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ANANTAPUR | FRIDAY | 30 OCTOBER 2020



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Labour Party suspends Corbyn

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3 shuttlers stuck in Germany after Covid scare



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Pak brags about Pulwama attack

Islamabad, Oct. 29: In a boast that is bound to further embarrass Paki-stan and bolster India's repeated assertions of cross-border terrorism, a senior Pakistani minister on Thursday admitted that Pakistan was responsible for the Pulwama terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir in 2019 that killed 40 CRPF personnel and brought the two countries to the brink of a war.

“Humne Hindustan ko ghus ke maara (We hit India in their home). Our success in Pulwama is a success of this nation under the leadership of Imran Khan. You and us... are all part of that success,” Pakistan's science & technology minister Fawad Chau-dhry said in the National Assembly during a debate.

Mr Chaudhry, a close aide of Prime Minister Imran Khan, made the remarks to counter Opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Ayaz Sadiq's claim made a day before in a speech in the National Assembly that

● **PML-N LEADER** Ayaz Sadiq said ‘legs were shaking and forehead perspiring’ at a meeting of Pakistan's top leaders, including Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, wherein foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi pleaded to release IAF Wing commander Abhinandan Varthaman, saying if he was not released, India would attack Pakistan.

Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi had at an important meeting last year pleaded to release IAF Wing Commander Abhinandan Vart-haman, who was captured on February 27, 2019, after his MiG-21 Bison jet was shot down. “India was not planning to attack... They just wanted to kneel before India and send back Abhinandan.” Mr Sadiq said that Prime Minister Imran Khan had skipped the high-level meeting.

— Agencies

Work on 16 med colleges to start

Aarogyasri will cover 2,000 diseases in all districts, says CM at Nadu-Nedu

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 29

The state government is to start the process for construction of 16 new medical colleges in the state and treatment of 2,000 ailments under Aarogyasri across the state.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said this while conducting a review meeting on Nadu-Nedu in hospitals in his camp office at Tadepalli on Thursday.

He said that treatment of 2,000 diseases is currently covered under Aarogyasri in seven districts. From November 13 this facility

SCHOOLS, COLLEGES IN AP FROM NOV. 2

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 29

The state government has decided to reopen all educational institutions on November 2 by putting in

place all protocols. Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney issued modified guidelines for reopening.

■ **Page 3: Schools to run on alternate days**

would be provided to the remaining six districts. He said that tenders processes for the new medical colleges would start in November in a phased manner and would be completed by January.

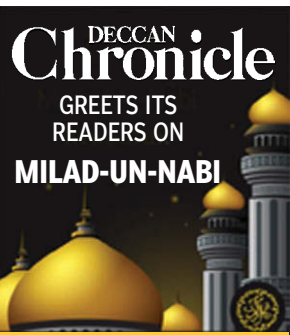
Jagan Mohan Reddy said that the state government would be spending ₹17,300

medical colleges, development of village clinics, primary healthcare centres, community health centres, area hospitals and district-level hospitals. Reiterating that all the hospitals should have better medical facilities, he said that there will be no compromise on the quality of infrastructure or the services being provided in hospitals. He stated that hospital authorities should be accountable and responsible in all aspects and directed them to ensure that all facilities are in place and make sure that patients should experience the feel of corporate

hospitals. He said that there should not be any complaints on sanitation or other facilities.

He instructed the authorities to study best practices in the construction of hospitals and implement them in the state. In addition to these, he also stressed on following environment-friendly initiatives and setting up of green buildings. He directed the authorities to immediately release ₹5,472 crore for revamping the existing hospitals under the Nadu-Nedu.

■ **Page 2: Ward secretariats to act as referral centres**



WEATHER

Max: 34.0°C
Min: 19°C
RH: 42%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Cloudy sky. Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 34/19 °C

COVID-19
COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+50,326)	(+553)
80,81,917	1,21,049
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+1,504)	(+5)
TS: 2,36,656	1,324
(+2,905)	(+16)
AP: 8,17,679	6,659

CASES AROUND THE WORLD	
4,51,20,686	
DEATHS	
11,83,386	
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES	
215	
worldometers.info/coronavirus	

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Nija Ashwayuja Shuddha Chaturdasi till 5.45 pm
Star: Revati till 2.56 pm
Variyam: Nil
Durmuhurtam: 8.34 am to 9.20 am; 12.22 pm to 1.08 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
HJRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Awwal 12, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.31 am
Zohar: 12.26 pm
Asar: 4.28 pm
Maghrib: 6.05 pm
Isha: 7.21 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.08 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.25 PM
MOONSET 2.51 AM
MOONRISE 1.05 AM

COUNTER POINT



Not IPL, they were betting on polls!

SHORT TAKES

Remittances down 9%: WB

Washington: The World Bank on Thursday said remittances to India would fall this year by nine per cent to \$76 billion due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and global economic recession. India followed by China, Mexico, the Philippines, and Egypt continue to be the top five countries in 2020 to receive foreign remittances, the World Bank said in its latest report. As the Covid pandemic and economic crisis continues, the amount of money migrant workers send home is projected to decline 14 per cent by 2021 compared to the pre-Covid levels in 2019, according to the latest estimates published in the World Bank. Remittance flows to low and middle-income countries are projected to fall by 7 per cent to \$508 billion in 2020.

INSIDE

■ **STATE... PAGE 2**
AP Police clinch majority awards at national level

Seema project needs nod: NGT

D. SIVA RAMI
REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, OCT. 29

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) Southern Zone, directed the AP government not to proceed with the proposed Rayalaseema lift irrigation project (RLIP) without submitting the detailed project report before the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB). The Union ministry of Jal Shakti had given this direction as it would impact sharing of Krishna waters between Telangana and AP.

Pronouncing the judg-

ment on Thursday — the orders were reserved on September 3 — on the application filed by one Gavinolla Srinivas, the NGT said it had prima-facie found that there is a component of irrigation envisaged in the project, which requires prior environmental clearance (EC). Without this, the state government is not entitled to proceed with the project. The bench observed that the RLIP involves building canals from Sangamithram to Muchumarri of about 4.5 km.

■ **Page 3: Tribunal: Project for drinking water, irrigation**

AP SELLS ONIONS AT ₹40 PER KG THROUGH RYTHU BAZAAR OUTLETS

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, OCT. 28:

Even as consumers are bearing the brunt with the price of onions hitting the roof, relief has come to them from the state government, which has managed to bring the price to ₹40 per kg through special counters at Rythu bazaar outlets across the state. With people rushing to their nearest Rythu bazaars, the price of bulbs has started dipping slowly in the open market.

The onion price was barely ₹25-30 a kg in the open market last month. However, it shot to ₹130-150 per kg in the market at present. The gap in the demand and supply is said to be the reason for the hike in onion prices.

The loss of its crop in Maharashtra, the principal supplier of onions to the country, due to rains, has resulted in the steep hike in prices. This gap is usually filled by the smaller size onions produced in Kurnool district.

However, the production was limited in the district year due to rains.

Noticing the high prices, the agriculture marketing department has opened special counters at Rythu bazaars across the state and started selling the bulb at ₹40 per kg. “We have got 25 tonnes of onions for Chittoor and 10 tonnes for Tirupati. Each consumer is being given one to two kg of onion at a subsidised price of ₹40,” K. Indumathi, assistant director (marketing), Chittoor district said.

SECURE | LINE **App said to be safe from spies**

Indian Army to ‘talk’ over its in-house app

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, OCT. 29

The Indian Army has developed a mobile messaging app similar to “WhatsApp” for secure voice, text and video calling.

This app will be used within the Army to keep communications secure and was named “Secure Application for Internet” (SAI).

“The application supports end-to-end secure voice, text and video calling services for Android

platforms over the Internet. It is quite similar to commercially available messaging apps like WhatsApp, Telegram, GIMS and SAMVAD, and uses end-to-end encryption messaging protocols,” the Army said.

It said SAI scores on security features with local in-house servers and coding which can be tweaked as per requirements.

“The process for filing Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), hosting the infrastructure on NIC and

working on an iOS platform is currently in progress,” it said.

Defence minister Rajnath Sin-gh complimented the Army for developing the app.

The Indian Army has initiated several steps to prevent any attempts at online snooping by the spy agencies of other nations.

Earlier this year the Army asked its officers and jawans to immediately delete their Facebook accounts and barred them from using some 88 other apps.

PUSHKARAM | FESTIVAL **Kurnool municipality letting sewage into river without scruples**

Dip in Tungabhadra poses health risk

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL OCT. 29

If you dip in the Tungabhadra river near Kurnool during the Pushkarams beginning from November 20, chances of sludge and the sewage of Kurnool city being thickly dissolved in the waters can not be ruled out.

Kurnool Municipal Corporation (KMC) has been letting out the sewage into the Tungabhadra river without any guilt for

the past several decades. The six lakh population of the Kurnool city has been prodding the civic body to regulate sewage and treat it properly but to no avail. Besides, the upstream industrial effluents is an added pollutant.

KMC is gearing up for Pushkarams at about eight ghats in its jurisdiction, said D.K. Balaji, KMC Commissioner. Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, he said that the civic body would be constructing public conveniences near the

bathing ghats and take care of providing drinking water and sanitation. Tenders have been called for and the deadline set is November 14. “We are doing all that is in our control to expedite the process and provide maximum facilities to the visiting public during the Tungabhadra Pushkarams between November 20 and December 1,” he added.

When asked why the KMC could not streamline the sewage facility in Kurnool which is aspiring

to be a judicial capital, he said that it has been neglected over the past years and that he has been trying to find a solution to this. “I have already sent a detailed project report to the Union Government to release Rs 342 crores under Swachh Bharat scheme. If this project is grounded, Kurnool will get the funds in a phased manner like the Rajahmundry municipality,” he said.

He further said KMC is working out a scheme to divert sewage to a well

built and not allowing it to get mixed up with the river waters. He, however, said that such a temporary mechanism was made even during 2008 Pushkarams.

An advocate in Kurnool recalled how he got scabies, itching, and dermatological complications after enthusiastically dipping in the Tungabhadra river during the previous Pushkaram season and was apprehensive that it is going to be a double whammy for pilgrims as the threat of Covid looms.

Isro gets ready for EOS launch

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, OCT. 29

The Indian Space Research Organisation is gearing up to launch India's workhorse Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) at 3.02 pm on November 7, weather permitting, from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) Sriharikota Range (SHAR), in Nellore district. This will be its first launch in about a year.

In its first mission in 2020 and 51st overall, the rocket, numbered PSLV-C49, would inject into space, an earth observation satellite, EOS-01, along with nine international customer satellites.

All activities in the spaceport and various centres of ISRO had come to a halt following the outbreak of Covid-19. The proposed launch of the geosimaging satellite Gisat-1 onboard GSLV-F10 on March 5 was postponed due to technical reasons.

Operations to launch PSLV-C49 commenced on a small scale by following Covid-19 protocols at SHAR in August and the scientists decided to go ahead with the launch of EOS-01.

The EOS-01 will provide data for applications in agriculture, forestry and disaster management support. The customer satellites are being launched under commercial agreement with NewSpace



Work on assembling of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C49) is in progress at the first launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota range, Nellore district.

India Limited (NSIL), department of space.

Due to the Covid-19 norms in place, the viewing gallery will be closed during the ensuing launch. Media personnel will also not be invited for the launch which will be telecast on the ISRO website, Youtube, Facebook and Twitter.

SHORT TAKES

VRO gets 2-yr jail, ₹10k fine for graft

Vijayawada: An ACB court convicted a village revenue officer to two years rigorous imprisonment and imposed fine of ₹10,000 in Kurnool on Thursday. According to ACB authorities, Thalari Pullarao, 51, while working as VRO at Madhavaram village of Pyapili mandal in Kurnool district, demanded a bribe of ₹10,000 from complainant Mutha Lakshmi Narayana for the issue of passbooks in his name and also in the name of his wife, his younger brother and his sister-in-law for a land of 21.03 acres. Based on the complaint, the ACB sleuths booked a case and caught the VRO red-handed while accepting the bribe on March 20, 2017. Finally, the ACB court convicted the VRO by awarding the sentence of two years RI.

REGISTRATION FOR MED/DENTAL COUNSELLING TOUGH

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 29

Some students who secured All India Rank in NEET UG 2020 are facing difficulty for online registration on the official website of Medical Counselling Committee.

Though the MCC announced to commence online registration for counselling for allotment of seats to pursue medical and dental first-year courses in various colleges from October 27, it failed to begin due to some technical grounds. However, as the counselling started on October 28, some students were finding it difficult to access the website and register for counselling for varied reasons.

A student from Vijayawada complained about the difficulty in opening up of the MCC website to register while some students complained about registration for counselling.

JAGAN TO HOIST TRICOLOUR ON AP FORMATION DAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 29

The AP government issued orders to conduct AP formation day celebrations following the Covid-19 protocol on November 1.

Chief secretary (political) to government Pravin Prakash issued orders on Thursday. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy would hoist the national flag at 9 am on November 1 inaugurating AP Formation Day celebrations at CM's Camp office in Tadepalli and would pay floral tributes to the image of Amarajeivi Potti Sriramulu. Also district in-charge ministers, ministers and Collectors would celebrate AP Formation Day in their respective districts.

Governor B.B. Harichandan would participate in the AP Formation Day celebrations at Rajbhavan in Vijayawada.

WARD SECRETARIATS TO ACT AS REFERRAL CENTRES

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, officials informed that the tenders for medical colleges in Paderu, Piduguralla, Machilipatnam and Pulivendula will be finalised by the end of November, and for Bapatla, Narsapuram, Eluru, Anakapalli, Markapuram, Madanapalle and Nandyal medical colleges by December.

For Vizianagaram, Rajahmundry, Penikonda, Amalapuram and Adoni medical colleges the tenders will be finalised by January. All these works will entail an expenditure of ₹7,500 crore.

On Aarogyasri referral programme, the Chief Minister stated that village/ward secretariats will be acting as referral centres till the establishment of YSR Health Clinics. He stated that the list of empanelled hospitals has to be displayed at all secretariats and the health assistant or ANM will be guiding the patients in receiving treatment from the best hospital.

As the Aarogyasri programme will be made available in the remaining six districts from November 13, the Chief Minister directed the authorities to add any treatment or procedures to the list if necessary.

Health minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas, Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney and other officials were present on the occasion.

Police Band performs



AP Police Band performs at Swaraj Maidan during Police Commemoration Day programme in Vijayawada on Thursday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

AP Police clinch majority awards at national level

State cops bag 18 of 28 awards, no other state touched double-digit

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 29

The AP Police department, which bagged 48 Skoch awards on Wednesday, once again dazzled on Thursday by winning 18 of the total 28 Governance Now India Police Awards-2020. This is another record as no other State had a double-digit tally.

The awards are given in recognition of those who have made the greatest contribution to public service with innovative use of technology.

In the first stage, the awards summit identifies officers who are ringing in innovative changes in the police department using technology and elects them as key speakers.

Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat state have won two awards each while Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Telangana State had to be content with one each.

Out of 18 awards, AP police headquarters won seven awards, followed by Anantapur and Prakasam po-

lice, one each by East Godavari, Guntur Urban, Kadapa, Kurnool, Srikakulam, Vijayawada and Vizianagaram. The AP Police won awards for Disha mobile App, AP police Seva, drone with audio announcement, digital health, house quarantine App, Disha integrated crime scene management, body-worn camera screening, implementation of house quarantine monitoring, high alert, Girijana Mitra programme, RRR programme, implementation of telemedicine, Kurnool fights corona, project TATA, Spandana and Parivartana, e-beat system, integrated crime prevention and monitoring centre with emergency response solutions and assurance with endurance service with sacrifice initiatives.

Prakasam Police was selected for Spandana & Parivartan and TATA (Training & Activities for Technology Adoption) projects.

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy congratulated AP Police department for their excellence at the national level. He sought AP Police to render good services to people. Prakasam SP, Siddharth Kaushal, was one of the key speakers from across the country selected for the awards summit.

As part of the summit, the SP said on Thursday that in Spandana, com-

plaints received online were disposed of on a war-footing even during the corona outbreak.

As part of Parivartan, reception centres at all police stations have been set up to educate the staff about technology and to provide quick solutions besides conducting training on the behaviour with the public. "Similarly, as part of the TATA project, training is given to everyone from the home guard to the Additional SP to enhance technical skills as there is a shortage of technically qualified personnel in the department," Kaushal added.

The SP said that the budget for the police department is low and steps should be taken to provide faster services to the public using low-cost technology and to increase skills of all staff so that everyone can acquire knowledge about technology.

He said that he was happy to receive the awards as they stand testimony to the proficiency of Prakasam district police.

HM: WILL USE TECHNOLOGY TO TACKLE DISASTERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRIKAKULAM/
VIZIANAGARAM, OCT. 29

Home minister and deputy chief minister Mekathoti Sucharita said the government would use technology extensively to prevent accidents and mitigate the situation during disasters.

Talking to reporters after inaugurating additional buildings at the fire station in Visakhapatnam on Thursday, the home minister said that the State Disaster Relief (SDR) officials served the people for 22 days non-stop during Titli cyclone and recently rescued and rehabilitated people in East and West Godavari and Krishna districts during the floods. Apart from preventing human loss, the SDRF personnel also saved the livestock.

"Some of our personnel were also sent to Kerala and Hyderabad during floods to carry out rescue and relief operations," she said.

The home minister presented merit certificates to the fire service personnel BJDS Prasant Kumar, K. Srinu Babu, Durga Reddy, P. Rambabu, Rajasekhar and P. Chakradhar.

New tourism policy soon, says minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, OCT. 29

The government will soon release a new tourism policy for the State, said Minister for Tourism Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao, at the CII Andhra Pradesh Tourism Conclave here on Thursday.

Delivering the keynote address, the minister said tourism in India has grown by leaps and bounds over the years, with each region contributing something to its splendour and exuberance. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) organised an Andhra Pradesh Tourism Conclave themed "Restarting Tourism and Hospitality Sector — Andhra Pradesh as most preferred Destination" in the digital mode.

The minister felt that Andhra Pradesh has the distinction of being a leading tourism destination in India and is presently the third most visited State in terms of domestic tourism.

In view of Covid-19, Andhra Pradesh will continue to promote the state domestically to attract more number of tourists. It is a microcosm within itself — offering unmatched tourism potential to investors and tourists, he added.

Highlighting the major strengths of Andhra Pradesh tourism, which includes beach and water-based, eco-tourism, Buddhist, religious, heritage, spiritual, wellness and medical, the minister stated that the government is to soon release a new tourism policy to attract greater private investments.

Vinod Zutshi, former secretary-tourism, and president, New Tourism Foundation stated that

● **THE MINISTER** felt that Andhra Pradesh has the distinction of being a leading tourism destination in India and is presently the third most visited State in terms of domestic tourism.

● **IN VIEW OF Covid-19**, Andhra Pradesh will continue to promote the state domestically to attract more number of tourists.

Andhra Pradesh could take the lead in re-start operations of tourism. He said that the state has great locations based on coastal advantage, eco-tourism and pilgrimage tourism.

Zutshi advocated a state-level tourism investors' summit, which would create a platform for investors about new avenues of opportunities.

AP Tourism Development Corporation managing director Pravin Kumar said the sector has been contributing significantly to the State's GSDP. He stated that the government has put the required Standard Operating Protocols (SOP) to resume tourism operations. Post-Covid, digital platforms have emerged as viable options to market the tourism strengths, he said.

Dilip Puri, founder-CEO of Indian School of Hospitality said that AP has the advantage of beautiful rivers, hills and forests, which would provide scope for new concepts of tourism with emerging new normal scenarios. He felt that the State has multiple tourism products to offer at the pan India level and emphasised that there was a need to build capabilities and skill development in the tourism sector.

Botsa hits out at Naidu on housing

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, OCT. 29

Minister for municipal administration, Botsa Satyanarayana, lambasted opposition leaders over the large-scale corruption in TIDCO housing during the TD regime and for obstructing the state government's initiatives in court.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, Satyanarayana criticised TD supremo, N. Chandrababu Naidu, for failing to sanction houses meant for the poor during his term and said TD leaders have looted huge amounts in the name of houses for the poor. The previous government had laid the foundation for only three lakh houses despite the union government sanctioning seven lakh houses.

"Out of three lakh houses, 2,62,216 reached the basement level while only 81,040 houses came up to 90-95 per cent work done and in 71,488 houses only 20-40 per cent work was done in the five-year term of TD. Although not a sin-

gle house was distributed to the poor, Naidu left a debt of ₹3,200 crore to TIDCO contractors," Satyanarayana said.

The previous government had fixed ₹2,000 per sq ft, for providing a house in 300 sq ft and charged over ₹2.6 lakh from the poor. For houses in 345 sq ft and 430 sq ft, beneficiaries were asked to pay ₹3.25 lakh and ₹4.65 lakh. Though the price per square foot is only ₹1200, the TD government charged over ₹2,000 and pocketed all the money, without even clearing bills to the contractors or completing a single house, Satyanarayana added.

Seeing the plight of the poor, Chief Minister, Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, during his pada yatra, decided to give 30 lakh houses free of cost, along with the TIDCO houses. Spending ₹600 crore, the state government completed all the pending houses and geared up for distribution.

However, TD leaders approached the high court and stalled the distribution of house pattas.

YSRC HAS NO RIGHT TO QUESTION SEC: TD

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 29

Leader of opposition in AP legislative council, Yanamala Ramakrishnudu, on Thursday expressed surprise over the changing statements of YSRC leaders on the con-

duct of local body elections in Andhra Pradesh.

He claimed that the YSRC leaders have no right to question the authority or jurisdiction of a constitutional and autonomous institution like the state election commission (SEC).

Tribunal: Seema project for drinking water, irrigation

From Page 1

The project will need evacuating the canal for about 22 km from the pump house delivery system to the Srisaillam Right Main Canal (SRMC). It concluded that though AP was projecting it as a scheme to augment drinking water requirements for the drought-hit Rayalaseema, the purpose appears to be to enhance utility of the water for irrigation as well.

The NGT further said that this will change the manner in which water will have to be lifted even as the project shed the gravity method for the lift pumping system.

The Tribunal said that such a mechanical device, which, according to AP, is not sufficient to draw the allocated water and to reach the optimal use of allocated water from the Srisaillam project. So it

● **THE NGT** said that though AP was projecting it as a scheme to augment drinking water requirements for the drought-hit Rayalaseema, the purpose appears to be to enhance utility of the water for irrigation as well.

cannot be said that there is no diversion/change in the project as claimed by AP. If that be the case, then it cannot be said to be a scheme for drinking water purposes but rather a combined project for drinking water as well as for irrigation purposes, the Tribunal concluded.

It said that there is a change in the methodology of drawing water and they want to enhance the capacity of the existing canals by providing additional canals/diversion canals and also by widening the existing canals. It is pertinent to note

that the Ministry of Jala Shakti had earlier opined that RLIP does not require environmental clearance because it is not a new one and does not involve addition in the cultivable command area (CCA). The change of stand was taken by the Union ministry of Jala Shakti after the TS government strongly objected to it.

The Tribunal bench, headed by Justice K. Rama Krishna (judicial member) and Sibal Dasgupta (Expert member), weighed the contentions raised by the Telangana state government which argued that the existing project passes through a wildlife sanctuary and some protected eco-sensitive zones. If there is any expansion by providing additional canals or widening the canal, it could affect those areas and further appraisal on those aspects would be required.

SIRIMANU | FEST

Urmila says she and her mother were offended when they were told to leave the Fort

Utsav kicks up fresh row in Gajapati Raju family

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, OCT. 29

The Tuesday's Sirimanu Utsav set the ball rolling for a fresh feud between the MANSAS chairperson Sanchaita Gajapati Raju and her sister Urmila Gajapati Raju.

Urmila is the daughter of Sudha Gajapati Raju, third wife of Ananda Gajapati Raju and Sanchaita, the eldest daughter of Ananda's divorced wife and former MP Uma

Gajapati Raju.

Urmila told the media on Thursday that she and her mother were offended while they were watching the Sirimanu Utsav from the entrance of the Fort. The police on the instruction of the chairperson asked them to leave the Fort, she said.

She went on to add that they were the legal heirs of the Ananda Gajapati Raju and Sanchaita lost all her rights after her mother divorced her father and a

settlement was made concerning the property.

"A registered will executed by my father Ananda Gajapati Raju gave my mother and me all the rights over the property," she told the media persons while narrating all the irregularities that were committed by Sanchaita Gajapati Raju.

Stating that Urmila's allegations were false, Sanchaita Gajapati Raju told this correspondent on Thursday evening that it

was customary since the venue was the Fort, the Chairperson MANSAS and her guests were allotted the first row to witness the ceremony.

There were no invitations and even Ashok Gajapati Raju stayed citing the Covid-19 pandemic, Sanchaita said.

"However some extended family members walked in without prior intimation with an entourage of male chaperones and occupied the front two rows. Out of

courtesy, I let them sit and added a chair for myself and was flanked by the Executive officer and the Correspondent of MANSAS," Sanchaita said.

She said Urmila and her mother, who were sitting next to the EO watched the event for over 45 minutes and then left the venue but later informed the media that they were not given any seats and therefore left the festival midway. They claimed that since they

belong to the royal family they had to be given the respect shown to the Maharanis and Princesses.

Sanchaita said that all ceremonies belong to the people of Vizianagaram and feudal mindsets have no place in 21st century modern progressive democratic India, which is mandated by the principle of a government.

"All respect and due courtesy to the guests were given to Urmila and

her mother and her remarks of being humiliated because she had to sit next to the correspondent of the Trust is uncalled for. The correspondent happens to be heading the educational institutes, which is the primary mandate of the Trust," she said.

"The petulant behaviour of the young lady and her mother only underscores their arrogance, lack of empathy and insensitivity towards the common working class," she added.

OTHER STORIES

TD SAYS RULING PARTY LEADERS ENCROACHING LAND

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, OCT. 29

TD requests the government authorities to clear the government land encroachments made by the ruling party leaders in the district.

They said that YSRC leaders in the district were arbitrarily occupying government lands by force of authority.

The public was having trouble registering their lands on Web land. They said there was an endless delay in taking action in their case.

However, the YSR Congress leaders were immediately registering the occupied lands online with their names. They alleged that some officials are said to be cooperating in this.

The TD politburo member Reddeppagari Srinivasa Reddy complained to the district collector on Thursday.

He requested the authorities to clear all the encroachments of government lands in the district.

SANITATION WORKER DIES AT WORK

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, OCT. 29

Tension prevailed in Revuru village in Anantasagaram mandal of SPSR Nellore district when a sanitary worker of village secretariat, Revuru Narayana, 55, collapsed and died while spraying bleaching powder in the village on Thursday.

Locals staged a protest blaming the 108 ambulance for the death while stressing that the worker would have been saved if the ambulance was on time.

The police, led by SI Subba Rao, rushed to the village and pacified the protestors.

They shifted the body of Narayana to the government hospital in Atmakur for post-mortem. The deceased is survived by three daughters and a son, the locals said.

UNIDENTIFIED GOONS ROB GOLD, CASH FROM HOUSE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, OCT. 29

Unidentified goons robbed ₹80,000 worth of gold jewellery and ₹10,000 cash from a house belonging to one Konda Hazarathi Reddy at Kapu Street in Kovur during the wee hours of Thursday.

According to the Kovur police, the accused gained entry into the house after breaking open the locks when the inmates were away from home and decamped with the gold ornaments apart from ₹10,000 cash.

The police have registered a case and are investigating.

VS UNIVERSITY BAGS ISO CERTIFICATION

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, OCT. 29

Vikrama Simhapuri University has received ISO 9001-2015 certification from HYM International Certifications Pvt. Ltd.

The representative of HYM International Certifications Mr Alapati Dibawah has handed over the certificate to the Vice-Chancellor Prof Rokkam Sudarsana Rao in the presence of water resources minister P. Anil Kumar Yadav and minister for Industries, Commerce, and Information Technology, Mekapati Goutham Reddy, Sarvepalli MLA Kakaani Govardhana Reddy was also present among others.

The certificate was awarded after a two-member committee visited campuses and verified the infrastructure.

₹3 CRORE WORTH 194 RED SANDER LOGS SEIZED

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, OCT. 29

Forest officials seized 194 red sander logs during a raid at Atmakur forest range on Thursday. They have also seized a van transporting the logs illegally following a tip-off. However, the smugglers managed to give a skip to the forest officials.

Divisional Forest Officer Y. Shanmukh Kumar has put the value of the logs at ₹3 crore as per the market price.

He said they are keeping a close watch on the forest areas to prevent smuggling of red sanders.

Jr colleges unprepared to reopen

Majority parents unwilling to send their wards to college fearing infection

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 28

Though the state government has announced the reopening of all educational institutions from November 2 onwards for the new academic year 2020-21 in compliance with Covid-19 protocols to avoid spread of the virus, majority of them are unprepared to do so as the official announcement has come at very short notice.

Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney announced here on Thursday the state government's decision to re-open all schools and colleges in both government and private sector from next Monday onwards.

Even as Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy

hinted about the date of reopening of educational institutions on November 2 earlier, no efforts were made to ready the institutions for reopening.

The managements of both the government and private junior colleges were caught off guard by the official announcement on Thursday. With October 30 being a public holiday due to Milan-un-Nabi and November 1 being a Sunday, they have just two days to prepare the educational institutions, taking up sanitisation and other requisite measures as per Covid-19 protocol to re-open on Monday.

The state has nearly 2,700 junior colleges with an intake capacity of 11 lakh students, including five lakh first year students. The board of inter-

SCHOOLS TO RUN ON ALTERNATE DAYS

From page 1

She said that schools will run on alternate days in three phases for which officials are making arrangements. She mentioned that Classes 9, 10, 11 and Intermediate first and second year would function on alternate days only for half-a-day and on a rotation basis.

mediate education is carrying out online admission for both first- and second-year intermediate courses from October 21 onwards and as the last date for online admission ended on October 29, it has been extended to November 6.

Out of nearly five lakh first year students in all

Ms Sawhney said that Classes 6, 7 and 8 will start functioning on a half-a-day basis from November 23. She stated that Classes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 will begin on December 14 and on alternate days and on half-a-day basis. She added that the same schedule would apply to all government schools and colleges.

colleges in the state, so far about one lakh have taken admission. Unless the admission of students is completed, it may not be possible to run the classes as the newcomers may miss the lessons as they arrive late. Moreover, majority of parents are unwilling to send their wards to the colleges

fearing that they may get infected with Covid-19.

In addition to that, the authorities in government colleges are supposed to clean up the class rooms and sanitise them and also come up with a plan of action as to how many students are to be accommodated in each class room, maintaining social distance to avoid the spread of the virus. They need a budget allocation for arranging sanitisers and also for daily sanitisation of classrooms.

The Board of Intermediate Education authorities maintain that they have even prepared an academic calendar and other schedules in strict compliance with Covid-19 protocol to ensure protection to students and staff from the virus.

WILD ELEPHANT TRAMPLES FARMER TO DEATH

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIZIANAGARAM, OCT. 29

A wild elephant trampled a 25-year-old farmer in Vizianagaram district. The deceased was identified as Y. Narayana. He was severely injured in the attack on Tuesday in Gumpa village under Komarada mandal in Vizianagaram district. He succumbed to injuries in KGH in Vizag on Thursday.

The herd of wild elephants wreaked havoc in Bangarampeta and few other areas by damaging the standing paddy, maize, cotton, and few other crops during the past few days.

The farmers are spending sleepless nights fearing attack and loss of life.

K. Samba Murthy of Komarada said that elephants entered into their villages a few days ago in search of food and water and damaged standing crops and few houses.

He said that they have been facing the elephant menace for the past few weeks, but none of the officials took measures to send the elephants into the jungle.

The farmers are gathering the courage to enter into their fields but are running away the moment they spot the elephants.

AMUL TO COLLECT MILK FROM 259 RBCs IN PRAKASAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, OCT. 29

Following an agreement with the AP state government, popular dairy products firm Amul would procure milk from 259 Rythu Bharosa Centres from November 25 in Prakasam district.

Managing Director of AP Dairy Development Corporation Ahmed Babu disclosed this during a review meet with officials in Ongole on Thursday. Referring to a survey carried out by Amul teams in 331 villages across Prakasam, he said farmers have been losing ₹5 to ₹10 for every litre. To prevent the loss and ensure profits, Amul would launch the collection of milk.

Decline in cases: Hospitals may resume regular services soon

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, OCT. 29

With new Covid-19 positive cases showing a decline, the Chittoor district's Covid-19 taskforce suggested the district administration to start relieving TTD guest houses, district hospitals and other Covid care centres from treating virus-infected patients and retain the TTD's Padmavathi Nilayam in Tiruchanoor near Tirupati as the main treatment centre.

The Covid-19 taskforce committee, led by Dy CM K. Narayana Swamy, state minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy along with district collector Narayan Bharat Gupta and other dignitaries on Thursday reviewed the Covid-19 situa-

tion in the district. Speaking at the meeting, Dy CM and panchayat raj minister advised the district administration to thoroughly assess the Covid-19 curve for the next 10 days and start resuming regular and emergency medical services at all government and private hospitals in the district. They also proposed to start to post Covid-19 out-patient services at the SVRR government hospital in

mercy. They all want to meet family members while wearing masks and following other Covid-19 protocols. It is said that meeting a person once or twice a month can bring some relief to those who suffer from loneliness.

Although it is possible to talk on the phone once every fortnight, it is not satisfactory to have so little time. They say that if they have the opportunity to talk directly, they will also have the opportunity to discuss family issues. Jail superintendent, Ravi Kiran, said the interviews would be conducted as per government norms.

AP records 2,905 new Covid cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 29

AP registered 2,905 new Covid-19 cases rising tally to 8,17,679 and 16 deaths taking toll to 6,659 in the last 24 hours. The authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin here on Thursday reporting that out of 88,778 samples tested, 2,905 individuals were found infected with Covid-19. Out of a total 78,62,459 samples tested so far in AP, 7,84,752 patients were discharged after recovery while 26,268

patients are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of Covid-19, West Godavari topped the state with 494 followed by 414 in East Godavari, 361 in Krishna, 359 in Guntur, 259 in Chittoor, 221 in Anantapur, 206 in Prakasam, 191 in Kadapa, 119 in Visakhapatnam, 96 in Nellore, 90 in Srikakulam, 70 in Vizianagaram and 25 in Kurnool.

With regard to cumulative confirmed Covid-19 cases, EG registered the highest number of 1,14,968.

₹50k investment in industries soon: Min

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, OCT. 29

Industries and IT Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy said that he would mobilise investments of Rs 50,000 crore in the industrial sector to the Nellore region in the next few years.

He was addressing a gathering after opening an electric sub-station along with water resources minister P. Anilkumar Yadav in Brahmanapalli village, the native of Mekapati family, in Marripadu mandal on Thursday. The two ministers also unveiled a statue of Dr Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy in the village.

Mr Goutham Reddy said that sub-stations are coming up in Varikuntapadu and Vengampalli villages apart from two more sub-stations

in Anantasagaram mandal.

Referring to the plans to establish an MSME Park in Udayagiri in addition to a similar park coming up in Atmakur segment, he said he is keen on removing the word 'backward area' in all parts of the state.

Expressing satisfaction over the abundant availability of water in Somasila and other reservoirs and tanks in the Nellore region, he promised to complete the works of Somasila High-Level Canal by 2022 with the cooperation of the Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and minister Dr Anilkumar Yadav.

During a visit to the ancient tank at Anantasagaram tank later, he said that he would develop the tank as a tourist attraction while directing the officials to prepare estimates.

Mangapuram temple annual fete from Nov. 11

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, OCT. 29

TTD will organise the annual *pavitrotsavam* of Lord Kalyana Venkateswara temple in Srinivasa Mangapuram near Tirupati in *Ekantham* (Solitude) from November 11-13 because of the Covid-19 restrictions.

As part of the annual festival, *Ankuravanam* will be held on November 10 at 7 pm with traditional rituals of *Matsagrahamam* and *Senadhipathi utsavam*.

The three-day *Agama* ritual, including temple cleansing and *punyahavachanam* (purification), is performed once a year to ward off any

vaidika lapses by either staff or devotees during festivals and *utsavams* in the temple.

On the first day of *pavitrotsavam*, *pavitra pratista* will be performed in the *Yagashala* and on the second day on November 12, *pavitra samarpana* will be observed in the afternoon, while on the last day, the annual *pavitrotsavam* concludes with *purnahuti*.

In view of the festival on all three days, *snapanam* *thirumanjanam* will be performed for the *utsava* idols of Lord Kalyana Venkateswara and his consorts. Similarly, *Asthanam* will be performed to the *utsava* idols every evening inside the temple.



Guntur Rural Police identifying child labour under Operation Muskan in various rural locations of Guntur district on Thursday.

— TEJO ROY ELETI

LOCKDOWN | WOES 750 inmates at Kadapa central jail wait for interviews

Prison inmates still denied mulakats

NAGESWARA RAO BALLEDA | DC
KADAPA, OCT. 29

The impact of the pandemic is making life hell for prison inmates.

Following prison authorities' instructions to avoid contracting the virus, inmates have been denied access to meetings with family members. Inmates have been concerned about the health of family members and vice versa as prison officials have banned interviews for the past seven months.

Interviews with inmates at Kadapa central jail have been suspended sin-

ce March 23 as part of the lockdown.

The details provided by those out on bail shed light on the plight of the inmates inside. About 750 inmates at Kadapa central jail are waiting for interviews. It also seems that prisoners who feel they are entitled to release due to good conduct are still being held.

Usually, convicted remand prisoners are allowed to meet their families. Convicted prisoners have the opportunity to meet with family members for 45 minutes once every fortnight. Prisoners in the same remand have the oppor-

● USUALLY, CONVICTED remand prisoners are allowed to meet their families. Convicted prisoners have the opportunity to meet with family members for 45 minutes once every fortnight. Prisoners in the same remand have the opportunity to meet relatives twice a week. Relatives coming to the meet them are required to confirm their kinship.

tunity to meet relatives twice a week. Relatives coming to the meet them are required to confirm their kinship and submit Aadhaar cards to the jail authorities. Three adults have the opportunity to meet each prisoner. In the case of children, an exception is made in ter-

ms of number. Prison officials set the time on all days, except public holidays. This has been stalled for the past seven months.

Lockdown relaxations have been applied to all sectors across the country. Prisoners complain that they are not shown

IN BRIEF

BJP YOUTH LEADER, TWO WORKERS KILLED

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, OCT. 29

A BJP youth leader and two workers were shot and critically wounded by suspected militants in Jammu and Kashmir's southern Kulgam district late Thursday evening. The reports said that all the three succumbed to their injuries on the way to hospital.

The police sources said that Fida Hussain Yatoo, district general secretary of the J&K unit of BJP Yuva Morcha, and his associates Umar Ramzan Hajam and Umer Rashid Beigh were targeted by gunmen in Kulgam's Yaripora village. They were quickly evacuated to an emergency trauma hospital along the Srinagar-Jammu highway in Qazigund area. But doctors at the hospital pronounced them dead on arrival.

"All three of them were brought dead," Dr. Asima, Medical Superintendent Qazigund, was quoted as saying by local news agency GNS.

The officials said that senior J&K district police officers and also those of the CRPF have already reached the spot to begin investigations. They also said that a vast area around the scene of the shooting has been cordoned off and a search operation launched to get the assailants dead or alive. A report said that the trio was attending a wedding ceremony in the area when a group of masked gunmen arrived at the scene and forcibly took them along. The report also said the BJP youth leader and his associates were taken to a nearby apple orchard where they were shot at from point blank range.

LABOURER FINDS 7.2 CARAT DIAMOND

Panna (MP), Oct. 29: Fortunes smiled on a labourer after he unearthed 7.2 carat diamond at a mine in Panna district of Madhya Pradesh on Thursday, an official said.

Balbir Singh Yadav extracted the precious stone from a pit at Krishna Kalyanpur mine in Pati Bajaria area of the district, diamond inspector Anupam Singh said.

After unearthing the stone, Balbir rushed to the mine office to deposit it with the authorities.

While the official said the exact value of the diamond will be decided by the authorities, Balbir and his elated wife Laadwati told reporters that they were informed that it would fetch anywhere between ₹35 lakh and ₹40 lakh.

The stone will be auctioned, following which the couple will get the proceeds after deduction of 12.5 per cent royalty, the official added.

Panna, located in the backward region of Bundelkhand, is famous for its diamond mines.

FORMER GUJARAT CM KESHUBHAI PATEL DEAD

Ahmedabad, Oct. 29: Former Gujarat chief minister Keshubhai Patel, who played a pivotal role in strengthening the BJP in the state, died here on Thursday after prolonged illness, family sources said.

Patel (92), who recovered from coronavirus infection recently, was rushed to a hospital in Ahmedabad on Thursday morning following health complications, the sources said.

The BJP veteran was the chief minister in 1995 and again during 1998-2001. Narendra Modi had succeeded him as Gujarat chief minister. The state government has declared a day's state mourning on Thursday, Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani told reporters. Keshubhai's last rites will be performed with full state honours, he added.

Hospital authorities said Patel died due to cardiac arrest.

Patel was rushed to the hospital after his pulse and oxygen level dropped on Thursday morning, his son Bharat Patel said. "He recently recovered from coronavirus, but his health kept deteriorating," he added.

The ruling BJP has postponed all its by-poll related programmes, including public rallies, following Patel's death.

Rupani cut short a poll rally at Ghadhada and visited Keshubhai's residence in Gandhinagar, where the body was kept, to pay tributes.

DOCS ADVISED AGAINST ENTERING POLITICS: RAJINI

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR / DC
CHENNAI, OCT. 29

Actor Rajinikanth confirmed on Thursday that he had health issues and that he had been advised by doctors not to involve himself in active politics even as his fans went berserk on Twitter demanding his entry into politics, saying that he was the only hope for Tamil Nadu.

Quoting what was described as a leaked letter of Rajinikanth, some media outlets put out a story that the actor might exit politics without even entering, prompting his fans to trend a Tamil hashtag 'If at all I vote it will be for Rajini only' through the day, calling their 'Thalivar' to come and also questioned the veracity of the 'leaked letter.'

Even as the hashtag was trending, Rajinikanth put out a tweet past noon saying: 'A letter masquerading as my statement has been making its rounds on social networking sites and the media. Everyone knows that it is not my statement. Yet some of the information in the letter on my health condition and doctors' advice are all true.'

He went on to say that he would inform his political stand to the people after discussing it with the office-bearers of Rajini Makkal Mandram (Rajini People's Forum). The forum was formed with the members of his erstwhile fans' association after he had made an announcement that he would be entering politics by launching his own party.

The actor had held meetings with the office-bearers in earlier occasions to elicit their views and also to guide them on the way he would like to fashion his party. But subsequently in a press conference, in which he just spelt out his plans and left the venue without taking any questions from the media persons, he made it clear he was not entering politics.

Later on, when it BJP leader and Union Home Minister Amit Shah mentioned that his party was waiting for Rajinikanth to float his party to forge an alliance with it, media started speculating about the possible party launch, enthusing his fans.

It was in that backdrop the 'leaked letter' surfaced on Wednesday, throwing cold water on the hopes of the actor's fan brigade. So they wanted to send across the message to their leader and hence took the Twitter route to draw his attention.

Most of the tweets projected him as the only alternative in Tamil Nadu politics. 'Expecting a better government is my right. Expecting selfless people in politics is minimum wish. Pls come Thalaiva. Show some light for TN. Give some hope,' said a fan who had been repeatedly tweeting through the day.

Now, it is speculated that the alleged 'leaked letter' was a planned leak.

RARE | BREW

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, OCT. 29

Assam tea industry is yet to overcome the setback of Covid-19 pandemic but it has started getting good news from the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) on Thursday where a lot of speciality tea was sold at a record price of ₹75,000 per kg, the highest this year.

However, this was the third time in the last one year when GTAC got another opportunity to sell Manohari Gold



A vehicle in flames after it was set on fire by a mob during a protest over recent police firing during a Durga Puja event in Munger on Thursday. — PTI

Protesters target cops over Munger firing; SP removed

Angry agitators torch mofussil and women police stations in the town

Patna/Munger, Oct. 29: The Election Commission has removed the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police of Munger over the violence during a Durga Puja event early this week, even as a group of protesters went on the rampage in the town on Thursday, setting some police stations and outposts on fire and ransacking the SP office.

The poll panel on Thursday also ordered an inquiry into the firing and stone-pelting during the immersion of an idol of goddess Durga late Monday night in which one person had died and several others were injured.

The election commission has asked Magadh Divisional Commissioner Asangba Chuba Ao to complete the probe within a week.

Rajesh Meena is District

Magistrate and Lipi Singh is SP of Munger. The EC statement said Munger will get a new DM and a Superintendent of Police Thursday itself.

Alleging that no action was taken against the SP and other police personnel over the Monday night incident, the agitators allegedly torched mofussil and women police stations in the town.

They also allegedly set police outposts at Purab Sarai and Basudeopur on fire, and ransacked the SP office and several other police stations and outposts. The office of Sub Divisional Officer was also allegedly targeted by the protestors, official sources said.

Witnesses said that finding themselves outnumbered, the police personnel at all these stations escaped from the premises.

Official sources said the agitators went berserk and also tried to set kotwali and Kasim bazar police stations on fire, but there they faced a strong resistance from the policemen who fired in the air to disperse the mob.

They burnt tyres near Rajiv Chowk in the Munger town, demanding action against the SP and the police personnel responsible for allegedly opening fire during the idol immersion procession.

Additional Director General of Police (Headquarters) Jitendra Kumar said in Patna that extra police force has been sent to Munger.

Deputy Inspector General of Police, Munger, Manu Maharaj led a flag march in Munger town to bring the situation under control.

The RJD-helmed Grand

Alliance has strongly criticised the Monday incident, likening the district police with General Dyer of infamous Jallianwala Bagh incident in Punjab during British rule on April 13, 1919.

IPS officer Lipi Singh is the daughter of RCP Singh, the JD(U) leader in the Rajya Sabha.

Coming on the eve of the first phase of polling, the incident had its impact voting too as two of the three Assembly seats — Munger, Jamalpur — in the district witnessed lower voter turnout as compared to the 2015 polls.

While Munger constituency had witnessed a poll percentage of 54.26 in 2015, it recorded 47.89 Wednesday. Similarly, the decline was from 49.70 per cent to 47.24 per cent in Jamalpur this time.

But Tarapur constituency recorded a polling per-

centage of 54.80 this time compared to 52.66 in 2015.

State minister and senior JD(U) leader Shailesh Kumar is in the fray from Jamalpur seat.

Meanwhile, the police department has ordered the removal of in-charges of mufassil police station and Basudeopur outpost in connection with the October 26 firing and baton-charge incidents.

RCP Singh was mobbed Wednesday by angry protesters demanding action against the "guilty officials" when he visited Begusarai, where polling is scheduled for November 3. Begusarai is the Lok Sabha seat of BJP leader and Union minister Giriraj Singh who had condemned the Munger incident and sought action against "erring officials no matter how highly connected they may be.

— PTI

Bombay HC directs Central govt to clear its stand on media trials

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, OCT. 29

The Bombay High Court on Thursday asked the Union government to clarify whether excessive reportage by the press on an ongoing investigation of Sushant Singh Rajput case amounted to interference in the administration of justice under the Contempt of Courts Act.

The court also asked the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting why it should not frame guidelines on media coverage of sensitive criminal cases.

A bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni was hearing PILs filed by some former IPS officers of

● **THE COURT** also asked the Ministry of I&B why it should not frame guidelines on media coverage of sensitive criminal cases.

Mumbai police and activists seeking restrictions should be imposed on media trials in SSR death case.

The PILs also alleged that some media channels are maligning the image of Mumbai police deliberately and requested court to interfere in the matter.

In the previous hearings, the HC heard the petitioners, private TV news channels, and the National Broadcasters Standards Authority (NBSA) on the

need for a regulatory mechanism for the electronic media.

The TV channels and the NBSA argued in favour of a self-regulatory mechanism and said the state must not be given any control over their content.

On Thursday, senior counsel Aspi Chinoy, representing former police officers, submitted to the court that there had been blatant violation of rights of various persons by the news channels while reporting on the SSR death case.

He said that the channels had resorted to pre-judging and conducted irresponsible coverage of the actor's death case, and that it was affecting

administration of justice and fundamental rights such as the right to fair trial guaranteed under Article 21.

Mr Chinoy submitted that the media had violated statutory framework of the Cable TV Regulation Act by transmitting content which amounted to contempt of court and though the Central Government, which was empowered under the Cable TV Act and the Programme Code for TV channels laid down under it failed to take suo motu cognisance of the media trial in Rajput's death case while the coverage by certain errant news channels was ongoing for over two months.

SC seeks Centre's response on use of remdesivir, HCQ

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, OCT. 29

The Supreme Court on Thursday sought a response from the Centre on a PIL seeking to restrain on prescribing Remdesivir and HCQ as medicines to cure Covid while making it clear that it was not going to adjudicate on as to which medicine should be provided to treat highly contagious disease.

Seeking response from the Centre, Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde heading a bench also comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Rama-swaramanian told the PIL's petitioner's advocate M.L. Sharma "We are telling you, we are only going to make the government aware of it, we are not going to judge which medicine should be prescribed for Covid treatment."

The court issued notice after Adv. Sharma referred to October 15 World Health Organisation report which says that "the interim results from the Solidarity Therapeutics Trial, coordinated by the World Health Organisation, indicate that Remdesivir Hydroxychloroquine, lopinavir/ritonavir and interferon regimens appeared to have little or no effect on 28-day mortality or the in-hospital course of Covid-19 among hospitalised patients..." Sharma referred to vari-

NIA RAIDS AT NINE LOCATIONS IN VALLEY, ONE IN DELHI

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, OCT. 29

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) continued its raids on the offices of various Non-governmental organisations and some other aid agencies and the homes of their organisers across Kashmir Valley on the second day on Thursday.

Premises owned or used by a similar organisation in Delhi were also searched by it in connection with a case pertaining to alleged misuse of funding received by these NGOs from across the country and abroad.

The case was registered by the NIA earlier this month under sections 120B and 124 A IPC and sections 17, 18, 22A, 22C, 38, 39 and 40 of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

The agency has claimed that it began investigations in the matter after receiving "credible information" that certain NGOs and trusts operating in J&K "are collecting funds domestically and abroad through so-called donations and business contributions, etc. and are then utilising these funds for secessionist and terrorist activities in J&K".

On Thursday, nine locations in the Valley and one in Delhi were raided by the NIA sleuths.

Those whose premises were searched include Falah-e-Aam Trust, Charity Alliance in Delhi, Human Welfare Foundation, JK Yateem Foundation, Salvation Movement and JK Voice of Victims.

A day earlier, the agency had raided and searched the offices of mass-circulated newspaper *Greater Kashmir* and a couple of NGOs and the homes of several journalists and human rights and political activists simultaneously in the Valley and Bangaluru.

The NIA had, however, said that the raids at *Greater Kashmir* office and the homes of some journalists were not in connection with their journalistic work and other professional pursuits but a case pertaining to alleged misuse of foreign contributions.

NOW, KERALA EMERGES AS COVID HOTSPOT

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 29

The overall coronavirus cases in India crossed 80.40 lakh on Thursday with 49,881 fresh cases.

However, out of these, 73.16 lakh have already recovered and little over 6 lakh people still remain infected.

The total fatalities so far has been close to 1.21 lakh out of which 517 deaths took place in the last 24 hours.

However, Kerala, which is reporting the highest number of daily fresh cases, has become a major concern for health authorities as it is emerging as the country's biggest Covid-19 hotspot now.

In Maharashtra, though daily fresh detections has dropped substantially from what it was for the last few months it still has second highest cases after Kerala.

Situation in the national capital too is worrisome which on Thursday had 5,739 fresh cases.

ous countries including UK and the US which have held the same view backing the WHO conclusions.

IN BRIEF

8 inmates dead after prison riot

Kabul: Rioting at a prison in western Afghanistan has left at least eight inmates dead, provincial officials said Thursday. The violence erupted on Wednesday night at the prison in Herat, the capital of western Herat province, said Mohammad Rafiq Shirzai, spokesman for the provincial health department. He said 12 others — eight inmates and four prison guards — were wounded in the outbreak at the facility, which holds around 2,000 prisoners. It wasn't immediately known if there are any Taliban at the penitentiary. The rioting started after guards began clearing some partitions created by prisoners, said Jelani Farhad, spokesman for the provincial governor.

Pak seminary blast probe ends

Peshawar: The investigation team probing the bomb blast at a religious seminary in northwestern Pakistan's Peshawar city has completed its initial report and arrested one student in connection with the attack that killed eight persons, officials said on Thursday. The investigation team that included officials of counter-terrorism department, police and law enforcement agencies, recorded statements of several eye witnesses and obtained the record of the students of the seminary and the labourers engaged in a construction work there. One student of the seminary has been arrested over his alleged links to the blast, suspected to have targeted a senior cleric from Afghanistan, officials said. The blast occurred around 8:30 am on Tuesday at a local mosque, which also serves as a religious school in Dir Colony in Peshawar, while students were reading the Quran. There was no claim of responsibility for the blast in the city, bordering war-torn Afghanistan. Law enforcement agencies on Wednesday detained several people in connection with the bomb blast.

59 bodies found in Mexican pits

Mexico City: A Mexican search group said that it found 59 bodies in a series of clandestine burial pits in the north-central state of Guanajuato and that more could still be excavated. The head of the official National Search Commission, Karla Quintana, Wednesday said excavations began a week ago based on a tip from relatives of missing people. Given the deficiencies of local law enforcement in Mexico, relatives of missing people in many states have formed their own search groups, collecting information and exploring possible body dumping sites and clandestine graves. Quintana called it "a sad and terrible discovery." She added that there were more "possible positive sites" where more bodies could be found, and that work would continue. The bodies were extracted over the last week from 52 pits at a property on the outskirts of the Guanajuato city of Salvatierra. The scene was considered dangerous enough that the army and National Guard provided security for the excavations. Guanajuato has the largest number of homicides of any state in Mexico.

JALLIANWALA BAGH STORY SHORTLISTED

London, Oct. 29: British Indian journalist and author Anita Anand's book that tells the story of a young man caught up in the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar has been shortlisted for a prestigious history-literary prize in the UK. 'The Patient Assassin: A True Tale of Massacre, Revenge and the Raj' will compete with six others for the PEN Hessel-Tiltman Prize for History 2020, awarded annually for a non-fiction book of specifically historical content.

Entries are required to be works of high literary merit — that is, not primarily written for the academic market — and can cover all historical periods. "Modern history is well-represented with Anita Anand's 'The Patient Assassin' showing us how empire continues to haunt us," said Rana Mitter, Professor of the History and Politics of Modern China at the University of Oxford, who is the chair of this year's judging panel. In the shortlisted book, Anand tells the dramatic story of an orphan Udhram Singh's 21-year quest for revenge.

France knife attack: 3 dead**Third attack in 2 months; attacker wounded by cops, hospitalised**

Paris, Oct. 29: An attacker armed with a knife killed three people at a church on Thursday in the Mediterranean city of Nice, authorities said. It was the third attack in two months in France.

The assailant was wounded by police and hospitalised after the killings at the Notre Dame Church, less than a kilometre from the site in 2016 where another attacker plowed a truck into a Bastille Day crowd, killing dozens.

Thursday's attacker was believed to be acting alone and police are not searching for other assailants, said two police officials, who were not authorised to be publicly named.

France's anti-terrorism prosecutor's office opened an investigation into the killings, which marked the third attack since the opening in September of a terrorism trial in the January 2015 killings at the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* and a kosher supermarket.

"He cried 'Allah Akbar' over and over, even after he was injured," said Nice Mayor Christian Estrosi, who told *BFM* television that three people had died, two inside the church and a third who fled but was mortally wounded.

"The meaning of his gesture left no doubt." In Nice, images on French media showed the neighborhood locked down and surrounded by police and emergency vehicles.

Sounds of explosions could be heard as sappers exploded suspicious objects. The lower house of parliament suspended a debate on France's new virus restrictions in the wake of spurt in cases and held a moment of silence Thursday for the victims.

The prime minister rushed from the hall to a crisis centre overseeing the aftermath of the Nice attack. French President Emmanuel Macron was headed to Nice later in the



French President Emmanuel Macron (2nd-L) visits the scene of a knife attack at the Basilica of Notre-Dame de Nice in Nice on Thursday. — AFP



day.

Less than two weeks ago, an assailant decapitated a French middle school teacher who showed caricatures of the Prophet for a class on free speech. Those caricatures were published by *Charlie Hebdo* and cited by the men who gunned down the newspaper's editorial meeting in 2015.

In September, a man who had sought asylum in France attacked bystanders outside *Charlie Hebdo*'s former offices with a butcher knife. — AP

FRENCH PM RAISES ATTACK ALERT TO EMERGENCY AFTER CHURCH KILLINGS

Paris, Oct. 29: France's prime minister Jean Castex says the country's threat level will be raised to its maximum after an attack near a church killed three people Thursday in Nice.

The move comes just hours before the country was going into its second coronavirus lockdown.

An attacker armed with a knife killed three people at a church Thursday in Nice, French authorities said. It was the third attack in two months in France amid a growing furor over caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad that were re-published by the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*. — AP

SAUDI MAN STABS, WOUNDS GUARD AT FRENCH CONSULATE, ARRESTED

Dubai, Oct. 29: Saudi Arabia's state-run news agency is reporting that a Saudi man has been detained after stabbing and slightly wounding a guard at the French Consulate in the city of Jiddah.

The Saudi Press Agency report on Thursday offered no motive for the attack. However, it comes amid heightened tensions

after an assailant decapitated a French middle school teacher who showed caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad for a class on free speech.

Those caricatures were published by *Charlie Hebdo* and cited by the men who gunned down the newspaper's editorial meeting in 2015. — AP

Antisemitism row: Labour Party suspends Corbyn

London, Oct. 29: The UK's Opposition Labour Party on Thursday suspended former leader Jeremy Corbyn from its ranks after a report by the country's human rights watchdog held the party "responsible for unlawful acts of harassment and discrimination" during his time in charge.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which had launched an investigation into antisemitism within the party following a string of complaints, found that Labour had broken the law in its failure to handle antisemitism, or anti-Jewish, complaints and there were "serious failings" by its leadership at the time.

However, in his reaction to the report, Corbyn said that the number of complaints made during his tenure were "dramatically overstated". "One antisemitic is one too many, but the scale of the problem was also dramatically overstated for political reasons by our opponents inside and outside the party, as well as by much of the media. That combination hurt Jewish people and must never be repeated," said Corbyn, in reference to the report.

A Labour Party spokesperson issued a statement soon after to announce that Corbyn had been suspended from the party. "In light of his comments made today and his failure to retract them subsequently, the Labour Party has suspended Jeremy Corbyn pending investigation. He has also had the whip removed from the Parliamentary Labour Party," the spokesperson said.

In his reaction to the EHRC report, current Opposition leader Keir Starmer had indicated that a denial stance to the report would not be tolerated,

● THE EHRC had served the Labour Party with an unlawful act notice after an investigation into antisemitism by the Equality and Human Rights Commission found it responsible for unlawful acts of harassment and discrimination. The BJP was quick to hit back.

without any specific references to Corbyn.

Starmer said: "And if — after all the pain, all the grief, and all the evidence in this report, there are still those who think there's no problem with antisemitism in the Labour Party. That it's all exaggerated, or a factional attack. "Then, frankly, you are part of the problem too. And you should be nowhere near the Labour Party either."

Earlier, the EHRC had served the Labour Party with an unlawful act notice after an investigation into antisemitism by the Equality and Human Rights Commission found it responsible for unlawful acts of harassment and discrimination. Its investigation, launched in May last year, identified serious failings in the party leadership in addressing antisemitism and an inadequate process for handling antisemitism complaints. The party was found responsible for three breaches of the UK's Equality Act (2010) relating to political interference in antisemitism complaints; failure to provide adequate training to those handling antisemitism complaints; and harassment. "The equality body's analysis points to a culture within the party which, at best, did not do enough to prevent antisemitism," the EHRC said. — PTI

Computerised lottery scheme for H-1B may go

Washington, Oct. 29: The Trump administration has proposed to scrap the computerised lottery system to grant H-1B work visas to foreign technology professionals and replace it with a wage-level-based selection process, a move that is expected to counter the downward pressure on the wages of US workers.

A notification on the new system is being published in the Federal Register on Thursday. Stakeholders have 30 days to respond to the notification, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said on Wednesday, less than a week before the US presidential election.

Replacing the computerised draw of lots to decide on the successful H-1B applicants, the DHS said it is expected to help counter the downward pressure on the wages of American workers that is created by an annual influx of relatively lower-paid, new cap-subject H-1B workers. The H-1B visa, most sought after among Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality

● THE TRUMP administration has proposed to replace the computerised lottery system with a wage-level-based selection process, a move that is expected to counter the downward pressure on wages of US workers.

occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

If finalised, US Citizenship and Immigration Services would first select registrations (or petitions, if the registration process is suspended) generally based on the highest Occupational Employment Statistics prevailing wage level that the offered wage equals or exceeds for the relevant Standard Occupational Classification code and areas of intended employment. "Prioritisation and selection based on wage levels better balances the interests of petitioners, H-1B workers, and US workers," the DHS said. "The Trump administration is continuing to deliver on its promise to protect American workers," said Acting DHS Deputy Secretary Ken Cuccinelli. — PTI

Four-week lockdown in France

Paris, Oct. 29: French doctors expressed relief but business owners were in despair as France prepared Thursday to shut down again for a month to try to put the brakes on a fast-moving fall coronavirus outbreak.

Shoppers at a Paris farmers' market said Thursday they were ready to restrict their freedoms given the rising number of virus-related deaths and Covid-19 patients filling French hospitals.

The new lockdown is gentler than what France saw in the spring, but still a shock to restaurants and other non-essential businesses that have been ordered to close their doors in one of the world's biggest economies.

French schools will stay open this time, to reduce learning gaps and allow parents to keep working. Farmer markets, parks and factories can also continue operating, officials said.

French lawmakers are voting Thursday on the new restrictions announced by President Emmanuel Macron, which are set to come into effect at midnight. The lower house of parliament is dominated by Macron's centrist party, so approval is virtually guaranteed.

The prime minister will lay out details of the virus-fighting plan Thursday evening. — AP

London, Oct. 29: New Coronavirus infections are rising by an estimated 96,000 cases daily across England, according to the findings of a new government-backed study released in London on Thursday.

An interim report led by Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI, which includes swab tests on thousands of people taken between October 16 and 25, shows that the prevalence of infection has more than doubled since the last round of similar

testing. This means an estimated 128 people per 10,000 of England's population has the virus that causes Covid-19, compared to 60 as of October 5. "These interim findings paint a concerning picture of the situation in England, where we're seeing a nation-wide increase in infection prevalence, which we know will lead to more hospitalisations and loss of life," said Professor Paul Elliott, director of the programme at Imperial College London. "We're also detecting

early signs that areas which previously had low rates of infection are following trends observed in the country's worst-affected areas. Now more than ever we must all work together to curb further spread of the virus and avoid subsequent overwhelming of the health service," he said.

The critical reproduction number (R) — the rate of virus transmission — has also increased further to 1.6, with infections doubling every nine days. — PTI

INDIA, UK INK NEW PARTNERSHIPS FOR RESEARCH TO BATTLE COVID-19

London, Oct. 29: India and the UK have clinched new partnerships to boost bilateral cooperation on combating the Coronavirus pandemic as part of the 10th UK-India Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD), held virtually following the Covid-19 lockdown and travel constraints. A £8-million joint funding initiative announced on Wednesday as part of the EFD outcomes will

support collaborative research focused on understanding the severity of Covid-19 in South Asian populations in India.

The UK Research and Innovation and the Department of Biotechnology in Indian Ministry of Science and Technology said their collaborative research will support research projects that are trying to understand the pandemic. — PTI

INFECTED MOUNT ROBUST DEFENCE

New York, Oct. 29: A vast majority of individuals infected with mild-to-moderate Coronavirus mount a "robust" defence via antibodies that is relatively stable for "at least five months".

This is the finding according to a new study which says this immune response significantly reduces the risk of reinfection with the Coronavirus. — PTI

POWER | PANGS

Some regions have been unable to report details of damage and casualties**Typhoon, landslides leave 35 dead in Vietnam**

Hanoi, Oct. 29: A typhoon that officials said was the most powerful to hit Vietnam in 20 years blew away from the country on Thursday after setting off landslides, sinking boats and knocking out power to at least 1.7 million people. At least 35 people were killed and more than 50 were missing, state media said.

The immediate focus for rescuers was on three villages in the country's central region where landslides killed at least 19 people and are suspected of

burying more than 40 others in thick mud and debris.

Deputy Prime Minister Trinh Dinh Dung travelled to the site of one landslide where soldiers were working to clear debris with bulldozers and he ordered officers to urgently send more troops to help with the efforts. "We must reach the landslide site the fastest way. First, send in more soldiers before we can get the big machine there. We have to reach the area by all means, includ-

ing by using helicopters," he said.

Also among the dead were 12 fishermen whose boats sank Wednesday as Typhoon Molave approached with winds of up to 150 kilometres (93 miles) per hour. Another 14 fishermen were still missing.

Officials said the death toll across the country may rise as some regions have been unable to report details of damage and casualties. Rescuers dug up eight bodies Thursday morning in Tra Van village in

Quang Nam province where a hillside collapsed on houses. The victims had taken shelter in the community as the typhoon approached, the official *Vietnam News Agency* reported.

In Tra Leng village, about 45 kilometres (28 miles) from Tra Van, another landslide buried a community with several houses occupied by about 45 people. Four people escaped, while rescuers recovered eight bodies and pulled out four villagers alive. — Agencies



A landslide triggered by Typhoon Molave leaves a trail of rocks and mud as it swamps a village in Phuoc Loc district of Quang Nam province, Vietnam on Thursday. — AP



Mike Pompeo

POMPEO, IN INDONESIA, BLASTS CHINA

Jakarta, Oct. 29: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo renewed the Trump administration's rhetorical onslaught against China in Indonesia on Thursday as the American presidential election looms.

With China a central theme in President Donald Trump's campaign to win a second term in just five days time, Pompeo took aim at Chinese aggressiveness in the South China Sea, where it has advanced maritime and territorial claims over the objections of its smaller neighbors, and over its handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Speaking in Jakarta, the headquarters of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Pompeo praised Indonesia's leadership in ASEAN for pushing back on what he called China's "unlawful" claims and lauded Jakarta's protection of its own territory. "We respect freedom of the seas, sovereignty and the rule of law," he said, standing beside Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi. Marsudi agreed, saying "international law must be respected," although she did not specifically mention China.

"Our law-abiding nations reject the unlawful claims by Chinese Communist Party in the South China Sea as is clear from Indonesia's courageous leadership on this subject within ASEAN and at the United Nations," Pompeo said.

"It's a cause worth pursuing in multilateral settings and the Trump administration very much supports this."

DECCAN Chronicle

30 OCTOBER 2020

Land for all in Kashmir: Wait for SC to take call

A recent Union home ministry order, which opens the door for any Indian to buy non-agricultural immoveable property in Jammu and Kashmir, deals a grievous blow to the aspirations — and to the psyche — of the people of Jammu, the Kashmir Valley, and Ladakh. The legal status of this order shall remain dubious until the Supreme Court has dealt with the challenge before it to the law through which whittled the constitutional autonomy of the erstwhile J&K state and whose long-term consequences for India appear far from happy. The long delay in the top court pronouncing on one of the most consequential matters brought before it in Independent India has occasioned considerable surprise.

Since constitutionally downgrading J&K, the Centre has taken a series of steps that have negatively impacted the lives of ordinary people in the UT and bred resentment. Among these are the hampering of the study of ordinary students by not permitting high-speed Internet, virtually killing journalism through the harsh treatment of media personnel, placing severe restrictions on the movement of people, banning protests, filling top positions in the UT administration by non-Kashmiri officers — to say nothing of putting thousands of non-BJP politicians in jail. In addition, in the name of quelling terrorism (and instilling patriotism by fiat) there is the egregiousness of troop deployment on an extensive scale not seen even in the intense militancy-affected years of the late 1980s-the early 1990s. To place matters in perspective — all policy actions derive from executive orders alone, as in the colonial era, and there is the denial of election to the UT legislature. The Centre gave itself the luxury to do all of these while the Supreme Court has delayed beyond comprehension hearing the case of the reading down of Article 370 and the re-fashioning of an adjunct provision, the Article 35-A. It is the latter which had made ownership of immoveable property, government employment, and state scholarships, the exclusive preserve of permanent residents of the state.

In May, new domicile rules were devised to let some people from outside J&K to apply for permanent resident status. This has now been widened to let anyone own immoveable property. Such a situation does not obtain in other special category states such as Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. In 1950, the Sheikh Abdullah government had brought the Big Estates Abolition Act to permit the tillers of land of big zamindars beyond certain ceiling prescriptions to become owners, and it is this which had made the former state among the top performers on social and economic indices. Under the new land orders, this Act stands revoked, probably opening the door for corporate houses.

Jammu and Ladakh have reacted negatively to the new land rules though the Centre may have hoped for support from those quarters on religious grounds. The heart of the matter is the taking away of the former J&K's autonomy, a condition laid down by Maharaja Hari Singh, and endorsed by Sheikh Abdullah, for joining India in 1947, rather than go with Pakistan.

Heed ASER's red flag

There has been a shift from private to government schools between 2018 and 2020, says the Annual Status of Education Report. The reasons include financial distress in households due to loss of income and shut-down of private schools. There has been an unregulated mushrooming of private schools all over the country in the past decades.

Alarmingly, India is among the few countries where the ratio of private to public schooling is the highest. That's because the coverage of the government school network is patchy at best and the quality of learning dispensed there abysmal. The ASER study showed, for instance, that during the survey week, only one in three rural children had engaged in a learning activity. And only 36 per cent of schools provided them with textbooks.

In urban centres, there has been a boom in the edutech industry in pandemic times. However, exposing the criminally negligent logic behind the government's great e-education push is a well-anticipated outcome. Although smartphone ownership almost doubled from 2018, a third of children with smartphone access still did not receive any learning materials. Significantly, less than 15 per cent of rural Indian households have Internet. The poorest homes cannot afford a smartphone or a computer. Some were found selling their only assets so the children could continue learning. Though it is highly iniquitous, the National Education Policy is silent on this yawning academic divide. The government, in its unseemly haste to pacify the influential middle classes, was loath to drop the JEE and restarted lessons for older students. But it paid scant regard to the increase in dropouts at the elementary and secondary levels.

It is a fact that 90 per cent of brain growth occurs by age five, meaning that the quality of early childhood schooling has a crucial impact. The ASER report shows that factors determining the quality of education received at this stage include the mother's education and the type of school, government or private. There is a need to strengthen the government school system urgently. India is going through an education emergency, which has been exacerbated by Covid.

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Subhani



Death talk: Euthanasia tales amid Covid times



Karan Thapar

As I See It

I started reading Arun Shourie's new book *Preparing for Death* whilst in quarantine after I happened to meet someone who subsequently tested positive. Had I an inkling that in a couple of days I would follow suit I doubt if this would have been my first choice. But since I had started it, I decided to continue. The fear that suddenly loomed ahead seemed to add macabre interest. At least, during daylight hours!

It's not an easy book to read. Written in a deliberate stream-of-consciousness style, it is often erudite and learned but there are occasions when it's prosaic and even pedestrian.

Like his other work, this book can be repetitive or, to be more accurate, Arun argues his case so thoroughly that you feel he's nailed the point long before he's finished with his hammer blows. Consequently, you need to read it in stages. Bit by bit. To make it easier, don't read in chronological sequence. Flip forward and back as curiosity guides you.

Well, that's what I did and thus stumbled upon five pages that tell a story that I find hard to describe. Perhaps my personal Covid affliction added to my fascination but I feel certain it would grip anyone who reads it. It's the most excruciatingly honest but also deeply disturbing and distressing account of a father's death told by his son. I admire Arun for sharing it with strangers and outsiders — because that's what readers are — but I also question why he wanted to do so

or what purpose it serves. It left me feeling uncomfortable. Actually, unsettled. I felt I was intruding into someone's privacy where I had no right to be.

The question this mesmerising account raises — actually explicitly though it shies away from an answer — is did Arun's father, Hari Dev Shourie, the founder of Common Cause, commit euthanasia? Everything in your head and heart tells you the answer is yes. Even the way Arun relates the story suggests this conclusion is unavoidable. In fact, there are a couple of sentences that, particularly for the suggestive or intuitive, could clinch the issue. "He was a strong advocate of euthanasia", writes Arun. "He had even written a book on the subject: *Life's Finale: Voluntary Exit*."

Arun's account of his father's death begins on the morning it happened. H.D. Shourie, who was 91 and had recently lost his wife, asked for tea at 8 am. When Ganesh, his trusted attendant, served it he was told to come back in an hour and a half. "When he went at 9.30, our father was gone."

A note written in his hand was found on the table by his bed. "I have

It's not an easy book to read. Written in a deliberate stream-of-consciousness style, it is often erudite and learned but there are occasions when it's prosaic and even pedestrian

By making convincing forensic use of the letter his father left, Arun presents a compelling case that drives one to the conclusion that his father committed euthanasia

led a full life". H.D. Shourie began, "My time has come... I have no regrets... today, the three of you are in town." It was that last sentence that shook Arun, his brother Deepak and their sister Nalini. "We used to travel a lot", writes Arun, "and often Nalini, Deepak or I would be out of town: he had clearly chosen a day when we were all in Delhi — none of us would have to rush back."

As the three siblings read and reread their father's last letter, their grief and shock mounting, they discovered it contained further evidence to suggest that H.D. Shourie had committed suicide. Arun writes that whenever he gave advice to others, the elder Shourie would say: "When you write the final note or your will, as far as possible write it in your own hand... and include in it some detail which no one but you know about... this will help establish the authenticity of the document." And that is precisely what he had done. The letter mentions "a souvenir" hidden in an "almirah". None of his children knew it was there.

If you still have doubts this was a case of death by euthanasia there is, right at the end of the five pages, a sentence spoken by Arun's mother-in-law that will simply blast them away. Maltiji, as Arun refers to her, lived her life with the Shouries, looking after their son Adit. Consequently, she got to

know his father well. She also shared a birthday with H.D. Shourie. It's what she suddenly said a few months after his death that seems to erase all doubts of how it happened. "*Bhai Sahib* had even written the recipe in his book, she told us one day — she was the only one in the family to have read the book."

So, doesn't that seem to suggest that H.D. Shourie put something in his morning tea which took his life? Something that would take 90 minutes to work, which is why he asked his trusted Ganesh to return an hour and a half later?

This is where Arun's account of his father's death stops. He doesn't answer the question — did H.D. Shourie take his own life? But then he doesn't really need to. By making convincing forensic use of the letter his father left, Arun presents a compelling case that drives one to the conclusion that his father committed euthanasia. It's hard to come to any other. In fact, you sense that is also what Arun believes — though, understandably, he can't bring himself to say so — when he writes of this father's book... "though years have passed since he went, I haven't had the courage to read it to this day".

Yet Arun has had the courage to tell us this story and share its harrowing impact on himself and his siblings. Speaking out is often a way of coming to terms with terrible tragedy or inexplicable mystery. Perhaps that was his reason for revealing something most people would, almost certainly, have kept to themselves. But it's not easy for the rest of us to handle. It not only left me full of questions and conflicting emotions but also quite shaken.

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

POLICE LAURELS

It is encouraging to read the police department's achievements (*AP cops ace tech test, win 48 of 83 Skoch awards, DC, Oct. 29*). The Disha initiative, justice through the innovative programme — Renovate, Restrain and Reassure (RRR) for policing are all impressive.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

BIASED SEC

The ruling party is evidently trying a tit-for-tat with the SEC on holding elections to local bodies. And the SEC himself is trying to settle scores by conducting elections before he demits office in March 2021. The TD is playing spoilsport by taking umpteen U-Turns. When AP SEC had unilaterally postponed local body polls halfway through March 2020 citing Covid, the TD leaders supported it. Earlier, when the elections to local bodies were due in 2018, neither the TD nor the SEC thought of holding it because of the anticipated defeat as Assembly polls.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

PM'S NAME CALLING

The Prime Minister's name calling in Bihar elections was uncalled for. He could have delegated his Cabinet colleagues to campaign instead of bringing down the dignity of the office he holds.

N.S. Sharma
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

New light on Netaji

NASIK, Oct. 29. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, dressed in Japanese clothes, left Taipei airport with some Indian companions for an unknown destination on August 18, 1945, after ordering the plane that brought him there to be brunt, according to Mr. Mohammed Usman Patel, who claims he was Netaji's bodyguard at the time.

Mr Patel told PTI yesterday he had prepared a detailed statement about Netaji's movements at the time as known to him and was sending it to the Prime Minister. He has suggested that the Khosla Commission, set up to inquire into the circumstances of Netaji's reported death, hear him and some others who were present at Taipei airport at the time.

Abhijit Bhattacharyya



Stop Dragon's free ride, don't let it exploit our democracy

It has been long-term Chinese policy, almost since the inception of the People's Republic, to try and mock India's democracy as the Dragon, deep down, is convinced it is democracy which makes this country weak, and its leaders ineffective and inefficient. This has driven the Chinese Communist Party's strategic thinking for decades.

The CCP's mission to humiliate India has become more diabolical by the day. In association with its allies in the Pakistan Army and its ISI, the Chinese are going all out in a bid to internationalise India's internal issues, though with little success, at the United Nations and elsewhere. President Xi Jinping is, of course, only continuing a tradition set long back by Chairman Mao Zedong.

The Dragon's diplomatic deception now borders on the ludicrous. You don't need a trained Sinologist to uncover duplicity and the plot to attack India from within. Thus, when Beijing's man in Delhi, ambassador Sun Weidong, parrots the one-liner "the common interests of the two countries (India and China) far outweigh the frictions and differences", he's either hallucinating or trying hard to convince his bosses that he's working hard in Delhi to mislead gullible Indians, and take them for a

ride!

Therefore, one should seek some clarifications from Mr Sun, and put forward some pertinent questions to him: "Mr Ambassador, please define the common interests of the two countries". Specifically, with facts and figures, without airy semantics. In what way do the "common interests", if any, "far outweigh the friction and differences"? Does it imply that India, for the sake of the so-called "common interests", be silent and succumb to the CPC's blandishments despite all the unilateral violence, killings, invasions, forced occupation of Indian territory since the 1950s, setting the tribal areas of Northeast India on fire, destroying West Bengal through the treacherous anti-national Naxalites and other marauding Communists, the unprovoked killing of Indian border personnel at Longju (August 1959), Hot Springs (October 1959), the 32-day invasion of India (October-November 1962), Nathu La (September 1967), Cho La (October 1967), Pangong Tso Lake (May 2020), the China-Pakistan CPEC through India's J&K, and now the Galwan Valley massacre (June 2020)?

Should India forget and forgive President Xi, who has made himself China's lifetime dictator, and his cohorts for the sake of what Beijing

hypocritically calls "common interests"?

Does the recurring murder of Indian soldiers by the CPC-controlled private militia called the People's Liberation Army constitute the "common interests" of Beijing and New Delhi? Does the loss of limbs of Indian officers and men and the forced occupation of Indian territory by the CPC constitute "common interests"? Or do the Chinese hope to tire out the Indian soldiers standing guard on the banks of Pangong Lake and force their commanders to talk from 10 to 14 hours a day in a diplomatic engagement with PLA generals? Is this why India maintains a standing army? Soldiers aren't diplomats, and it isn't their role to resort to Gandhi-like "*ahimsa*" to counter the CPC's "*hinsa*"!

Sorry, Ambassador Sun, that's the job of the foreign office and its diplomats, who should "enter the dragon" and play hardball, telling Beijing that there is a limit to how long such gross violations of India's sovereignty can continue.

It's time for the Chinese to forget about access to India's market of 1.3 billion people. It's time their spies operating under garb of companies, investors and tourists stop interfering in India's internal affairs. Let

them not issue brazen threatening "advisories" to India's independent media, ordering it to "desist" from writing about Taiwan, Xinjiang, the Dalai Lama, Hong Kong, Uighurs and human rights violations. One wonders what the battalions of Chinese diplomats have understood about this country that they would think India's media would follow the foreign ministry's lead in its reports and comments?

It's also time for Beijing to stop instigating India's neighbourhood through its cash, threats, deceit, deception and lies.

The Indian State should seriously go back to basics of the Constitution to deal with the Chinese assault on Indian territory and revisit Article 1(3) — "The territory of India shall comprise" ... and "(c) such other territories as may be acquired". Simply put, India's Constitution doesn't have any provision to cede territory to any foreign power/country. It permits acquisition only... "as may be acquired". If at all, India can only cede its own territory subject to an amendment of the Constitution. Thus, with the passing of Constitution (119th Amendment) Bill 2013, for example, for operationalising the Land Boundary Agreement with Bangladesh, notified as "100th

Amendment Act" after the assent of the President, the border readjustment between New Delhi and Dhaka took place peacefully and with mutual respect and honour. India cannot otherwise cede an inch of its territory to any foreign country. That's the bottomline.

It is clear as daylight that the Chinese are bent on hurting and humiliating democratic India. There is no chance of any change in the congenial psyche of hostility and aggression by the CPC. That's the reason attempts are being constantly made to dishonour and discredit this country before the comity of nations. If an India of 1.3 billion people cannot safeguard its sovereignty, Constitution and territorial integrity, and allow its trade, commerce, banking, economy and strategic sectors to be penetrated by the CPC, it's time for Delhi to snub the wayward ambassador publicly. Enough is enough! Without any further ado, India must decisively abort the Chinese geo-economic strategy which is penetrating and slowly poisoning the very fabric of our republic.

The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College. The views expressed are personal

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39749.85	-0.43
Nifty 50	11670.80	-0.50
S&P 500*	3,303.20	0.98
Dollar (₹)	74.10	98.9
Pound Sterling (₹)	96.27	-0.20
Euro (₹)	86.94	-0.14
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,309▼186	0.37
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	37.46	-1.66
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.881	0.023
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.803	0.022

* As of 9:30 PM IST

P&G to set up ₹400 cr 'India Growth Fund'

FMCG major Procter & Gamble (P&G) on Thursday announced a Rs 400 crore fund to help its existing and new suppliers in India to build capacities. Through the 'India Growth Fund', P&G will collaborate with suppliers to build capacities that will further localise the manufacturing of finished products, procurement of raw materials and packaging materials, and adopt go-to-market innovations and technology, P&G said in a statement.

DPIIT's new quality control norms for leather footwear



The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has come out with quality control norms for different leather foot-wear including anti-riot shoes with a view to contain imports and production of sub-standard products in the country. The products would have to conform to the specified standards and bear the standard mark under a licence from Bureau of Indian Standards. The items cannot be produced, sold/traded, imported, stocked unless they bear BIS mark.

IndiGo posts ₹1,194 crore loss for Sept quarter

Budget carrier IndiGo on Thursday reported a net loss of ₹1,194 crore for the second quarter ended September 30. It had posted a net loss of ₹1,062 crore in the September quarter of the previous financial year. In the April-June period this year, the airline had incurred a net loss of ₹2,884 crore. The airline's total income stood at ₹3,029 crore in the second quarter of 2020-21, a decrease of 64.5 per cent over the year-ago period, it said.

BP pitches for infra sharing with cos like ONGC

Ahead of starting the next wave of gas production from the KG basin, UK-based supermajor BP Plc has pitched for oil and gas producers sharing their infrastructure to help cut costs and monetise small and marginal discoveries. BP, which in partnership with Reliance Industries Ltd is investing USD 5 billion in developing three sets of discoveries in the Krishna Godavari basin block KG-D6, also wanted sanctity of contracts to be honoured and policy stability.



Gold demand in India plunges to 25-year low

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, OCT. 29

India's gold demand in 2020 might be the lowest in 25 years as the pandemic has already dragged down consumption in the first three quarters by almost half. Central banks have turned net sellers in the September quarter after a gap of 10 years. In the first three quarters of 2020, gold demand stood at 252 tonnes, which was 49 per cent down from 496 tonnes in the same period last year. With one more quarter to go, the World Gold Council expects that India's gold demand would be the lowest since 1995. "The year 1995 had seen one of the lowest yearly demand of 462 tonnes. In Q4 of last year, the demand stood at 194 tonnes. Even if we assume that the country consumes 200 tonnes in the festive quarter of Q4 this, which though is unlikely, the total consumption for the calendar year will touch 452 tonnes and will be lesser than 1995 demand," said Somasundaram PR, Managing Director, India, World Gold Council. According to him, some of the organised jewellers have reportedly seen 60 – 80 per cent of the demand recovering in the month of October. The September quarter saw gold demand falling by 30 per cent to 86.6 tonnes on the back of Covid-19 related disruptions, bleak consumer sentiment and high prices accompanied by volatility.

RBI on gold buying spree

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, OCT. 29

While central banks turned net sellers after a gap of 10 years, the Reserve Bank of India bought 6.8 tonnes of gold during the pandemic-hit September quarter. In fact India has bought a total of about 30 tonnes since March this year. India was among the six central banks that increased their reserves in Q3 by a tonne or more. India bought 6.8 tonnes of gold in the quarter when the gross purchases by all the banks totaled a modest 33 tonnes. United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan and Cambodia were the other buyers. Earlier in February, RBI had bought 6.8 tonnes taking the total gold reserves to 641.8 tonnes. As on October 9, gold reserves have increased to 670.1 tonnes, as per the data of RBI. In the past seven months, RBI has bought close to 30 tonnes of gold in staggered purchases. India has been buying

gold in smaller tranches since 2017. In 2019, the bank had bought 34.5 tonnes and in 2018, 42.5 tonnes. In 2017 it had bought 0.3 tonnes. Prior to that, RBI had purchased 200 tonnes in 2009. However, in the September quarter, Central banks turned net sellers of gold for the first time since Q4 2010. Against a net purchase of 141.9 tonnes in the same quarter last year, banks made a net sale of 12 tonnes. Turkey and Uzbekistan accounted for the bulk of the sales. Central banks of the two large buyers- Russia and China - also have not been buying gold for some time. According to the World Gold Council, Covid-19 continued to inflict widespread economic hardship, and this pre-occupied central banks and governments around the world. "Uncertainty has been elevated by the pandemic, motivating many investors – including central banks – to seek assets

This is the third lowest quarter since 2000 when the World Gold Council began publishing quarterly demand. This is, however, higher than Q2 which saw a 70 per cent drop – 64 tonnes - and the second lowest in World Gold Council's quarterly series.

While jewellery demand was down 48 per cent in Q3 against the year-ago quarter, investment demand was 51 per cent up to 33.8 tonnes compared to 22.3 tonnes in the Q3 2019. In value terms, investment demand went up by 107 per cent to Rs 15,410 crore.

Mistrys seek to split Tata Sons' shareholding

Mumbai, Oct. 29: The Shapoorji Pallonji Group on Thursday said it has submitted a plan to Supreme Court to end its seven decades-old association with the Tata Group. The Mistrys have valued their holding in the Tatas at ₹1.75 lakh crore, it informed the apex court, which is hearing the long-drawn legal battle between the two groups that began after the Tatas in a boardroom coup on October 28, 2016 sacked Cyrus Mistry as the Chairman. "Tata Sons is effectively a two-group company, with the Tata Group comprising Tata Trusts, Tata family members and Tata companies holding 81.6 per cent of the equity share capital, and the Mistry family owning the balance 18.37 per cent," the Shapoorji Pallonji Group said in a statement quoting from its submission to the apex court.



The group has submitted a plan for separation from Tatas to the Supreme Court. Tata Sons is the core investment company and is the holding company for the Tata Group and its value arises from its stake in listed equities, non-listed equities, the brand, cash balances and immovable assets. The value of 18.37 per cent stake of the SP Group in Tata Sons is over ₹1,75,000 crore, it said. — PTI

Centre rejigs norms for PLI scheme

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, OCT. 29 Making the production-linked incentive schemes more attractive for bulk drugs and medical devices manufacturing, the government has replaced "minimum threshold investment" criterion with "committed investment". The government has replaced the criterion of 'minimum threshold' investment with 'committed' investment by the selected applicant. The change has been made to encourage efficient use of productive capital. Further, the amount of investment required to achieve a particular level of production depends upon choice of technology and it also varies from product to product. However, the verification of the actual investment for incentives under the scheme continues.

Global trade to shrink by 20%

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, OCT. 29

Revising its earlier estimate, the UNCTAD has predicted global trade to plummet by 20 per cent or by about \$6 trillion in 2020. In 2019, global trade stood at about \$25 trillion, with estimates then predicting a 3 per cent rise in 2020. Without a swift recovery in the second

half of 2020, the consensus now is that trade will instead plummet by about 20 per cent this year, or by about \$6 trillion. Such a decline would be unprecedented, being significantly larger than the \$4 trillion fall seen during the 2009 recession, said Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General, UNCTAD in a recent article. In early October, UNCTAD had said that it

expected global trade to fall by about 7 per cent in 2020 under the assumption that the trend observed in Q3 continues into Q4. The lower bound for 2020 is at about 9 per cent and considers the possibility of a resurgence of the pandemic and the prospect of a deteriorating policy environment with sudden increases in trade restrictive policies, the article had said.

Hiring in e-commerce, retail bouncing back

Mumbai, Oct. 29: The retail segment, which has been badly hit due to the lockdown restrictions, is bouncing back gradually with an uptick in hiring of 15 per cent in September when compared with the previous month, according to a report. However, the hiring activities are still down by 50 per cent compared to the corresponding month a year ago, according to a report by Naukri.com. The sector is showing a slow but steady sequential recovery but the sector is likely to bounce back further during the festive season in the country, it added. "As more public spaces have opened up keeping social distancing in mind, we see movement pick up in retail spaces. Hiring is also picking up accordingly," the report added. "The Naukri retail hiring report is based on hiring activities in the sector on the job site's platform. Top roles that recruiters are hiring for include retail store manager, sales or business development manager, merchandiser,



software developer, tech architect, designer and accountant. Roles such as logistic manager, interior designer, warehouse assistant and tech lead have seen 100 per cent, 66 per cent, 44 per cent and 42 per cent growth in demand year-on-year. Keywords like logistics and retail sales executive are up by 247 per cent and 500 per cent in recruiter searches for the sector, it added. Meanwhile, the report further stated that there has been an upward trend in hiring activities in the Internet sector with a sequential recovery since July onwards. "This is backed by various phases of unlocking

along with the huge demand from consumers for daily essentials through online channels. Major hiring to prepare for the festive season is indicative in August but has become flat through September, it added. Even though the internet or e-commerce industry started seeing a decline in hiring since the start of the year, when compared with the pre-COVID-19 period, we see a high recovery; the sector is down by only seven per cent in September compared to February. Even digital marketing and pay per click specialist roles have seen an annual growth of over 40 per cent, it added. — PTI

M&M to launch 3-wheeler e-cargo

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, OCT. 29

Mahindra Electric on Thursday announced the launch of its new electric 3-wheeler cargo model Treo Zor at starting price of ₹2.73 lakh at Delhi showroom which includes the FAME 2 and state subsidies. The Mahindra Treo Zor electric 3-wheeler, built on the Treo platform, will be available in pickup, delivery van and flat bed variants at Mahindra small commercial vehicle dealerships in select cities across the country from December. The vehicle will be retailed through Mahindra's SCV dealerships in select cities with deliveries commencing in December 2020. With a best-in-class payload capacity of 550 kg, the Treo Zor is suitable for last mile transport and is claimed to offer savings of around ₹60,000 per year

(fuel cost saving of ₹2.10/km) compared to a diesel model. The goods carrier is claimed to have a maintenance cost of 40 paise per km. The certified driving range on a full charge stands at 125 km. "The Treo Zor will provide a clean, sustainable and affordable solution for last-mile delivery," Mahindra & Mahindra's MD and CEO Pawan Goenka said at the launch.

ants at Mahindra small commercial vehicle dealerships in select cities across the country from December. The vehicle will be retailed through Mahindra's SCV dealerships in select cities with deliveries commencing in December 2020. With a best-in-class payload capacity of 550 kg, the Treo Zor is suitable for last mile transport and is claimed to offer savings of around ₹60,000 per year

DRL ties up with BIRAC for vaccine trials

New Delhi, Oct. 29: Drug major Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Thursday announced its partnership with the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council, set up by the Department of Biotechnology, for advisory support on clinical trials of Russian Covid-19 vaccine, Sputnik V, in India. "The partnership will allow Dr Reddy's to identify and use some of BIRAC's clinical trial centres for the vaccine, which are funded under the National Biopharma

Mission (NBM), implemented by Project Management Unit-NBM at BIRAC. Further, the company will have access to good clinical laboratory practice labs to conduct immunogenicity assay testing of the vaccine," Dr Reddy's Laboratories said. Earlier this month, Dr Reddy's and Russia Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) received approval from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) to conduct an adaptive phase 2/3 human clinical trial for Sputnik V vaccine in

India. On August 11, the Sputnik V vaccine developed by the Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology was registered by the Ministry of Health of Russia and became the world's first registered vaccine against Covid-19 based on the human adenoviral vector platform. Currently, there are two indigenously developed vaccine candidates for COVID-19. — PTI

Maruti back in profit, net profit up 1%



MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, OCT. 29

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest car maker, on Thursday swung back to profit with its net profit rising 1 per cent year-on-year to ₹1,371 crore in the July-September second quarter as demand for its small cars improved after the stringent Covid-19 lockdown were lifted. The maker of popular car models such as Swift and Vitara Brezza had posted a loss of ₹249.4 crore in Q1 FY21. Profit was impacted due to a decline in other income (down 34.5 per cent year-on-year) and higher tax cost (up 76.3 per cent YoY). Also, the net profit in Q2 FY20 was higher due to mark-to-market gains on the invested surplus and lower tax provision, company reasoned. "In Q2, the performance improved on the back of some demand recovery and gradual improvement in supply conditions," Maruti Suzuki said in a statement. The New Delhi-based carmaker saw its dispatches improve in the second quarter as the country restarted most activities to revive the economy that is headed towards a rare annual contraction in more than four decades. The lockdown had forced India's automakers to stall operations, leading to a washout in the initial months. Revenue during the quarter jumped 10.4 per cent to ₹18,744.5 crore compared to the year-ago period. Maruti sold 3.93 lakh units this July-September quarter, reporting a massive 413 per cent growth over the previous quarter and 16 per cent over the year-ago period.

India can make Perovskite solar cells, a potential cheap alternative to silicon cells

US pitches cheaper solar power tech to India

Chennai, Oct. 29: The United States wants India to explore manufacturing a cheaper alternative to silicon solar cells, United States. Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette said on Wednesday, amid high dependence on Chinese technology. Brouillette, who was addressing a virtual press conference at the conclusion of the India energy forum at the IHS CERA Week, said India was "perfectly positioned as a potential manufacturer" of perovskite cells, on which the United States was conducting research at its national laboratory in Colorado. "We have seen recently with this pandemic, supply chain issues have aris-



en with countries like China and in certain cases we have become overly dependent upon one country," Brouillette said. India has an ambitious plan to increase its renewable energy capacity to 175 gigawatts (GW) by 2022, nearly three-fifths of

which will be solar power. India, an energy hungry nation, which imports over 80 per cent of its solar cells and modules from its neighbour, wants to increase domestic manufacturing but has so far had little success. "It is a technology we

want to share with India, we think it is better done there than other parts around the world," Brouillette said. Perovskite solar cells (PSCs) are considered by scientists as a potential cheap alternative to silicon cells.

● **INDIA HAS** an ambitious plan to increase its renewable energy capacity to 175 gigawatts (GW) by 2022. ● **THE ENERGY** hungry nation imports over 80% of its solar cells and modules from its neighbour. ● **SCIENTISTS** ARE also exploring using perovskite in tandem with silicon to increase efficiency.

efficiency has improved dramatically," said Sandeep Ravishankar, a scientist researching Perovskite solar cells at the Institute of Energy and Climate Research, Forschungszentrum Jülich, Germany. "However, Perovskite solar cells are still not stable enough to be considered as a commercial competitor of silicon," Sandeep said. Scientists are also exploring using perovskite in tandem with silicon to increase efficiency, and research on the technology is being carried out in countries including the United States, Saudi Arabia and Federal Republic of Germany.

SHORT TAKES



Novak Djokovic gestures after defeating Borna Coric in the Vienna Open pre-quarterfinal.

Djokovic seals 2020's top spot

Vienna: Novak Djokovic virtually ensured equalling Pete Sampras's record of ending the year as world number one for the sixth time on Wednesday when he reached the Vienna ATP quarterfinals. Djokovic defeated Croatia's Borna Coric 7-6 (13/11), 6-3 and will secure the year-end top spot as long as Rafael Nadal does not take an unlikely wild card into the Sofia event next month. If Novak wins the Vienna title on Sunday, he will make sure of the landmark regardless of whether or not Nadal plays in Bulgaria. Djokovic, who now has 39 wins and just two defeats in 2020, has been the top-ranked player at the end of a season five times: in 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015 and 2018. He shares that mark with career rivals Roger Federer and Nadal. Sampras achieved the feat six years in succession between 1993 and 1998. — *AFP*

Green in Oz squad for India series

Melbourne: Australia on Thursday included young all-rounder Cameron Green in their T20 and ODI squad for the limited-overs series against India while Moises Henriques returned to national fold after three years following his exploits in the Big Bash League. India will play three One-day Internationals (November 27, 29, December 2) and as many T20Is (December 4, 6, 8) against Australia before the much-awaited Test series. "Cameron's domestic form has been outstanding and he has carried it through for Western Australia this summer. As a potential player of the future this is an opportunity for him to be part of the squad and build on his experience," national selector Trevor Hohns was quoted as saying by Cricket Australia. — *PTI*

Man U dismantle Leipzig, Barca win

Paris: Marcus Rashford was again the star for Manchester United in the Champions League with a hat-trick in a 5-0 thumping of RB Leipzig on Wednesday as Barcelona put their off-field troubles to one side to win 2-0 away to a Ronaldo-less Juventus. Rashford came on as a second-half substitute and scored three times from the 74th minute on in what was a fine win against last season's semifinalists. Mason Greenwood and Anthony Martial also scored. In Italy Barcelona bounced back from their weekend defeat in the Clasico against Real Madrid to beat Juventus 2-0. Lionel Messi got his name on the scoresheet late on, netting a stoppage-time penalty to seal Barca's second victory in as many Group G outings.

THE RESULTS
Manchester United 5 (Greenwood 21, Rashford 74, 78, 90+2, Martial 87-pen) bt RB Leipzig 0; Juventus 0 lost to Barcelona 2 (Dembele 14, Messi 90-pen); Borussia Dortmund 2 (Sancho 78-pen, Haaland 90+1) bt Zenit Saint Petersburg 0; Istanbul Basaksehir 0 lost to Paris Saint-Germain 2 (Kean 64, 79).

HOLDER'S SIGN

Dear Readers, What do you think Jason Holder of Sunrisers Hyderabad is signalling when he raises three fingers after taking each wicket? Write to us at sportsdesk@deccanmail.com

Live on TV

CRICKET

IPL: Kings XI Punjab vs Rajasthan Royals from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

Women's Big Bash League: Sydney Thunder vs Adelaide Strikers from 6.45 am (Saturday) on Sony Six

WWE

Smackdown: Bouts from 5.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1

Gaikward off KKR

Jadeja cracks whip as CSK beat Knights in thriller

Dubai, Oct. 29: Chennai Super Kings beat Kolkata Knight Riders by six wickets in a thrilling IPL match here on Thursday.

Ravindra Jadeja scored an unbeaten 31 off just 11 balls which included two boundaries and three sixes, the last of which was struck on the last ball of the match to overhaul KKR's total of 172 for 5.

Needing 30 runs off the last two overs, CSK smashed 20 off the penultimate over bowled by fast bowler Lockie Ferguson, thanks to Jadeja, who hit two more sixes in the last over bowled by pacer Kamlesh Nagarkoti.

Earlier, opener Ruturaj Gaikwad set a solid foundation for the chase by scoring 72 in 53 balls (4x6, 6x2).

For KKR, opener Nitish Rana made 87. Following Rana's 61-ball effort, cameos from skipper Eoin Morgan (15 off 12) and Dinesh Karthik (21 not out off 10) allowed KKR to put up a competitive total.

CSK, who pulled things back in the middle overs, leaked 66 runs in the last five overs.

Lungi Ngidi (2/34) was the best bowler for CSK while Sam Curran also bowled well early on.

The KKR innings was built largely on Rana's knock which comprised 10 fours, four sixes.

Rana hit three consecutive sixes off Karn Sharma in the 16th over to up the ante as the Kolkata side looked for quick runs.

— *PTI*



Ruturaj Gaikwad of Chennai Super Kings plays a shot against Kolkata Knight Riders during their IPL match at Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Thursday.

— *BCCI*

SCORECARD

Kolkata Knight Riders: Shubman Gill b Karn Sharma 26, Nitish Rana c Sam Curran b Lungi Ngidi 87, Sunil Narine c Ravindra Jadeja b Mitchell Santner 7, Rinku Singh c Ambati Rayudu b Jadeja 11, E. Morgan c Gaikwad b Ngidi 15, D. Karthik not out 21, R. Tripathi not out 3. Extras (LB-1, W-1) 2. **Total (for 5 wickets 20 overs) 172.**

FOW: 1-53, 2-60, 3-93, 4-137, 5-167. **Bowling:** Chahar 3-0-31-0, Curran 3-0-21-0, Ngidi 4-0-34-2, Santner 3-0-30-1, Jadeja 3-0-20-1, Karn Sharma 4-0-35-1.

Chennai Super Kings: Shane Watson c R. Singh b Varun Chakravarthy 14, RD Gaikwad b Cummins 72, Ambati Rayudu c Narine b Cummins 38, M. S. Dhoni b Varun 1, Sam Curran not out 13, Jadeja not out 31. Extras (NB-1, W-8) 9. **Total (for 4 wickets in 20 overs) 178.**

FOW: 1-50, 2-118, 3-121, 4-140. **Bowling:** Pat Cummins 4-0-31-2, Kamlesh Nagarkoti 3-0-34-0, Sunil Narine 4-0-23-0, Lockie Ferguson 4-0-54-0, Varun Chakravarthy 4-0-20-2, Nitish Rana 1-0-16-0.

IPL POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Mumbai Indians	12	8	4	0	16	+1.186
Royal Challengers Bangalore	12	7	5	0	14	+0.048
Delhi Capitals	12	7	5	0	14	+0.030
Kings XI Punjab	12	6	6	0	12	-0.049
Kolkata Knight Riders	13	6	7	0	12	-0.467
Sunrisers Hyderabad	12	5	7	0	10	+0.396
Rajasthan Royals	12	5	7	0	10	-0.505
Chennai Super Kings	13	5	8	0	10	-0.532

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

SHASTRI URGES SURYAKUMAR TO BE PATIENT

New Delhi, Oct. 29: National coach Ravi Shastri has urged Suryakumar Yadav to "stay strong and patient" after the MI batsman impressed with an unbeaten 43-ball 79 in the IPL despite the heart-break of being ignored for India's tour of Australia. His consistent run in domestic cricket and the IPL notwithstanding, Yadav did not feature in India's white-ball squad named for the series against Australia.

"Surya namaskar. Stay strong and patient @ s u r y a _ 1 4 k u m a r #MivSRCB," Shastri tweeted.

His innings earned praise from several former stars with Virender Sehwag saying it won't be long before Yadav dons the Indian jersey. — *PTI*

Powerful Punjab face languishing Rajasthan

Abu Dhabi, Oct. 29: A rampaging Kings XI Punjab would look to extend their exceptional run and inch closer to a Play-offs berth while Rajasthan Royals would be desperate to stay alive in the tournament when the two sides clash in an IPL match, here on Friday.

It has been a dramatic turnaround for the KL Rahul-led side after a string of losses earlier in the tournament.

They have managed to weave together five consecutive wins against the top four sides in the tournament, infusing life into their campaign. They are in fourth position with 12 points from as many games, while the Royals have slumped to the penultimate spot with 10 points having

NUMBERS GAME	
HEAD TO HEAD	
OVERALL:	● Matches: 20 ● Rajasthan: 11 ● Punjab: 8 ● Tied: 1 (Kings XI Punjab beat Rajasthan Royals in Super over after match ended in a tie)
MEETING IN 2019	
● Kings XI Punjab beat Rajasthan Royals by 14 runs at Jaipur.	● Kings XI Punjab beat Rajasthan Royals by 12 runs at Mohali.
MEETING IN 2020	
● Rajasthan Royals beat Kings XI Punjab by 4 wickets at Sharjah.	
FOR THE RECORD	
● Mayank Agarwal made 106 runs off 50 balls with 10 fours and seven sixes against Rajasthan Royals in first meeting at Sharjah.	● Rajasthan Royals' 226 for six in 19.3 overs against Kings XI Punjab in first meeting at at Sharjah was the highest successful run-chases in IPL.

— *S. PERVEZ KAISER*

suffered seven defeats from 12 outings.

The Royals can't afford to slip up, if they lose on Friday they will be out of the reckoning while a defeat for Punjab will

dent their chances for a top-four finish.

The Royals will be high on confidence after their win over Mumbai Indians in their list outing. — *PTI*

HARDIK, CHRIS REBUKED FOR ALTERCATION

Abu Dhabi, Oct. 29: RCB all-rounder Chris Morris and his MI's counterpart Hardik Pandya have been reprimanded for a verbal altercation during their teams' IPL clash here.

The incident took place in the 19th over of MI chase when Pandya struck Morris for a massive six and gestured towards the South African.

Morris got his revenge when he dismissed Pandya in the fifth ball of the over and gave him a send off. MI won the match by five wickets.

A press release from the IPL said that both of them admitted to breaching the Code of Conduct.

"For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the match referee's decision is final and binding," said the release. — *PTI*

India for Kiwi as ICC's chairman

New Delhi, Oct. 29: The BCCI is likely to back the candidature of New Zealand's Greg Barclay over Singapore's Imran Khwaja in the elections for the ICC chairman, a post vacated by India's Shashank Manohar after two terms in July this year.

Barclay and Khwaja are the only two candidates contesting for the chairman's post and the 16-member all-powerful ICC Board is set to vote in the first week of December.

While hectic back-channel talks are on to find a unanimous candidate and put up a picture of unity among the Board of Directors (mostly comprising of member nations), it is highly unlikely that Khwaja will have the backing of the Indian cricket board.

"The BCCI is more aligned with New Zealand Cricket (NZC) and those who matter in Indian cricket board find Barclay as a more suitable candidate for the post. Also Khwaja's policy position-

ing isn't exactly in favour of Indian cricket," a senior official, privy to developments in ICC board said. There are a few issues due to which current ICC deputy chairman Khwaja won't find favour with the BCCI.

Firstly, the role played by him along with Manohar to roll back the proposed revenue model in which India, England and Australia stood to gain more.

The matter was up for vote and Khwaja and Manohar, had back then, gathered enough votes to crush the BCCI.

Secondly, the ICC in 2019, had drawn up a rough calendar for the 2023 FTP cycle and till 2028, each and every year; there was a senior men's flagship event kept in that, the revenues from which would have benefitted the smaller nations.

It is understood that the white paper that ICC prepared had Khwaja's tacit support. In fact, BCCI had strong objections to such a proposal. — *PTI*

KAPIL SHARES HIS WELL BEING IN VIDEO MESSAGE

New Delhi, Oct. 29: A week after undergoing angioplasty, the legendary Kapil Dev on Thursday greeted his former India teammates from the 1983 World Cup, saying he is "feeling very good" and eager to meet everyone soon.

The 61-year-old underwent the procedure after suffering a heart attack. He was discharged from the hospital a couple of days later.

"My family 83. The weather is very pleasant and I am very eager to meet you all. I am feeling very good. Thanks to all for your wishes and concern."

"I am hoping that we all will meet pretty soon. I will try to meet you all as early as possible. We have approached the end of the year and I am confident that we will have a great start to next year. Love you all," an enthusiastic Kapil, dressed in a purple T-shirt, said in a video which he shared with his 1983 teammates.



A screengrab of Kapil Dev from a video released by him.

— *PTI*



In this file picture taken on December 6, 2008 Argentina's national team coach and football star Diego Armando Maradona gestures as he attends a felicitation programme at Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata, India. — *AFP*

Maradona turns 60 in self-isolation

Buenos Aires, Oct. 29: Notorious for his wild lifestyle, Argentina great Diego Maradona turns 60 on Friday in far more sober circumstances sheltered in self-isolation to protect him from the Coronavirus pandemic.

Having suffered two heart attacks in the last 20 years and contracted hepatitis, Maradona's precaution after a bodyguard started displaying Covid-19 symptoms earlier this week is understandable.

Born in a poor Buenos Aires neighborhood on October 30, 1960, Diego Armando Maradona quickly marked himself out as special talent. Defiant and ingenious, macho, a loyal friend and spiteful enemy, Maradona has always been magnetic.

IDOLIZED LIKE A GOD

First came the highs. Having made his name helping Boca win the Argentine title, he earned a move to Catalan giants Barcelona at just 21.

At 25 he dragged

Argentina to World Cup glory at Mexico 86. In the quarterfinal against England he displayed both the devil in him, and his genius, first scoring a goal with his hand — which he later dubbed the "Hand of God".

THE LOWS OF LIFE

Maradona broke down in floods of tears in 1990 after he failed to inspire an ill-disciplined Argentina to retain the World Cup, losing 1-0 to West Germany in the final. The next year his Napoli career ended in disgrace after he was handed a 15-month ban for taking cocaine.

He'd scored 346 goals in 679 matches over a 21-year career. As a coach he never enjoyed the same success, and certainly did not have the same flair.

Put in charge of the national team with a Lionel Messi in his pomp, Maradona's charges slumped out of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa with a 4-0 quarterfinal drubbing by Germany. — *AFP*

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