


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

ANANTAPUR | MONDAY | 30 NOVEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 29.0°C
Min: 15°C
RH: 78%
Rainfall: rain

Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 29/15 °C

COVID-19 CUNT

CASES

(+38,035)

DEATHS

(+432)

94,30,724

1,37,152

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+805)

(+4)

TS: 2,69,223

1,455

(+620)

(+7)

AP: 8,67,683

6,988

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

6,28,80,668

DEATHS

14,63,088

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Shuddha
Pournami till 2.57 pm
Star: Rohini full day
Varjyam: 11.40 pm to 1.25 am
(Tuesday)
Durmuhurtam: 12.27 pm to 1.11 pm; 2.39 pm to 3.23 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 noon
HJRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Akhir 14, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.08 am
Zohar: 12.05 pm
Asar: 4.11 pm
Maghrib: 5.47 pm
Isha: 7.02 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.17 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.49 PM
MOONSET 6.07 AM
MOONRISE 5.52 PM

COUNTER POINT



You are so lucky to have a Cow Cabinet to take care of your problems!

SHORT TAKE

Tea in kulhads at train stations

Jalpur: Tea will be sold in environment-friendly kulhads (earthen cups) in place of plastic cups at all railway stations, railway minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday. He was speaking at an event organised at the Dhigawara railway station in Rajasthan's Alwar district to mark the inauguration of the newly electrified Dhigawara-Bandikui section under the North Western Railway. This initiative will be the contribution of the railways towards a plastic-free India, he said.

GOLD | STANDARD AP conducted standard RT PCR tests for 52% people

AP Covid tests cross 1-cr mark

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 29

Andhra Pradesh has crossed one crore mark in terms of the number of Covid-19 tests conducted as on Sunday morning. As on November 29, 2020, a total of 1,00,17,126 samples have been collected for testing. Of this, 8,67,683 have tested positive and 91,49,443 were negative. Andhra Pradesh stands first among big states in India with 1,87,587 tests per million population compared to the national average of 98,004 tests per million. Of over one crore tests, 52.38 lakh tests were con-

ducted using highly reliable RT-PCR, 7.41 lakh using truenat model and 40.37 lakh using rapid tests. Officials said the mortality rate in Andhra Pradesh stands at 0.81 per cent, which is lower than the national average of 1.46 per cent, because of extensive testing and timely treatment. The state government worked on an action plan to contain the spread of Covid-19 and utilised the services of village volunteers for community surveillance, monitoring health conditions, among others. Andhra Pradesh had no Covid-19 testing lab. The

first lab in the state for Covid-19 was established on March 7, 2020. Starting with zero-testing facilities, the state government ramped up its health infrastructure and established 150 testing laboratories including government, private, and TrueNat labs by June along with dedicated hospitals for treating Covid-19 patients. Apart from 15 testing facilities, Covid-19 tests are being conducted in four private labs, 44 VRDL labs, 90 Truenat labs, 6CBNAT, 5NACO and 5 CLIA labs. Andhra Pradesh followed a decentralised model of Sample Collection Centres. About 1,519 facilities acted

as the sample collection centres. Apart from collections centres, Mobile RRT teams covered the nook and corner of the state prioritising Containment Zones. Andhra Pradesh, meanwhile, has reported 620 new Covid-19 cases and seven deaths in the past 24 hours ending Sunday morning. The tally increased to 8,67,683 and the death toll nearing 7,000 as it reached 9,988. Krishna and Visakhapatnam districts have reported two new deaths each, while Guntur, Chittoor and West Godavari districts have reported one death each. Other districts reported no new deaths.



WORLD | 5 Covid shuts Christmas markets in Europe



BUSINESS | 7 Finmin asks PSU insurers to cut flab

SPORTS | 8 Smith hits tons as Aussies clinch ODI series



YSRC, TD ready for a floor fight

YSRC, TD try to expose each other's failures

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 29

AP Assembly's Winter Session is expected to heat up with opposition and ruling parties crossing swords on several issues. The discussions may end up being the beginning of campaigning for the forthcoming local body elections.

Opposition Telugu Desam has chosen 20 issues to expose failures of the Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government. The ruling YSR Congress is planning to counter the same by exposing failures of TD in dealing with several important issues when it ruled the split Andhra Pradesh.

The TD will focus on cornering the government in Assembly by bringing up attacks on temples, Dalits, minorities and women, increase in property taxes, crop damage due to incessant rains and cyclone, government's failure in dealing with Coronavirus, local body elections, smart meters for agricultural pump sets under free power scheme, non-distribution of TIDCO houses, pending NREGS bills, corruption in new

Assembly likely to run for 5 days

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 29

The AP Assembly's winter session is likely to be held for five days, starting from Monday. A meeting of the Business Advisory Committee would be conducted at 8 am on Monday to finalise the duration of the Assembly session.

The Telugu Desam wants the Assembly to run for 10 days and TDP deputy leader K. Atchannaidu will attend the BAC meeting on behalf of the opposition party. Police made foolproof

arrangements for the smooth functioning of the Assembly. Guntur Rural SP Vishal Gunni conducted a review meeting on the security measures with the Assembly chief marshals and other officials on Sunday.

The SP said a total of 1,637 police officers and personnel will be on duty. He said security arrangements will be monitored by the police from the Garuda Control Centre.

He said CCTV cameras, drone operating live streaming and body-worn cameras will monitor the assembly premises.

sand policy, abnormal increase in prices, neglect of Polavaram project, closure of industries, cancellation of PPAs, difficulties being faced by private teachers, liquor sales, collection of toll tax on state roads, cancellation of welfare schemes, no increase in pension

amounts, and increasing debt of government.

TDP deputy leader K. Atchannaidu said the main opposition will not spare ruling YSRC in the Assembly as well as the Council.

■ Page 2: YSRC to focus on TD's misrule

Don't ban media, says Naidu

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 29

Leader of Opposition in Assembly N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday wrote a letter to Speaker Tammineni Sitaram objecting to ban on media and removal of media point in the Assembly premises. He sought rest-

oration of media point and entry of media for covering the Assembly and Council sessions.

Naidu asserted that media is crucial in communicating to people debates and nature of proceedings in the legislative bodies. He felt banning media from Assembly is harmful than even G. O.

ANOTHER CYCLONE LIKELY TO MAKE LANDFALL ON DEC. 3

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 29

A well-marked low-pressure area lay over the southeastern Bay of Bengal and adjoining Andaman Sea on Sunday, following a cyclonic circulation that had developed near the equator in the Indian Ocean region.

The IMD said the system would intensify into a deep depression in the next 36 hours and reach Tamil Nadu coast on December 2.

The system may make landfall between Tamil Nadu and Puducherry on December 2 or December 3. Under its influence, heavy rains could be witnessed in south coastal AP, Rayalaseema, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

■ Page 2: Farmers fault fertiliser, official advice

Festive lights



Girls and women decorate a floral rangoli with earthen lamps on the eve of Karthika Pournami festival, also called Deva Deepavali in north India, on Sunday. The day is special for the followers of both Lord Shiva and Vishnu. It is believed Shiva had killed demon Tripurasura and Vishnu incarnated in Matsya avatara on this day.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

Drunken man attacks minister Nani

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 29

A drunken man attacked transport minister Perni Venkataramiah alias Nani with a trowel at Machilipatnam on Sunday. The minister escaped unhurt and the attacker was arrested. The incident took place when the minister

was performing rituals to his mother Nageswaramma, who passed away recently, at his residence.

The man, identified as Badugu Nageswara Rao, a mason by occupation, came up to the minister, pretended to touch his feet and attacked him with the trowel. The first blow hit the minister on the waist

belt. An Anganwadi teacher G. Padma, standing beside the minister, screamed for help and restrained the accused. When Nageswara Rao tried to attack the minister again, security personnel and the minister's followers caught him. The shirt of the minister was torn, but he escaped without injuries

Nageswara Rao was found to be in an inebriated condition.

The attacker, who hails from Chemmanagripeta of Godugupeta in Machilipatnam, claimed to have visited the minister's residence to seek work.

■ Page 2: Police hint at attacker's ties with TD



Industries and IT minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy inspects Somasila reservoir in Nellore district on Sunday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

UP REGISTERS 1ST CASE UNDER LOVE JIHAD LAW

Lucknow, Nov. 29: Uttar Pradesh has registered its first case under the new anti-conversion law in Bareilly district based on a complaint from the father of a young woman.

The case was registered at the Devarniya police station in Bareilly district on Saturday.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi said a case was registered by Tikaram, a resident of Bareilly, who accused a man — Uvaish Ahmed — of the same village of trying to convert his daughter through allurements.

According to the complaint, Tikaram's daughter and Ahmed studied together in class 12.

Three years ago, the accused started exerting pressure on her to undergo religious conversion and perform 'nikaah' (marriage). But when the woman opposed, he threatened to kidnap her, Tikaram alleged. He got his daughter married to someone else in June, but Ahmed continued to harass her.

— PTI

GHMC campaign comes to an end

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

A highly emotionally charged and communalised campaign by political parties for the elections to Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation elections finally concluded at 6 pm on Sunday.

The polling will be held on December 1 and results will be declared on December 4. As soon as the campaign ended, providing for cooling off period, parties and candidates are now keenly awaiting election day.

A night before the poll campaign ended, TRS chief and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao is reportedly confident of retaining power in the city. He is reported to have told his leaders, "We have sent a message to all sections of people. Now they have to decide whether they want prosperity or disturbances."

Sources close to Rao disclosed that he said, "With forces rallying against us, I was left with only option — to place my views before people."

Sources claimed that Rao believed strongly that

Hyderabad people will give TRS a massive mandate. "Boss is confident of retaining power in GHMC, probably with over 100 seats," a source claimed.

Meanwhile, leaders of all parties and candidates in the fray made a last effort to reach out to as many voters as possible on the last day of the nine-day campaign. Incidentally, the campaign for GHMC attracted national headlines, with allegations and counters by leaders of the TRS, BJP, Congress and the MIM during their padayatras and roadshows.

The campaign became a fight for narratives. While the BJP tried to "expose" the alliance between TRS and MIM, and the appeasement, corruption, family rule of the pink party, besides raking up issues like Rohingya immigrants, the TRS tried to dub it a "battle between decisive and divisive forces".

The opposition also focused on the failures of TRS in fulfilling poll promises, from building two-bedroom houses and handling the recent floods to massive corruption of the ruling party.

HARSH WINTER EXPECTED IN NORTH INDIA

New Delhi, Nov. 29: North India is likely to expect a harsher winter and the possibility of cold waves occurring could be more this season, India Meteorological Department (IMD) director-general Mrutunjay Mohapatra said on Sunday.

The IMD, in its winter forecast for December to February, said below normal minimum temperatures are likely over north and central India.

"The winter is likely to be harsher in north India this season. The probability of occurrence of cold waves is more," Mohapatra said.

He added that the night temperatures in north India are likely to be below normal, while the day temperatures are expected to be above normal. The west coast and south India are likely to witness above normal minimum temperatures.

"During the upcoming winter season (December to February), below normal minimum temperatures are likely over subdivisions of north, north-west, central and few subdivisions over east India," the IMD said in its forecast.

— PTI

FARMERS REJECT CONDITIONAL DIALOGUE OFFER

New Delhi/ Chandigarh, Nov. 29: Rejecting the Centre's offer to hold talks once they move to the Burari ground, the farmers who are protesting at Delhi's borders for four days against the new farm laws on Sunday said they will not accept any conditional dialogue and threatened to block all five entry points to the capital.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, however, battled for the new laws in his radio address, saying these reforms have given the farmers "new rights and opportunities".

■ Full report on Page 4

SHORT TAKES

ALL INDIA SC/ST OFFICERS PANEL DEMANDS QUOTA

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, NOV. 29

The All India SC/ST Gazetted Officers Association pointed out that no reservations were being planned in the New Education Policy (NEP) as announced by the Centre. The association organised a round table conference on NEP here on Sunday in which there was no mention of reservations for SC/ST and OBCs across the country.

Association general secretary Ravishankar demanded that the Centre continue reservations for SC/ST and OBCs otherwise the weaker sections would be losing out in progress.

Leaders belonging to SC, ST and BC associations from various parts of the district participated in the conference.

Mr Ravishankar observed that NEP was against Article 15(4) in which backward sections should be provided education without any hurdles.

"We couldn't find any word pertaining to reservations for SC/ST and OBCs in the new education policy," he said. The association threatened to stage protests against NEP saying the NEP was against the Constitution.

Further, the conference felt that establishment of foreign universities would impact lakhs of SC/ST and OBC students who are unable to pay fees in private varsities.

In addition, the conference also objected to the proposals to introduce occasional courses from Class VI.

19 ARRESTED, LIQUOR SEIZED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 29

The Guntur rural police seized 16,128 bottles of illegal liquor worth of ₹32 lakh by arresting 19 persons on Sunday. The accused hid the bottles brought from other states in a hatchery at Uppalapadu of Veldurthi mandal. Police seized the stocks during checks.

Addressing a press meet at Guntur on Sunday, rural SP Vishal Gunni said that Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) Macharla inspector Konda Reddy arrested two persons Kelam Srinu and Kalluri Kondalu in a hotel at Gundlapadu village of Veldurthi mandal while selling illegal liquor and seized 51 liquor bottles from them. During inquiry the police found several other persons involved in the illegal liquor business and they are bringing liquor illegally from adjacent Karnataka, Telangana and Maharashtra states.

Mr Vishal Gunni said that the gang brought 23,520 bottles with the help of one Sangamesh of Bidar and stored half of the stock in a hatchery. They dug a big pit beside the hatchery with the help of an earthmover and hid the stock in it.

The SP said that as many as 19 persons including the main accused Sangamesh were arrested and police seized ₹32 lakh worth 16,128 illegal liquor bottles, one lorry and an earth-mover. He said that 12 accused belong to Gundlapadu and Uppalapadu, three to TS, two to Karnataka and the remaining two to Madhya Pradesh. He warned that stern action would be taken against those selling illegal liquor and praised the efforts of SEB for unearthing the gang.

CPM COLLECTS DONATIONS FOR ROAD REPAIRS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, NOV. 29

The CPM activists staged a novel protest that collected donations from the people for the development of the roads to bring it to the notice of the officials as it should be an eye-opener to the government. The roads have been badly damaged in almost all the villages in Godavari districts.

The roads in Indrapalem, Kovvada, Chidiga, Rameswaram, Achutapuratrayam and other villages in Kakinada and Anaparthi Constituencies in the vicinity of Kakinada. The CPM planned protest against the roads and took up a signature campaign, demanding the government should develop the roads. A passerby responded to the agitation, and signed for the campaign and questioned the government, "Are these roads or pits meant for hell?" and he donated some money and appealed to the agitators to give it to the government.

Naidu playing spoilsport: YSRC

TD could raise the issue of number of days at the BAC meeting: Chief whip

YSRC to focus on TD's misrule

FROM PAGE 1

Majority sections of the society are suffering under the YSRC government since the past 18 months TD legislators will question the government on behalf of the public.

Coming to the ruling party, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy himself conducted a meeting with ministers and directed them to draw separate strategies for countering the opposition parties when sessions are on in both the Assembly and Council. Ministers and



Gadikota Srikanth Reddy

ruling party legislators have been asked to prepare well on subjects,

along with proof and records, to "whitewash" opposition TD.

Treasury benches will expose the failures of erstwhile TD government for leaving huge debts while stepping down from power and attacks on Dalits, women and minorities under its rule.

YSRC will defend itself pointing to implementation of welfare schemes despite financial and Corona crises, containment of Covid-19, phase-wise liquor ban, distribution of compensation to farmers within a few days

of crop losses, and TD government cheating people over construction and distribution of TIDCO houses, among others.

Minister for municipal administration Botsa Satyanarayana asserted that YSRC will expose the opposition with proof and evidence.

Government chief whip Gadikota Srikanth Reddy said YSRC has drawn strategies to counter the opposition in both the Assembly and Council towards exposing the opposition's doublespeak within the public.

● The government chief whip said it will be the prerogative of BAC to decide for how many days the Assembly session should be held. He asked Mr Naidu to first participate in the proceedings of the Assembly session for five days and then demand for an extension.

Police hint at attacker's ties with TD

FROM PAGE 1

Speaking to media persons, the minister said many people from nearby villages came to his residence to attend his mother's ceremony. "When I was coming out of my residence, a man came towards me and tried to touch my feet. But he took out a small trowel used for masonry and attacked me in my abdomen," the minister recalled.

"The weapon brushed the belt buckle of my trouser. The person tried to attack me once again, but the people around me caught him," he said. The minister said he saw the attacker a couple of times but was not really sure of the reason behind the attack.

Quoting preliminary



B Venkateswara Rao

information, Krishna district SP Ravindranath Babu said the attacker was the brother of a Telugu Desam woman leader Uma Devi and a sympathiser of the TD.

He said the police were trying to find out the reason behind the attacker carrying a sharp trowel

and would also investigate the political angle and other motives behind the attack.

The SP said the police had shifted the accused to a government hospital for medical tests. Circle inspector Venkataramana said the attacker was in an inebriated condition and the police are investigating his criminal history.

Civil supplies minister Kodali Srivenkateswara Rao, YSRC leader Talasila Raghuram, MLAs Jogi Ramesh and Vallabhaneni Vamsi called up Perni Nani and enquired about his well-being.

Later, home minister Mekathoti Sucharita met minister Nani in the evening and inquired about the incident. She said a thorough investigation would be conducted.

DGP Goutam Sawang, along with other officials, visited the minister's house and inquired about the incident.

APJAC Amaravati leader Bopparaju Venkateswarlu and Y.V. Rao condemned the attack and demanded the government to take stern actions against the accused and others who were responsible for the attack.

Former minister and TD leader Kollu Ravindra, however, refuted allegations of YSRC leaders about involvement of their party in the attack. He said the Telugu Desam has no connection with the attacker. He demanded a transparent investigation in the attack and further demanded the ruling party to stop mudslinging against the TD.

80% SUBSIDY ON SEED, SAYS MINISTER

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, NOV. 29

The social welfare minister Pinepe Viswaroop said that the government would supply seed to the farmers with 80 per cent subsidy and compensation would be given for every acre which has been damaged due to Cyclone Nivar. He visited the agriculture fields which have been badly damaged in Nangavaram, Sannavilli, Uppalagupam, Badugu Peta, Perayi Cheruvu, Kunavaram and other villages of Uppalagupam mandal in Amalapuram Division of Konaseema area on Sunday.

He said that the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is taking steps for making agriculture profitable and doesn't want the farmers to suffer because of the crop damage.

He said that the government was giving top priority to the agriculture sector and the farmers need not worry about their crops.

He instructed the officials to complete the enumeration and submit their reports on December 15 and the government would help the farmers by the end of December.

He also visited Ventrakona and Rellugadda villages in Allavaram mandal.



Union home minister Amit Shah waves during his road show for the GHMC elections at Warasiguda in the city on Sunday. Union MoS G. Kishan Reddy and BJP OBC Morcha chief K. Laxman are seen.

— DEEPAK DESHPANDE

BJP will dethrone TRS, says Shah

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

Exuding complete confidence, buoyed by the hysterical crowds that gathered to greet and cheer him, Union minister of home affairs Amit Shah said the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will have its mayor in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and the party will form the next state government in Telangana.

"The way people of Telangana have supported Modi ji during Lok Sabha polls, the beginning for change has begun. GHMC is the next stop," Shah said during his roadshows.

Addressing a press conference at the party state headquarters, he said he was touched by the affection and love extended by citizens of Hyderabad, through their participation in such massive numbers at the rally and at road shows.

"Looking at the enthusiasm and support of citizens, I am very sure of a big victory," Shah said, adding, "no election is small for us. Those who called the GHMC elections as gully elections are insulting people of Hyderabad. Every oppor-

tunity where people give a mandate is of highest importance to us. We are not contesting this election to increase vote or seat share, but to win the mayor's position."

Refuting the allegation of Chief Minister K. Chandrababbarao that the BJP government at the Centre was not giving enough funds to Hyderabad, especially after the floods, he said, "We have been giving but CM KCR has not been going to the Secretariat to work. If he goes to work, he will know what all we have given."

Shah then outlined a host of fund disbursements made to Hyderabad, including over ₹500 crore support recently. Shah said the TRS is responsible for the sinking of Hyderabad because of their appeasement policy towards the MIM.

Amit Shah said the TRS is allowing goons and mafia to illegally encroach waterfronts, lakes and nalas, leading to an unprecedented deluge.

"In the last five years, the TRS government could not clear nalas or remove encroachments. The BJP will ensure every single illegal occupation will be demolished. Hyderabad will never again face such floods," Shah promised.

● Amit Shah said he was touched by the affection and love extended by citizens of Hyderabad, through their participation in such massive numbers at the rally and at road shows

"The TRS-MIM combine cannot transform Hyderabad into a global city or make it the software hub of the world because they are incompetent and irresponsible. Only the BJP has a track record to ensure Hyderabad transforms into a global IT hub and a microcosmic symbol of new India," Shah said.

Exposed KCR's misgovernance and failure to deliver any of the promises made in the 2016 manifesto, including building double bedroom houses for poor, giving drinking water connections to homes, creating dump yards, cleaning the Hussainsagar or developing the Musi riverfront or building hospitals, Shah said KCR failed Hyderabad totally.

He pointedly asked CM Chandrababbarao, "Why he has not implemented Ayushman Bharat scheme, which provides ₹5 lakh health insurance to

poor?

"Had KCR implemented the visionary flagship programme of Prime Minister Modi, people would not have had to shell out huge amounts in corporate hospitals during Covid pandemic," he said.

Shah listed the Modi government's support to Telangana and Hyderabad through funding and programmes in power generation, educational and research institutions, GHMC credit rating, Covid support and street vendor loan scheme, which benefited over three lakh street entrepreneurs in the state.

"In many of these programmes, Hyderabad city and Telangana got maximum benefit. From modernisation of passport issuance to extension of Metro rail projects, the BJP has always kept interests of Hyderabad as a priority," he said.

Shah highlighted the BJP's goal to transform GHMC with the philosophy of moving from dynasty to democracy, from corruption to good governance, from secrecy to transparency.

He said, "Sardar Patel rescued Hyderabad and the region from a Nizam who wanted to join Pakistan. Hyderabad

should transform into a modern global city and not be stuck with the nawabi and Nizami times. Hyderabad can't afford another Nizam."

Dismissing the unfounded criticism that the BJP was practicing divisive politics, Shah said that wherever the BJP governs, there are no communal riots.

On allegations by TRS leaders that no Central aid was given for relief work in Hyderabad when it was hit by heavy rains and floods, Shah said the Centre sanctioned and gave the maximum amount to Hyderabad. "Water entered houses of seven lakh people. Where was Asaduddin Owaisi or KCR? They were not to be seen. Our party workers and leaders were among people to help," he said.

In a conclusive attack, Amit Shah challenged KCR to come clean on his alliance with the MIM. "Why is KCR scared of explicitly accepting that he is in an alliance with the MIM? Why is he hiding the fact from the public?"

Shah appealed to all voters of GHMC to come on Election Day and vote in large numbers to elect a BJP mayor to transform Hyderabad into a modern, global city.



Irrigation officials closing the erosion on the retaining wall of a bridge on Penna river near Kovur on Sunday

— DC

Advance tech for bunds on two sides of Penna

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 29

Designs using advanced technology are being prepared for constructing bunds on both sides of Penna River – from Penna barrage to National Highway at Venkateswarapuram in Nellore.

Thereafter, the river will be able to handle 8 lakh cusecs of water, thereby preventing flooding of Nellore in future.

This was disclosed on Sunday by irrigation minister P. Anil Kumar Yadav while inspecting flood-affected houses in the city. He attributed flooding in some colonies to illegal construction of houses on banks of the river.

Anil Kumar, along with IT minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy, visited the flood-affected Bhagat Singh Nagar, Janardhan Reddy Colony and Ahmed Nagar abutting Penna River.

The two ministers also inspected the ghat at Sri Talpagiri Ranganathaswamy and the barrage being constructed on Penna River in Nellore.

The ministers assured full support of the state government to people whose houses have been

damaged due to heavy rainfall.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Anil Kumar hinted at removal of illegal structures, including houses built on banks of the river. At the same time, he promised alternative houses to the displaced.

The minister said, "We have instructed officials to prepare estimates for restoration of roads, bridges and local tanks, which have been damaged due to cyclone in the district." He maintained that civic body officials are supplying water and distributing food to people living in the affected areas of the city.

Mr Goutham Reddy said he would bring damage in the city to the attention of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and submit a detailed report for obtaining support from the state government.

Referring to forecast of another two cyclones looming large, Mr Goutham Reddy requested people to follow all directions issued by officials in this regard.

Municipal commissioner K. Dinesh Kumar, RDO Hussain Saheb and others were present on the occasion.



Farmers in Uppalagupam mandal show their damaged paddy crop to the social welfare minister P. Viswaroop on Sunday.

Farmers fault fertiliser advice

FROM PAGE 1

Farmer V.S. Raju said, "We had high hopes on black gram. But when we spread fertilisers and pesticides, they ended up decreasing our yield." He said though he sowed black gram in three acres, he got only three bags. Had agricultural officials given proper advice to farmers on alternative crops and supplied good fertilisers and pesticides, he would have got a good yield.

Traders are coming forward to buy black gram at ₹7,500 to ₹8,000 per quintal. Farmers say though prices of black gram in the retail market are ₹110 to ₹130 per kilo, the government has fixed a minimum support price (MSP) of only ₹6,000 per quintal for black gram, ₹7,196 for green gram, ₹5,100 for Bengal gram and ₹1,850 for maize. "The government should have fixed the MSP of pulses higher," Raju remarked.

Marked district manager I. Manju said if any trader forces farmers to sell their produce below MSP, they must inform

Rythu Bharosa Kendrams (RBKs). Volunteers at RBKs will immediately upload the matter on CMAPP (Comprehensive Monitoring Agriculture, Price and Procurement) app. This will alert officers at all levels. RBKs could then intervene and start procuring pulses and maize at the MSP.

The Marked manager said at present, as per CMAPP statistics, black gram is being sold in the range of ₹7,500 to ₹7,899. However, five maize purchasing centres have been opened in the district while maize crop registration is going on at 61 RBKs.

Agriculture minister Kurasala Kannababu announced that black gram in 42,112 hectares and Bengal gram in 62,598 hectares have been damaged in the state. Government will help these farmers accordingly.

Meanwhile, Nivar Cyclone in East Godavari district has destroyed 369 hectares of black gram, 900 hectares maize, 100 hectares jawar, 30 hectares sunflower and 986 hectares of cotton.

OTHER STORIES

11-YEAR-OLD BOY SUCCUMBS TO ASPHYXIATION

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 29

In a tragic incident, a 11-year-old boy succumbed to asphyxiation and two others were shifted to a government hospital after they fell unconscious at their house located in Nelapalli under Palamaneru segment of Chittoor district.

The deceased was identified as Reddeppa, and the other two are his sister and her husband. According to Sub-Inspector Madhusudhan Reddy, Reddeppa is son of a farmand Naranayappa hailing from Battam-doddi under Peddapanjani mandal.

Reddeppa visited his sister's house in Nelapalli village on Saturday evening.

The couple has been working in a poultry farm. Given the extreme cold in the region, the couple lit charcoal in the bedroom, and all of them slept in the same room after closing the doors and windows on Saturday night.

Some locals broke open the doors on Sunday morning, when they noticed no activity in the house, only to find the couple and the boy in an unconscious state.

Shocked by the situation, they alerted the police and the latter summoned 108 ambulance. After finding Reddeppa dead, police rushed the couple, who were unconscious, to the nearby hospital and later to the government hospital in Palamaneru. They couple are out of danger, he said.

Based on the complaint from the relatives of the kin, the police registered a case and are investigating.



M. Venkaiah Naidu

VICE-PRESIDENT TO SPEND A WEEK IN AP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 29

Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu will spend a week in Andhra Pradesh beginning December 1. He will arrive at Vijayawada on December 1 and the following day distribute course completion certificates to trainees of Swarna Bharat Trust. Later, he will fly to Visakhapatnam in the afternoon. After reaching his residence at Sagarnagar, the Vice-President will participate in governing body and governing council of ICWA on virtual platform at 5 pm.

On December 3, the Vice-President will release the book *40 years with Kalam* in a virtual meeting and the following day at 10 am he will release commemorative postage stamp on I.K. Gujral, the former prime minister of India. He will interact with the scientists of Central Marine Fisheries Research and Central Institute of Fisheries Technology on December 5.

He has no programmes on December 6 and December 8. He will participate in the Indian Armed Forces Flag Day on December 7 and leave Vizag on December 9.

THREE STUDENTS DROWN IN A VILLAGE POND

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 29

In a tragic incident, three students were drowned in a village pond near Ramapuram when they went swimming on Sunday.

The deceased have been identified as Naga Bhushanam, 15, Vinay Kumar Reddy, 15, and Jaswanth, 13.

According to the Sub-Inspector of Ramasamudram Ravi Kumar, the three students belonging to Gunthavaripalle went for swimming in a pond located in a nearby village Ramapuram in Ramasamudram mandal Sunday.

The trio drowned after venturing into the water, unaware of the depth of the pond. Residents rushed to the spot after coming to know about the incident and fished out the bodies of the students.

The police registered a case and shifted dead bodies for post-mortem. Residents had a tough time in consoling the parents of the boys.

Jwala Thoranam draws big crowds at Srisailam

Pournami is considered a very auspicious day of Karthika Masam

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL NOV. 29

Srisailam temple witnessed huge crowds for Kartika Pournami and the third Monday which attracts thousands of devotees during Karthika Masam. The temple performed Jwala Thoranam, Laksha Deepotsavam, Pushkarani Haarathi in the evening.

Thousands of devotees also thronged temples of Lord Siva at Omkaram, Mahanandi, Yaganti, Kalvabugga and Jagannathagattu and performed special rituals.

"This year, the Pournami fell on Sunday and continued through Monday afternoon and arrangements have been made for both days to enable devotees offer prayers on the occasion," temple executive officer K.S. Rama Rao said. Pournami is considered a very auspicious day of Karthika Masam, he added.

Though in view of Covid-19 protocol devotees were strictly advised not to have group visits, at least 30,000 pilgrims offered prayers and lit deepams on the premises of temples like Srisailam in the evening.

Visitors were not allowed to take baths with holy water of Patala Ganga. Only ropeway users were allowed up to Patala Ganga and they floated deepams in the holy water as part of the Laksha Deepotsavam organised by temple authorities.

Amidst chants of Om Namasivaiah by the devotees, the Maha Mangala Harathi to Krishnaveni Nadeemathalli was offered.

Late in the evening, officials organised the traditional Jwala Thoranam at the main temple. On the occasion, the general darshan took 4-5 hours while special darshan took 3-4 hours. Mr Rama Rao said



A riot of sacred flames heighten festive spirit as Srisailam performed Laksha Deepotsavam and Jwala Thoranam on eve of Karthika pournami on Sunday. — DC

Children, elders take bath at Tungabhadra Pushkaralu

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL NOV. 29

Tungabhadra pushkar ghat received good number of visitors on Sunday. Though children below 12 years prohibited from entering, visitors freely entered ghats with children and old people.

All the devotees were having baths with holy

● About 1.50 lakh pilgrims have so far visited from various parts of the state and neighboring Telangana, Karnataka and Maharashtra

water of River Tungabhadra and floated

deepams in the River. About 1.50 lakh pilgrims have so far visited from various parts of the state and neighboring Telangana, Karnataka and Maharashtra and all had holy bath with Tungabhadra water by showers which the officials arranged at all 23 pushkar ghats in the district so far.

elaborate arrangements and tight security was made to avoid any untoward incidents under the directions of district SP K. Fakeerappa.

Similarly at Mahanandi temple, devotees lit one crore deepams around the temple on the occasion.

Yaganti temple officials also performed Deepotsavam. Mantralayam Mutt officials organised the Thunga Harathi as part of the festival.

Meanwhile, devotees floated nearly one lakh deepams in the holy water in Tungabhadra. Devotees

also thronged Jagannathagattu, Nagareswara Swami temple, New Ayyappa Swami temple, Saibaba temple and Rambotla temple in Kurnool. Thousands of the devotees floated deepams into the KC Canal at Vinayaka Ghat in the city.

OFFICIALS TOLD TO MAINTAIN 70 TMC.FT IN DAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 29

Industries and IT minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy underlined the need to reduce pressure on the crust gates of all irrigation projects while pointing to a situation if anything goes wrong.

He directed the engineers of the Somasila project to reduce the storage to 70 tmc ft while pointing to the possibility of huge inflows from upstream as the India Meteorological Department is forecasting two more cyclones to the region.

Stressing that they have learned several lessons because of the heavy rains and inundation of several villages, he said they would take steps to handle the floods effectively in future.



Workers erecting barricades outside the Assembly Hall ahead of Winter Assembly sessions at Velagapudi in Guntur district on Sunday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

'Speaker decision should not be applied in Council'

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 29

Leader of Opposition in AP Legislative Council Yanamala Ramakrishnudu on Sunday appealed to the Council Chairman M.A. Sharif to allow all sections of the media to cover the House proceedings in tune with the spirit of the Constitution and freedom of expression.

He demanded the decisions taken by the Assembly Speaker against the media should not be applied in the Council premises.

Mr Ramakrishnudu said that for many decades, the media channels were being permitted into the House but unfortunately

● THE LEADER of Opposition Mr Ramakrishnudu said that for many decades, the media channels were being permitted into the House but unfortunately the suppressive YSR Congress government was neglecting and ignoring all the established legislative procedures.

the suppressive YSR Congress government was neglecting and ignoring all the established legislative procedures.

He demanded that all the media be allowed into the Council premises and that the Chairman take immediate steps for setting up a media point there.

The Council Chairman should take all measures possible to protect the democratic rights of the media representatives.

In a letter sent to the Chairman, Mr Ramakrishnudu asserted that the people had a right to watch and learn about the debates by their representatives in the legislature.

He claimed that it was the fundamental right of the voters to know how their leaders were responding to the public issues and problems inside the House.

GOVT. MISUSING TUNGABHADRA FEST FUNDS: TD

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, NOV. 29

Telugu Desam party politburo member and former minister Kalava Sreenivasulu lashed out over government massive misusing of funds in the name of Tungabhadra pushkaralu in the region. He pointed out drainage water was being released into the Tungabhadra river closer to Pushkar ghats of Kurnool district.

"The government had released huge funds towards the organising of holy pushkaralu and large scale of funds were misused in the name of ghats," Mr Sreenivasulu observed. The leader lashed out at YSRC government over massive misuse of funds in the name of pushkaralu. The drainage water was being released into the river closer to pushkar ghats in Kurnool city and other parts at river beds of the river.

The TD leader also pointed out the government failed to celebrate the occasion in Anantapur district where the majority of areas had connections with the Tungabhadra water. The party cadres from Bommanhal mandal planned to pay tributes to Tungabhadra river at High Level Main Canal.



Youngsters perform special prayers at the Lord Shiva idol during the special prayers marking Karthika Pournami at Lord Shiva Temple at Burujupeta in the One Town area in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. Devotees in Vijayawada lit the diyas on Kanakadurga temple as part of Koti Deepotsavam on the occasion of Karthika Pournami on Sunday. Meanwhile, the Parade Grounds located on the backside of TTD Administrative Building in Tirupati is readied to organise the Karthika Deepotsavam on Monday. It may be mentioned here that TTD has planned to conduct religious activities as part of month-long Karthika Deepotsavam both at Tirumala and in Tirupati. As part of it, the Deepotsavam will be observed on November 30 in Tirupati to which Sri Vijayendra Saraswathi Swamy of Kanchi Mutt will grace and deliver a religious discourse.

ELECTROCUTED VICTIM'S KIN GET ₹5L RELIEF

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 29

Executive Engineer of Andhra Pradesh Southern Power Distribution Company Srihari Rao has handed over a cheque for ₹5 lakh as compensation to the kin of S.K. Razak, who was electrocuted at Nellore three days back, on Sunday.

It may be recalled that Razak of Venkateswarapuram was killed when he accidentally stepped on a snapped power cable while trying to escape from a falling tree at Magunta Layout during heavy rain on November 25.

YSR Congress leaders were also present with Mr Sriharirao.

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SOCCER TIME



A football match in progress between 1993 SAAP and T Colt Association teams during the Silver Jubilee Celebrations Exhibition Match by Sports Hostel 1993 Vizag Batch organized by SAAP Regional Sports Hostel at Railway Football and Athletic Stadium near Railway New Colony in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. 1993 SAAP team won the match by 2-1 goal. — DC

SHORT TAKES

I-T DETECTS ₹450CR UNDISCLOSED INCOME IN TN

New Delhi, Nov. 29: The Income-tax department has detected undisclosed income of ₹450 crore after it searched an IT SEZ developer, its former director and a stainless steel supplier based in Tamil Nadu, the CBDT said on Sunday.

The searches were carried out at 16 premises in Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Cuddalore on November 27, it said.

"The searches, so far, have resulted in the detection of undisclosed income of more than ₹450 crore," the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said in a statement. The Board is the administrative authority for the tax department. In the case of the ex-director of the information technology special economic zone (IT SEZ), the taxman unearthed evidences of about ₹100 crore "accumulated by the person and his family members in the past 3 years." "The search further unearthed that the IT SEZ developer claimed bogus work-in-progress expenses of about ₹160 crore in an under-construction project," the statement said.

"The entity had also claimed capital expenses of around ₹30 crore on account of bogus consultancy fees in an operational project and inadmissible interest expenses to the extent of ₹20 crore was also claimed by the entity," it said.

STAN SWAMY'S ALLEGATIONS DENIED

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, NOV. 29

A senior prison official from Talaja jail on Sunday informed that Father Stan Swamy, an accused in the alleged Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, is being provided sipper and other facilities like wheelchair, walking stick, walker, and two attendants in the prison from the day second of his arrest.

Swamy, 83, who has various health ailments including Parkinson disease has been in Talaja jail from October 8.

The court on Thursday rejected Swamy's application seeking a direction to the National Investigation Agency to return the straw and sipper allegedly seized from him during the arrest after the NIA denied that it ever seized those things. His lawyer Sharif Shaikh had then filed fresh application to provide such necessary things to Swamy.

While talking to the media, a senior prison official denied allegations made by Swamy. He said, "We are aware that Swamy is a patient. Why would we not provide him things which he needs for survival?" "We are providing him a wheelchair, walking stick, walker and two attendants. We have also provided straw and sipper so he can eat easily," the official said. As per the NIA, Swamy was involved in the activities of the banned CPI (Maoist), and had received funds through an associate for furthering Maoist agenda.

JAWAN KILLED, 7 OTHERS INJURED IN NAXAL ATTACK

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, NOV. 29

An assistant commandant of CoBRA, the elite counterinsurgency unit of CRPF, was killed while seven other personnel were injured in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast triggered by Maoists in Chhitalnar in Chhattisgarh's south Bastar district of Sukma late on Saturday night.

The incident occurred when a joint search party comprising personnel of the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), Special Task Force (STF) and District Reserve Group (DRG) personnel were conducting a combing operation in the area, Bastar inspector-general of police P. Sunderraj told this newspaper on Sunday. The search party came under IED attack when it was passing by the Arabraj Metta hills, nearly 4 km from Tadmetla under Chhitalnar police station at around 8.30 on Saturday evening.

"Eight officers and jawans of 206 CoBRA including second-in-command Dinesh Kumar Singh and assistant commandant Nitin Bhalerao were injured in the blast. All the injured were evacuated from the attack site to Chhitalnar field hospital. Later in the night, all the eight injured were airlifted to Raipur for better medical treatment," Sunderraj said.

FARM BILLS OPEN OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMERS, SAYS PM

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 29

Amid unprecedented protests by farmers from several states in the national capital against the three farm laws that were passed recently by Parliament, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his Mann ki Baat monthly radio broadcast on Sunday that the laws were advantageous for farmers, and that they addressed all the demands made by them.

Modi's assurance comes when farmers from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and several other states have laid siege near various entry points of New Delhi, seeking scrapping of these laws, terming them "pro-corporate" and "anti-farmer".

In fact, soon after the Prime Minister's broadcast ended, the agitating farmers were quick to reject Union home minister Amit Shah's proposal for early discussion on their grievances, conditional to their moving to a designated protest site.

Modi, listing the benefits of the three farm laws, said: "Agricultural reforms in the past few days have also now opened new doors of possibilities for our farmers. The demands that were made by farmers for years, that every political party, at some point or the other, made the promise to fulfil... those demands have been met."

Describing these laws as agricultural reforms, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said they have "unshackled" farmers and given them "new rights and opportunities".

● **MODI'S ASSURANCE comes when farmers from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and several other states have laid siege near various entry points of New Delhi, seeking scrapping of these laws, terming them 'pro-corporate'.**

Farmers reject early talks, threaten to 'gherao' Delhi

Farmers say government should have approached them with 'an open heart'

SANJAY KAW & BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, NOV. 29

Thousands of farmers protesting at Delhi's borders against the Centre's new farm laws on Sunday rejected Union home minister Amit Shah's proposal for an early discussion on their grievances, conditional to their moving to a designated protest site in the national capital's Burari area.

A joint forum of about 30 farmers' unions said the government should have approached them with "an open heart" and not put preconditions for talks. "We have decided that we will stay put at Delhi's borders. We will not go to Burari as it is like an open jail," Bharatiya Kisan Union (Dakaunda) president Buta Singh Burjill said.

The leaders spearheading the protests also urged the Centre to withdraw the new laws and authorise a Cabinet committee or a Group of ministers to hold future discussions. They, however, made it clear that no political party would be allowed to share the stage with them.

Bharatiya Kisan Union (Krantikari) leader Sarjet Singh Phul threatened that the farmers were ready to block all the five entry points to Delhi. He said, "Instead of going to an open jail in Burari, we've decided that we will gherao Delhi by blocking its five main entry points. We've got four months' rations with us, so nothing to worry. Our operations committee will decide everything." All through Sunday, the situation remained tense around Delhi's edges and beyond as a large number of farmers from Punjab, UP and Rajasthan continued to join the protests in the border areas. Apart from a few incidents of tyre-burning, the protestors broke through the police barricades at the Delhi-Haryana border near Narela to enter the national capital.



A farmer helps a woman to cross a temporary barricade at Singhu border in New Delhi on Sunday during their Delhi Chalo march against the new farm laws. — PTI

BJP alleges Cong, SAD instigating stir

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 29

Accusing the Congress and former ally Shiromani Akali Dal of propping up the farmers protest, the BJP on Sunday claimed that the protest has become a "lion's ride" for both the political outfits.

"The lion doesn't listen to them nor can they disembark," Tweeted BJP general secretary (organisa-

tion), B.L. Santhosh. "They will rue their misdeed for a very long time to come."

With hundreds of farmers, mainly from Punjab, sitting on the Delhi-Haryana border, the BJP claimed that farmers are being misled by "forces from abroad" and advised them that they should understand such "design and become wiser."

The BJP has claimed that supporters of

Khalistan movement, supported by some of the India's neighbours, want to create unrest in Punjab and India by infiltrating the farmers' association and misusing farmers to settle their interests.

Citing an interview of one such activists and the banners that were carried at some of the protest sites, Santhosh said that it is anybody's guess who is misleading farmers.

The nation should stand up as one to expose these forces.

"Farmers protests co opt @medhanarmada @YogendraYadav , AAP party leaders, forces from abroad who are supporters of Khalistan movement. It will be good to farmers to understand the design & become wiser . Don't allow farmers to become guinea pigs for anarchist designs," said Santhosh.

Covid cases inch closer to 94-L mark

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 29

India's Covid-19 caseload inched closer to the 94-lakh mark, while the number of people who have recuperated from the disease crossed 88 lakh pushing the national recovery rate to 93.71 per cent. The total Coronavirus cases mounted to 93,92,919 with 41,810 new infections being reported in a day, while the death toll climbed to 1,36,696 with 496 new fatalities.

The Union health ministry posted a graph on Sunday morning, which showed that 22 states and Union Territories have Covid-19 fatality rate lower than the national average of 1.46 per cent.

The active Coronavirus caseload remained below 5 lakh for the 19th consecutive day. There are 4,53,956 active Coronavirus infections in the country which comprises 4.83 per cent of the total caseload. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 88,02,267 pushing the national recovery rate to 93.71 per

● **THE COUNTRY'S daily new Coronavirus cases are being largely reported from just eight states and Union Territories (UTs).**

cent, while the Covid-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.46 per cent.

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

According to the ICMR, over 13.95 crore samples have been tested up to November 28 with 12,83,449 samples being tested on Saturday. The country's daily new Covid-19 cases are being largely reported from just eight states and Union Territories (UTs). The states that contribute maximum number of daily new cases are Maharashtra, Delhi, Kerala, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Chhattisgarh.

MP announces closure of schools till December 31

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, NOV. 29

Even as Madhya Pradesh is under the grip of rising Coronavirus cases, the government has announced closure of primary and middle English schools till December 31.

"The state has witnessed a sudden surge in Coronavirus positive cases in the third week of November. It appears the second wave of pandemic has already hit the state. We apprehend that positive cases may rise in December too and hence the people need to be very cautious", Health minister Prabhuram Choudhury told reporters here.

The state has been reporting more than 1,500

fresh cases daily since the third week of November. The notification announcing the closure of schools was issued here late on Saturday night. A decision on reopening the schools on January 1 would be taken considering the pandemic situation then.

The government said the partial functioning of classes from 9 to 12 in high schools would continue and consent of parents of the students was mandatory for allowing them into classrooms. Students are being allowed to attend schools to clear their doubts. Meanwhile, the state has recorded the death of 13 infected people in the last 24 hours. MP has reported 1,514 new cases of Covid-19 on Sunday.

Gurung to address rally next month

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, NOV. 29

Three-and-half-years after his escape from Darjeeling, fugitive Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) top gun Bimal Gurung, facing more than 150 cases including the UAPA, is all set return to North Bengal next month with a political rally which he will address at Siliguri.

According to reports, his visit to the Hills still remains uncertain due to a fierce opposition by his rival camp in the GJM led by Binoy Tamang and Anit Thapa, also at the helm of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration.

Landing at Bagdogra Airport in Siliguri on Saturday afternoon after three-and-half-years, Gurung's long-time lieutenant Roshan Giri said, "Bimalji is coming here very soon. Possibly on December 6 he will reach Siliguri. We have got permission for a rally at Baghajatin area here. If



Bimal Gurung

the venue turns out to be small, we will hold our rally at another place."

On the separate statehood demand of Gorkhaland Giri observed, in 2024, we will support the party which will support Gorkhaland. Bimalji already announced it on October 21."

Tearing into the rival GJM faction he claimed, "Anit Thapa and Binoy Tamang have destroyed hills. From corruption to nepotism to murder of democracy, everything happened there. Democracy will be restored there when Bimalji would return. People have faith in his leadership. We all thank them for supporting us."

MILLION DOLLAR RAJINI QUESTION STILL HANGS IN THE AIR

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, NOV. 29

Will he? Won't he? The million dollar question might find an answer today as Superstar Rajinikanth is slated to meet secretaries of his Rajini Makkal Mandram. The secretaries will gather at the Raghavendra kalyana mandapam and the star can also be expected to attend in-person as the start of his political career could be on the line.

Urged to rethink on expressing his wish to stay away from electoral politics on October 29, perhaps due to health reasons, he will meet the district secretaries of RMM to announce his decision about contesting in next year's Assembly polls. Sources indicates that an announcement is certainly expected on Monday since Rajini himself had declared that he would make his stand known after consulting Mandram officials. Rajini had hinted that his long awaited political entry would be delayed as concerns had been expressed about the potential risks to his health during the pandemic. A letter available in the public domain hinted that the actor had been advised to restrict travel since he has a kidney condition and could be vulnerable to the Covid-19. The star was to disown the letter and yet admitted that in the letter "the doctor's advice is true".

The actor who had shown an interest in entering politics was tipped to meet Amit Shah of BJP when the Union home minister came to Chennai this month. He did not come to meet Shah but the auditor S. Gurumurthy is said to have conveyed Rajini's thinking on political entry to Shah.

U.P. RECORDS 1ST CASE UNDER NEW ANTI-CONVERSION LAW IN BAREILLY

Lucknow, Nov. 29: Uttar Pradesh has registered its first case under the new anti-conversion law in Bareilly district based on a complaint from the father of a young woman. The case was registered at the Devarnayan police station in Bareilly district on Saturday, officials said.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi said a case was registered by Tikaram, a resident of Sharif Nagar village under Devarnayan police station (in Bareilly), who accused a man — Uvaish Ahmed — of the same village of trying to convert his daughter through "allurement" (*bahla-phuslaaka*).

The case was registered against Uvaish Ahmed under sections of the Indian Penal Code and the new anti-conversion law. Senior Superintendent of Police Rohit Singh Sajwan said four police teams have been formed to arrest the accused. According to the complaint, Tikaram's daughter and Ahmed studied together in Class 12.

Three years ago, the accused started exerting pressure on her to undergo religious conversion and perform 'nikah' (marriage). But when the woman opposed, he threatened to kidnap her, Tikaram alleged.

The complainant's daughter married someone else in June this year. However, Ahmed continued to harass her family members, he said.

According to the complaint, Ahmed went to Tikaram's house on Saturday and asked him to bring his daughter back from her in-laws' house. Threatening her family, the accused told Tikaram that the woman will have to undergo religious conversion and marry him, according to the complaint. — PTI

GREEN INITIATIVE

'Kulhad' saves environment and lakhs of people get employment from it: Goyal

Kulhad to replace plastic tea cups at railway stations

Jaipur, Nov. 29: Tea will be sold in environment-friendly 'Kulhads' (earthen cups) in place of plastic cups at all railway stations in the country, railway minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday.

Speaking at an event organised at the Digawar railway station in Rajasthan's Alwar district, the minister said the initiative will be the contribution of the Railways towards a plastic-free India.

"Tea is given in 'Kulhads' at nearly 400

railway stations in the country today, and in future, it is our planning that tea will be sold only in 'Kulhads' at all the railway stations in the country. This will be the contribution of the Railways towards a plastic-free India," he said.

The minister said before addressing this gathering, he was having tea in a 'Kulhad' and the taste was really different.

'Kulhad' saves the environment and lakhs of people get employment from it, he said. The minister

was speaking at an event to mark the inauguration of the newly electrified Dhigawara-Bandikui section under north-western Railways.

The minister said before the Narendra Modi government came to power in 2014, the railway sector was ignored in Rajasthan as electrification had not been taken up in the last 30 years after the electrification of Delhi-Mumbai route.

He said the investment by Railways and infrastructure development

projects in Rajasthan have increased multiple times between 2014-2020 as compared to that between 2009-2014.

Goyal said 65 underpasses were constructed from 2009-14 while 378 underpasses have been constructed from 2014-September 2020.

He said only four over-bridges were constructed in five years till 2014 whereas 30 such bridges have been constructed from 2014 to September 2020. The minister said electrification of railway

lines across the country will save the environment as engines will run on electricity produced in the country, saving fuel, money and time. Also, the speed of trains will also be increased, he said.

"This will also help farmers who will be able to take their crops to any part of the country (through rail freight transport) in less time," he added.

Goyal said the Prime Minister is very concerned about the environment and therefore

emphasis is being given on electrification.

The minister flagged off the first train on the newly electrified 34 km-long Dhigawara-Bandikui rail section.

He said after the entire line from Rewari to Ajmer has now been electrified with the electrification of this stretch.

Dausa MP Jaskaur Meena, GM-NWR Anand Prakash and other public representatives and railway officials were present in the function. — PTI

SHORT TAKES CHINA SET TO BOLSTER NEPAL DEFENCE TIES

Kathmandu, Nov. 29: China's Defence Minister Gen Wei Fenghe on Sunday met Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli and held talks with Nepal Army chief Gen Purna Chandra Thapa on various issues of bilateral interest, aimed at bolstering bilateral military cooperation and taking the existing friendly ties to a new height.

Gen Wei, who is also a State Councillor, held bilateral talks with Army chief Gen Thapa at the army headquarters here during his day-long "working visit" to Nepal, said a statement issued by the Nepal Army. "The two held a cordial discussion on various issues of bilateral interest," it said. "Bilateral discussions were then held at the delegation-level mainly on issues pertaining to resumption of training and student exchange programme and follow up on defence assistance that have been impacted due to the Covid-19 pandemic," the statement said. The Chinese defence minister, who was leading a 21-member delegation, viewed both the proposals "positively and affirmed that the bilateral cooperation should resume as soon as possible, including exchange of high level visits," it said.

He also pledged to provide additional assistance to the Nepali Army in fighting Covid-19. The Nepali Army expressed confidence that "the visit will help in strengthening and expanding the cordial military-to-military relations between the two countries."

DAVID PROWSE, ORIGINAL DARTH VADER, DIES

London, Nov. 29: Actor David Prowse, best known for physically portraying the role of the antagonist Darth Vader in the original "Star Wars" trilogy, has died at the age of 85 following a brief illness, according to his agent. His agent Thomas Bowington confirmed the news of the actor's death on early Saturday morning. "It's with great regret and heart-wrenching sadness for us and million of fans around the world, to announce that our client Dave Prowse MBE has passed away at the age of 85," Bowington said.

Jason Joiner, events producer who worked with Prowse, also announced the death on a Facebook page dedicated to the actor. "Dave was dedicated to meeting the fans for decades and lots of fans' first ever guest they met was Dave in the early days of Comic Cons and collators' events. Dave was larger than life and he will be so very much missed. Our love and thoughts go out to his family," Joiner said.

Mark Hamill, who played Prowse's on-screen son Luke Skywalker in the "Star Wars" films, paid tributes to the late actor on Twitter. "So sad to hear David Prowse has passed. He was a kind man & much more than Darth Vader. Actor-Husband-Father-Member of the Order of the British Empire-3 time British Weightlifting Champion & Safety Icon the Green Cross Code Man. He loved his fans as much as they loved him. #RIP (sic)" Hamill wrote.

EVACUATION AS VOLCANO ERUPTS IN INDONESIA

Jakarta, Nov. 29: A volcano in eastern Indonesia erupted Sunday, sending a column of ash as high as 4,000 metres (13,120 feet) into the sky and prompting the evacuation of thousands of people.

Nearly 2,800 people from at least 28 villages were evacuated from the slopes of Mount Ili Lewotolok, which is located on Lembata island of East Nusa Tenggara province, as the volcano began erupting, said Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Radiany Jati.

There were no deaths or injuries from the eruption. The Transportation Ministry said a flight warning had been issued after the eruption and a local airport had been closed as ash rained down on many areas of the island. Mount Ili Lewotolok has been erupting off and on since October 2017. Indonesia's Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation Center raised the volcano's alert level to the second-highest level on Sunday after sensors picked up increasing activity.

The 5,423-metre (17,790-foot) mountain is one of three currently erupting in Indonesia after Merapi on Java island and Sinabung on Sumatra island.

"They are among more than 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia, which is prone to seismic upheaval due to its location on the Pacific 'Ring of Fire,' an arc of volcanoes and fault lines around the Pacific Ocean.

Anti-lockdown protests in London: Over 150 arrested

Arrests for breaching virus curbs, assaulting cop and possessing drugs

London, Nov. 29: Scotland Yard has said its officers policing anti-lockdown protests in central London have made 155 arrests as part of early interventions to prevent people from gathering amid the Coronavirus pandemic. The Metropolitan Police made arrests for offences, including breaching Coronavirus regulations, assaulting a police officer and possession of drugs.

Save Our Rights UK, a group holding demonstrations against the stay-at-home rules, said it held protests on Saturday against the government's Covid-19 lockdown. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had on October 31 announced a second lockdown in England as the country crossed the grim milestone of 1 million Coronavirus cases.

The lockdown took effect on November 5 and will last until December 2. Large gatherings are banned under the Coronavirus lockdown restrictions. The Metropolitan Police on Saturday said its officers made a number of early interventions to prevent people from gathering and urge them to go home.

As part of this, coaches transporting protesters into the UK capital were intercepted and those who did not turn back were either arrested or issued fines or fixed penalty notices under the Coronavirus legislation, it said. "This was a challenging day for Met, City of London and British Transport Police officers," Chief Superintendent Stuart Bell, policing commander on the protests, said on Saturday.

"On Friday, we made it very clear how we would police this event, warning those looking to attend that they risked facing enforcement action if they attended a gathering in London," he said. "The enforcement action is a direct result of those individuals deliberately breaking the law and at times, targeting our officers with aggression and causing disruption to the road network," he added. —PTI

HK TO CLOSE SCHOOLS AMID VIRUS SURGE

Hong Kong, Nov. 29: Hong Kong has reported 115 new Coronavirus infections, the first time it has seen cases in the triple digits since August 2. The government on Sunday also announced that classes at kindergarten, primary and secondary schools will be shut for the rest of the year in light of the worsening Coronavirus situation in the city.

Of the 115 infections reported Sunday, 24 were untraceable. Another 62 were linked to recent outbreaks in dance studios across the city, taking the total number of infections in that cluster to 479, health officials said. Employees and recent guests at three restaurants in the city have also been ordered to undergo compulsory testing after multiple positive cases had been linked to the venues. Hong Kong has reported 6,239 Coronavirus infections since the pandemic began. —AP

SMART | DEVICE

Houston, Nov. 29: Researchers have created the smallest memory device yet, an advance that may lead to faster, smaller, and more energy-efficient electronic chips for consumer electronics and brain-inspired computing.

The scientists from the University of Texas at Austin in the US also found the physics that unlocks dense memory storage capabilities for these tiny devices. In the research, published recently in the journal *Nature Nanotechnology*, the scientists reduced



Aerialist Svitlana Rohozhyna performs during the "EXTRAVAGANZA - The Vegas Spectacular" show at the Jubilee Theater at Ballys Las Vegas Hotel & Casino on Saturday in Las Vegas, Nevada. The production opened on March 14, 2020, for only one show before all entertainment on the Las Vegas Strip was shut down to fight the Coronavirus pandemic. The show reopened this week just as a three-week statewide pause went into effect due to surging Covid-19 numbers, forcing producers to adjust to new capacity restrictions limiting audience to 50 people. —AFP

Boris defends lockdown in attempt to curb rebellion

London, Nov. 29: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has urged his Conservative Party lawmakers to back the government's tier-based Covid-19 lockdown in a Parliament vote in a letter stressing that there "a sunset" clause — or expiry date — of February 3 on the latest restrictions. In an attempt to curb a growing rebellion within his own ranks against the new measures which face a House of Commons vote next Tuesday, Johnson wrote on Saturday evening that the tiers will be reviewed every two weeks, and areas can move down the tiers from mid-December.

"Regulations have a sunset of 3 February. After the fourth fortnightly review (January 27), Parliament will have another vote on the tiered approach, determining whether the measures stay in place until the end of March," he wrote.

In his attempt to placate angry MPs opposed to further lockdowns, he also committed to publish more data and outline what circumstances need to change for an area to move down a tier, as well as analysis of the health, economic and social impacts of the measures taken to suppress Coronavirus.

Most of England's population is to fall under the two toughest tiers when the second national lockdown ends on December 2. Around 32 million people — 57.3 per cent of England — will fall into Tier 2 or high alert level which means the rule of six applies with up to six members of different households allowed to meet outdoors. —PTI



Boris Johnson

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Virus: Christmas markets across Europe cancelled

Berlin, Nov. 29: The European plazas where people would usually gather at crowded stalls to partake in hot mulled wine, gingerbread, sausages and other delicacies are just empty squares.

Christmas markets, a cherished tradition in Germany and neighbouring countries, have joined the long list of annual traditions that were cancelled or diminished this year

because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

November saw many European countries impose partial or tougher lockdowns as new virus cases soared.

The restrictions are either being retained or only partially loosened as Advent begins Sunday.

Nuremberg's sprawling, bustling Christkindlesmarkt, one of Germany's best known holiday markets

and traditionally a big tourist draw, was called off a month ago.

Markets across the country — including in Frankfurt, Dortmund and many in Berlin — have suffered the same fate because of the pandemic, with authorities cancelling the events or organisers concluding that it didn't make sense to push ahead with their plans. —AP

also requested him to wear a mask, but he refused. The staff then called airport security to escort the man off the plane. He refused to leave his seat. Only when all the other passengers got up and walked out did he finally leave the plane, the paper said, citing police.

Once on board, the captain and flight attendants

also requested him to wear a mask, but he refused. The staff then called airport security to escort the man off the plane. He refused to leave his seat. Only when all the other passengers got up and walked out did he finally leave the plane, the paper said, citing police.

The incident delayed the flight for 45 minutes.

"We apologise to customers for the delay on Flight 1382 on Wednesday as a passenger was removed from the flight for mask non-compliance," the airlines said in a statement. The man was released from the jail next morning. The Covid-19 death toll in the US since the pandemic's start is now more than 264,000. —PTI

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Afghan suicide car bomb kills 30 security men

Kabul, Nov. 29: A suicide car bomber struck an army base in Afghanistan on Sunday killing at least 30 security personnel, officials said, in one of the deadliest attacks targeting government forces in months.

The attack occurred on the outskirts of Ghazni city, capital of the eastern province of Ghazni, which has seen regular fighting between the Taliban and government forces.

It came as the Afghan government and Taliban are engaged in peace talks, but a top official warned that such attacks have the potential to "harm the peace process" as violence continues to surge across the country. "Thirty bodies and 24 wounded people have been brought to hospital. All of them are security personnel," Baz Mohammad Hemat, director of Ghazni hospital, said.

Interior ministry spokesman Tariq Arian said a suicide bomber had detonated a vehicle full of explosives. "The bomber drove a Humvee vehicle right inside the base and detonated it," Ghazni governor spokesman Wahidullah Jumazada said. The base is located on a vast swath of arid land surrounded by mountains.

Video footage showed military ambulances taking the dead and wounded to hospitals and cranes deployed to remove the debris from the site of the attack in the base. The ministry of defence gave a toll of 10 security personnel killed and seven wounded. The ministry is known to downplay tolls

in attacks against its forces.

No group has so far claimed the attack, and the Taliban who are fighting government forces have often not commented on deadly strikes since the peace talks commenced on September 12.

The Taliban have primarily targeted government forces in rural areas since signing a separate deal with Washington in February that paved the way for the withdrawal of foreign forces by May 2021.

The Pentagon said earlier this month that it would soon pull out about 2,000 troops from Afghanistan, speeding up the timeline of a full withdrawal. "Such terrorist attacks will create an atmosphere of fear, terror and pessimism among the Afghan people and will harm the peace process," said Abdullah Abdullah, who is leading the overall peace process in Afghanistan.

"The increase in violence is not acceptable to people... and runs against the peace process, negotiations and reconciliation." The Ghazni attack comes just days after two bombs killed 14 people in the historic city of Bamian, ending years of calm in the isolated town famous for its ancient Buddhist heritage. —AFP

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Yannis Plakiotakis

GREEK MINISTER IN HOSPITAL WITH COVID-19

Athens, Nov. 29: Greek Merchant Navy Minister Yannis Plakiotakis was admitted to hospital on Saturday suffering from coronavirus, he said on social media.

The 52-year-old politician had announced on Tuesday that he had tested positive the day before. In a statement he had said he planned to remain at home for the time being.

Greece is battling a second wave of the pandemic with a general lockdown and its health system on its knees due to the number of patients on ventilators.

On Saturday, authorities announced a record death toll with 121 new deaths in 24 hours, raising the total death toll to 2,223.

The number of people in the intensive care units rose to 606.

Greek Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis on Saturday warned that "Christmas holidays this year will be very different". —AFP

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Scientists find the physics that unlocks dense memory storage capabilities

World's smallest atom-memory unit created

Houston, Nov. 29: Researchers have created the smallest memory device yet, an advance that may lead to faster, smaller, and more energy-efficient electronic chips for consumer electronics and brain-inspired computing.

The scientists from the University of Texas at Austin in the US also found the physics that unlocks dense memory storage capabilities for these tiny devices. In the research, published recently in the journal *Nature Nanotechnology*, the scientists reduced

the size of what was then the thinnest memory storage device, shrinking the cross section area down to just a single square nanometre. According to the researchers, getting a handle on the physics that pack dense memory storage capability into these devices enabled them to make the device much smaller. They said ultrasmall holes in the material provide the key to unlocking the high-density memory storage capability.

"When a single additional metal atom goes into

that nanoscale hole and fills it, it confers some of its conductivity into the material, and this leads to a change or memory effect," explained Deji Akinwande, a co-author of the study. Though they used the compound molybdenum disulfide — also known as MoS₂ — as the primary nanomaterial in their study, the researchers believe the discovery could apply to hundreds of related atomically thin materials. Smaller processors enable manufacturers to make more compact com-

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This means faster and smarter devices that take less power to operate, the scientists explained. The original device — dubbed "atomistor" by the researchers — was at the time the thinnest memory storage device ever recorded, with a single atomic layer of thickness.

However, shrinking the memory device is not just about making it thinner but also building it with a smaller cross-sectional area, they added. "The scientific holy grail for scaling is going down to a level

where a single atom controls the memory function, and this is what we accomplished in the new study," Akinwande said.

The new device falls under the category of memristors — an area of memory research, centred around electrical components with the ability to modify resistance between its two terminals without a need for a third terminal in the middle. According to the researchers, these can be smaller than currently used memory devices. —PTI

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BREXIT TALKS: FISHING RIGHTS TOP OF MENU

London, Nov. 29: Last-ditch Brexit trade talks continued in London on Sunday with fishing rights remaining an "outstanding major bone of contention," according to British foreign minister Dominic Raab. European Union chief negotiator Michel Barnier told reporters that "work continues, even on a Sunday," as he arrived for the second day of talks. Both warned that a deal could not be reached without concessions from the other party. —AFP

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DECCAN Chronicle

30 NOVEMBER 2020

Farmers have its ear, onus is on govt to find solution

The three laws the Union government has brought in with a claim to revolutionise Indian farming and emancipate the farmer seem to have failed to convince a large section of its potential beneficiaries. They have been on a warpath ever since the bills were introduced in parliament in September this year. And after having waited for months for an amicable solution, they have now reached the national capital, and made their voices heard in the corridors of power.

The Union government has been less than honest when it says it is ready to hold talks with the agitationists. Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar first offered to talk to them in October, but absented himself when they turned up. Defence minister Rajnath Singh, a former agriculture minister with a fair understanding of the sector, had also offered to mediate but nothing concrete emerged. At present, Union home minister Amit Shah has said the government was willing to talk but given the way Prime Minister Narendra Modi justified the pieces of legislation in his latest radio talk on Sunday, there is not much the government has decided to concede.

Agriculture in India, like it is the world over, is a highly protected enterprise. Governments support it in terms of subsidies for inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, finance and power, and for the purchase of the produce. The agriculture markets (*mandis*) and the minimum support price (MSP) mechanism that are in vogue in India offer the farmer some basic assurances: there will be a buyer and there will be a minimum price, so that he needs to fight a limited number of other uncertainties. In spite of them all, instances of farmer suicide are on the rise.

It is in this context that the three laws, which, in effect, undermine both agriculture markets and the MSP, should be seen. The laws allow the farmer to sell to any one, and allow anyone to purchase, with no upper limits. It also legalises contract farming. Instead of revelling at the new freedom, the farmers are petrified by the possibility of the entry of the big corporates, at present legally stopped, into the scene and hence the protests. They fear that the corporates will chase out the mandis and once they vanish, the government could also withdraw from the scene. Since the laws provide for no MSP, they will be at the mercy of the big players. And that's how the farmers' primary demand for legal protection to the MSP system gains credence.

The NDA dispensation has its own ways of dealing with protesters, and it has demonstrated it while addressing issues created by note ban, introduction of the Goods and Services Tax, passing of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and hollowing out of Article 370 of the Constitution. One way was to portray the protesters as troublemakers and anti-nationals. It's unlikely to work this time around, for it's the farmer who feeds the nation who is there on the other side. So, the government better address their legitimate demands and come out with a solution.

Iran killing: Trouble for Biden

The Iranians have pointed fingers at Israel for the targeted killing of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, thought of as the father of their nuclear programme. There is also speculation that it could be the United States playing tricks in the dying stages of the Trump presidency or using Israel as the hitman. Either way, it was a foolish and a dangerous move that can lead to unsettling consequences in an already volatile region, whose purport is to queer the pitch for the incoming president, Joe Biden.

The assassination and its fallout can bring satisfaction to only three entities: President Trump, Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu and the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Salman, who have been conspiring to strike blows at Iran under the overall umbrella of the flawed and failed Trump administration policy of bringing "maximum pressure" against Iran, possibly with a view to achieving regime change or Iran's military destruction. There is also a fourth entity, the Xi Jinping regime in China which last month signed a massive investment deal with Tehran. Whether this fructifies or not is conjecture, but it does offer the Chinese considerable leeway in unsettled West Asia at the expense of the US.

A justly angry Iran has threatened that it would retaliate. It would be well advised to be extremely measured in response, instead of causing a military opening up. The incoming Joe Biden team would also do well to calm nerves in Tehran, using balancing words. The killing by the Americans of Major General Qasem Soleimani, the head of Iran's nuclear weapons programme, this January did not bring Iran to heel or cause it irretrievable loss. The recent killing of a famous nuclear scientist is not likely to reverse Iran's nuclear weapons programme, should Tehran head in that direction. The Iranian nuclear project is too well-grounded for that.

To curb this programme in return for ending crippling US and Western sanctions, the previous Obama administration had signed a comprehensive agreement with the regime of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in 2015, which President Trump scuttled in 2018. That has led Iran to raise its enrichment capacity eight times. For the incoming Biden administration, the key to stabilising West Asia lies in diplomacy, not militarisation.

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Skand Tayal

Are 'virtual' summits of any real use?

November has seen India's participation in five virtual summits, starting with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on November 10 and ending with G-20 on November 22, with the Asean-India on November 13, East Asia Summit on November 14 and Brics on November 17. The raison d'être of summits is to enable the principals to interact in person, enabling them to cogitate over matters of vital importance collectively, bilaterally and sometimes off the record informally. But a virtual meet over electronic waves addressing images of fellow leaders is an entirely impersonal platform. The question arises: does such virtual summits serve any useful purpose.

Virtual summits do serve two objectives. One, to clear the annual calendar of meetings so the chain of summits remains unbroken; and the second, it enables countries to articulate their priorities and float fresh ideas to collectively address regional and global challenges.

In the summits, the primary focus was on the Covid-19 pandemic and ways to contain the virus and revive economic growth. India highlighted its efforts to support many nations by supplying medicines and medical equip-

ment. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to help make the Covid vaccine "accessible and affordable to all nations" was well received. With India's recognised capacity to produce vast quantities of vaccines, this commitment is serious and will make a palpable difference to the mission of vaccinating billions of people at an affordable cost.

At the SCO meet chaired by Russia's Vladimir Putin, Mr Modi stressed the importance of "reformed multilateralism" to meet the expectations of the world battling the social and financial impact of the Chinese virus. It was a wise call as nation states have no alternative but to work together. But the structures, processes and philosophy of both the concept of multilateralism and its practice across different institutions have a crying need for reform.

At the SCO summit Mr Modi expressed India's firm commitment to regional peace, security and prosperity and against terrorism, illegal weapons, drugs and money laundering. India has high expectations from the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent under the auspices of the SCO and recently sent an officer to work with RATS.

On November 12, Mr Modi addressed

the Asean-India summit hosted by the Vietnamese Prime Minister. In his brief remarks, Mr Modi focused on the centrality of Asean in India's "Act East Policy" and noted the importance of "a cohesive, responsive and prosperous Asean" for India's Indo-Pacific vision. The choice of words is notable. Under Chinese pressure on economically vulnerable countries like Laos and Cambodia, the 10 Asean members no longer speak with one voice on critical issues like Chinese expansionism in the South China Sea. Asean, as a group, has also not been sufficiently proactive and responsive in meeting the multiple challenges posed by the pandemic.

Progress on physical connectivity between Northeast India and Thailand through Myanmar has been tardy, that prompted the PM to stress the importance of digital connectivity with Asean. The unpalatable reality is that huge investments on development of roads or multi-modal network between East India and Asean have little economic justification or even local demand from businesses or communities. It is an endeavour solely driven by strategic and diplomatic logic and must be financed by India without any expectations of significant returns.

In East Asia, issues of common con-

cern include Chinese intrusion in SCS and terrorism. Both India and Asean leaders noted "the importance of promoting a rules-based order in the region, including via UNCLOS". However, China's shadow looms large on the region and the Code of Conduct for SCS being negotiated with China is likely to be a toothless document of pious intentions.

As Mr Modi spent Diwali with Indian soldiers at Longewala, Rajasthan, the East Asia Summit on November 14 was attended by external affairs minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar. On SCS, Mr Jaishankar did not mince words and expressed concern about "actions and incidents that erode trust in the region". In keeping with India's restraint in multilateral fora, he refrained from naming China for its transgressions.

The Brics summit on November 17 was chaired by President Putin. This group of emerging large economies has lost much of its sheen and cohesion with tensions between India and China and economic stress in Brazil and South Africa. The leaders did make their statements which are unlikely to have much impact or outcome. Brics summits are rarely noticed by any international observer outside those

from the member countries. If the India-China confrontation continues, Brics may also go into slow oblivion as the already-forgotten IBSA.

The G-20 summit hosted by Saudi Arabia was devoted to an "inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery" from the pandemic. Mr Modi emphatically proposed a shift of emphasis from mere growth to the welfare of human beings. His call for talent, technology, transparency and trusteeship will resonate widely in distant capitals. On terrorism, the G-20 declaration supported the FATF to combat money laundering and terror financing. Ironically, China's Xi Jinping urged all to bridge their differences through dialogue and resolve disputes through negotiations!

It is fair to conclude that virtual summits are ritualistic with forgettable outcomes. Even in normal times, most summit declarations are long and verbose, lacking focus and urgency. In the post-Covid world, it might be useful to revisit the ever-growing culture of summitry, clinically examine their usefulness and inject fresh energy into the process.

The writer is a retired diplomat and has served as India's ambassador to Uzbekistan and South Korea

Subhani



New Delhi tries to reset its ties with neighbours



K.C. Singh

The six months of lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic followed by a gradual reopening of international travel has seen diplomacy transition from virtual meetings on e-platforms to calibrated in-person contacts. Multiple events with geopolitical impact are compelling diplomats to scurry for meetings. One, the new US President assumes office on January 20, 2021, despite the misleading fulminations of incumbent Donald Trump. Pending this, all major nations are reassessing their policy options. Two, China is trying, after signing a confidence-boosting 15-nation trade agreement (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership), to wean away or pressure America's allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific and Europe before the Joe Biden administration fills the strategic vacuum.

For India, the first is a lesser hurdle than the second. While continuity is expected in the positive trajectory of India-US relations under President Biden, a renewed emphasis on human rights and democracy may present the Indian government with a challenge as it maintains or even sharpens its majoritarian agenda in coming state elections. But Chinese actions require close monitoring as the military standoff at the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh persists into winter. Senior Chinese diplomat and state councillor Yang Jiechi was in South Korea in August and then in Myanmar, Spain and Greece in September. He arrived in Sri Lanka on October 9, promising Chinese assistance for infrastructure, including building of the Colombo Port City and upgrading of Hambantota port. Meanwhile, the Imran Khan government in Pakistan in September

decided to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan to a full province, signalling to China that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) running through it had a more assured legal status.

Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi swung through Japan and South Korea on November 24-25 to apparently woo them before President Biden unveils his Indo-Pacific strategy.

South Block naturally also stepped up its diplomatic engagements to respond to these two and other developments. While external affairs minister S. Jaishankar was on a six-day tour of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Seychelles on November 24-29, foreign secretary Harsh V. Shringla was in Nepal on November 26-27. Separately, national security adviser Ajit Doval was in Sri Lanka on November 27-28 for the fourth Trilateral Maritime Security Cooperation meeting of India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Relations with Nepal have been testy since India inaugurated in May a new road in the Kalapani sector, providing easier access to Mansarovar in China. Nepalese Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, while beleaguered in an internal political battle with rival Communist Party group, picked the territorial issue to rally his party and nation. China was no doubt delighted by the friction as it ratcheted up its military posture in Ladakh. Indian Army Chief Gen. M.M. Naravane visited Nepal to maintain the old tradition of close relations between the two militaries. In a peculiar followup, the head of the Research and Analysis Wing, India's external intelligence agency, made a high-profile visit, including a call on the Nepalese PM and the Opposition leader. The foreign secretary's visit was thus well prepared and expected to further soften the Nepalese. A border

working group meeting, which the Nepalese sought as a condition precedent to resumed bonhomie, was conceded. Mr Shringla also proposed an infrastructure and connectivity plan to counter the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative from the north. Nepal is a vital buffer between India and China and geographically and culturally more integrated to the Indian south than the Chinese north.

In Colombo the NSA, Mr Doval, had the more complex task of balancing Chinese gains in Sri Lanka after the recent electoral triumph of the wily and nationalistic Rajapaksa clan, with the brothers occupying the top two posts. Ironically, since the initiative's creation, domestic politics in Sri Lanka and the Maldives has brought to power governments closer now to China and India respectively, the reverse of the earlier situation. Thus, while in the Maldives the Solih government is more than thrilled to welcome Indian investment even in lieu of Chinese offers, in Sri Lanka the Rajapaksa clan is leaning towards the Chinese, opportunistically balancing Indian and American overtures as that allows it freedom to pursue its nationalistic and majoritarian agenda domestically. It may find Mr Biden and his team is less tolerant of its domestic politics than the Trump administration. The BJP's desire to make a dent in Tamil electoral politics would also have to be balanced against majoritarianism at home and reticence over how minority Tamils are treated in Sri Lanka.

Before Mr Jaishankar arrived in the Gulf, US secretary of state Mike Pompeo was making his farewell visits to Israel, the United Arab Emirates and finally Saudi Arabia, where he arranged a meet-

It was surprising the minister chose to visit only nations aligned with the US in the Gulf and those with recently established relations with Israel

ing between Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the Red Sea town of Neom on November 22. I had tweeted at the start of his visit that hopefully no adventurous move was being planned against Iran, to create a diversion, as a desperate President Donald Trump ran out of legal and populist tricks to overturn the US presidential election results. On November 27, in an apparent Israeli operation, endorsed perhaps by the US and even the Saudi-UAE alliance, Dr Mohsen Fakrizadeh, a top Iranian nuclear scientist and high-level officer of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, was killed. This was an attempt to limit the Biden administration's options in dealing with Iran. Hopefully, the Iranians are smart enough not to be immediately provoked. But their pent-up anger over the earlier killing of Gen. Qasem Soleimani in a US drone attack and now this provocation can explode at some stage.

Mr Jaishankar's visit to Seychelles was important as the new LDS government of President Waud Ramkalawan, the priest-grandson of an immigrant from Bihar, has been opposed to Indian naval concessions. However, it was surprising the external affairs minister chose to visit only nations aligned with the US in the Gulf and those with recently established relations with Israel. In the case of Bahrain, there was some justification as the death of long-serving Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa needed condoling. But overall, the optics seemed insensitive to the fissures in the Islamic world caused by Trumpian diplomacy. It would limit India's options with Iran and other Islamic nations opposed to US-Saudi-Emirati actions. It would perhaps have been better to wait till the Biden administration had begun fixing the Trumpian mess.

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

LETTERS

FARM LAWS

The Centre is clearly on the back-foot with reference to the new farm laws that are being opposed by those who are most affected: the peasants. The bone of contention is MSP which is not guaranteed in the law — although not totally removed (*At best, farm laws pass reform buck to big biz, DC, Nov. 29*). Pawan Verma's contention seems to be reasonably correct. The Centre should guaranteeing MSP — no less.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

LOVE JIHAD

Kudos to the UP government and CM Yogi Adityanath for bringing in the Ordinance against Love Jihad. But will it stand legal scrutiny for possible violation of fundamental rights?

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

AHMED PATEL

The demise of Ahmed Patel has undeniably left a deep void in the Congress (*Despite defeat, Rahul vac was on track, DC, Nov. 29*). His role as a crisis manager was exceptional and unequalled. He has the wherewithal of acceptance, patience and neutrality to work out a peace deal. It remains to be seen who can step into his shoes and deliver results?

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

India must make atom bomb: Vajpayee

By a staff reporter
NIZAMABAD, Nov. 29
Mr. ATAL BEHARI VAJPAYEE, Chairman of the Bharateeya Jana Sangh, strongly pleaded that it was essential for India to manufacture atom bomb. He said that he had received information that Pakistan was getting ready for another attack on India. He said that China, Russia and America were giving arms to Pakistan, which would certainly be used against our country. To protect the country and to counter the possible attack by Pakistan, India should sufficiently equip herself with army, arms and ammunition. No one would come to rescue the country at the time of a crisis.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	44,149.72	-0.25
Nifty 50	12,968.95	-0.14
S&P 500*	3,638.35	0.24
Dollar (₹)	74.03	-0.19
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.84	-0.12
Euro (₹)	88.14	-0.23
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,142▼43	0.008
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	48.04	0.24
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.911	0.039
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.852	-0.026

* As of Friday/Saturday

US, UK & Oz top mkts for Indian sellers on eBay

The US, the UK, mainland Europe and Australia are the top markets for Indian sellers that are exporting products through cross-border e-commerce on eBay's platform. Indian sellers have been witnessing strong demand across categories like apparel, fine jewellery, toys, auto parts and accessories and home decor, especially during the holiday season (Thanksgiving to New Year's), eBay India country manager Vidmay Naini said.

HSBC considers exit from US retail banking



HSBC Holdings PLC is considering an exit from US retail banking, according to a news report by the Financial Times. In the coming weeks, senior managers will outline the plan to the bank's board. They are also likely to suggest reducing investment banking activities to concentrate on international clients with a focus on Asia and the Middle East. A full exit from the US is no longer being considered.

Infibeam gets NCLT nod for demerger of biz

Fintech firm Infibeam Avenues Ltd (IAL) said it has received NCLT, Ahmedabad's approval for the demerger of its various entities, including SME e-commerce service and e-commerce business units. Under the 'composite scheme of arrangement', IAL had sought to demerge its SME E-commerce and the E-commerce marketplace businesses to Suvaidha, while theme park and event business will be vested to DRC Systems.

China needs 4.7% growth to reach 2035 GDP target

A Chinese official said the country's average annual growth needs to reach 4.73 per cent to achieve a 2035 target of doubling the size of its economy. China has the conditions to meet the goal, said Yang Weimin, deputy director of an economic committee under the top political advisory body. President Xi Jinping said recently that it is "completely possible" for China's economy to be twice the size by 2035.



■ Steep fall in gems & jewellery exports mar H1 figures

Trade balance with UAE turns deficit from surplus

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, NOV. 29

A drastic drop in exports has reversed India's trade balance with the UAE from surplus to deficit.

While India saw the trade balance improving with most of the major trading partners, including China, the US and the UK due to import reduction, the balance deteriorated with the UAE. From a trade surplus of \$510 million during April-September 2019, the trade slipped into a deficit of \$1.6 billion in the first half of the current fiscal.

The main reason behind the deterioration was the decline in exports. Exports to the UAE took a severe beating of 55 per cent, dropping from \$14,942 million in April-September 2019-20 to \$6,738 million in the first half of the current fiscal, as per the data from the Federation of Indian Export Organisations.



Since the imports from the UAE stood at \$8,376 million, India registered a trade deficit of \$1,637 million.

While the decline was evident across most of the product categories, export of gems and jewellery was the highest contributor to this. Gems and jewellery exports to the UAE contracted 86.7 per cent from

\$5,063 million between April and September 2019 to \$673 million in the first half of the current fiscal, finds the Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council.

Jewellery traditionally accounts for nearly a third of India's exports to the UAE, which dropped to a meagre 4 per cent during April-September 2020. A

large chunk of exports to the UAE happens through the Cochin Special Economic Zone. Cochin SEZ, which had exported \$3,268.90 million worth gems and jewellery in the first half of last year, saw a drop of 99.28 per cent to a meagre \$23.65 million in the first half of this year.

Exports of ready-made garments too declined 42 per cent during January-June this year to \$606 million against \$1,045 million during the year-ago period.

"Dubai is the largest trading hub in the UAE and almost 70 per cent of the shipments reaching Dubai are meant for re-exports to other markets. The re-exports were almost closed from Dubai due to the pandemic and hence the exports have fallen drastically," said K. Unnikrishnan, deputy director general, Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

PSU general insurers asked to cut flab, rationalise branches

New Delhi, Nov. 29: The finance ministry has asked public sector general insurance firms, especially National Insurance, Oriental Insurance and United India Insurance, to rationalise branches and cut down avoidable expenses to improve their financial health, sources said.

Earlier this year, the Union Cabinet decided to halt the merger process of the three state-owned general insurance companies due to their weak financial positions and the government, instead, approved



fund infusion of Rs 12,450 crore to help them meet required regulatory parameters. The finance ministry has asked

these companies to cut the flab by rationalising branches and rein in other avoidable expenses like guest houses, etc, the sources said.

Besides, the companies have been asked to expand their business through the digital medium.

As part of the capital infusion exercise, the government approved raising the authorised share capital of National Insurance Company Ltd to Rs 7,500 crore and that of United India Insurance Company Ltd and Oriental Insurance Company Ltd to Rs 5,000 crore each.

Deemed GST registrants face physical verification

New Delhi, Nov. 29: The CBIC has asked field offices to carry out physical verification of premises of businesses which have been granted deemed GST registration between August 21 and November 16 to ascertain that they have genuine business or intend to carry out so.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has also asked taxmen not to grant GST registration on deemed basis in cases where the applicant has not opted for Aadhaar authentication or the authentication has failed.

Current provision under goods and services tax (GST) law allows for deemed registration upon completion of 21 days of application if the proper officer has not issued any notice within the 21 days.

The CBIC, in its instruction to field offices, said that data suggests that during the period from August 21 to November 16 deemed registrations have been granted in many

cases where Aadhaar authentication has not been opted for or has failed.

"These registrations granted on deemed basis require verifications to ascertain that they have genuine business or intends to carry out so," the CBIC said while issuing standard operating procedure (SOP) for carrying out physical verification of persons who have been granted deemed registration.

During the physical verification, the officer, among other things, would verify that in case the applicant intends to carry out manufacturing activity, the capital goods, if required for the said manufacturing activity, have been installed.

The officer would also verify electricity connection, bills paid in the relevant period, size of the premises whether it is commensurate with the activity to be carried out by the applicant.

— PTI

From small biz to farmers, middle India is driving demand

ADITI SHAH &
RAJENDRA JADHAV
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI,
NOV. 29

Manish Mehra, owner of Washex Hospitality, an industrial laundry service, recently flew from Delhi to Jodhpur to win a contract to service a large, government-run hospital. "For a new relationship it is essential to know each other before you can establish the trust and confidence to work online and that need is higher in case of government departments," said Mehra, who had to stay for a week in a Jodhpur hotel.

Increased demand for air travel and hotel stays by small business owners like Mehra, accompanied by a rise in rural incomes and spending after two good monsoons, is helping the pandemic-hit Indian economy slowly recover.

Government data released on Friday showed the economy shrank 7.5 per cent in the July-September quarter, performing better than analysts' expectation of an 8.8 per cent contraction.

Annual growth of 3.4 per cent in farm sector and 0.6 per cent in manufacturing during the September quarter has raised hopes of an early recovery and some service sectors such as trade, hotels and transport contracted at a much slower pace compared with the April-June period.

Farmers, benefiting from a bumper crop, are lapping up tractors while demand for personal vehicles, due to a lack of public transport and the need for safer travel options, has boosted sales of cars and motorcycles.

There has also been an uptick in goods and services, tax collections and higher energy consumption.

A recovery is taking shape and it has been led by the manufacturing sector, which has moved from near annihilation in the July quarter to rebound mode, said Yuvika Singhal, an economist at QuantEco Research.

"Until there is a stronger recovery in high contact service sectors, which make up 60 per cent of the GDP, agriculture and manufacturing are expected to

AirAsia India says not exiting but expanding

Mumbai, Nov. 29: Budget carrier AirAsia India plans to add three more Airbus A320 neo planes by June next year as part of its fleet and network expansion.

The airline—a joint venture between Tatas and Malaysia's AirAsia Investment Ltd—currently has 32 aircraft, including two A320 neos inducted recently.

In a statement to PTI, an AirAsia India spokesperson said the airline had signed an agreement for inducting five A320 neo planes last year.

The Bengaluru-based airline took delivery of the first A320 neo in October and another one earlier this month.

"We will be inducting our third Airbus A320 neo in December and we look forward to inducting our fourth and fifth A320 neo by June 2021," the spokesperson said in the statement.

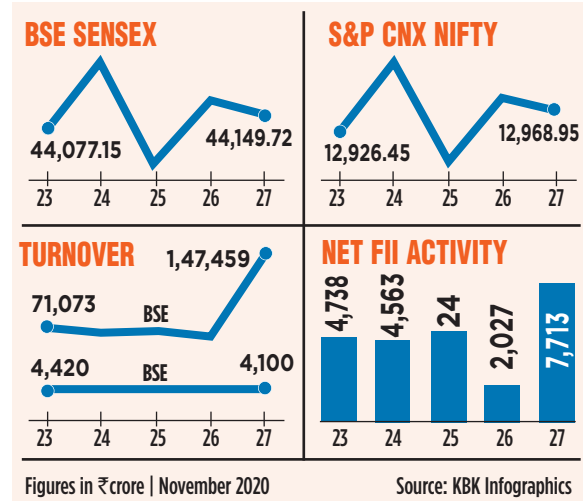
The statement was issued in response to the queries sent to the airline's managing director and chief executive officer Sunil Bhaskaran.

On Nov. 17, Malaysia's AirAsia Berhad had said it was reviewing its investment in AirAsia India. Against this backdrop, there have also been concerns about the domestic airline.

Indicating that AirAsia India is on an expansion path, the airline's spokesperson said it is planning to scale up the capacity to 70 per cent from 55 per cent at present.

—PTI

GDP data, auto sales seen as key triggers for market



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, NOV. 29

The second quarter GDP data that exceeded the market expectations may accelerate the broader market rally seen last week when the market opens on Tuesday after the long weekend, said analysts.

A record Rs 60,358-crore buying by the foreign portfolio investors in November has seen the market closing at record highs. The futures & options rollover for the Nifty-50 index at 77 per cent and the Nifty Bank Index at 79 per cent remains positive, though profit taking by domestic institutions has also been quite large in November.

The market is closed on Monday on the occasion of Gurunank Jayanti.

S. Ranganathan, head of research, LKP Securities, said, the contraction in GDP at 7.5 per cent was ahead of the market expectation, which was assuming a contraction of

9 per cent. Two-wheeler demand, he said, was robust and so was cement demand. Smart Investors were anticipating this, which was evident in the sharp up-move of over 5 per cent in the Nifty Midcap 50 and over 6 per cent up-move in the Nifty Smallcap 100 for the week. "The data is in line with Q2 earnings and commentary put out by several corporates," he added.

Nomura India said, "India's GDP growth rose to a better-than-expected -7.5 per cent year on year in the second quarter, a sharp rebound from the lockdown-induced decline of 23.9 per cent in the first quarter... On a seasonally adjusted basis, we estimate that GDP rose by an impressive 21 per cent quarter on quarter, almost reversing the 24.3 per cent fall in the April-June quarter."

November auto sales numbers and RBI policy announcement scheduled for later in the week would also impact the market.



carry the growth," said Singhal, adding that India is still growing on a lower GDP base and it will take more than a year to recover lost output.

A string of Marriot hotels in industrial towns like Sriperumbudur, Visakhapatnam and Nasik are operating at 50 to 60 per cent occupancy, with the bulk of guests working with domestic manufacturing companies, said Ashish Jakhanwala, CEO of hospitality firm Samhi, which owns the properties.

But Samhi's hotel in Bengaluru that mainly depends on large corporates is filling only 20 to 30 per cent of rooms.

"Demand from large corporates and international travel will take longer to recover. Hotels catering to public sector and infrastructure companies are

doing better," said Jakhanwala.

Since the end of May, when the government lifted a ban on flights, monthly domestic passenger traffic has more than doubled from 2 million in June to over 5 million in October. But that is still down from about 12 million a year ago.

India's biggest carrier IndiGo and rival Vistara are seeing an uptick in business travel but to a much smaller extent than before.

"Much of it is from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) or small business owners who cannot afford to sit at home," said Vinod Kannan, chief commercial officer at Vistara.

SMEs have contributed to a 35 to 40 per cent recovery in hotel bookings compared with pre-Covid times and between 27 and 32 per

cent recovery in flights, according to online travel agency MakeMyTrip.

In the hinterlands, the impact of Covid-19 has not been as severe as in the big cities and farmers have benefited from good rainfall for two consecutive years, leading to a bumper harvest and adequate conditions for winter-sown crops. This is driving up sales for tractor makers like Mahindra & Mahindra.

Lack of adequate and safe public transport in small towns and villages has also pushed up demand for cars and motorcycles.

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest carmaker, had a 10 per cent growth in rural sales between July and September versus a 4 per cent rise overall, led by small, entry-level models, said Shashank Srivastava, executive director, marketing and sales.

"While Bharat is leading India in terms of a recovery, it cannot carry India," he said, adding that steady, long-term demand will depend on improving economic factors, growing incomes and a rebound in urban markets.

— Reuters

CAUGHT | IN COVID

Output from shale wells typically declines in a matter of months, so new ones need to be drilled

Pandemic has broken shale and left oil markets in Opec hands

KEVIN CROWLEY,
DAVID WETHE &
SHEELA TOBBEN
NOV. 29

Opec's oil ministers have a few challenges to consider at a crucial summit on Monday, but for the first time in years the shale boom won't be at the top of the list.

A devastating global pandemic and a reckoning with Wall Street appear to have broken the resolve of the shale wildcatters who turned the US into the world's biggest oil producer. Years of breakneck growth, at the expense of crude kingpins in the Middle East and Russia, have come to an end. If there was ever any doubt, it's now abundantly clear who has the upper hand in the global oil market.

"In the future, certainly we believe Opec will be the swing producer - really,

totally, in control of oil prices," Bill Thomas, chief executive officer of EOG Resources Inc, the biggest independent shale producer by market value, said earlier this month. "We don't want to put Opec in a situation where they feel threatened, like we're taking market share while they're propping up oil prices."

The shale industry's prudence, also echoed by the CEOs of Pioneer Natural Resources Co and Occidental Petroleum Corp, means that production will probably flatten after a steep plunge this year. US oil output will end 2020 close to 11 million barrels a day, about the same as it is now, according to forecasters IHS Markit, Rystad Energy, Enverus and the US Energy Information Administration.

"I see no more growth until 2022, 2023, and it will



be very, very light in regard to the US shale industry ever growing again," Pioneer CEO Scott Sheffield, who'll run the fourth-largest shale operation in the country after his company completes the takeover of Parsley Energy Inc, said in an interview.

That will surely come as a relief to Opec and its allies.

At the start of 2020, the group's efforts to control prices were facing increasing difficulties. The breakthroughs in horizontal drilling and

fracking that ushered in the shale revolution made it look as though US production growth might never end. Output surpassed 13 million barrels a day for the first time in February.

Then Covid-19 hit, people around the world stopped driving and flying, and the oil market crashed. President Donald Trump brokered a historic deal with Opec in April to remove almost a 10th of global production from the market. He said the US contribution would come in the form of market-driv-

en cuts.

That pledge was delivered faster than most predicted, and it made a huge difference. Investors who were already tiring of the shale industry's cash-burning spree retreated from the sector, and several producers went bankrupt. Before the summer was over, US output had collapsed by 3.4 million barrels a day, almost the same as removing the United Arab Emirates at peak production. Output from shale wells typically declines in a matter of months, so new ones need to be drilled and fracked just to maintain production at current levels. A recent uptick in drilling and fracking doesn't seem to be enough to ensure production growth.

Since hitting bottom in the summer, the number of rigs searching for crude in shale fields has increased

by 69 to 241 last week, according to data from Baker Hughes Co. That's still down from 683 in March. Similarly, the number of fracking crews in the once vibrant Permian Basin straddling Texas and New Mexico has increased to 63, an improvement from a meagre 20 in June, data from Primary Vision Inc. show. But that's less than half the 146 teams that were pumping mixtures of water, chemicals and sand into wells in January to release oil from shale rock in the area.

It's as though the US suddenly went from being a thorn in Opec's side to being an unofficial member of the cartel's alliance with Russia and other producing nations. Since June, benchmark US oil prices have been remarkably stable, hovering around \$40 a barrel, and

that's how Opec likes it.

While shale's retreat has made Opec's life easier, for the US oil industry it's been brutal. There have been 43 bankruptcies of exploration and production companies this year through October, according to a report from law firm Haynes & Boone.

Shale may be down but it's certainly not out, though. The US is still an oil superpower, and will remain so for years to come. And there's always the possibility that higher prices will get explorers drilling and fracking relentlessly like before. A sustained price rise to \$50 a barrel will "trigger growth again," according to Bernadette Johnson, vice president for strategy and analytics at Enverus. At \$60 a barrel, US shale will come back strongly, she said.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Tyson draws in comeback fight

Los Angeles: Mike Tyson's return to boxing at age 54 ended in a draw with 51-year-old Roy Jones Jr. on Saturday in an eight-round exhibition battle of former heavyweight champions. Fifteen years after retiring with a 2005 loss to journeyman Kevin McBride, Tyson made his comeback at Staples Center in Los Angeles without spectators in a pay-per-view matchup that mixed curiosity and nostalgia. California State Athletic Commission officials required two-minute rounds instead of the usual three-minute rounds, mandated larger than normal 12-ounce gloves, said neither fighter could seek a knockout and declared there could be no official winner in safety moves for the over-50 fighters. "Sometimes that two minutes felt like three minutes," Tyson said. — *AFP*

Hami revs up to win Bahrain GP

Sakhir, Bahrain: Lewis Hamilton powered to victory at the Bahrain Grand Prix on Sunday in a race overshadowed by a horrific crash for French driver Romain Grosjean. Briton Hamilton, crowned world champion for a record-equalling seventh time last time out in Turkey, held off the Red Bulls of Max Verstappen and Alexander Albon to claim his 95th F1 win. The race was delayed after Grosjean survived a frightening collision with a barrier on the opening lap. He was taken to hospital with suspected fractured ribs and burns to his hands and feet after his crash which was followed by another accident that saw Racing Point driver Lance Stroll rescued from his overturn car. Lando Norris came home fourth ahead of his McLaren teammate Carlos Sainz with Pierre Gasly taking sixth for Alpha Tauri. — *AFP*

Five-star Man City hammer Burnley

London: Man City shrugged off their problems in front of goal by hitting five past Burnley for the fourth consecutive clash between the two at the Etihad. Pep Guardiola's men had scored just seven goals in their previous seven league games, but Riyad Mahrez's early double opened the floodgates. Benjamin Mendy made it 3-0 before half-time and Ferran Torres got his first Premier League goal before Mahrez completed the scoring and his hat-trick. Victory propelled City to within six points of Liverpool at the top of the table with a game in hand. Later, Everton boss Carlo Ancelotti was reduced to tears before his side's 1-0 loss to Leeds as respects were paid to Diego Maradona before all Premier League games this weekend with a minute's applause. — *AFP*

Messi pays tribute to Maradona

Barcelona: Lionel Messi paid tribute to Diego Maradona by stripping off his Barcelona top to reveal the Argentina great's shirt after he scored the final goal of a 4-0 rout of Osasuna on Sunday. Messi celebrated his powerful strike from outside the box to cap the comfortable victory by taking off Barcelona's blue-and-burgundy to bare the red-and-black of Maradona's shirt from his stint at Newell's Old Boys. Messi then blew a kiss with both hands to the sky as he looked up. Messi played for Newells before he joined Barcelona at age 13. Maradona played five matches for Newell in 1994 near the end of his glorious playing career that made him a legend in his home country. Messi had kept his head bowed during the minute of silence before kickoff at the Camp Nou for Maradona. — *AP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

Lanka Premier League: Dambulla vs Jaffna from 3 pm on Sony Six

WWE

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

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INDIA FALL FLAT

Oz crush Kohli's men in 2nd ODI for unassailable series lead

Sydney, Nov. 29: Australia buried India under an avalanche of runs for a 51-run drubbing in the second one-day international and an unassailable 2-0 series lead after the majestic Steve Smith produced another master-class in the form of a 64-ball 104 here on Sunday.

Batting first, Australia rode on five fifty-plus scores including Smith's blazing knock, to post an imposing 389 for four against a sluggish India.

This was the Australian run-machine's fifth century against India in the 50-over format and second on the trot after his ton in the series-opener, which came off 66 deliveries.

A target of 390 proved to be too much for India as they were stopped at 338 for nine, with captain Virat Kohli (89) and K.L. Rahul (76) finishing as their main contributors in what turned out to be another forgettable outing for the beleaguered visitors.

India started the big chase in earnest with the in-form Shikhar Dhawan (30) and Mayank Agarwal (28) dealing in boundaries from the onset.

If Agarwal found the fence twice in the first over, Dhawan struck Mitchell Starc for three successive fours to get the Indian innings going.

A magnificent cover drive by Agarwal took the visitors past 50 in 6.1 overs. However, in trying to go for one too many, Dhawan perished.

In came Kohli and as he has mostly done through his illustrious career, the Indian captain played some delightful shots on the way to his 87-ball innings to keep the visitors in with a chance.

During his stay in the



Australia's Steve Smith celebrates his century against India during the second one-day international at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday.

middle, Kohli pulled, drove, flicked and cut with plenty of success as India tried to keep the required rate within 9-10 runs per over. But pacer Josh Hazlewood provided Australia their biggest breakthrough when he had Kohli caught brilliantly by a diving Moises Henriques at midwicket.

That brought Hardik Pandya in the middle and the all-rounder, in the company of Rahul, played some big shots. But they were never going to be enough.

— *PTI*

FACTFILE

- Australia recorded their highest total against India by making 389/4 in 50 overs in the second ODI on Sunday.
- The hosts previous best was 366/8 in 50 overs in the first match of the series at the same ground. Overall, it is the third-highest total by any team against India in the ODIs.
- Steven Smith recorded third fastest hundred for Australia by completing 100 runs off 62 balls during his 104-run knock.

— *S.PERVEZ KAISER*

SCORECARD

Australia: D. Warner run out (Shreyas Iyer) 83, A. Finch c Kohli b Shami 60, S. Smith c Shami b Hardik Pandya 104, Marnus Labuschagne c Mayank Agarwal b Bumrah 70, Glenn Maxwell (not out) 63, Moises Henriques not out 2. Extras (lb-2, nb-1, wd-4) 7. **Total (For 4 wkts, in 50 overs) 389.**

FoW: 1-142-1, 2-156, 3-292, 4-372.

Bowling: M. Shami 9-0-73-1, J. Bumrah 10-1-79-1, N. Saini 7-0-70-0, Y. Chahal 9-0-71-0, H. Pandya 4-0-24-1, R. Jadeja 10-0-60-0, M. Agarwal 1-0-10-0.

India: Mayank Agarwal c Carey b Cummins 30, Virat Kohli c Henriques b Hazlewood 89, Shreyas Iyer c Smith b Henriques 38, K. L. Rahul c Hazlewood b Zampa 76, Hardik Pandya c Smith b Cummins 28, Ravindra Jadeja c Maxwell b Cummins 24, Navdeep Saini (not out) 10, Mohammed Shami c and b Maxwell 1, Jasprit Bumrah lbw b Zampa 0, Yuzvendra Chahal (not out) 4. Extras (nb-2, wd-8) 10. **Total (for 9 wkts, in 50 overs) 338.**

FoW: 1-58, 2-60, 3-153, 4-225, 5-288, 6-321, 7-321, 8-326, 9-328.

Bowling: M. Starc 9-0-82-0, J. Hazlewood 9-0-59-2, P. Cummins 10-0-67-3, A. Zampa 10-0-62-2, M. Henriques 7-0-34-1, G. Maxwell 5-0-34-1.

89, Shreyas Iyer c Smith b Henriques 38, K. L. Rahul c Hazlewood b Zampa 76, Hardik Pandya c Smith b Cummins 28, Ravindra Jadeja c Maxwell b Cummins 24, Navdeep Saini (not out) 10, Mohammed Shami c and b Maxwell 1, Jasprit Bumrah lbw b Zampa 0, Yuzvendra Chahal (not out) 4. Extras (nb-2, wd-8) 10. **Total (for 9 wkts, in 50 overs) 338.**

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Kohli blames bowlers for blooper

Sydney, Nov. 29: India skipper Virat Kohli had no qualms conceding that the visitors were outplayed by a confident and ruthless Australia in the series-deciding second ODI here on Sunday, pinning the blame on the ineffective and inconsistent bowling by his side.

"We were completely outplayed. I think with the ball, we were not that effective, we didn't hit the areas that we wanted to consistently and they have a strong batting line-up, they know the conditions and the angles well," Kohli said at the post-match presentation.

Chasing Australia's 389, India finished at 338 for 9 with Kohli (89) and K.L. Rahul (76) being the top-scorer.

"Look at the scoreboard, we got 340 and still fell short by 50 odd, so the chase always felt steep and we knew one or two wickets would take the required rate to up to 13, 16 and so we had to keep hitting," the India skipper said.

"They took the chances that they created in the field, which was the difference, otherwise it



Captain Virat Kohli en route to his 89 against Australia during their second ODI in Sydney on Sunday.

would have been a much closer game."

"...Credit to them, they bowled much more consistently and used the dimensions well."

Kohli said the two catches which led to his and Shreyas Iyer's (38) dismissal were the "defining moments" of the game.

"Me and KL (Rahul) were talking if we stick around till 40-41 (overs), even 100 in last 10 overs with Hardik to come, it was game on, that was the

game plan but the two catches that they hung on to were the defying moments," he said.

A pleased Australia captain Aaron Finch said his bowlers took some lessons from the way Pandya bowled.

"Moises bowled really well defensively including his cutters, and as Virat said, we got a bit of a blueprint from Hardik, by taking the pace off the ball," Finch said after the match.

PANDYA BOWLS FOR FIRST TIME IN OVER A YEAR

Sydney, Nov. 29: All-rounder Hardik Pandya bowled in top-flight cricket for the first time since returning from a back surgery more than a year ago, with his team under pressure against Australia during the second ODI here on Sunday.

Two days ago, after the first ODI, Pandya, who has remodelled his action to reduce the stress on his body, said he would bowl in the "important" games and only when the time is right.

Pandya bowled a good first over too, conceding just five runs against a rampaging Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne.

In his second over, Pandya gave away just four runs with the Australians finding it difficult to put away his slower balls.

— *PTI*

Rithvik named in India chess side

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

International Master R. Raja Rithvik has been named in the Indian Under-16 team for the World Youth Rapid Online Chess Championship to be held from December 11 to 13.

Rithvik, a Class XI student at Bhavan's Sri Ramakrishna Vidyalaya in Sainikpuri, Hyderabad, made the cut by virtue of being reigning sub-junior national champion and in due recognition of his achievements at international level.

Rithvik, with a FIDE Rating of 2408, has been undergoing coaching at RACE Chess Academy under N.V.S. Rama Raju.

During the pandemic situation, Rithvik won prizes in several online championships such as Indian Junior Chess League,



Raja Rithvik

International Yoga Day Online Championship, Tehsil Cup Online Blitz Championship, Hannibal Online Chess Tournament, Leelavathi Open Blitz Championship etc.

Rithvik achieved his first GM Norm in Ellobregat International Open 2019 at Spain and needs two more GM Norms to become Grand Master.



Winners of the Diego Maradona U-15 football tournament pose with the trophy at Sky Kings grounds in Bowenpally.

Rao Nagar wrest Maradona event

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

B. R. Rao Nagar (Old Alwal) defeated Shed Lines (Yapral) 1-0 to win the Diego Maradona Memorial U-15 Football Tournament held at the Sky Kings Grounds in Bowenpally.

Sathwik scored the all important goal through a solo effort to help his side take the top honours in the six-team tournament.

Avinash of Shed Lines Team was adjudged Player

of the Tournament. Former captain of the Indian team Victor Amalraj, who was the chief guest, distributed the prizes.

Addressing players at the presentation ceremony, Victor recalled that he had played against the Argentina national team which was without Maradona in the 1984 Nehru Cup, which India had lost 0-1. The same Argentina team won the FIFA World Cup in 1986.



Indian Davis Cup player Saketh Myneni (second from left) and IPS officer and sportsman C. V. Anand (centre) pose after inaugurating the Hyderabad Open Tennis Association seniors tournament at Surya Tennis Foundation in Bowenpally, Hyderabad. The tournament will be played under the auspices of All India Seniors Tennis Association.

CA's latest endeavour to fight racism will go a long way



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

Before the start of the first One Day International starring India and hosts Australia, the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) saw a square brown patch surrounded by players from both teams. The teams had formed a "Barefoot Circle" to support the anti-racism movement and acknowledge the culture of the indigenous 'First Nations People' of Australia.

With this gesture, Indian sport formally became part of an off-shoot of the famous 'Black Lives Matter' (BLM) movement that has enveloped the

world, ever since the murderer of a young Black man was acquitted by a court in Florida, USA in 2013.

BLM entered cricket's portal when the members of the English and West Indian teams took a knee before play in the first Test between England and West Indies at the Ageas Bowl earlier this year.

Famed Windies pacer and commentator Michael Holding's thoughts on racism went viral melting many hearts. Windies skipper, Jason Holder had regretted that his plea to make BLM a part of the Indian Premier League

went unanswered.

On a personal level, the 'Barefoot Circle' moment felt good and satisfying. The noble gesture took me back in time to a small, but significant, incident that had occurred when I toured Australia as a member of the Cricket Club of India (CCI) team in 1982. The CCI team had toured across the sporting nation, making friends and playing hard cricket.

At a banquet, my ex-wife got into a conversation with a lady guest whose patronising attitude had been flagged off by one of our hosts. The conversation, which revolved around India and it's mystique had expected questions like: "Are your roads full of cows?" Or: "You speak good English, where did you learn the language?" Suddenly, the chat turned a bit icy when the lady asked if "the caste

system was still followed in India?" Unperturbed, my ex-spouse replied: "The country's been working on it ever since we became independent."

She then took out an imaginary "sword from the scabbard" and asked: "Where are the indigenous people of Australia? How come we haven't seen a single one ever since we landed". The lady was last seen retreating to the farthest corner of the banquet.

Embarrassed, our host mentioned that people like her (the lady) were few and far between, only to be reassured that it was no big deal for us Asians, having dealt with many such loose cannons who were condescending.

From then, Australia has crossed many bridges to combat racism. In 2008, their Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered a

public apology to their indigenous people, accepting the "blemished chapter in our nation's history." Cricket Australia's latest endeavour will go a long way in reiterating their nation's desire to achieve socio-economic parity among all citizens in a multi-cultural environment.

Social activism in sport has a long history with legendary sportspersons like sprinter Jesse Owens, tennis aces Arthur Ashe and Martina Navratilova, NFL's Colin Kaepernick and many others making statements about a cause they believed in while taking on a flawed system. Sport has an immediate emotional connect with the masses. What then would be a better platform for anyone to put forth their opinions and beliefs?

Sportspersons have been putting forth the causes

for a social change using their stature and getting their message across to the masses that followed them. The definition of social activism is simple: It's an 'intentional action' with the goal of bringing about change in society. For any kind of social activism to succeed, the 'real' intentions of the activist(s) need to be pure and unadulterated.

For many years now, the Australian cricket team has been sporting pink uniforms to raise awareness for breast cancer. Past masters like Owens, Kaepernick and many others stood up for what they believed to draw attention and change perceptions.

In 2017, Deloitte, a global consulting firm, had forecast trends in the world-wide sports industry. One of the predictions was that questions about enabling, managing, or redirecting

athletes in social activism will require strategic decisions by teams and leagues. The words — teams and leagues — matter most when it comes to modern times. While movements like BLM, Barefoot Circle and many other humanitarian and/or social issues need to be taken up and exposed, there may be others that would mask a hidden agenda fuelling a selfish need of people controlling the sport.

For a country like ours, where sports stars are given godly status, managing social activism while donning national colours will be imperative as we go forward.

We have seen many good social causes morph into ones whose ends are driven by salacious commercial or political agendas. And therein lies the danger.