.in

RTP-51/2020
RD : I/104599

SE/HQ
GGSSTP, Rupnagar

DECCAN Chronicle

17 NOVEMBER 2020

As RCEP is born, India must tread cautiously

The world's largest trade bloc emerged on Sunday after 15 countries in East and Southeast Asia, and Australia signed a deal to open up their economies further to foster free trade. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which has been anchored by China, accounts for 29 per cent of the global economy in terms of its size, overshadowing similar arrangements in Europe and North America. However, India, the third-largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity, is conspicuous by its absence as it walked out of negotiations in 2019.

Prime concerns expressed by India were the fear of Chinese goods flooding the country, misuse of simplified country of origin rules, lack of mechanism to prevent dumping of industrial products by China and agricultural and dairy products by Australia and New Zealand. There was no mechanism to address a potential trade deficit arising out of lower tariffs mandated under the RCEP. The deal expected the member-countries to offer similar treatment to co-members as they offer to any of their strategic-partner countries. The member-countries expected India to adhere to these conditions without an assurance on opening up services sector, where Indian companies are far ahead, and allowing easy movement of labour under this deal, making the RCEP tilted heavily towards China.

Nevertheless, staying away from the RCEP is also not a smart move because India would be an attractive investment destination for export-focused companies

After the signing of the deal, several member-countries of the RCEP wished India too joined the deal, which seeks to promote free trade in Asia. The interests of the current member-countries do not align any further. While it is a fact that India would lose out of accessing the largest market in the world, one must also try to understand if India - with the current level of industrialisation - can cash in on the RCEP. Currently, RCEP is nothing but ASEAN plus-5, which means China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia and 10 countries of the ASEAN. Southeast Asian countries already have a free-trade agreement. But now three leaders in manufacturing - China, Japan and South Korea - and two agricultural and dairy majors - Australia and New Zealand - have joined the ASEAN's free trade zone. It is a win-win for all of them. While companies can choose to set up factories in smaller countries to access the world's largest market, China, Japan, and South Korea can compete to sell products. The Indian industry, however, does not have the inherent strength to compete with bigger players and may end up being a dumping ground.

Nevertheless, staying away from the RCEP is also not a smart move because India would be an attractive investment destination for export-focused companies. The government, therefore, should begin consultations on the reforms required to make the Indian industry as competitive and efficient as South Korea and Japan. If the government intends to double farmers' income, it should become more productive. It doesn't reflect well on India to be fearful of New Zealand's dairy products. It is high time the government nudges its industry and farming truly world-class and does whatever is required for that to happen.

Farewell to a legend

What does it take to become the best loved man of Bengali cinema? A formidable supply of talent, love for one's craft, a vast body of work, association with legends? Matinee idol looks that would floor a generation of college-goers? Or is it the fact that he represented the last of the bhadralok, a way of being rendered obsolete by the changing mores and aesthetic of the people of a nonetheless-declining state? Mentored by theatre actor Ahindra Choudhury and the icon, Sisir Kumar Bhaduri, the boy from Kolkata's Surya Sen Street got his big break when selected by Satyajit Ray for the titular role in *Apur Sansar*, the concluding part of Apu Trilogy based on Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay's *Pather Panchali*. Soumitra Chatterjee would go on to collaborate with Ray on some of his best acclaimed projects. He would play the ebullient Amal in Tagorean *Charulata* and the inscrutable Feluda of Ray's own detective series with equal ease. Straddling the world of arthouse and popular cinema with aplomb, a director's actor, he could be versatile, as the hardy Punjabi cab-driver of *Abhijana*, the attractive imposter of Mrinal Sen's *Akash Kusum* or the swashbuckling villain in Tapan Sinha's history thriller *Jhinder Bandi*, setting the screen alight with the chemistry he shared with Sharmila Tagore. Aparna Sen and Madhabi Mukherjee. His ability to fit into the role in a way that offered his audiences identification at extraordinarily intimate levels was the quality that defined him. He also famously refused the Padma Shri on account of there being no safety net for film industry daily wagers. But recognition, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Padma Bhushan, Dadasaheb Phalke Award, Chevalier of Legion d'Honneur, would follow this gracious soul who confidently stuck to his genre, refusing offers from Bollywood, and choosing to return to the stage and poetry. A lifelong pursuit of the arts thus ended on Sunday. All around there is the sound of hearts shattering. The world of Bengali, nay international, cinema is poorer. Travel well, Apu.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUBHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

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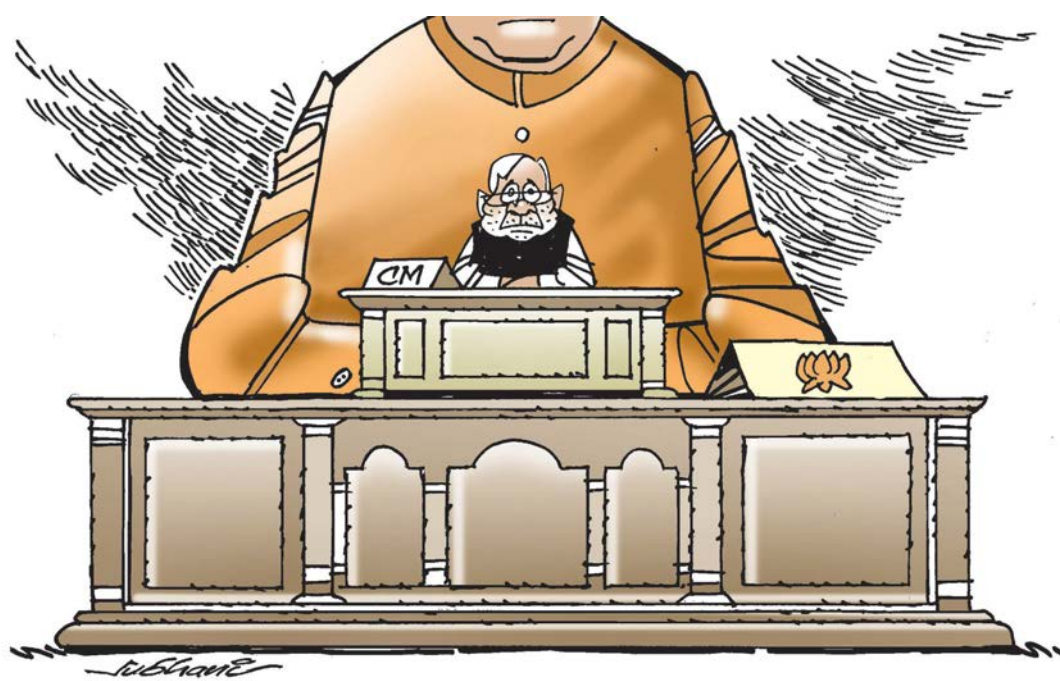
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Subhani



RCEP shifts Indo-Pacific dynamics, blow to Delhi



K.C. Singh

While the entire world was focused on the American presidential election, the signing on November 15 of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) has significantly altered the Indo-Pacific strategic environment. With all 10 Asean members joining China and Japan, besides South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, a huge free trade bloc is born. With a combined \$26.2 trillion of GDP, one-third of the world's total, it will facilitate commerce among members by eliminating 90 per cent of tariffs.

Therefore, while US President-elect Joe Biden's path to office is now clear, despite the Trumpian Twitter tantrums, he faces a more complex scenario in the Indo-Pacific region. There is still some time before the RCEP is fully implemented as a certain number of Asean and non-Asean signatories must ratify it first. But any analysis of the implications of the Biden presidency simply cannot ignore this new development.

Multiple challenges await the next US President, at home and abroad. Overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic, with cases spiking due to the onset of winter and the lax observance of precautions, looms above all else, as indeed do its economic consequences. The American economy has shrunk, compared to a year earlier, by slightly over minus four per cent, as Britain's figure tops minus 10 per cent and the Eurozone at minus eight per cent. Canada and Japan fall in between those figures and that of the US. The Economist magazine writes that while the pandemic will fade by the end of 2012, the "tech surge will outlive

Mr Biden's presidency". These deeper changes are pitted against the desire of the liberal faction of the Democrats to favour manufacturing jobs and social goals. The US markets did not drop on the Biden-Harris victory as control of the Senate remains with the Republicans, seen as blocking the Democratic socio-economic agenda. This balance hinges on the fate of two Senate run-off contests in Georgia on January 5. If the Democrats win both, they will seize control of the Senate, the strength of both parties being tied at 50 each, giving the vice-president the casting vote. That could rile the US and even the Indian markets.

As regards the pandemic, Mr Biden's approach has emerged, despite Mr Trump not cooperating with his transition team. A group of experts has been formed to suggest a plan, including for vaccination of the populace, based on science and medical expertise rather than Trumpian evasion and half-truths. Mr Biden realises control of the pandemic is critical to reviving the economy and jobs. The Democrats want to hit the ground running after Mr Biden's inauguration on January 20.

As a global power, the US cannot ignore the foreign policy challenges. On China, Mr Trump's forthright criticism of predatory trade practices, theft of intellectual property and state capitalism led to trade sanctions to coerce Beijing to accept a more transparent rules-based system. The Covid-19 pandemic emanating from China and its delay in alerting the world has merely crystallised concerns into open hostility, now percolating down to the popular level. Thus, there is bipartisan consensus for maintaining the pressure on China. The Biden administration

Multiple challenges await the next US President, at home and abroad

may substitute open confrontation, which Henry Kissinger calls the two nations at the foothills of a new Cold War, with smarter containment strategies. The difficulty is that if the sanctions are rolled back, what does China offer as concessions to address America's economic and security concerns? Michele Flournoy, a frontrunner for the defence secretary's job, has advocated US defence readiness to have the capacity to sink the entire Chinese naval fleet in 72 hours!

There is also the technology competition symbolised by the US barring Huawei's access to top US semiconductors. Taiwan is a key component in US advances in cutting-edge semiconductor design and production. The continuing Chinese threats to Taiwan and the US dithering over defending it, in case China tries to annex it militarily, has created strategic vacuum. Some Chinese analysts argued that if China occupies Taiwan, as it has Hong Kong, Taiwan's famed chip producer TSMC would be a bonus.

The RCEP's signing by two components of the "Quad" - Australia and Japan - queers the US and Indian approach to the Indo-Pacific. Only weeks back this group was being projected as the skeleton of a new security architecture to contain China. It was hoped the Biden administration may review US withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which Japan had championed to balance Chinese trade influence in the Indo-Pacific. It exists in a modified form, minus the US, as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). It is possible the US and Japan may yet re-engage to discuss America's re-entry, but with the RCEP finalised China has first-mover advantage. In one swoop China has negated the hype over the de-coupling

from China. It also leaves India stranded, strategically and trade-wise, between its Quad partners and a China-dominated group, which has drawn away two of the Quad's four members. Moreover, for the new US administration, the Indo-Pacific may be a lower priority than rebuilding alliances ignored or abandoned by Mr Trump and healing rifts with nations like Germany and France.

The *Global Times*, the largely reliable English voice of Beijing, headlined an editorial: "Indo-Pacific strategy upholder India misses the bus of RCEP and long-term growth". India still has paths open to both joining the RCEP, albeit with diminished negotiating weight, or playing along with the US if its interest in CPTTP emerges. But in any case, all the bluster over Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI), that the Quad members were to create as an alternative to Chinese dominance of supply chains, now appears a non-starter.

Besides the fear of RCEP affecting Indian industry and farmers, including those in the dairy sector, Chinese obduracy in accepting full de-escalation at the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh has heightened Indian suspicions. Is it a coincidence that the Chinese intrusions followed India's unwillingness to join the RCEP in November 2019, and sponsoring alternative approaches like Quad Plus? With India's options now conditioned by the initiatives of others, New Delhi needs peace at home with farmers and in the region with neighbours. In any case, its majoritarian proclivities, with the West Bengal election approaching, can become an irritant in US-India ties just as China has outplayed it in the Indo-Pacific. In chess terms, it is not checkmate yet. But China controls the board with the better pieces.

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh.

LETTERS

ATTACK PAK

How long India will play a defensive role against China-propped Pakistan? India must attack this hostile nation militarily to an irrecoverable stage. Otherwise India will keep losing its soldiers in sporadic incidents.

N.S.R. Murthy
Secunderabad

FLOOD RELIEF

This is an era of elections purely based on politics instead of people's issues (*BJP sends its top team to GHMC, DC, Nov. 16*). On floods, the MoS for home said the TS government did not submit a detailed report for the Centre to give a relief package. But why can't the Centre give at least ad-hoc relief? After winning more than 100 seats in the last GHMC elections the TS government announced 100 days plan to improve living conditions in the GHMC area. The recent misery proves how best the living conditions have improved.

B. Raghunadha Rao
Hyderabad

PROPERTY TAX

The recent rains have damaged roads which require funds for repair and for increasing the capacity of storm water drainage system to prevent flooding. Sanitation is poor due to lack of funds. The government has given 50 per cent rebate on property tax to owners in the city whose tax is ₹15,000. When both the GHMC and the state are starving for funds, it is not advisable to give any rebate.

Dr O. Prasada Rao
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Excavation at Golconda begins

By a staff reporter
HYDERABAD, Nov. 16. Excavation work near the enclosure wall of Qutub Shahi tombs at the historic Golconda on the outskirts of the city, was commenced by the State Archaeological Department, today.

Mr. N. Ramesan, Finance Secretary and Mr. S.R. Ramamurthy, Education Secretary, inaugurated the work at two different points adjacent to the area where a summer house and a palace were unearthed during excavations last year.

Dr. Abdul Waheed Khan, Director of Archaeology and Museums, told newsmen that the chance discovery of the summer house and the palace, buried three metres below a mound, had encouraged them to probe further into the depths.

Aakar Patel



Everything is looking bleak: Can Modi still bring change?

The BJP has won yet another election, and victory is attributed to the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He is in the seventh year of his term and appears to have lost none of his attractiveness for the voter. There is no data available on this, of course, and elections across the subcontinent are won on the back of tribalism, organisation and money.

But let us assume that it is the personal attractiveness and credibility of the Prime Minister that has yet again taken the BJP through in Bihar. The question is — to what end does he want to keep winning? Power is held for a purpose — to be able to effect change. What change has Mr Modi used his power for?

On the economy, the numbers cannot be kept hidden. The rate of GDP growth has gone from eight to seven to six to five to four to three per cent over the last 12 quarters. Something sabotaged the economy just before January 2018 and today

is not the time to go again into it. The fact is that without Covid-19 and long before the lockdown, the Indian economy was wrecked. Hours after the Bihar election results were out, the RBI announced that in the second quarter, meaning July to September, India's economy would again contract, and we were in recession.

The government did not acknowledge this or respond to it. The Prime Minister muttered some more things about development, but his heart is not in it. Do you remember the last time he spoke about his world beating economic performance? It is because there is nothing to say. Bangladesh has overtaken India's per capita GDP. What more can be added to that?

As I am writing this, there is news that we have lost at least 11 more lives on the Line of Control in Kashmir. The media's response to this in India has been to claim that Pakistan has also lost 11 lives. It has become like a game, and if we are able to get enough of the other

side out then it is fine for us to suffer the losses we have. This is lunacy but it is the product of the way that Mr Modi has characterised relations with neighbours, as being a zero sum game. Meaning that their loss is our gain. But this is bogus. We gain nothing material by killing their people. We lose when our people are killed.

On the LAC, we are preparing to formalise the surrender that we have already effected on the ground. We have permanently been stopped from patrolling till Finger 8 in Ladakh and heaven alone knows what else has been given up amid the secrecy.

Mr Modi's refusal to acknowledge that the Chinese had intruded into and were holding ground that India had been previously patrolling was a clear signal to the other side. He has since stopped speaking on this subject. What is there to say? India has not even been given an explanation for why our leader thinks his friend Xi Jinping had launched his aggression. Our constitutional

recklessness in Jammu and Kashmir happened without any understanding of the international ramifications.

As one defence analyst has said, Mr Modi changed the status of Ladakh on the map, while Mr Xi changed it on the ground. So much for the 56 inches. Our clinging to Donald Trump has not paid off. His secretary of defence, who was promising an eternal military alliance, was fired this week.

What else is there? We could talk about Covid-19. We carry the second highest number of infected people in the world, the third highest number of dead. What role if any the government has had in controlling it or mitigating it is unknown. The lockdown appears to have had exactly the opposite effect that we were told it would have. We are still clocking over 40,000 cases a day and have no real control over the epidemic. Two-thirds of India's working women lost their jobs because of the lockdown. Reports have shown that the work participation

rate for women fell from an already low 9.15 per cent in December 2019 to just 5.8 per cent in August this year. For men, it is down from 67 per cent to 47 per cent. Most of India is not working. Have you heard Mr Modi talk about this? No. What is there to say?

The good thing is that we are in Year 7 of his reign. His words do not mean anything at this point. It is the numbers we must look at and the numbers are clear. If there is still support for Mr Modi among the population, it must be for something else, not his performance. There the record is quite clear.

Power is held to effect change. Mr Modi has shown himself incapable of effecting it in the positive sense. On the economy, on the border, on employment, on the epidemic. One wonders to what end he not only holds on to it but seeks to acquire more.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

SHORT TAKES

WILL TURN
BENGAL INTO
GUJARAT: BJP MPRAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, NOV. 16

Playing the industrialisation card ahead of next year's Assembly elections, West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh on Monday asserted that the party would turn the state into a Gujarat so that no one would have to migrate elsewhere for jobs.

He said that the Tata Group was given land by the BJP government in Gujarat for its Nano small-car project soon after it was "driven out" of Singur in Hooghly by Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee when she was in the Opposition during the Communist rule.

Ghosh said at Barasat in North 24 Parganas, "We want to turn our state into Gujarat. Didi sometimes complains against attempts to make this state a Gujarat. We say we will try for it 100 times. We will certainly turn this state into Gujarat. Our youth will get jobs here. No one will have to go to Gujarat."

The Midnapore BJP MP told the Chief Minister, "Shutting down the Tata factory, you will win votes. Will we have to live as beggars here?" He pointed out that the Gujarat government had given land to the Tatas within 24 hours of its exit from West Bengal, he said.

PRAUNDESWARI
HAS TOUGH TASK
AT HANDAKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 16

Senior BJP leader Daggubati Purandeswari who was recently appointed the party's in-charge for Odisha in place of Arun Singh has a tough task in her hand — packing more firepower to the state organisation that has been struggling to wrest power from the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD).

Despite her party winning eight of the 21 Lok Sabha seats and 23 of 147 Assembly seats in the simultaneous polls held in May 2019, it has bitten the dust in the three Assembly elections held recently.

Desperately trying to position itself as the key rival of the ruling BJD since it walked out of an 11-year-old alliance with the former in 2019, the saffron party has always been found wanting on several fronts. It has failed to match the cadre strength and number of booth level workers of the ruling party.

According to party insiders, the BJP is failing repeatedly to register spectacular results largely because of lack of "adequate" efforts by the state leaders and "diluting" its stands against the ruling dispensation. Discreet silence mega mining and chit fund scams and alleged close proximity of some leaders of the BJD supremo and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, according to political analysts, have confused the voters if it (the BJP) is the real political adversary of the ruling party.

FREE PRESS SOUL
OF DEMOCRACY,
SAY LEADERS

New Delhi, Nov. 16: Describing a free press as the 'soul of democracy', top leaders including President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday commended media persons for their work as frontline warriors during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In their messages on the occasion of the National Press Day, the leaders also stressed that any attack on the freedom of press is detrimental to national interests and must be opposed by one and all.

While the President and the PM lauded the media for its contribution during the pandemic, vice president M. Venkaiah Naidu and Union ministers Amit Shah and Prakash Javadekar emphasised on the importance of freedom of press in the country and condemned any attack on it.

In his written message, which was read out during a webinar organised by the Press Council of India (PCI) to celebrate the National Press Day, the President said that media persons have been among frontline Corona warriors who played a major role in educating people and mitigating the impact of the pandemic. Kovind said the theme of this year's National Press Day celebration, 'role of media during Covid-19 and its impact on the media', deals with the most serious crisis facing the world and the country.

Daggers drawn in Congress
over Bihar election debacle

It could win only 19 out of the 70 seats it contested in just concluded polls

SREEPARNA
CHAKRABARTY | DC
NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

Even as Nitish Kumar begins his record fourth term as Bihar chief minister, the Congress Party is in the throes of a meltdown over its disastrous performance in the Assembly polls which prevented the Grand Alliance from winning the elections by a hair's breadth.

The Congress, which could win only 19 out of the 70 seats it contested in the just concluded Bihar polls, is largely being held responsible for the debacle of the Mahagathbandhan or the Grand Alliance with the Left parties and the Rashtriya Janata Dal having performed far better.

This has led to many senior Congress leaders, who were already on a warpath over the "organisational mess in the party", to speak out again. Sources told this newspaper that the group of 23, which comprises leaders who had written a letter to Congress president Sonia Gandhi expressing their grievances in late August, are planning to take up the Bihar polls debacle, too.

Sources said that the leaders are waiting for Congress treasurer Ahmed Patel to recover from Covid-19. Patel, who is known to be very close to Congress president Sonia Gandhi and has been her political secretary, is currently in hospital.

Senior lawyer and Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal, who is one of the leaders among the group of 23, has already come out in the open saying that the party is unwilling to introspect.

"If for six years, the Congress has not introspected, what hope do we have for introspection now? We know what is wrong with Congress. The party itself knows the answers. But they are not



Union home minister Amit Shah and BJP national president J.P. Nadda, Bihar Governor Phagu Chauhan, HAM (S) chief Jitan Ram Manjhi with Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Deputy Chief Ministers Renu Devi and Tarkishore Prasad pose for a group photograph after the oath-taking ceremony at Raj Bhawan in Patna on Monday. — PTI

willing to recognise those answers. If they do not recognise those answers, then the graph will continue to decline," he said.

Sibal added that there was "reluctance because the CWC is a nominated body. Democratic processes must be adopted and embraced even in the constitution of the CWC, which is reflected in the provisions of the Congress' constitution itself".

Among others who have spoken out are Tamil Nadu MP and former finance minister P. Chidambaram's son Karti Chidambaram and Bihar Congress leader Tariq Anwar.

"It's time we introspect, ideate, consult & act @INCIndia," Karti Chidambaram tweeted.

Anwar said on Sunday that the Congress must learn from the Bihar debacle and complete alliance formalities well in advance for upcoming

CHIRAG TAKES A DIG AT NITISH, HOPES
HE COMPLETES TERM AS NDA CM

Patna, Nov. 16: LJP president Chirag Paswan on Monday congratulated Nitish Kumar on becoming the Bihar Chief Minister once again, saying, tongue-in-cheek, that he hopes the JD(U) leader will "continue to remain the NDA's CM".

In an apparent swipe at Kumar becoming the Chief Minister despite having way too less MLAs than the BJP, he said, "I

Assembly polls. He, however, claimed that the high command was serious about introspection as well as a thorough analysis of the results.

Sources said that the issue was likely to be taken up at the AICC meeting which is likely to be

congratulate you on becoming the Chief Minister and the BJP for making you one".

"Congratulations to respected @NitishKumar ji for becoming the chief minister once again. Hope the government will complete its term and you will continue to be the NDA's chief minister," Paswan, a bitter critic of Kumar, said in a series of tweets in Hindi. — PTI

held in late January or early February and preparations for which have already begun.

In August, when the 23 senior leaders had raised issues critical to the party organisation, they were confronted and accused of being disloyal.

GRAND ALLIANCE
BOYCOTTS NITISH'S
OATH-TAKING

Patna, Nov. 16: The opposition Grand Alliance on Monday decided to boycott the oath-taking ceremony of Nitish Kumar, claiming the mandate in the elections was "against the NDA" which has been changed by a "fraud".

RJD, which is spearheading the five-party Mahagathbandhan, and its allies have decided to remain away from the swearing-in function of Kumar.

"The RJD boycotts oath-taking ceremony of this puppet government. The mandate is for a change, and against the (ruling) NDA. The peoples verdict has been changed by the rulers order," the RJD alleged in a tweet. — PTI

At swearing-in,
Sushil looks forlorn

Patna, Nov. 16: Senior BJP leader Sushil Kumar Modi, who has not been retained in the new Bihar dispensation after serving as the deputy chief minister for close to 15 years, attended the swearing-in ceremony of new NDA government on Monday but looked aloof in the crowd of new MLAs.

A 14-member council of ministers headed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was administered the oath of office at the Raj Bhawan here by Governor Phagu Chauhan.

Sushil Modi, who has been Nitish Kumar's deputy in all the NDA government he has led in Bihar, was not among the 14. He was invited for the swearing-in ceremony though, and he came, but did not look his usual self.

Otherwise a vibrant politician, Sushil Modi watched, not betraying much emotions, as Kumar and others were administered the oath of office.

The BJP has replaced Sushil Modi as the deputy

chief minister, bringing in two new faces for the post multiple-term BJP MLAs Tarkishore Prasad and Renu Devi.

At one point of time, Kumar spotted his long-term deputy and asked him to come near him. The two walked together for some distance, much to the glee of the paparazzi, but their paths were different this time and they separated.

Kumar and Sushil Modi's pair as CM and Deputy CM since 2005, barring a 20-month gap when Kumar was in alliance with the RJD, has been the hallmark of the ruling coalition in the state.

The smooth sail of the successive JD(U)-BJP governments in the state has, to a large extent, been attributed to the good chemistry the two leaders shared.

However, this rapport was resented by a section of his Sushil Modi's own partymen who would have otherwise confronted the JD(U) boss on some issues.

— PTI

Nitish Kumar: Masterful
craftsman of realpolitik

Patna, Nov. 16: "Politics is the art of the possible", German statesman Otto Von Bismarck once famously said. And who understands it better than Nitish Kumar, the modern-day craftsman of realpolitik, who has survived many a headwind to secure a fourth straight term as the Bihar Chief Minister despite his party finishing a poor third in the 243-member state Assembly.

Nitish Kumar's unusual knack for spotting friends has got him where it has despite the drastic slump in the electoral fortune of his party that won just 43 seats, down from 71 it had in 2015, and 31 less than ally BJP which clinched 74. The most atypical of politicians owing their rise to post-Mandal politics, Nitish Kumar stood out for his ability to address the governance deficit, unlike a majority of the breed reared in the socialist stable, but was often accused of pursuing politics of opportunism. Call it political opportunism or sagacity, his moves, in effect, prevented the

Hindutva forces from holding sway over Bihar, where a section of the BJP feels mortified over not having its own chief minister till date despite enjoying a near hegemonic status nationally.

Known for weighing his options carefully before making any move, Kumar, upon a closer look, comes across as a risk taker who has not shied away from going against the tide. An engineer by training who had taken an active part in the JP movement, he spurned a job offer from the state electricity department and decided to take the political gamble, an oddity among educated youth in Bihar for whom the lure of "sarkari naukri" remains undiminished.

Unlike Lalu Prasad and Ram Vilas Paswan, his co-travellers during the movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan, electoral success eluded Kumar for long.

He got the first taste of victory, after three successive defeats, in the 1985 Assembly polls when he won from Harnaut as a candidate of the Lok Dal

though the Congress swept the elections riding the tailwind generated by the assassination of Indira Gandhi the previous year.

Four years later he entered the Lok Sabha from Barh even as fellow MP from Saran Lalu Prasad shifted to Bihar, taking over as the chief minister and scripting a spectacular success story which altered the state's political landscape. Kumar, one of the most articulate leaders of the Janata Dal, had fully backed Lalu in the keenly fought internal contest for chief ministership.

The next decade-and-a-half saw Prasad's rise as one of the most powerful but controversial figures of his time who ruled the state by proxy, getting his demure homemaker wife Rabri Devi elected as his successor, when a charge sheet in fodder scam caused him to step down as the chief minister. During the same period, Kumar burnt his bridges with Prasad, floated the Samata Party, and built his own political edifice brick by brick.

— PTI

Ministers lose
bypolls in MP,
refuse to resignRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, NOV. 16

Two ministers in the Shivraj Singh Cabinet have sparked a political row by 'deciding' to continue in their positions despite being defeated in the recent byelections in their respective Assembly constituencies.

State ministers Imarti Devi and Giriraj Dandotia have so far maintained a silence over their next course of action following their loss in the bypolls, indicating that they are not in favour of stepping down and want to continue in their position till January 2 when their six-month tenure in the ministry ends.

As per the Constitution, a non-MLA can be inducted into a ministry for six months during which he or she needs to be elected. The Congress on Monday raked up the issue demanding that all the ministers in the Shivraj Singh ministry who lost the bypolls should step down on moral grounds.

"It is unethical on the part of the ministers who lost the bypolls to continue in their positions. They forfeited the moral right to continue in the ministry after losing. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan should ask them to put in their papers if they do not volunteer to resign," Congress spokesman

● **MP MINISTERS** Imarti Devi and Giriraj Dandotia have so far maintained a silence over their next course of action following their loss in the bypolls, indicating that they are not in favour of stepping down and want to continue in their position till January 2 when their six-month tenure in the ministry ends.

Bhupendra Gupta said here.

The BJP has chosen to keep mum on the issue. "It is the Chief Minister's prerogative to decide whom he wants in his ministry and whom he wants to drop", BJP spokesman here Rajneesh Agrawal said.

Legal experts say that Constitutional provisions do not bar the defeated ministers from continuing in the ministry till the end of the six-month-period even after failing to get elected to the House during the period.

"As per Article 164 (4) of the Constitution, a person who is not an MLA can continue as a minister for six months," Anand Bhardwaj, senior advocate of the Gwalior bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, said.

Another minister in the Shivraj Singh cabinet, Anand Singh Kansana, has also lost the byelections. He has announced that he will step down. But he is yet to put in his papers.

Winter, budget
sessions likely
to be clubbed

New Delhi, Nov. 16: In the wake of rising Covid-19 cases in the national capital, it is being contemplated that a single extended session of parliament be held instead of separate winter and budget sessions, sources said on Monday.

However, nothing has been finalised and discussions are still in a preliminary stage. A final call is yet to be taken, but there are suggestions that a single unified session can be held in the place of two sessions in such a short span of period, the sources said.

The winter session of parliament usually starts from the last week of November or the first week of December, while the budget session starts from the last week of January and the Union Budget is tabled on February 1.

The monsoon session, which was held from September 14 in midst of the pandemic, was cut short by eight days and concluded on September 24 as, despite the elaborate arrangements made by authorities, many MPs and Parliament staff members tested positive for Covid-19.

Several first-time measures such as staggered sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and the use of both chambers and gal-

● **THE MONSOON** session, which was held from Sept 14 in midst of the pandemic, was cut short by 8 days and concluded on Sept. 24.

leries to accommodate members while following physical distancing norms were implemented during the monsoon session.

The Budget session was also curtailed earlier this year amid the looming threat of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Former Lok Sabha secretary general P.D.T. Acharya said it is a convention to hold three sessions of parliament in a year. It is not a rule. As per the Constitution, there should not be a gap of six months or more between two sessions.

If government clubs two sessions of parliament and holds only two sessions this year, then it will not be a violation of any rule, Acharya added.

The national capital had recorded its highest single-day spike of 8,593 Covid-19 cases on Wednesday. On Thursday, 104 fatalities, the highest in a day in over five months, were recorded. The rise in cases prompted the Centre to announce fresh steps on Sunday including a house-to-house survey. — PTI

GUPKAR | ALLIANCE BJP terms PAGD an unholy alliance, which wants exactly what 'Pak, anti-India nations want

BJP asks Congress to clarify its stand on Article 370

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

Slamming the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) as an "unholy alliance," which wants exactly what "Pakistan and anti-India countries want," the BJP on Monday asked the Congress to clarify its stand on Article 370 after the Jammu and Kashmir PCC chief said that the party will contest the maiden District Development Council (DDC) with the alliance.

Reminding the Congress top brass, including party president Sonia Gandhi and former president

Rahul Gandhi, that restoration of Article 370 is the declared agenda of the alliance, senior BJP leader and Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the Congress should tell the nation categorically whether or not it supports annulment of pro-people and humanitarian laws that came into force in J&K after the annulment of the Article 370.

Prasad also asked the Congress leadership whether or not it supports the statement of PAGD chairman and National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah that he wished Article 370 will be restored with China's help and also

● **THE PEOPLE'S** Alliance for Gupkar Declaration is an amalgamation of various Jammu and Kashmir based political parties who are seeking the restoration of Article 370.

of PDP's Mehbooba Mufti, who had said that she would only hold the Tricolour after the J&K state flag is restored.

He cited Central laws including on juvenile justice, human rights and reservations for SC/ST, OBCs, and those against child marriage, corruption, transactions and against triple talaq, that

were implemented in J&K post-annulment of Article 370 and the benefits of annulment of Article 35(A).

He asked: "I want to ask Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, do they want the restoration of Article 370? Please tell the nation categorically and clearly does the Congress support annulment of pro-people laws."

He accused the PAGD of pushing J&K towards a state of "narrow conservatism."

The PAGD is an amalgamation of various Jammu and Kashmir based political parties who are seeking the restoration of

Article 370.

Earlier, targeting the Congress over its ties with the NC and the PDP, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra also lashed out at the PAGD, describing the alliance as "unholy".

"This Gupkar Alliance wants exactly what Pakistan and anti-India countries want. Pakistan has gone to every forum and spoken against the removal of Article 370. The Gupkar Alliance says the same thing," said Patra who also took at a dig at Gandhi over comments of the likes of former US president Barack Obama to RJD leader Shivanand Tiwari.

EVICTION OF GUJJAR-BAKERWAL
COMMUNITY 'ILLEGAL': MEHBOOBA

Srinagar, Nov. 16: Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti on Monday warned the government against evicting members of the Gujjar-Bakerwal community from forest areas in the Union Territory, saying if they are harassed, the consequences would be dangerous.

Mehbooba visited the upper reaches of Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag district on Monday and met

people whose 'Dhoks' (temporary shelters) were demolished by authorities as part of an anti-encroachment drive.

"This is part of the illegal process started by central government in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370, under which the people, who live here like nomads, Gujjars, Bakerwals, whose forefathers have been living here for centuries, are being evicted," Mehbooba said.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

LAST RITES OF
MARTYRED ARMY
JAWANS HELDDC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, NOV. 16

Last rites of two jawans, who got killed in an ambush with Pakistan forces last week, were held at their native places in Maharashtra on Monday with full state honours.

Bhushan Ramesh Rao Satai, who was killed during shelling by Pakistani troops in Jammu and Kashmir, was given a tearful farewell by his family members, relatives and officials in Nagpur. He was posted as Naik in the Maratha Light Infantry. The mortal remains of Satai (28) were transported to Nagpur on Sunday evening.

Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh, energy minister Nitin Raut laid wreaths on the soldier's body at the Brigade of the Guards Regiment parade ground. Senior Army officers, public representatives and Nagpur administration officials also paid homage to Satai. Later, the body was taken to Katol where hundreds of locals attended the last rites of the jawan.

"I am paying tributes to the martyrs on behalf of the Maharashtra government," Mr Deshmukh said.

Satai, whose father is a labourer, joined the Army in 2011. On Friday, Pakistan indulged in heavy cross-border shelling along the Line of Control (LoC) in which five security forces personnel and six civilians were killed.

NEARLY 2L INDIAN
STUDENTS CHOOSE
U.S. FOR STUDIES

New Delhi, Nov. 16: Nearly two lakh Indian students chose the United States as their destination to pursue higher education in the 2019-20 academic year, according to the Open Doors Report released by the US embassy on Monday.

Indian students comprised nearly 20 per cent of the over one million students from around the world, and the US has seen a steady rise in the number of undergraduate students from India, the report stated.

"Over the last 10 years, the number of Indians studying in the United States has roughly doubled, and we know why the US is the gold standard for higher education, providing practical application and experience that gives our graduates an advantage in the global economy," said minister Counsellor for public affairs David Kennedy.

To assist Indian students, the US Department of State offers advising services to prospective students through seven EducationUSA advising centres throughout India — in New Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Ahmedabad and Mumbai.

"Early next year, a second EducationUSA Center is opening in Hyderabad hosted by Y-Axis Foundation. All centres are staffed by EducationUSA advisors who offer accurate, comprehensive, and up-to-date information about opportunities to study in the United States" an official statement by the Embassy said.

MP COP'S SHOLAY
SHOW ON DUTY
GOES AWRYRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, NOV. 16

An 'overenthusiastic' cop in a Madhya Pradesh town sought to inject life into his patrols by enacting the role of iconic Gabbar Singh of the 1975 classic Sholay. But, his 'show' has landed him in trouble with an officer serving him a showcause notice seeking an explanation on his style of patrolling.

K.L. Dangi, Kalyanpur police incharge in Jhabua district, was seen in a video that has gone viral in social media, delivering dialogues of Gabbar Singh while patrolling in the town on November 15. "Kalyanpura se 50-50 km duri par jab bachcha rota hai to maa kehti hai chup ho ja beta nahin to Dangi aa jayega (When children cry even as far as 50 km from Kalyanpura, their mothers make them go to sleep by taking name of Dangi)", the cop was heard saying, paraphrasing the epic line from Sholay.

"We have issued a showcause notice to him. It is the duty of a policeman to maintain law and order. It is not the proper way of doing duty. Action will be taken on the basis of the reply received from him," Jhabua district superintendent of police Ashutosh Gupta said on Monday.

Season's first snowfall



An army convoy moves on a snow covered road after the seasons first snowfall, at Gulmarg in Baramulla district of north Kashmir, Monday. Authorities have issued an avalanche warning in four districts of the Valley as the higher reaches of the Union Territory received moderate to heavy snowfall, while the plains were lashed by rains.

— PTI

SC sends man jailed for
Uddhav tweet to HC

Top court says HC can uphold rights; local court gives bail in one case

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, MUMBAI,
NOV. 16

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a plea for bail of a man who was arrested from Gujarat for posting allegedly objectionable comments in his tweets against Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and his minister-son Aaditya.

A bench of Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian asked the counsel for Sameer Thakkar to approach the Bombay HC with the plea saying that it can also uphold his fundamental rights.

"The High Court can also uphold your fundamental rights. It can also transfer the case and grant you bail. Then why are you coming under 32 (under Article 32 of the Constitution, writ pleas are filed in the Supreme Court). You please go to the High Court," the bench told senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani who was appearing for Thakkar.

SC issues notice on plea
against arrest of journalist

New Delhi, Nov. 16: The Supreme Court on Monday sought a response from the Uttar Pradesh government on a plea challenging the arrest of Kerala-based journalist Siddique Kappan on his way to Hathras where a young Dalit woman had died after allegedly being gang-raped.

The top court, which has now posted the plea of Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ) seeking bail for Kappan on November 20, asked the union as to why it did not

approach the Allahabad High Court seeking the same relief.

We are trying to discourage (Article) 32 petition (Writ petitions under Article 32 are directly filed before the top court). This is not a comment on the merits at all, said a bench of Chief Justice S. A. Bobde and Justices A. S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian.

Issue notice returnable on November 20. In the meantime, as prayed for, the petitioner (KUWJ) is allowed to serve the Standing Counsel for the

Jethmalani said that Thakkar has been arrested for "bailable offences" and this will "shock your Lordships". "We are quite immune from shock. We see it everyday. Nothing shocks us," the bench

observed and asked him to approach the High Court.

Meanwhile, a local court in Mumbai on Monday, granted bail to Sameer Thakkar. Thakkar was granted bail after the Maharashtra government

respondents/State (Uttar Pradesh), the bench said in the order.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the journalists' body, sought bail for the scribe saying that there was nothing against the journalist in the FIR lodged at Mathura by Uttar Pradesh police.

The FIR has been filed under various provisions of the IPC and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) against four people having alleged links with the Popular Front of India, or PFI.

— PTI

SC REFUSES TO
ENTERTAIN PLEA
SEEKING AS
'NULL AND 'VOID'

New Delhi, Nov. 16: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a plea seeking to declare as null and void the election of those against whom charges have been framed for over a year for offences entailing punishment of five years and more.

A bench headed by Justice L. N. Rao said the petitioner can pursue remedies for implementation of earlier judgement delivered by the apex court, which had in 2018 left it to Parliament to make laws to ensure that persons facing serious criminal cases do not enter the political arena.

A five-judge Constitution bench had in September 2018 said that though criminalisation of politics is a "bitter manifest truth" which is a "termite" to the citadel of democracy, it cannot "usurp the power" of law-making which is vested with the legislature.

The bench, also comprising Justices Hemant Gupta and Ajay Rastogi, was on Monday hearing the plea filed by NGO Lok Prahar.

— PTI

Lord Ayyappa
devotees trek
to SabarimalaGILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
NOV.16

The famous Sabarimala temple opened for the annual Mandala Makaravilakku season on Monday morning.

Devotees, mainly from the neighbouring states, trekked up to the hill shrine while adhering to Covid-19 protocols including maintaining social distancing and wearing masks.

It is the first annual pilgrimage season at the hill temple after the Coronavirus outbreak.

The rituals began with head priest Kantaru Rajeevaru performing the Ashtadravya Maha Ganapathi Homam at the Sannidhanam. Though the shrine had opened on Sunday evening there were no special pujas. The devotees were allowed inside the temple complex only on Monday morning

which also marked the beginning of the 62-day long pilgrim season.

Priest A.K. Sudheer Namboothiri opened the doors of the sanctum sanctorum and lit the lamps in the presence of the chief priest.

Each day, only 1,000 pilgrims, who have booked through the virtual queue system, would be allowed to offer prayers. On Sundays, 2,000 people would be allowed for darshan and on Mandala pooja and Makaravilakku days 5,000 pilgrims would be permitted.

In view of the pandemic, the pilgrims have to carry Covid-19 negative certificates obtained 48 hours before they reach Nilakkal and Pamba base camps. Covid 19 kiosks have been opened at the base camps for testing. The pilgrims will not be allowed to stay at Sannidhanam or at temple premises overnight.



Devotees maintain social distance while standing in queues to offer prayers at Lord Ayyappa temple on the 1st day of Malayalam month of 'Vrischikam, at Sabarimala in Pathanamthitta' on Monday

— PTI

Major temples
in Maha open
after 8 monthsBHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, NOV. 16

All major temples in Maharashtra were thronged by devotees as places of religious worship were reopened in the state on Monday after being shut for nearly eight months. That the reopening coincided with the auspicious occasion of Diwali 'Padwa' (Marathi New Year) further added to people's joy.

Shri Vitthal Rukhmini Mandir in Pandharpur, Saibaba Mandir in Shirdi, Tulja Bhawani Mandir in Tuljapur, Mahalaxmi Mandir and Jyotiba Devasthan in Kolhapur, Grishneshwar Mandir at Ellora in Aurangabad, Siddhivinayak Mandir and Haji Ali Dargah in Mumbai saw a steady rush of devotees throughout the day.

In Pandharpur, the Shri Vitthal Rukhmini Mandir was adorned with floral designs, which caught the eye of devotees. However, the temple authorities

decided to permit only 'Mukhdarshan' of Lord Vitthal and Rukhmini instead of regular practice of allowing devotees the darshan by touching the feet of idols.

Rameshwara Rao from Chennai along with his wife became the first devotees after eight months to seek the darshan of Lord Vitthal and Rukhmini. "I was fortunate that the Mandir was reopened just in time and I could take the blessings of the god," he said.

The Mahalaxmi Mandir and Shri Jyotiba Devasthan, two of the major temples in Kolhapur, saw a stream of devotees since the morning. Mahesh Jadhav, chairman of the Jyotiba Devasthan Committee, said, "Sterilisation and cleanliness was carried out in the temple in the morning before allowing devotees inside. In addition to this, the guidelines of using sanitiser, masks, social distancing are being followed strictly."



BJP workers celebrate outside the Siddhivinayak temple that was reopened for public in Mumbai on Monday.

— PTI

Man killed, several injured in Kanpur clash

Kanpur (UP), Nov. 16: A 25-year-old youth was killed and several injured here in a clash between two communities that erupted after a man was accidentally splashed with water, police said on Monday.

Taking note of the incident, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has instructed that the accused be booked under the stringent National Security Act (NSA), which allows preventive detention for up to a year.

Two policemen have

been removed and sent to the Police Lines for their alleged laxity.

Police personnel, including the Provincial Armed Constabulary, have been deployed in large numbers to keep tabs on the simmering tension at Chakeri locality after the incident late Sunday evening.

Four people, identified as Anjum (36); Mohammad Mohsin (27); Sarfraz Alam (23) and Meraj (21), all residents of Jajmau's Wajidpur, have been arrested, said Superintendent of Police (East) Raj Kumar

Agarwal. The SP said Pintu Nishad, 25, and his friend Sandeep left their homes in Wajidpur area and accidentally stepped on a water pouch lying on the road. The water splashed on Amaan, a resident from the same area, sparking a clash.

Hearing about the altercation, dozens of other locals reached the spot and pelted each other with stones, injuring Nishad and several others, he said.

The injured were taken to Lala Lajpat Rai (LLR)

Hospital where Nishad was declared brought dead, Agarwal added.

In a tweet, the Chief Minister's Office said, "Instructions have been issued to immediately arrest the accused and invoke the National Security Act against them. A financial assistance of ₹5 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund has been announced for the aggrieved family."

Under the NSA, one can be detained without a charge for up to 12 months if the authorities are satis-

fied that the person is a threat to national security or law and order.

Meanwhile, the Jajmau's police post in-charge and a constable have been removed for their alleged laxity and sent to the Police Lines, officials said.

An inquiry has also been instituted against the police personnel who were deployed with the police response vehicle (PRV) and were sent to the incident site. They allegedly did nothing and remained a mute spectator, said SP Agarwal.

— PTI

STEEP | DECLINE

Country has registered a total of 88.45 lakh virus cases, with 1.3 lakh deaths

India sees lowest daily Covid cases in 4 months

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

With 30,548 new infections India's total Covid-19 cases so far reached to 88.45 lakh on Monday. The total number of active cases continue to decline steadily as out of the total figures, only 4.65 lakh are still under medical care while 82.49 lakh people have recovered. So far 1.30 lakh people have died to Coronavirus out of which 435 deaths were reported in the last 24 hours.

"Daily new cases numbering 30,548 is a historic

low that assumes significance given many countries in Europe and America are experiencing a continuous steep rise in daily new cases," union Health Ministry officials said.

They added that the number of active cases remained below 5 lakh for the sixth consecutive day and the national recovery rate is 93.27 per cent. The Covid-19 case fatality rate is 1.47 per cent.

Delhi, Kerala, and West Bengal continue to report a high number of cases even as Maharashtra that was once the epicentre of

● THE PHASE-III trials of Covaxin would involve 26,000 volunteers across 25 centres in India and it is being conducted in partnership with ICMR. It is the largest clinical trial conducted for a Covid-19 vaccine in India.

the virus is now easing with respite as cases have come down here below 3,000. The state has now reopened places of worship with adequate distancing measures. Daily fresh cases have also fallen below 2,000 in Tamil Nadu for the first

time since June.

Meanwhile, Hyderabad based Bharat Biotech said that its Covaxin is now undergoing phase-3 trials and the company is also working on another vaccine for Covid-19 which would be in the form of nasal drops and can be ready by next year.

The Phase-III trials of Covaxin would involve 26,000 volunteers across 25 centres in India and it is being conducted in partnership with ICMR.

It is the largest clinical trial conducted for a Covid-19 vaccine in India. Last month, the vaccine-

maker said it had successfully completed interim analysis of Phase-I and -II trials of the vaccine and is initiating Phase-III trials in 26,000 participants.

Covaxin is being developed by Bharat Biotech, in collaboration with the ICMR — National Institute of Virology (NIV). Bharat Biotech in September said it had entered into a licensing agreement with Washington University School of Medicine in St Louis for a novel 'chimpanzee adenovirus' (chimpanzee adenovirus), a single-dose intranasal vaccine for Covid-19.

HARYANA GOVERNOR,
MANISH TEWARI TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

Chandigarh, Nov. 16: Haryana Governor Satyadeo Narain Arya tested positive for Covid-19 on Monday and was admitted to a private hospital in Mohali in Punjab.

The 81-year-old Governor is currently admitted in the ICU, hospital sources said. "His condition is stable," a hospital official said. Haryana Chief Minister M. L. Khattar in a tweet wished Arya a speedy recovery.

Congress MP and former Union minister Manish Tewari on Monday said he has tested positive for Covid-19. Tewari got himself tested after running mild fever. "I have tested positive for Covid-19 today afternoon. I got up with mild fever around 2 am last night. Got myself tested first thing in the morning. Two parallel Tests. No other symptoms so far," the MP from Sri Anandpur Sahib said in a tweet. — PTI

IN BRIEF EXTREMIST GOES ON TRIAL IN FRANCE

Paris, Nov. 16: An Islamic State operative goes on trial Monday in France on terror charges for swaggering bare-chested through a train in 2015 with an arsenal of weapons and shooting one passenger.

He was brought down by three American vacationers in an electrifying capture that Clint Eastwood turned into a Hollywood thriller. The scene five years ago on the fast train from Amsterdam to Paris is the focus of the month-long trial of Ayoub El Khazzani, with testimony expected from the two US servicemen and their friend, who have been hailed as heroes. Eastwood, who turned the drama on August 21, 2015 in "Car No. 12 into a movie "The 15:17 to Paris," has been also summoned to appear on November 23. It was unclear whether they would be present or testify by video. El Khazzani, a 31-year-old Moroccan boarded the train in Brussels armed to the hilt, authorities say.

JETLINER HITS BROWN BEAR IN ALASKA

Yakutat (US), Nov. 16: An Alaska Airlines jetliner struck a brown bear while landing early Saturday evening, killing the animal and causing damage to the plane, officials said.

None of the passengers or crew members on board the plane were injured during the accident at the Yakutat Airport in southeast Alaska, *The Anchorage Daily News* reported. The Boeing 737-700 killed the brown bear sow, but a cub thought to be about 2 years old was uninjured, Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities spokesman Sam Dapevich said.

Airport crew members had cleared the runway about 10 minutes before the flight was expected to land, Dapevich said. The plane landed after dark and crews followed normal procedures for runway checks. The staff did not see signs of wildlife during the check, but the pilots spotted the two bears crossing the runway as the jet slowed after landing, Dapevich said.

"The nose gear missed the bears, but the captain felt an impact on the left side after the bears passed under the plane," Alaska Airlines said in a statement. The pilots saw the bear lying about 20 feet (6 metres) from the center of the runway as the plane taxied to a parking area just before 6:30 p.m., the airline said. It was not immediately clear how many passengers were on the flight. The plane departed from the town of Cordova.

SPACEX SENDS 4 ASTRONAUTS TO SPACE STATION

Cape Canaveral, Nov. 16: SpaceX launched four astronauts to the International Space Station on the first full-fledged taxi flight for NASA by a private company. The Falcon rocket on Sunday thundered into the night from Kennedy Space Center with three Americans and one Japanese, the second crew to be launched by SpaceX.

The Dragon capsule on top — named Resilience by its crew in light of this year's many challenges, most notably COVID-19 — reached orbit nine minutes later. It is due to reach the space station late Monday and remain there until spring. "By working together through these difficult times, you've inspired the nation, the world, and in no small part the name of this incredible vehicle, Resilience," Commander Mike Hopkins said right before liftoff. Once reaching orbit, he radioed: "That was one heck of a ride." Sidelined by the Coronavirus himself, SpaceX founder and chief executive Elon Musk was forced to monitor the action from afar.

He tweeted that he "most likely" had a moderate case of Covid-19. NASA policy at Kennedy Space Center requires anyone testing positive for Coronavirus to quarantine and remain isolated. Sunday's launch follows by just a few months SpaceX's two-pilot test flight. It kicks off what NASA hopes will be a long series of crew rotations between the US and the space station, after years of delay. More people means more science research at the orbiting lab, according to officials. Cheers and applause erupted at SpaceX Mission Control in Hawthorne, California, after the capsule reached orbit and the first-stage booster landed on a floating platform in the Atlantic. Musk tweeted a single red heart. The flight to the space station — 27 1/2 hours door to door — should be entirely automated.

Belgium's Janssen begins Covid-19 vaccine trial in UK

Clinical trial to involve 6,000 volunteers across the country

London, Nov. 16: Belgium-headquartered global pharmaceutical company Janssen began a major new clinical trial of its potential vaccine against Covid-19 in the UK from Monday, which will involve 6,000 volunteers across the country. Recruitment into the Phase 3 study will complete in March 2021 and the trial will last for 12 months. It marks the third potential vaccine to enter clinical trials in the UK, alongside US biotech company Novavax and University of Oxford/AstraZeneca, whose studies remain ongoing.

"The start of further clinical trials in the UK is yet another step forward in the race to discover a safe and effective vaccine, and comes alongside recent news that we could be on the cusp of the first major breakthrough since the pandemic began," said UK Business Secretary Alok Sharma.

"While we are optimistic with the progress being made, there are no guarantees and it is possible there will be no one-size-fits-all vaccine. That is why it is absolutely vital that while our scientists are cracking on with the job, we continue to follow the guidance to control the virus, protect the NHS and save lives," he said. The UK volunteers will take part in the trial at 17 National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) sites, including in Southampton, Bristol, Cardiff, London Leicester, Sheffield, Manchester, Dundee and Belfast, according to the government's Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

It said the government has developed a portfolio of six different vaccine candidates and secured access to 350 million doses to date. Of this, 30 million doses of the Janssen vaccine could be made available to the UK if it is safe and effective by mid-2021.



Street artist Eme Freethinker works on one of his mural paintings on a segment of the Berlin wall (1961-1989) in Berlin's Mauerpark on Sunday. The still-standing segment of the so-called "rear wall", which used to prevent access for east Germans to the death strip, is a legal graffiti and street art space that has become an alternative to museums, many of which are closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Finding an effective vaccine with a good safety profile is a top priority in helping to protect us all more quickly against Covid-19. While the news of a potential vaccine is tremendously exciting, our ambition in the scientific community is to ensure we leave no stone unturned in the search for a solution to help end this pandemic," said Professor Saul Faust, Director of the NIHR Southampton Clinical Research Facility and Chief Investigator for the Janssen Phase 3 trial.

"All the vaccines that are being trialled work by generating immune responses to the same part of the coronavirus as the RNA vaccine that has announced some interim early results," he said.

The trial by Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies, part of Johnson & Johnson, is jointly funded by the UK government's Vaccine Taskforce to test the safety and effectiveness of a potential Covid-19 vaccine. Paul Stoffels, Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee and Chief Scientific Officer,

Merkel, govts to assess lockdown

Berlin, Nov. 16: German Chancellor Angela Merkel will assess the effects of a nearly two-week-long partial lockdown with state governors in a video conference Monday.

Germany went into a partial lockdown at the beginning of November that included closing restaurants, cafes and cultural institutions, but left open schools and stores after virus figures spiked exponentially in October. The rise of new infections has since slowed down, but on Friday the country still registered a new record of 23,542 cases. On

Monday, 10,824 new cases were reported by the country's disease control center. However, virus figures are usually lower at the beginning of the week because there's less testing on weekends.

Merkel and the 16 state governors will begin their evaluation of the country's Coronavirus situation in the afternoon. Local media reported that possible new measures could include recommendations to further reduce social contacts and to cut school classes in half and have elementary school children wear masks. — AP

Johnson & Johnson, said: "We are delighted to be initiating our global Phase 3 trial in the UK to study the safety and efficacy of a two-dose regimen of our investigational Covid-19 vaccine candidate. "This

collaboration with UK researchers and the NIHR demonstrates our continued commitment to working together with partners around the world, and marks another positive step forward." — PTI

PERU PRESIDENT RESIGNS, CRISIS GRIPS NATION

Lima, Nov. 16: Peru's interim president resigned Sunday as the nation plunged into its worst constitutional crisis in two decades following massive protests unleashed when Congress ousted the nation's popular leader.

In a short televised address, Manuel Merino said Congress acted within the law when he was sworn into office as chief of state Tuesday, despite protesters' allegations that legislators had staged a parliamentary coup. "I, like everyone, want what's best for our country," he said.

The politician agreed to step down after a night of unrest in which two young protesters were killed and half his Cabinet resigned. Peruvians cheered the decision, waving their nation's red and white flag on the streets. — AP

MALL | MOVE

Kids will tell what they want for Christmas from six feet away

Here comes Santa with mask, plexiglass

New York, Nov. 16: Santa Claus is coming to the mall — just don't try to sit on his lap. Despite the pandemic — and the fact that Santa's age and weight put him at high risk for severe illness from the Coronavirus — mall owners are going ahead with plans to bring him back this year. But they are doing all they can to keep the jolly old man safe, including banning kids from sitting on his knee, no matter if they've been naughty or nice. Kids will instead tell Santa what they want for Christmas from six feet away, and sometimes from behind a sheet of plexiglass. Santa and his visitors may need to wear a mask, even while posing for photos.

And some malls will put



Sydney Poulos, 8, gives Santa a fist bump through a transparent barrier at a Bass Pro Shop in Bridgeport.

faux gift boxes and other decorations in front of

Saint Nick to block kids from charging toward

him. Other safety measures include online reser-

China: RCEP is a milestone of great significance

Beijing, Nov. 16: China on Monday termed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement to create the world's biggest free trade bloc as a "milestone of great significance", while studies showed that the deal is more of a strategic significance to Beijing providing marginal economic impact.

Fifteen Asia-Pacific nations, including China, on Sunday signed the agreement. India, one of the leading consumer-driven markets in the region, pulled out of talks last year, concerned that the elimination of tariffs would open its markets to a flood of imports that could harm local producers. A declaration by the countries which have signed the RCEP agreement said that they can start negotiations with India for joining the pact once New Delhi submits a written request stating its intention for the same.

Analysts say that without India, the agreement would not have much relevance as it cannot provide a big market combining India and China, the most populous countries in the world. "After 8 years of negotiations, the RCEP was officially signed," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here while answering a question on the agreement.

"This means that the most promising agreement covering the largest population and economic volume was officially set and up. It's a milestone of great significance," he said. As Covid-19 continues to spread, unilateralism, protectionism are rising, he said, adding that the signing of the RCEP will be a strong boost to regional and global economic recovery.

"This shows strong support of all sides to multilateralism and free-trade, strong support to open and collective free trade regime. This is a show of support for collective

● **INDIA, ONE** of the leading consumer-driven markets in the region, pulled out of talks last year, concerned that the elimination of tariffs would open its markets to a flood of imports that could harm local producers.

efforts against common challenges," he said.

Meanwhile, studies show the benefits RCEP will not outweigh the negative impact of the long-running US trade war on China's economy even though it will make China's market much more integrated with the rest of Asia. However, analysts agree that the trade pact, which covers 30 per cent of the global economy, is far more strategically significant than providing a direct economic impact, Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* reported on Monday.

China may claim a symbolic victory in the signing of the world's biggest trade deal in the face of ongoing US disinterest in multilateralism, but the direct economic benefits will be marginal, the Post report said.

The trade deal, initiated by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2012 but often regarded as a China-led counterpart to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), covers nearly one-third of the world's population and GDP.

However, while the RCEP adds incrementally to Chinese GDP, it will not be enough to cancel out the damage of the trade war with the US, research showed. In June, researchers at the Peterson Institute for International Economics found that RCEP, would add 0.4 per cent to China's real income by 2030, while the trade war would trim 1.1 per cent.

— PTI

Macron sees Donald's envoy

TIME FOR TRUMP TO CONCEDE, SAYS OBAMA

Paris, Nov. 16: French President Emmanuel Macron faced the potentially uncomfortable position Monday of meeting US President Donald Trump's top diplomat, having already congratulated President-elect Joe Biden for his election victory.

Neither side said much in advance about US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's low-profile visit to Paris, the starting point of a seven-country tour of Europe and the Middle East. Macron's office described Pompeo's planned stop Monday at the presidential Elysee Palace as a "courtesy" visit.

No press conference was scheduled, seemingly ruling out the likelihood of journalists getting to ask Pompeo or Macron about their conflicting visions of the US election outcome. Pompeo has not accepted Trump's election defeat. Macron has already spoken by phone with Biden to congratulate him. Pompeo's trip is aimed at

Washington, Nov. 16: It's time for US President Donald Trump to concede to President-elect Joe Biden, as there is no scenario to reverse the outcome of the election, his predecessor Barack Obama has said. Trump, who is refusing to concede, has 232 electoral college votes. He has challenged the election results in various states including Pennsylvania, Nevada, Michigan, Georgia and Arizona. He had demanded a recount in Wisconsin.

In all these states, he alleged there were massive voters' fraud and electoral malpractice. Biden

has 306 of the 538 electoral college votes, well above the halfway mark of 270. "Absolutely," Obama told 60 Minutes of the CBS News in an interview aired Sunday when asked if in his view, it is time for Trump to concede. "Well, I mean, I think it was time for him to concede probably — the day after the election — or at the latest, two days after the election. When you look at the numbers objectively, Joe Biden will have won handsily. There is no scenario in which any of those states would turn the other way, and certainly not enough to reverse the outcome of

the election," Obama said.

More than the courtesy of a concession, the Trump White House is declining to free up the usual funds and facilities for the incoming administration. Biden is not receiving secret national security briefings as Trump did when he was president-elect, he alleged. Asserting that a president is a public servant, Obama said that they are temporary occupants of the office, by design. "And when your time is up then it is your job to put the country first and think beyond your own ego," he said. — PTI

shoring up the priorities of Trump's outgoing administration.

From Paris, he was expected to travel to Turkey. The trip will also include visits to Israeli

settlements in the West Bank that have been avoided by previous secretaries of state. Before the scheduled meetings with Macron and his foreign minister, Pompeo laid a

bouquet of red, white and blue flowers at a memorial to victims of terrorism at a Paris landmark, the Hotel des Invalides. The ceremony lasted about a minute. — AP

SHORT TAKES

QUAKE OF 6.1
MAGNITUDE HITS
PHILIPPINES

Manila, Nov. 16: An earthquake of magnitude 6.1 struck Mindanao in the Philippines, the European Mediterranean Seismological Centre (EMSC) said on Monday. The quake was at a depth of 15km, it added. The earthquake, which is tectonic in origin, will trigger aftershocks, the Philippine Institute of Seismology and Volcanology (Phivolcs) said. Damage is expected.

The institute said the offshore quake, which struck at 6.37am local time on Monday, hit at a depth of 33km south-east of the town of San Agustin, Surigao Del Sur. The Philippines has frequent seismic activity due to its location along the Pacific Ring of Fire.

NATWEST FOR
SCIENCE-BASED
CLIMATE GOALS

London, Nov. 16: NatWest said on Monday it had become the first UK bank to sign up to the science-based targets initiative as part of its efforts to reduce its carbon emissions. The bank set out targets in February to make its own operations net zero carbon by the end of this year and to at least halve the climate impact of its finance activity by 2030.

More than 1,000 companies have already set science-based targets, which are increasingly seen by investors as crucial to clearly show how businesses will meet their green ambitions. The Science Based Targets initiative, a collaboration between groups including the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), sets best-practice standards and assesses company efforts to align with the Paris agreement on climate change.

ITALY TO STUDY
HYDROGEN
FOR TRAINS

Milan, Nov. 16: Italian rail operator Ferrovie dello Stato (FS) has signed an agreement with Europe's biggest gas transport group Snam to study using hydrogen for its transport network. The two companies said on Wednesday they would set up a working group to assess pilot projects for replacing fossil fuels on the national rail grid with hydrogen.

The agreement is the first of its kind in Europe between a national railway company and an energy group as hydrogen emerges as a possible solution to help meet climate targets.

"Hydrogen rail transport is a key innovation capable of making freight and passenger transport more environmentally sustainable on the remaining railway sections not yet electrified," FS CEO Gianfranco Battisti said. Hydrogen today is too expensive for widespread use but as costs come down governments round the world are looking to it to replace fossil fuels in sectors where electrification is not an easy solution. The European Commission has mapped out a plan to expand the production and use of hydrogen to help meet a net zero emissions goal by 2050.

SPAIN TO
CREATE \$20 BN
POWERHOUSE

Madrid, Nov. 16: Spain's Iberdrola IBE.MC announced a deal worth \$8.3 billion including debt on Wednesday, adding PNM Resources PNM.N to its Avangrid AGR.N business to create the third-largest US renewable energy operator.

Absorbing PNM into Avangrid will create an operator present in 24 states, Iberdrola said, and bring together firms with a combined market value topping \$20 billion. *Reuters* reported on Tuesday that the deal was being discussed.

PNM's board unanimously approved the \$4.3 billion offer to its shareholders of \$50.3 per share, the filing said. Iberdrola expects the deal to close in 2021 and start boosting financial results from the first year.

Green energy targets and increasing investor interest in protecting the environment have buoyed Iberdrola and other renewables-focused utilities.

The pandemic has also seen US utilities look harder at consolidation to cut costs and spur investment. Active in New Mexico and Texas, PNM gives Avangrid a route to expand its regulated business beyond the US northeast.

PNM could also benefit from Avangrid's renewables experience as it works to cut emissions. A plan has now been approved to close its coal-fired San Juan plant in 2022, Iberdrola said.



People prepare to be evacuated from banana fields onboard a minibus in La Lima municipality, Cortes department, Honduras, ahead of the arrival of Hurricane Iota on Sunday. — AFP

Eta-battered Central
America awaits Iota

It's predicted to become a Category 4 storm

Managua (Nicaragua), Nov. 16: A fast-strengthening Hurricane Iota is sweeping over the western Caribbean and predicted to become a very dangerous Category 4 storm as it heads for the same part of Central American battered by a similarly powerful Hurricane Eta just over a week ago.

Evacuations were being conducted from low-lying areas in Nicaragua and Honduras near their shared border, which appeared to be Iota's likely landfall. Winds and rain were already being felt on the Nicaraguan coast Sunday night.

Iota became a hurricane early Sunday and rapidly gained power, and was expected to pass over or near Colombia's Providencia island during the night. The US National Hurricane Center warned it would probably reach Category 4 strength as it approached the Central

● **THE HURRICANE** center said Iota had maximum sustained winds of 105 mph (165 kph) late Sunday. It was centered about 235 miles (375 kilometers) east-southeast of Cabo Gracias a Dios on the Nicaragua-Honduras border and moving westward at 10 mph (17 kph).

America mainland late Monday. The hurricane center said Iota had maximum sustained winds of 105 mph (165 kph) late Sunday. It was centered about 235 miles (375 kilometers) east-southeast of Cabo Gracias a Dios on the Nicaragua-Honduras border and moving westward at 10 mph (17 kph).

It was already a record-breaking system, being the 30th named storm of this year's extraordinarily busy Atlantic hurricane

season. Such activity has focused attention on climate change, which scientists say is causing wetter, stronger and more destructive storms. In Honduras, compulsory evacuations began before the weekend and by Sunday evening 63,500 people were reported to be in 379 shelters just in the northern region, while the whole country was on high alert.

Nicaraguan officials said that by late Sunday afternoon about 1,500 people, nearly half of them children, had been evacuated from low-lying areas in the country's northeast, including all the inhabitants of Cayo Misquitos.

Authorities said 83,000 people in that region were in danger. Wind and rain were beginning to be felt Sunday night in Bilwi, a coastal Nicaraguan city where people crowded markets and hardware stores during the day in search of plastic sheeting,

nails and other materials to reinforce their homes, just as they did when Hurricane Eta hit on Nov. 3. Several residents of Bilwi expressed concern that their homes would not stand up to Iota, so soon after Eta.

Local television showed people being evacuated in wooden boats, carrying young children as well as dogs and chickens. Authorities warned that the risk was high because Iota would probably come ashore over areas where Eta's torrential rains left the soil saturated with water and more prone to new landslides and floods. Eta already wreaked havoc. It hit Nicaragua as a Category 4 hurricane, killing at least 120 people as torrential rains caused flash floods and mudslides in parts of Central America and Mexico. Then it meandered across Cuba, the Florida Keys and around the Gulf of Mexico. — AP

European firms
told to reveal
climate costs

London, Nov. 16: Investors are pushing major European companies to make sure the "missing" costs of climate change are properly reflected in their financial statements, a move that could wipe billions of dollars off the value of sectors from energy to aviation.

The European and U.S. investors, who manage \$9 trillion in assets, have sent 36 carbon-heavy companies a document here setting out how they should account for the likely impact of the 2015 Paris climate accord on their future profits.

The investors suspect that existing balance sheets rest on assumptions over variables such as oil prices, carbon taxes, and the lifespan of fossil fuel assets that are incompatible with a shift to net-zero carbon emissions under the Paris deal.

JPM Morgan Asset Management (part of JP Morgan Chase & Co JPM.N), DWS DWSG.DE, Fidelity International and M&G Investments MNG.L were among 38 asset managers to back the document, according

to a copy of an accompanying letter here shared with Reuters by the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change, an industry coalition.

In a statement published on Monday, the investors called on the companies to "address missing climate change costs in financial accounts".

"Either we get serious and start shifting capital flows towards activities aligned with the Paris Agreement, or we continue to talk about it," said Natasha Landell-Mills, head of stewardship at London-based asset manager Sarasin & Partners, who wrote the 23-page investor expectations document. "Paris-aligned accounts are amongst the most important changes that will drive system-wide capital redeployment," Landell-Mills said.

Companies included Germany's E.ON EONG-n.DE and Uniper UN01.DE, Spain's Iberdrola IBE.MC and Endesa ELE.MC, France's Air Liquide AIRPPA, Austria's OMV OMV.VI and London-listed Anglo American AAL.L. — Reuters

PLASTIC IN MED
TO DOUBLE IN 20
YRS: REPORT

Madrid, Nov. 16: Nearly 230,000 tonnes of plastic is dumped into the Mediterranean Sea every year, a figure which could more than double by 2040 unless "ambitious" steps are taken, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature said Tuesday.

Egypt, Italy and Turkey are the countries that release the most plastic into the sea, mainly due to large coastal populations and huge amounts of "mismanaged waste," an IUCN report found.

But on a per capita basis, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia have the highest levels of plastic waste leakage into the Mediterranean.

The report, called "Mare Plasticum: The Mediterranean", estimates that over one million tonnes of plastic have already accumulated in the Mediterranean Sea.

"An estimated 229,000 tonnes of plastic -- equivalent to over 500 shipping containers -- are leaking into the Mediterranean Sea every year," said the report. — AFP

Amazon: Military to be
there for 5 more months

● **BOLSONARO DEPLOYED** the military to the Amazon in May this year, repeating a similar deployment made in 2019 when fires spiked.

Brasilia, Nov. 16: Brazil's right-wing government will extend the military's deployment to fight destruction of the Amazon rainforest by five months through April 2021 from its previous November end date, Vice President Hamilton Mourao said on Monday.

Mourao told reporters that President Jair Bolsonaro would sign a decree by next week to extend the deployment to protect the world's largest rainforest, which acts as a curb on climate change by absorbing vast amounts of greenhouse gas.

Bolsonaro deployed the

military to the Amazon in May this year, repeating a similar deployment made in 2019 when fires spiked in the region and provoked international criticism that Brazil needed to do more to protect the world's largest rainforest.

But this year's deployment began earlier and will last far longer as international pressure on

Brazil continues over heightened levels of deforestation and forest fires since Bolsonaro took office in January 2019.

Global investment funds have threatened to divest from the country and Amazon deforestation endangers a trade deal between the European Union and South America's Mercosur bloc that still must be ratified. "We must continue because we want to enter a virtuous cycle of falling deforestation. We are committed to bringing it down and to bring it down we need people out in the field enforcing the law," he said. — Reuters

EU COUNTRIES
BACK GREEN
FARMING PLANS

Brussels, Nov. 16: European Union agriculture ministers agreed on Wednesday to set aside part of the bloc's massive farming policy budget for programmes that protect the environment.

The EU is nearing the end of a two-year struggle to overhaul its agriculture policy, to attempt to align it with the bloc's climate change commitments, while supporting farmers' livelihoods.

The common agricultural policy as a whole will suck up roughly a third of the EU's 1.1 trillion euro budget for 2021-2027, to be split between direct payments to farmers and other support for rural development. Ministers agreed that 20% of the payments to farmers will be earmarked for green schemes. — Reuters

China: Environment still grim

Shanghai, Nov. 16: China's environment conditions are "grim", falling short of public expectations even after five years of efforts to improve air quality, boost clean energy and curb greenhouse gas emissions, a senior official said.

There was still a long way to go, said Zhao Yingmin, the vice-minister of ecology and environment, even though China had met a series of targets on smog, water quality and carbon emissions over the five years from 2016.

"While seeing the improvements ... it should be clearly recognised that the quality of the ecological environment remains far from people's expectations for a better life," he told reporters in Beijing.

China remains dependent on heavy industry and coal, and the "grim environmental trends" have not fundamentally changed, he added.

CHINA TO SHARE WATER DATA WITH
MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION

Bangkok, Nov. 16: China on Thursday signed an agreement with the Mekong River Commission (MRC) to share year-round data on the flow of its portion of the vital waterway amid concern that Chinese dams may be causing drought downstream in Southeast Asia.

A push for more data from China's portion of the Mekong River - which Beijing calls the Lancang River - intensified this year after US government criticism that 11 Chinese dams were "hoarding" water and hurting livelihoods downstream, an accusation Beijing denies. "This agreement is a landmark in the history

of China-MRC cooperation," An Pich Hatda, the MRC Secretariat Chief Executive Officer, said in a statement.

He added that data-sharing is critical to the management of the Mekong, on which 60 million people depend for fishing and farming in downstream countries Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

Two years of record drought on the 4,350-km (2,700-mile) waterway have severely harmed livelihoods and raised questions over how mainstream Mekong dams in China and downstream in Laos were affecting the flow of water.

— Reuters

In the month of October, President Xi Jinping set a 2060 deadline to attain

"carbon neutrality", as part of China's commitments to the Paris climate

change accord.

It also aims for emissions to peak by 2030.

The announcement was seen as a challenge to the United States, set to withdraw from the Paris deal on Nov. 4.

On Monday, the foreign ministry criticised Washington's record on climate, calling it a consensus-breaker and a troublemaker.

China is drawing up a new five-year plan for 2021-2025, which experts say would require stronger commitment to controlling coal consumption and promoting low-carbon energy to meet the 2060 target of carbon neutrality.

Zhao did not give detail of the next five-year plan, but said China would step up efforts to control fossil fuel consumption and promote low-carbon technology, while promising greater contributions to tackling climate change. — Reuters



Villagers monitoring a forest fire near their village in Pekanbaru, Riau, Indonesia. — AFP

Third of Indonesia
fires in pulp, palm
areas: Greenpeace

Singapore, Nov. 16: Forested areas greater than the size of the Netherlands have been burned in Indonesia in the past five years, with 30% of the fires occurring on pulpwood and palm oil concessions, environmental group Greenpeace said.

Greenpeace said analysis of official data showed 4.4 million hectares (10.8 million acres) of land burned over 2015 to 2019, with 1.3 million hectares of that lying in the concession areas.

The group's report said eight of the 10 palm companies with the largest burned areas in their concessions for the five years have not been sanctioned.

Indonesia's new jobs creation law, which activists say favours businesses at the expense of the environment, is "rolling out a red carpet" for more deforestation, it also said.

"Year after year they (companies) have broken the law by allowing forests to go up in flames," said Kiki Taufik, head of the Greenpeace Southeast Asia forest campaign.

Indonesia's environment and forestry ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

In February, Indonesian President Joko Widodo ordered government officials to find a permanent solution to prevent annual forest fires.

Indonesia has the biggest forests outside the Amazon and Congo and environmentalists say its remaining reserves may be exploited under the new labour law.

The government says the law aims to boost investment and competitiveness and create better quality jobs.

Among the changes in the new law that worry environmentalists is the removal of a minimum forest area.

Indonesian islands were mandated to have 30% forest cover per island, a benchmark policymakers call arbitrary and want replaced with more relevant metrics.

Three of the five companies Greenpeace said had the largest burned areas in their concessions from 2015 to 2019 are suppliers to Indonesia's biggest conglomerate, Sinar Mas Group, and a large pulp and paper company, Asia Pulp & Paper. — Reuters



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	43,637.98	0.45
Nifty 50	12,780.25	0.47
S&P 500*	3,621.33	1.01
Dollar (₹)	74.61	0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.19	0.21
Euro (₹)	88.11	0.04
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,425.241	0.47
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.39	1.61
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.878	-0.024
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.918	0.025

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Power use grows 7.8% in first half of Nov.

Power consumption grew 7.8 per cent to 50.15 billion units (BU) in the first half of November this year, showing a rise in economic activities. Power consumption was recorded at 46.52 BU during Nov. 1-15 last year, shows power ministry data. For a full month in November last year, power consumption was 93.94 BU. After a gap of six months, power consumption had grown 4.4 per cent in September.

Munot to leave SBI Mutual Fund to head HDFC MF



HDFC Mutual Fund said its board has approved the appointment of Navneet Munot as its next managing director and chief executive officer. Munot, who was the chief investment officer of SBI Funds Management, will succeed the present MD Milind Barve, HDFC Mutual Fund said. In a separate statement, SBI Funds Management said Munot has decided to leave the organisation to pursue other opportunities.

Registration of start-ups at GeM doubles

The number of startups registered at public procurement portal GeM has more than doubled to 7,438 in the last one year and they are receiving government and PSU orders. The Government e-Marketplace was launched in August 2016 for online purchase of goods and services by central departments. "We now have 48,038 buyers, 7.42 lakh sellers with 2.42 lakh MSEs and 7,438 startups," GeM CEO Talleen Kumar said.

Equitas Bank offers 7% on women's SB a/c

Equitas Small Finance Bank (ESFB) has launched 'Eva' savings account for women offering 7 per cent interest. Eva tries to address the well-being of Indian women in every aspect such as health, wealth and prosperity. "Along with 7 per cent interest in savings account, it also offers free health check-up and unlimited tele-consultation with women doctors, gynaecologists and mental health experts," the bank said.

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RIL, Aramco, BP, Total all stay away Biggies keep off BPCL stake sale

New Delhi, Nov. 16: The government on Monday received 'multiple' bids for buying out its stake in India's second-biggest fuel retailer BPCL but Reliance Industries as well as supermajors Saudi Aramco, BP and Total did not make a bid. Tuhin Kanta Pandey, secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam), which is handling the strategic sale, tweeted that the transaction advisors (TAs) for the sale of government's 52.98 per cent stake in Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) have reported receiving "multiple expressions of interest."

"The transaction will move to the second stage after scrutiny by TA," he said. "Strategic disinvestment of BPCL progresses: Now moves to the second stage after multiple expressions of interest have been received," finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman also tweeted. Neither of them gave the number of bids received or the names of the bidders. Separately, four industry officials said three-four bids have been put in. Reliance Industries, which was considered a potential bidder as BPCL would have added a 22 per cent fuel market share to its fledgling retail business and made it the nation's number one oil refiner, did not put in an expression of interest



(EoI) at the close of the deadline on Monday. Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco), which had been keen to enter the world's fastest-growing fuel market, too did not put in an EoI. UK's BP plc and Total of France—which have plans to foray into the Indian fuel market—had previously ruled themselves out of the BPCL race as they did not want to add oil refining assets when the world was moving away from liquid fuels. A clutch of private equity funds and/or pension funds are said to have put in an EoI. Russian energy giant Rosneft-led Nayara Energy, which operates a 20 million tonne oil refinery at Vadinar in Gujarat and also has 5,822 petrol pumps, was considered a potential bidder for BPCL but reports last month had indicated it was no longer keen. Abu Dhabi National Oil Co (Adnoc), which has ambitions for Indian mar-

M&M plans to revive BSA bike

SIDDHARTH PHILIP NOV. 16

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd is crafting plans to build a UK factory to resurrect the BSA motorbike brand in a test case for whether Britain can attract companies post-Brexit. Mahindra, which bought the defunct marque in 2016, is scouting for a site to assemble the motorcycle, chairman Anand Mahindra said in an interview. Whether it goes ahead partly hinges on talks over government grants and a trade deal with the European Union, he said. "With Brexit, the UK government is going out of its way to give benefits, which actually goes toward filling that difference in viability," said Anupam Thareja, a managing partner at Phi Capital and co-founder of Mahindra's Classic Legends subsidiary. The classic-bike brand owner is adopting a wait-and-see approach to Brexit negotiations before giving the green light to BSA. The factory project would depend on tariff levels and the ease of moving both workers and products across borders, Thareja said. Making the bikes in the UK is key for the brand to maintain authenticity, says Mahindra. BSA started as a bicycle maker before crafting its first motorcycle over a century ago. It featured in the World War-II, when used by the British Army, but went bust in the 1970s. —Bloomberg

Just 5 mall projects see completion in 2020

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 16



As the business in malls has still not recouped to pre-Covid levels, mall development is moving at a snail's pace. The calendar year was supposed to see the launch of 54 new malls spanning over 22.2 million sq. ft, as per the pre-Covid estimates. However, just 5 malls covering 2.75 million sq. ft have been completed yet. These new malls have come up in Gurgaon, Delhi, Lucknow and Bengaluru, as per the data from Anarock Retail. The yet-to-recover business in malls has put the construction process on hold. Malls remained closed for a longer period even after the lock-down. As of August, malls were seeing 60 per cent sales of last year, though the footfalls were much lesser. However, malls are

expecting the festive season to take the sales to 80 per cent. "Since the shopping malls reopened across the country, the industry and mall developers noticed more serious buyers walking-in with a set agenda of what to buy. While the dwell time has decreased, however, the ticket size has increased drastically. During the Navratri and Diwali season, shopping malls across the country

reported an increase in footfalls on a week-on-week basis and witnessed a continued growth during the weekends. We are hoping to reach 80 per cent of sales on an average," said Amitabh Taneja, Chairman, Shopping Centres Association of India. Considering the slower pace at which mall development is taking place, many of the launches would be pushed to 2021. "Covid-19 added enormous pressure to the already delicately-poised Indian retail sector. The anticipated new mall supply was severely hit this year and most of it will spill over to 2021 and beyond. New completions have been deferred and leasing activity has been delayed," said Anuj Kejriwal, CEO and MD of Anarock Retail. However, even in 2021, only 14 new malls spread over 5.9 million sq ft are likely to get operational.

WPI inflation at 8-month high of 1.48%

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, NOV.16

Driven by rising prices of vegetables and manufactured items such as vegetable oils, steel and basic metals, the wholesale price-based inflation went up to an eight-month high of 1.48 per cent in October, the data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry showed on Monday. This was the highest

level for the Wholesale Price Index inflation after February, when it was 2.26 per cent. The WPI inflation was at 1.32 per cent in September and zero per cent in October last year. "Some food article prices softened in October, while manufactured items witnessed hardening of prices in the same month. Food inflation in October stood at 6.37 per cent against 8.17 per cent in the previous month," the

release said. Similarly, the price rise in vegetables and potato remained high at 25.23 per cent and 107.70 per cent, respectively. "Inflation in non-food articles and minerals was higher at 2.85 per cent and 9.11 per cent, respectively. While, in the manufactured products category, inflation stood at 2.12 per cent in October, compared to 1.61 per cent in September," the data showed.

Take on risk, trust recovery in 2021: Morgan Stanley

JOANNA OSSINGER NOV. 16

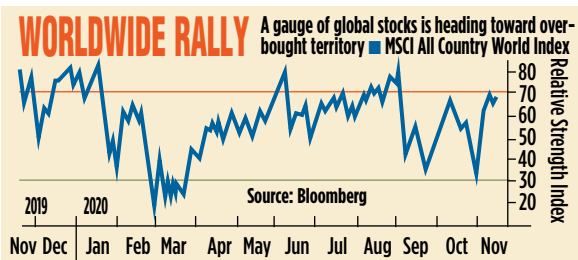
Morgan Stanley strategists said an expected "V-shaped" economic recovery, greater clarity on Covid-19 vaccines and continued policy support offer a favourable environment for stocks and credit next year. It has also cut its forecast for gold to \$1,825 an ounce on average for 2021 from a previous \$1,950 on the expected global economic recovery. In an outlook for 2021, a team including Andrew Sheets recommended investors overweight equities and corporate bonds against cash and government debt, and sell the US dollar. Volatility is set to decline, and investors should be "patient" in commodity markets, the strategists said. "This global recovery is sustainable, synchronous and supported by policy, following much of the 'normal' post-recession playbook," they wrote. "Keep the faith, trust the recovery." A gauge of global stocks headed toward a record on Monday amid optimism that the expected roll-out of vaccines and additional US fiscal stimulus will bolster the world economy. Still, sceptics argue the short-term out-

WORLD STOCKS HIT RECORD ON RECOVERY, VACCINE HOPES

CHUCK MIKOLAJCZAK NEW YORK, NOV. 16

A gauge of global stocks hit a record on Monday as the latest batch of positive data for a possible Covid-19 vaccine boosted sentiment, along with signs of economic recovery in Asia, while oil prices jumped. US stocks climbed, with the Dow Industrials nearing the 30,000 mark for the first time, thanks to news from pharma company Moderna saying its prospective vaccine was

94.5 per cent effective in preventing Covid-19. Cyclical names, which generally benefit the soonest as an economy recovers from a recession, led the way higher, with energy, industrial and financial sectors the top performing. The MSCI World Index of global shares, building on strong overnight gains in Asia's leading markets and a stronger open for most European bourses, extended gains after the Moderna announcement to hit a record.



look is challenging as nations resort to lockdowns to fight a resurgence in virus cases and lawmakers bicker over the size of US relief spending. Morgan Stanley joins JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Goldman Sachs Group Inc. in painting a

positive outlook for equities. JPMorgan strategist Marko Kolanovic said US election results create a bull case for markets, while David Kostin at Goldman Sachs expects society to normalise gradually next year. The Morgan Stanley team doesn't expect a

smooth path upwards and noted that significant challenges remain. Risks include a worse-than-expected Covid-19 winter wave, and a return to austerity in the longer term, according to the note. Investment calls in the report include: a base case for the S&P 500 to reach 3,900 by the end of 2021; 10-year US treasury yield at 1.45 per cent by the end of next year; the US Dollar Index to weaken about 4 per cent by the end of 2021; and preference for high-yield credit over investment grade and leveraged loans over high-yield bonds. —Bloomberg

Alosa sees uncertain diamond market

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 16



Despite recording a year-on-year growth in October, diamond miner Alosa is worried about an uncertainty in the market. Uncertainty puts pressure on Indian gems and jewellery exports, which has not even recovered in October. Alosa had started seeing the first signs of recovery in the diamond market from mid-August when the Indian diamond polishing industry resumed imports after a four-month voluntary ban. The company saw growth in September and October. In October, the sales grew 3.6 per cent to \$310 million. The recovery was also led by end demand for jewelry as September demand in China and US grew 13 per cent and 14 per cent y-o-y respectively. However, Alosa finds that it is "definitely too early to speak of the full recovery". The markets still face uncertainty caused by the pandemic's impact on the global economy and subsequent developments. The key indicator for the diamond industry will be upcoming Christmas and Chinese New Year retail sales," said

Jim Vimadalal, director, Indian Representative Office, Alosa. While the festive goods are already on the way to the markets, any disruption due to the second wave of the pandemic can hit the Christmas and New Year sales. The second wave has already put Europe under restrictions and an uncertainty is looming large over the US. This uncertainty will put further pressure on the Indian gems and jewellery industry. Indian gems and jewellery exports were down even in September and October. While it recorded a dip of 27 per cent in September, the decline was 21 per cent in October. Cut and polished diamond sales were down 19.6 per cent in September and the category details are not yet out for October. According to trade circles, the October shipments were affected by the container availability issues as well.

DIGITAL STRATEGY HELPS MARUTI SELL OVER 200,000 CARS

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, NOV. 16

The digital revolution in selling cars is taking stronger root in India with social distancing becoming the new normal in a Covid-scarred world. Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest carmaker, on Monday said it has sold over two lakh cars through the online channel. The company, which initiated its online sales platform around two years back, said the digital channel now covers nearly 1,000 dealerships across the country. "Since introducing this new digital channel in 2018, we have witnessed a three times increase in digital enquiries and recorded sales of over 2 lakh units since April 2019," Shashank Srivastava, executive director (marketing & sales) at Maruti Suzuki India, said. This digital channel has helped to generate over 21 lakh customer enquiries as well, he pointed out. Citing the 'Google Auto Gear Shift India 2020 Report', he said nearly 95 per cent of new car sales in India are digitally influenced as the customers first research online and then buy at dealerships. —Reuters

Ratification of RCEP trade deal may take years

JAMES PEARSON HANOI, NOV. 16

Fifteen Asia-Pacific economies signed what could become the world's largest free trade agreement in Hanoi on Sunday, covering nearly a third of the global population and about 30 per cent of its global gross domestic product.

Who has signed? RCEP includes China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and the 10 members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean): Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and

the Philippines. India was involved in early discussions but opted out last year over concerns related to cheap Chinese imports. Member states have said there is still room for India to join RCEP, however. Anyone can join RCEP 18 months after it comes into force but India, as one of the original negotiating partners, can join at any time once the deal comes into effect. What happens next? RCEP, signed on Sunday, must now be ratified before coming into effect, a process that will take months to start and years to complete.

According to copies of the 510-page, 20-chapter agreement uploaded to the foreign ministry websites of RCEP member states on Sunday, the deal must be ratified by at least six Asean countries and three non-Asean signatory countries before it can come into effect. East Asian rivalry Notably, RCEP marks the first time China, Japan and South Korea have been brought together under a single trade agreement—a process that has been otherwise marred by historical and diplomatic disputes. Last year, at the height of a trade dispute between

Japan and South Korea, which had its roots in a dispute stemming from Japan's wartime colonisation of the Korean peninsula, South Korean officials said Japanese trade restrictions violated the "spirit" of the RCEP. Japan may find significant benefits (with RCEP), as it now has preferential access to South Korea and China, which it did not have," said Deborah Elms of the Singapore-based Asian Trade Centre. When will it kick in?

RCEP provides some flexibility for less-developed members to implement the practical and legislative changes it requires. Cambodia and Laos, for example, have three to five years to upgrade customs procedures. Specifically which areas are open to tariff reductions under RCEP is complex and changes from country to country. Some states have listed what RCEP includes while others have listed what it does not. For countries which already have free trade agreements with each other, an added benefit of RCEP is that it creates a common set of rules of

origin, which will facilitate easier movement of goods between the 15 members. How does RCEP compare with CPTPP? The idea of RCEP hatched in 2012, was seen as a way for China, the region's biggest importer and exporter, to counter growing US influence in the Asia-Pacific. It gained momentum when Trump withdrew the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in 2017. The TPP has since been renamed the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for

Partnership (CPTPP) and it includes seven RCEP members, but not the United States. RCEP focuses heavily on cutting tariffs and increasing market access but is seen as less comprehensive than the CPTPP. It also requires fewer political or economic concessions and has less emphasis on labour rights, environmental and intellectual property protection and dispute resolution mechanisms. RCEP's market size is nearly five times greater than that of the CPTPP, with almost double its annual trade value and combined GDP.

Explainer

SHORT TAKES

Kipruto charged with sex crime

Nairobi, Kenya: Olympic steeplechase champion Conseslus Kipruto of Kenya has been charged with having sexual intercourse with a 15-year-old girl and was released on bail Monday after pleading not guilty. Kipruto was charged with what is referred to as "defilement" in Kenyan law — sexual intercourse with a minor under the age of 18. Because of the girl's age, Kipruto faces at least 20 years in prison if convicted, according to Kenya's sexual offenses laws. The 25-year-old Kipruto, who is a policeman, was charged in a courthouse in Kapsabet. He was released on \$1,800 bail. Kipruto is alleged to have had intercourse with the girl on Oct. 20 and 21, according to the charge sheet, and was first arrested on Nov. 11. Kipruto won gold in the 3,000-meter steeplechase at the 2016 Olympics. — AP

Five ISL clubs fail to secure license

New Delhi: Five Indian Super League clubs have failed to meet the AFC and national licensing criteria and will now have to either appeal against the decision or seek exemption from the AIFF in order to take part in the cash-rich event starting on Friday. Odisha FC, NorthEast United FC, Kerala Blasters, Hyderabad FC and new entrants Sporting Club East Bengal are the five clubs which were not handed licenses by the AIFF to be able to take part in AFC and national competitions this season. The five clubs which failed to secure licenses can either appeal to the Club Licensing Appeals Body of AIFF against the decision of the Club Licensing Committee (First Instance Body) within a stipulated time or can apply for an exemption to the Club Licensing Committee. — PTI

Prajnesh loses US Challenger final

Cary, US: Indian Davis Cupper Prajnesh Gunneswaran squandered initial advantage to lose to Denis Kudla of USA in three sets in the final of the Atlantic Tire Championships here. The fourth seeded Indian lost 6-3, 3-6, 0-6 in the men's singles summit clash of the ATP Challenger event in one hour 33 minutes on Sunday. Prajnesh started on a bright note, putting up a dominant display to take the opening set of the tournament. However, he was unable to keep the momentum going as the second-seeded American came back strongly in the next two sets to claim the title. Prajnesh had got the better of Thomaz Bellucci in the quarterfinals before receiving a walkover against Denmark's Mikael Torpegaard in the semifinal. —PTI

Italy beat Poland, England bow out

Rome: Three years after an embarrassing failure to qualify for the World Cup, Italy are back in contention with the best in Europe. England, meanwhile, are already out of contention for the Nations League finals with one round of matches still to play. An Italy squad badly hit by the coronavirus still managed to beat Poland 2-0 on Sunday, putting the *Azzurri* in control of their group, while England were beaten 2-0 by Belgium. Another win at Bosnia-Herzegovina on Wednesday will see Italy hosting the four-team finals in October — just a few months after hosting the opening game of the European Championship in Rome. — AP

Live on TV

CRICKET

Big Bash League: Sydney Sixers vs Brisbane Heat from 9 am; Sydney Thunder vs Melbourne Renegades from 1.35 pm on Sony Six, HD

TENNIS

ATP Finals: Matches from 7.30 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD and 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

UEFA Nations League: France vs Sweden from 1.15 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 3; Spain vs Germany from 1.15 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2; Croatia vs Portugal from 1.15 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 1

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Covid threat to Test

Paine in self-isolation after Corona outbreak in Adelaide

Sydney, Nov. 16: A fresh Coronavirus outbreak in Adelaide on Monday forced Australian players, including captain Tim Paine, into self-isolation but the country's cricket board asserted that the first Test against India here from December 17 will go ahead as scheduled.

A cluster of Covid-19 cases in Adelaide prompted other states like Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory to close their borders with South Australia and impose a 14-day hotel quarantine on all visitors from Adelaide from 11.59 pm on Monday.

"There is ongoing monitoring but that's the end of the story," a CA spokeswoman was quoted as saying by *Sydney Morning Herald* on the match which is still a day-nighter.

The number of cases had crept up from four on Sunday to 17 on Monday.

The development has the potential to throw the Australian summer of cricket into chaos but CA insisted there is no reason to think next month's Test series opener against India — Day/Night Pink ball match — at the Adelaide Oval is in doubt.

The newspaper said CA is monitoring the fallout of the outbreak and its officials were in contact with key decision-makers in Adelaide.

Tasmanian health authorities have returnees from South Australia since November 9 to quarantine.

This meant that Paine, Matthew Wade and their team mates in the Tasmania squad, which recently completed the opening round of Sheffield Shield matches in South Australia, had to go into isolation.

The India squad and those Australians who took part in the Indian Premier League in the UAE are in a 14-day quarantine in Sydney since Thursday.

They will complete the isolation a day before the ODI series which begins on November 27 at the SCG. — PTI



Indian cricketers Ravindra Jadeja (from left), Umesh Yadav and Kuldeep Yadav jog during a practice session in Sydney on Sunday. — BCCI

Rahul pulls along with tennis ball

Sydney, Nov. 16: After competing on the slow UAE tracks for nearly two months during the IPL, India's star studded batting line-up is gearing up for the lively Australian pitches with the traditional tennis ball training on Monday. In-form K.L. Rahul spent considerable time in perfecting his pull-shots with deliveries hurled from 18 yards during Monday's net session.

There was nothing unusual in such session as players train like this when they gear up to compete on tracks where there is steep bounce on offer. In a video posted on

twitter by the BCCI, Rahul's senior teammate Ravichandran Ashwin was seen using a tennis racket and serving the stand-in white ball vice-captain with tennis balls aimed at his rib cage.

Rahul was trying to keep the pull shot down, an art his skipper Viat Kohli has mastered over the years, rolling his wrists.

There is a basic purpose of practising against tennis balls. From a shorter distance, the ball travels faster and it helps in making the reflexes quick.

Therefore when the leather ball is used, any

In-form batsman K. L. Rahul spent considerable time perfecting his pull-shots with deliveries hurled from 18 yards during Monday's net session.

batsman will get a fraction of a second more from the 22 yards.

During the '80s and '90s before a tour of Australia or West Indies, the specialist batsmen were known to bat against wet tennis balls from 16 or 18

yards on cement wickets to get adjusted to the bounce.

With training modules undergoing a sea change, now the tennis racquets are used to add more pace to the light tennis balls.

Team's senior speedster Mohammed Shami posted a video on his personal twitter handle, where he was seen bowling with the pink kookaburra ball.

Shami is a part of all three squads and it is a given that India will need his skills most during the four-Test series starting on December 17 with the day-night pink ball game in Adelaide. — PTI

Dustin dazzles at the Masters

Augusta (Georgia, USA), Nov. 16: Nothing ever comes easily for Dustin Johnson in the majors, except for slipping into that Masters green jacket.

Johnson overcame a jittery start that conjured memories of past majors he failed to finish off. He turned that into a command performance, making sure this one-of-a-kind Masters with no fans also had no drama.

Not even close.

Johnson tapped in for par on the 18th for a 4-under 68 to finish at 20-under 268, breaking by two shots the record set by Tiger Woods in 1997 and matched by Jordan Spieth in 2015.

His five-shot victory was the largest at the Masters since Woods won by 12 in his record-breaking win in 1997. All that was missing were the roars for any of his pivotal putts early and his birdie putts on the back nine that put it away.

The Masters, postponed from April because of the Covid-19 pandemic, was forced to do without patrons for the first time. Johnson still received a warm reception coming up the 18th from club members and their wives, his partner, Paulina Gretzky, and a few champions.

Two-time champion Bubba Watson was there to congratulate him.

"I always dreamed of having one of those,"

Johnson said as he went to sign his card. "Now I got one."

Johnson's four-shot lead was reduced to one after five holes, and then he quickly restored control. Cameron Smith and Sungjae Im each shot 69 and were the only ones who really had a chance.

Smith got quite the consolation. He became the first player in Masters history to post all four rounds in the 60s, and all it got him was a silver medal.

Johnson became the 12th Masters champion to never trail after any round, and his closing 68 broke another record held by Woods it was his 11th consecutive sub-par round at Augusta National.

No one had a better finish than defending champion Tiger Woods, but only after the five-time Masters champion posted the highest score of his career three balls in Rae's Creek for a 10 on the par-3 12th hole. He finished with five birdies over the last six holes to salvage a 76.

The betting favourite and biggest basher in golf, Bryson DeChambeau, couldn't even beat 63-year-old Bernhard Langer, who shot 71 and wound up one shot ahead of the U.S. Open champion.

These were only sideshows on a quiet Sunday at Augusta National. — AP



Last year's Masters champion Tiger Woods (right) presents Augusta Masters winner Dustin Johnson his first green jacket in Augusta, Georgia, on Sunday. — AP

Nadal starts with comfortable win

London, Nov. 16: Rafael Nadal launched his bid for a first ATP Finals trophy in style on Sunday, taming in-form Andrey Rublev in straight sets in London.

The Spanish world number two, chasing the biggest prize missing from his glittering resume, barely broke sweat as he outclassed the Russian debutant 6-3, 6-4 at the empty O2 Arena.

Nadal, who last month equalled Roger Federer's record of 20 Grand Slams by winning the French Open, has won 86 titles but just one of those has come on an indoor hard court.

His record at the eight-man elite event pales in comparison with his main rivals. Federer, who is absent with injury.

Novak Djokovic produced a masterclass against Argentina's

Diego Schwartzman on Monday as he embarked on his campaign for a record-equalling sixth title.

The world number one wobbled at the start of the match against the diminutive eighth seed, making his debut at the elite eight-man event but recovered to win 6-3, 6-2.

The Serbian, 33, has enjoyed another sparkling season despite the coronavirus interruption, winning four titles including the Australian Open.

"Always the first match is very tricky," said Nadal. "Every match is difficult when you are playing against the best of the best so it's a positive start for me, very happy," he added.

Nadal has qualified for the ATP Finals for a record 16 consecutive years but has been forced to withdraw on six occasions.

A combination of injury and his preference for other surfaces has counted against him but his greater freshness as a result of a shorter season may boost his chances this year. — AFP

Birthday cheer



National badminton coach Pullela Gopichand cuts a cake to celebrate his 47th birthday on Monday at the Pullela Gopichand Badminton Academy in Hyderabad. The former All England champion has produced shuttlers of international repute from his state of the art academy, termed the cradle of Indian badminton.

Australians to form 'barefoot circle' to support anti-racism

Sydney, Nov. 16: Australian players will form a barefoot circle to acknowledge the culture of indigenous people before every series, starting with the ODI contest against India, said pacer Pat Cummins, who admitted that his team has not done enough to support anti-racism movement.

The Australian Test and ODI vice-captain said his team considered the move as the best way to begin addressing racism, both at home and around the world. "We've decided to do the Barefoot Circle. We're going to look at doing it at the start of each series and it's a pretty easy decision for us. Not only as a sport, but we as people are absolutely against racism," Cummins was quoted as saying by *ESPNCricinfo*.



In this file photo, West Indies players take a knee before the start of the third Test against England at Old Trafford in Manchester on July 24, 2020. — AP

"We can probably put our hands up and say we haven't done enough in the past and we want to get better, so this is one small thing we're going to introduce this summer," he added. Earlier this year,

West Indies legend Michael Holding has criticised the Australian team for not taking a knee in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, during the limited overs series in England. — PTI

Not only series win, WTC berth also on India, Oz minds



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

There must have been plenty on Indian skipper Virat Kohli's mind as he boarded the chartered flight from Dubai to Sydney. Not qualifying for the final of the Indian Premier League must be tingling his thoughts, even as a section of the media rose in favour of his erstwhile vice captain, Rohit Sharma as a better option to lead the country in white ball cricket. Their brief for Rohit to captain the country may be justified but their timing, on

the eve of the team's departure for Australia, isn't the best from the perspective of the team that's poised to take on one of the best in the game.

The first of the three One Day Internationals begins in a less than two weeks from now and the team has got a guarded welcome from the Aussies even as they practice in the bubble created in suburban Sydney. Former Aussie skipper Steve Smith, who missed the last Test series against India, has fired the first salvo, telling the

Indians that short pitch bowling does not bother him and his four failures to Kiwi left-arm pacer Neil Wagner were nothing but an aberration. The Aussie taste for the hook and pull shot is legend and one doubts whether the Indians will fall to this ruse.

Notwithstanding the ODI series and the three Twenty20 that follow, the home team is concentrating on the four-match Test series that kicks off mid-December. The Aussie distaste for losing is well documented and their loss in the last Test series to India will be at the back of their minds. Aussie head coach, Justin Langer, has reminded the Indians that his team is 'two-years better' and more experienced. Their focus on the Test

series is not only to try and avenge their loss and get the Border-Gavaskar Trophy back down under. It is also a crucial one vis-a-vis the World Championship of Test cricket (WTC) as both teams are in contention to qualify final of the tournament.

India is currently at the number one spot with 360 points followed closely by Australia (296), England (292) and New Zealand (180). With the hiatus on Test series due to the pandemic, International Cricket Council is reported to have tweaked the ranking system to give the teams an opportunity to qualify for the prestigious WTC final. A leading cricket website has published a report stating that ICC's cricket committee

has opted to choose the finalists from the percentage of points they have earned from the series played so far. Reacting to the report, ICC has clarified that no decision has been taken as yet and the future of the WTC will be discussed at their board meetings this week.

To decide who gets to become the champion in the WTC, it is only fair for all teams (constituting the pool of nine) get a chance to play against each other at home and away. With India and Pakistan not likely to clash in the near future and the Covid pandemic disrupting the execution of a few series, featuring Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, the ICC Board will have to come up with a solution for the WTC to be held as scheduled before

Kohli walks out for the toss with Tim Paine at Adelaide for the first Test on December 17.

The way things are panning out, it looks very difficult for all nine Test teams to play six series (home and away), as per the original plan for the WTC. It would therefore be prudent for the ICC to reschedule the tournament and extend it for another year to enable all teams to get a fair shot for the championship. For now, only India, Australia, England, New Zealand and Pakistan stand a realistic chance of qualifying for the WTC final scheduled for next June at Lord's. In context of the WTC being decided, either as originally planned or by a new formula mooted by the ICC Board, the result of the

India, Australia Test series will set the tone for the next set of series' featuring other teams.

Irrespective of what the ICC decides, both teams will be giving it their very best in what promises to be a tough series of Test matches. As far as ICC goes, deciding a world championship on percentages or runs/wickets ratios will not be the best way to decide the ultimate winner.

Deviations, considering these difficult times, will ensure completion of the first cycle of the WTC, but will, as a senior journalist friend put it, only be of academic interest. Giving each team a fair chance in the WTC is what the ICC need to decide on or (in short) it simply won't be cricket!