





## SHORT TAKES

### BJP POINTS TO TRS INTERNAL SURVEYS

FROM PAGE 1

A senior party leader pointed out that Chief Minister had himself disclosed that the TRS's internal surveys had revealed an increase in the number of seats for the BJP in the GHMC polls.

He said that currently the party has only three corporators but serious efforts from state and national leaders will show good results. Since the 2016 GHMC elections, the BJP has won the Goshamahall Assembly seat and the Secunderabad parliamentary constituency in the city.

## SOME MORE CORPORATORS ON THE WAY OUT

From page 1

Some more corporators would be displaced due to local factors and political reasons. Sources revealed that KTR had secured division-wise feedback of winning horses and he will give priority to candidates with better winning chances rather than go by seniority. While this is so, there is intense lobbying among corporators and aspirants for tickets.

Rama Rao has been busy in recent days inaugurating completed projects and laying the foundation stones for new ones, and announcing sops for the people. Sources said that in coming two weeks, Rama Rao will concentrate on distribution of double bedroom houses to the beneficiaries as per his promise to deliver them before end of December 2020. Once the task is complete, the party will reveal its poll strategy.

## GOVT TRANSFERS 15 DSP RANK OFFICERS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, NOV. 15

The state government has transferred 15 deputy superintendents of police (DSP) rank officials including Siddipet assistant police commissioner A. Vishwa Prasad who had taken charge on October 7, about the time the Dubbak byelection notification was issued.

DGP M. Mahendar Reddy on Saturday issued orders asking Prasad to report to the DGP's office. Ch Rameshwar, who was awaiting posting, will be Siddipet ACP. There were reports among police circles that the cash seizure by the Siddipet police during the byelection from a close relative of BJP candidate M. Raghunandan Rao and the alleged assault on TRS MLA Ch Kranti Kiran by BJP workers a day head of polling resulted in the transfer.

Siddipet Traffic ACP A. Balaji was transferred and posted as DSP of Sangareddy. P. Sridhar Reddy was transferred as ACP LB Nagar to replace K. Pruthvidhar Rao who was asked to report to the DGP's office.

Akula Srinivas, DSP CID, was posted as ACP Kacheguda and S. Bheem Reddy, ACP Hyderabad Metro Rail, as DSP Patancheru and M. Sudharshan, DSP Counter Intelligence Cell, as ACP Banjara Hills in place of K. Srinivasa Rao who is now DSP intelligence.

P.V. Ganesh, ACP CCS of Ramagundam, will be ACP Punjagutta in place of M. Thirupattanna who is now DSP Intelligence. V. Bhaskar, DSP of CI Cell, will be ACP Shamshabad and V. Jaipal Reddy, ACP CCS, Hyderabad city, has been posted as Baswada DSP in place of S.R. Damodar who has been asked to report to the DGP's office. On Friday, the state government posted P. Venkata Rami Reddy back as collector of Siddipet district. He had been shunted out of Siddipet.

## BJP gears up for GHMC polls



The BJP GHMC election management committee meets at the party office in Nampally on Sunday. Party state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Union minister of state G. Kishan Reddy, BJP vice president D.K. Aruna and senior leaders attended the meeting. BJP leaders also felicitated newly elected Dubbak MLA M. Raghunandan Rao on this occasion.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

## RAGHUNANDAN TO TAKE OATH ON NOV. 18

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, NOV. 15

Bharatiya Janata Party MLA-elect M. Raghunandan Rao will be sworn in as Dubbak legislator at 1 pm on November 18. Rao had upset the much-fancied TRS to win the November 3 byelection by a narrow margin of 1,079 votes. He will be the BJP's second legislator, after T. Raja Singh.



# Hyd in a mess: Uttam

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, NOV. 15

State Congress chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Sunday urged Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao to extend immediate relief to the residents of Osmannagar, Saifnagar, Abdullah Yahya Nagar and other localities which are still submerged in floodwaters following the rains in the second week of October.

In an open letter to the Chief Minister, the TPCC chief said: "The people of Hyderabad are living in the most miserable conditions in the last two months but the government does not

● IN AN open letter to the CM, the TPCC chief said: "The people of Hyderabad are living in the most miserable conditions in the last two months but the government does not care."

About 5,000 people in about 1000 houses in the three colonies were living in miserable conditions, he said.

The residents, belonging to the poor and middle classes, had lost their electronic gadgets, children's books and furniture. He said the people were "experiencing hell," surrounded by water and living amid nauseating odour, mosquitoes and snakes. The face the risk of contracting water-borne diseases as well as those spread by mosquitoes.

"No official or public representative has come forward to support the people there," said the TPCC chief who had toured the area on Friday. "Proof of your governance is the fact that the situation is so bad in a ministerial constituency that is not so far away from Hyderabad," he told the Chief Minister.

The residents had no access to safe drinking water. Three-phase power supply is required to pump away the water and drains have to be cleared, the TPCC chief

said. He said lack of coordination between the municipality, irrigation, revenue and electricity departments had made things difficult. The TPCC chief said when he enquired about the situation in Osmannagar with the collector and other officials, he was told that they had submitted a report to the state government and were waiting for a response.

Uttam Kumar Reddy asked the Chief Minister to order enumeration of damage in the area and pay compensation to each family. Steps should be taken to find a permanent solution to inundation of those areas in the future.

# Contract lecturers get a KCR boost

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, NOV. 15

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao decided to give an opportunity to contract lecturers to work in their choice of vacant posts available in government junior colleges.

The Chief Minister held a review meeting on the problems faced by contract lecturers in government junior colleges. Education minister P. Sabitha Indra Reddy and Rythu Bandhu Samithi chairman Palla Rajeshwar Reddy brought to the notice of

the Chief Minister the various issues being faced by the contract lecturers of government junior colleges.

While instructing the officials to prepare guidelines in this regard, Rao said "The state government has taken several measures about junior

college contract lecturers. The attempt to regularise them failed due to cases in courts. The government has doubled their monthly salaries. In the past they were paid for 10 months in a year." He instructed officials to take into consideration their plea and

that they should be given an opportunity to work in the government junior college of their choice in the vacant posts.

He also instructed senior officials of the education department to prepare the guidelines keeping in view the existing rules and regulations.

## NEW CASES PLUMMET ON BACK OF FEWER TESTS

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, NOV. 15

New Coronavirus cases plummeted to a low of 661 for Saturday, the day of Diwali. Three more persons succumbed to the disease on Saturday. The total cases stood at 2,57,374 and the deaths at 1,404.

Coupled with a fall in the number of tests during weekends, Telangana state reported testing of only 21,264 samples in the 24-hour period ending Saturday 8 pm. Of these tests, 11,907 were from primary and secondary contacts of those who tested positive in the past few days, while the remaining 9,357 were from individuals who either volunteered and got themselves tested or were referred for testing.

Another weekend low was on October 25 when 582 new cases were detected. Only 14,729 individuals were tested for the virus. Another day that had registered lower cases than on Saturday was June 20, when 546 new cases were reported from 3,188 samples that were tested.

It may be noted that during the earlier months of the pandemic, positive cases were on a consistent high and the ratio between new cases and tests was much higher.

This was not just because of the disease spreading faster but testing was done using RT-PCR tests, considered the gold standard for Covid-19 testing.

Since July, the state has been using the much less reliable Rapid Antigen Tests extensively. They are not known to present accurate results.

# Kavitha vows help to victim's family

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, NOV. 15

TRS MLC K. Kavitha on Sunday assured the family of a woman whose body was found in Nizamabad district that all steps would be taken to ensure that the accused are punished as per law and justice is done.

The body of the girl was found under suspicious circumstances in Nyavanandi of Sirikonda mandal in Nizamabad district, according to sources.

The members of the victim's family along with the members of the Yadav community called on Kavitha at

her residence in Hyderabad on Sunday, seeking her intervention.

Kavitha spoke to Nizamabad police commissioner Kartikeya over the telephone and enquired about the reasons for delay in the case investigation. She urged him to expedite the investigation and personally monitor it to nab the persons responsible for the death of the victim.

Assuring the victim's family of help, Kavitha said Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao does not tolerate crimes against women and was taking all measures to ensure their safety.

# RTC staff to get pending salaries

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, NOV. 15

In a relief to the staff of the TS Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC), Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Sunday decided to immediately pay 50 per cent pending salary to them which was withheld for March and April due to Covid-19. He was holding a review meeting with officials of transport and finance departments on the steps being taken to bring RTC back on track. He asked finance secretary Ramakrishna Rao to immediately release ₹120 crore for this purpose.

The CM instructed TSRTC authorities to make arrangements for restoration of bus services to all earlier routes and to increase services to 50 per cent in Greater Hyderabad limits from the present 25 per cent.

Rao said, "The state government is protecting the state PSUs despite several difficulties. We have opposed tooth and nail attempts made to privatise the power sector. On the other hand, the Centre is privatising PSUs, including

the LIC. We are protecting our state-run undertakings."

He said "I will not relax till TSRTC is put back on track. Many employees and lakhs of their families are dependent on it. Moreover, this is the cheapest transport network available for the poor."

TSRTC officials informed that due to the Coronavirus and with people preferring to use private vehicles, occupancy rate of their buses had come down drastically, which resulted in the corporation incurring heavy losses.

Rao instructed officials to take appropriate decisions and get over the difficulties created by the pandemic. He pointed out that cargo services introduced by RTC had become a big hit. He hoped that like Indian Railways, TSRTC would also earn profits through its cargo services.

He expressed his happiness that the RTC had carried million parcels and congratulated Transport minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar and officials concerned.

Ajay Kumar and TSRTC officials thanked the Chief Minister for his instructions to initiate talks.

# Diwali picnics turn tragic as 6 revellers drown

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC WITH AGENCY INPUTS WARANGAL, NOV. 15

Diwali turned tragic for the residents of Rangarajapuram Colony of Venkatapuram under Mulugu district on Saturday after four youths from there drowned in the river Godavari while they were celebrating a friend's birthday.

Two bodies were found on Saturday, and the two others on Sunday.

According to the police, 20 friends went to a pond near the old Godavari sand ramp, about three kilometres from the village, to celebrate the birthday of one Sashi Kumar on Saturday.

Four of his friends, Tumma Karthik, Sankhya Srikanth, Raivarapu Prakash and Anvesh, who were in the group went for a swim in the river and drowned. They were reportedly inebriated.

On receiving information of the youths going missing in the water, Venkatapuram circle inspector K. Shiva Prasad and sub-inspector Tirupati reached the spot and took part in rescue operations.

Expert swimmers, with the help of fishermen, and carried out search operations. The bodies of Prakash and Karthik were found on

● 20 FRIENDS went to a pond near the old Godavari sand ramp, about three kilometres from the village, to celebrate the birthday of one Sashi Kumar on Saturday.

Saturday evening, and that of Anvesh and Srikanth on Sunday. All the deceased were under the age of 25.

Eturnagarm ASP Md Ghouse Alam warned villagers living on the shores of the Godavari, not to venture into the river, which is very deep and the water was flowing swiftly.

"It is prohibited to take baths or celebrate any parties. Villagers must not allow such events to happen.

They also must alert the police regarding such incidents," he said warning, anyone violating these orders, would be dealt with seriously. Elsewhere, two teenagers drowned at the Nizamagar dam in Kamareddy district on Saturday.

They were among the group of five persons who went to the dam on Diwali.

Two of them, aged 19, went near a flood gate to bathe. It is believed that they slipped fell into deep water and drowned, a police official said.

HOLY | TIME

## Once-in-12-years pushkaralu at the river starts next week

# Purohits queue up at Tungabhadra

DC CORRESPONDENT KURNOOL, NOV. 15

Anticipating a bonanza, purohits are coming to Kurnool district from within AP and neighbouring districts of Telangana state and Karnataka in hope of making some money during the Tungabhadra Pushkarams, a once-in-12-years event, to be held all along the course of the Tungabhadra river from November 20 to December 1.

Presence of priests is sine qua non for people to perform 'pinda pradhana' in honour of their ances-

tors. As a precautionary measure, the Kurnool district administration has made mandatory Covid-19 tests for purohits, who will have to compulsorily wear masks and wash their hands frequently with sanitisers.

The district administration is cataloguing all priests and will start issuing them high security identity cards from Tuesday, November 17. The endowments department has said purohits will have to produce a "Coronavirus negative report" to obtain their identity cards, said V.L.L.N. Sastry, a purohit

● THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION is making a list of priests and will start issuing them high security identity cards from Tuesday. The endowments department has said purohits will have to produce a "Coronavirus negative report" to obtain their identity cards.

● THE KURNOOL administration is being vigilant as there is a wave of opinion spreading that the people must be allowed to have a holy dip in the river. The administration had barred bathing in the Tungabhadra during the pushkaralu due to Covid-19 restrictions.

in Mantralayam.

Due to fears of a second wave of Coronavirus pandemic striking, Kurnool administration has banned devotees from having a dip in the river. The

devout will have to remain content with just sprinkling water over their heads.

An endowment official said there are 21 bathing ghats along the course of

Tungabhadra river in the district. Each ghat will have presence of 15 purohits. During the 2008 Pushkarams, their number was 20 at each ghat.

The district administration is being vigilant as there is a wave of opinion spreading that people must be allowed to freely have a holy dip in the river. The opinion is spreading despite the administration banning bathing in the river due to the risk of Covid-19 pandemic spreading along the river course if any of the patients are Coronavirus positive or even asymptomatic.



Finance minister Harish Rao plays a shot after inaugurating a cricket tournament at Siddipet. He also went to the mini Tank Bund in the town on Sunday.



## OTHER STORIES

### 3 GIRLS DROWNED IN ALISAGAR RESERVOIR

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, NOV. 15

Three girls accidentally drowned in Alisagar reservoir in Yedapally mandal on Sunday.

The incident occurred when the victims were trying to take a selfie on their mobile phones. Trying to save each other, the three girls drowned in the reservoir.

The deceased are identified, as Jubera, 16, Mashera, 14, and Meraj, 12, of Rakasipet in Bodhan town.

The girls, along with their friends, came to the Alisagar reservoir for a Sunday outing. In another incident, two youths drowned in Nizamsagar waters on Saturday.

Syed Sumer, Katike Shiva of Kalher in Medak district reached the Nizamsagar project and tried swimming underwater at the project gates and accidentally drowned in water. Their bodies were fished out, with the help of expert swimmers.

## LIVE WIRE FISHING KILLS 2 IN SEPARATE EVENTS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, NOV. 15

Live wire fishing in Khammam district has turned out to be a death trap for people. Nearly four deaths have taken place due to this type of fishing practice.

Though the revenue and police officials have asked the locals to refrain from the practice, nobody cares.

Dharavat Krishna, 36, a farmer, had gone to the NSP left the canal at Kranthipuram under Konigerla mandal on Sunday for fishing, and got electrocuted.

Those who go fishing, drop a live wire into the canal. Due to electrocution, the fish die and float on the water surface. People later collect the fish. Following this method,

Krishna also dropped a live wire. He saw some fish floating and jumped into the water to catch them, and got electrocuted.

In another incident, Kommu Abraham, 33, a native of Diddupudi near Wyra was found dead in the Wyra reservoir.

## LORRY DRIVER KILLS ATTENDANT, DRIVES WITH BODY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, NOV. 15

A lorry driver killed his attendant, Raju in a brawl and drove with the body of the man for nine hours. He later surrendered at the Konigerla police station along with the body of the deceased on Sunday.

The accused lorry driver, Nipu Raju, a native of Jagannathapuram near Kakinada, explained the incident to the police.

According to the Wyra circle inspector, Vasanth Kumar, Nipu Raju has been working as a lorry driver for long. The vehicle attendant, Raju, travelled with him. Raju came to Manthani, from Kakinada with a load of Palmoline. After unloading the product, they travelled to Sultanabad, in Karimnagar district, and loaded the broken rice there.

The accused found the tarpaulin on the top of the lorry untied and asked the attendant Raju to tighten it. He stopped the lorry on the outskirts of Karimnagar. Instead of doing the job, the attendant disobeyed. An altercation took place. The attendant suddenly tried to attack him with a vegetable knife. To protect himself, he stabbed the attendant in his stomach. The entire incident took place in the cabin of the lorry at 9 pm on Saturday.

Driver Raju, was in shock, after confirming the attendant's death, drove the lorry to Konigerla police station with the body at 6 am on Sunday. He narrated the story to the Wyra circle inspector, Vasanth Kumar and sub-inspector Suresh.

The police sent the body for post-mortem and filed an FIR

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Adilabad MLA Jogu Ramanna in (white shirt) wears a cap made of peacock feathers and dances to the beats of the drum as part of Gussadi-Dandari celebrations in connection with the Diwali festival in Adilabad. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

# Adivasis' Gussadi-Dandari draws netas to their gudems

Adilabad ZPTC poll round the corner, leaders hope to win over tribals

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC  
ADILABAD, NOV. 15

The political leaders are all headed towards the Adivasi gudems, to take part in the Gussadi-Dandari celebrated by the Adivasis on the occasion of Diwali in erstwhile Adilabad district.

Adilabad Rural mandal is soon going for the ZPTC elections, and many leaders have increased their visits to the Adivasi gudems.

Leaders and top officials in the district are shaking their legs to the traditional drum beats that reverberated the villages from morning to night trying to get closer to the Adivasis.

Adilabad MLA Jogu Ramanna and Thalamadugu ZPTC Goka Ganesh Reddy were the 'Gussadi topi'. Even, some non-tribals have shown interest to participate in



Adilabad BJP leader Soyam Bapurao plays 'Chechoy Dhems' during the Gussadi-Dandari celebrations.

the Gussadi-Dandari event.

Asifabad TRS MLA Atram Sakku and Adilabad BJP Soyam Bapurao played 'Chechoy Dhems' like trained artists with the Adivasis during the Gussadi-Dandari.

Asifabad Zilla Parishad chairperson Kova Laxmi also participated in the cultural events.

Former Adilabad Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) MP Godam Nagesh organises the event every year on a grand scale in his native village Jatharla in Bajarhathnoor mandal.

Nagesh said, "This year I did not organise the event due to the Covid-19 epidemic. Every year, I would invite Gussadi teams from

## Adivasis celebrate Diwali differently

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, NOV. 15

Diwali is the big festival for the Adivasis, and Gussadi-Dandari, is a special occasion for them. Adivasis celebrate Diwali differently and have their rituals to mark the occasion.

Following the age-old traditions, they have a feast and feed non-veg to their guests coming from other villages. However, holding these feasts have

become a costly affair. Usually, the event is organised, through donations, collected from the villages. Sometimes, the headman of the village will bear all the expenditure.

Some Adivasi men become Gussadis, by wearing peacock feathers and putting traditional marks on their bodies, wearing garlands made of beads and a type of wildflowers found in the jungles.

31 villages to perform the dances."

Nagesh said, "Last year the state government gave ₹10,000 to each village cel-

ebrating the Gussadi-Dandari team, but the situation is not favourable this year due to the Covid-19 epidemic."

# Docs warn of second Covid-19 wave

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, NOV. 15

Many questions about what is the present situation of Covid-19 in Khammam? Is there any remedy to the virus in the coming months? are doing the rounds.

Cardiologist M.F. Gopinath observes, "A peculiar situation prevails in the district, and people are divided into two categories - careless and fear-some."

"As many as 60 per cent of the people are taking every care possible, like maintaining physical distance, wearing masks and bathing after coming to the house from work to avoid getting infected. However, there are a few that do not bother at all. I receive both these types of patients in my hospital."

In August, the Covid-19 positive cases crossed the 500 mark. As of date, Khammam district has registered 24,100 cases. Nearly 22,500 patients recovered. On August 31, there were 568 positive cases; followed by 443 as on September 1. In October it was between 200 and 400 and in November 150 cases.

The Covid-19 positive patients are undergoing treatment in the government Covid-19 centre and 18 private hospitals.

District medical and health officer G. Malathi said, "The Covid-19 is a problem and people behaving carelessly is an issue. A danger of a second wave cannot be denied. People should take all precautionary measures to check the virus."

N. Bhaskar, a retired headmaster,

## +ve Cases come down in erstwhile Adilabad district

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC  
ADILABAD, NOV. 15

Compared to the previous months, the number of Covid-19 cases has fallen to single digits from double digits presently.

With a dip in temperatures in erstwhile Adilabad district, there is a possibility of a rise in the Covid-19 cases. However,

"Compared to two months ago, presently people are not afraid of the virus. The fall in the death rate is one of the reasons. People, particularly the youth, are

on Friday the number of registered cases was five and on Saturday six in Adilabad district. However, doctors have warned asking people to be cautious to avoid getting infected from the Coronavirus in this critical period.

In the last one month, Covid-19 cases have come down in the Adilabad district. Same is the case in Nirmal, Mancherial and

moving freely without maintaining the Covid-19 protocol."

In rural areas, life goes on a usual. N. Rambabu, a farmer said, "How many

Komaram Bheem Asifabad district. People move freely in the district, and coal workers attend their duties without any hesitation, unlike in the past.

Doctors have asked that the medical and health department to create more awareness among the people about the precautionary measures to be taken to avoid contracting Covid-19.

P. Srinu, a farmer from Pindiprolu village said, "The lifting agency pays us ₹25 per jute bag. The remaining ₹25 cost for a jute bag has to be paid by us, adding to our farm costs, another ₹12,000 to ₹13,000 per acre of paddy. Per acre of paddy needs

# Setback to Cong in Kamepalli

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC  
KHAMMAM, NOV. 15

The Congress in Kamepalli mandal received a jolt after the resignation of more than a dozen leaders including Utukuru sarpanch Kodem Sulochana and mandal parishad member Epuri Hemamalini from the primary membership of the party as well as their elected seats.

This came about after they were not invited to the laying of the foundation stone for the memorial building of former minister Ramreddy Venkat Reddy in Kamepalli. Venkat Reddy's brother and former MLA Damodar Reddy laid the foundation stone to the building three days back.

Congress has a strong cadre in Kamepalli mandal and it holds the key to the party winning the Yellandu Assembly constituency.

Epuri Mahender Kumar, an employee in Nuzvid Seeds, resigned and joined the Congress five years back he was a staunch follower of Venkat Reddy, who died four years back.

Kumar said, "Senior Congress leaders in the

mandal were not invited to the function. Even the sarpanch and MPTC of Utukoor were ignored and it is nothing but humiliation of representatives of local bodies."

Utukoor sarpanch Kodem Sulochana, who has resigned, said, "We are working for the party since long and attending every programme."

Sulochana said zilla parishad member Praveen Kumar and Congress Kamepalli mandal president Narsi Reddy were embarrassing them at every opportunity.

Praveen Kumar, who was in the BJP, was invited to the Congress by Mahendra Kumar and given the party ticket in the Kampalli ZPTC election.

Praveen is accused of following the 'divide and rule' policy and humiliating the other leaders.

Utukoor MPTC Hemamalini said that they took the decision to resign with pain and added that many other leaders in Kamepalli mandal were coming forward to resign.

Party leaders Laxman Naik, Sankar and Ravi were among those who resigned from the party.



Congress leaders and representatives of local bodies of Kamepalli mandal announce their resignation from the party in Kamepalli on Sunday. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

# Paddy gunny bags get dearer

RAVINDRA SESHU  
KHAMMAM, NOV. 15

The prices of gunny bags have increased following lockdown as production has reduced. This is affecting farmers. Agencies like the Food Corporation of India and state marketing departments that lifted farm produce from farmers pay ₹25 per bag.

The Central government had placed the order for 2.54 lakh bales with the jute mills in West Bengal. However, the industry was able to fulfil only 18 per cent of it in August. Jute mills in Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere are also unable to meet the demand and traders are selling a jute bag for ₹50 per piece.

P. Srinu, a farmer from Pindiprolu village said, "The lifting agency pays us ₹25 per jute bag. The remaining ₹25 cost for a jute bag has to be paid by us, adding to our farm costs, another ₹12,000 to ₹13,000 per acre of paddy. Per acre of paddy needs

nearly 30 bags. A farmer sells nearly 10 lakh quintals of paddy each year in both the Kharif and Rabi seasons.

About 60 lakh new gunny bags are required every year, while another 60 lakh old bags, will be reused. In general, farmers will get back the cost of the bags. But, the scarcity and increasing prices of a gunny bag will cost the farmers an additional ₹15 crores and will be added, to the cost of the farm production.

N. Nageswara Rao, a farmer leader said, "Marketing officials should look into the scarcity of gunny bags." The scarcity has led to a demand for old bags in Khammam. Farmers are buying old gunny bags for ₹20 each, some of the old gunny bags are selling for ₹40 each also.

Khammam market committee chairman N.V. Ramana said that the supply of gunny bags from W. Bengal has lessened and traders have increased the price of bags.

# Dasyam: Kaloji Kalakshetram to be completed within a year

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, NOV. 15

Chief Whip Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar along with state planning commission vice-president Boinapally Vinod Kumar and TSTD MD Manohar inspected the development work of Kaloji Kalakshetram under construction at Hayagrivachari Maidan in Balasamudram of Hanmakonda on Sunday morning.

He said that the work on the Kaloji Kalakshetram is progressing fast.

"The Kaloji Kalakshetra building is being constructed at ₹50 crore with state-of-the-art technology and modern touches.

The Kalakshetram building was designed in a way that was more sophisticated than the Ravindra Bharathi in Hyderabad and particularly appealing to the people, adding that Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao was committed to the comprehensive development of Warangal city," he said.



Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar and Boinapally Vinod Kumar inspect the construction of the Kaloji Kalakshetram at Hanamakonda on Sunday. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

Boinapally Vinod Kumar said, "Contractors were instructed to complete the structure as soon as possible. We promise to see to it that there is no

further funding problem for the works.

The building would be completed and made available within a year. I would be monitoring the construction work from

time to time."

District tourism officer M. Shivaji, local corporator Madhavi Reddy, TRS leaders Jannu Zakaria were among others present.

## 14-DAY-OLD BABY THROWN FROM BUILDING

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, NOV. 15

A 14-day-old baby died after he was reportedly thrown from the terrace of a three-storey building at Erragadda by his mother. She had attempted to take her own life earlier last month, citing marital disputes as the reason.

The Sanathnagar police booked the accused, Lavanya, 27, for murder and placed her under arrest. Police said Lavanya got married to Venugopal in 2016.

About six months ago, she briefly returned to her mother's place when she was pregnant, saying she was unable to do the household work alone, said the police.

"On October 29, the couple had a fight and Lavanya attempted to take her life. She was rushed to a hospital by her family, where she underwent treatment and gave birth to a baby boy on October 30 and moved to her parents place after getting discharged.

## CLASSIFIEDS

### MATRIMONIAL BRIDE WANTED

**MUSLIM**  
SUNNI Businessman, qualification MBA, age 45, height 5'10", looking for Widow/ Divorce/ First marriage, educated lady having good height and personality. Consideration for kids if any. Contact: 9912540009, 9989981269. (S/2021/IC00090)

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## SHORT TAKES

## ASSAM DEPLOYS DRONES AT BORDER FOR SURVEILLANCE

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, NOV. 15

In the wake of growing inter-state border dispute among the north-eastern states, Assam government has augmented vigil along the inter-state border areas and deployed drones to keep surveillance on its forest areas along the border.

Informing that even the ministry of home affairs was keeping a close watch on the situation along the Assam-Mizoram border areas where conflict took place recently, authoritative security sources told this newspaper that more than 589 square kilometres of Assam's land was under encroachment by the neighbouring states.

Pointing out that it was highly challenging to retrieve the lands encroached by neighbouring states long back, security sources said that Assam was determined to stop the fresh attempt of encroaching the land by neighbouring states.

Asserting that the Assam government was committed to protect its constitutional boundaries, security sources said that efforts are on to improve vigil along the inter-state border areas. However, because of the length of the inter-state borders and difficult terrain, it is not easy to deploy police to guard every inch of the border with the people of neighbouring states taking advantage of the situation.

## GUPKAR ALLIANCE FAILS TO FINALISE SEAT-SHARING

Srinagar, Nov. 15: The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration members failed to finalise their seat-sharing arrangement for the District Development Council polls yet again despite holding a marathon meeting on Saturday, the third one in two days, on the issue.

The seat-sharing issue defying a resolution appeared to be exasperating for the two key constituents of the PAGD with its vice-chairperson and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti reminding the alliance that it "has a bigger cause to fight for than to bicker over the DDC elections."

JKPC chairman Sajad Lone too rued that "the statesmanship and magnanimity is still a missing trait in our polity". In a related development earlier during the day, as per the sources, PDP founder member Muzaaffar Hussain Baig resigned from the party following disagreement over seat-sharing for the upcoming DDC elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

The PAGD meeting which lasted for several hours at the National Conference (NC) headquarters 'Nawa-i-Subah' here concluded late on Saturday night, a PAGD leader said.

He said the meeting was part of the consultations between the parties of the alliance for the upcoming DDC polls.

## NOW, JAIL-MADE FOOTWEAR TO HIT KERALA MARKETS

Thiruvananthapuram, Nov. 15: 'Jail-made' hawai chappal will soon be available in your next-door shop or market in Kerala as a central prison here has started manufacturing the rubber slippers now.

After dishing out a variety of products, including delicious but cost-effective food items, and successfully venturing into organic farming and beauty parlour business to running a petrol pump, the inmates of the Poojappura central prison here are now making footwear.

As part of a series of welfare measures for the prisoners to bring them to the forefront of society, the Kerala Prisons and Correctional Services Department recently established a manual footwear manufacturing unit at the jail premises.

The jail authorities released photos of inmates, in their conventional attire, engaged in chappal making and the colourful footwear they made.

"Each pair of slipper will be sold at ₹80 and it will be marketed under the brand name-Freedom Walk," Superintendent of the prison and correction home Nirmalanandan Nair said.

Director General of Prisons and Correctional services Rishi Raj Singh, DGP, on Saturday launched the sale of the slippers at a function in the jail premises adhering to Covid-19 protocols.

## DELHI STUDENTS TO GET LESSONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

New Delhi, Nov. 15: From how much information to share online to how to deal with cyber threats, over seven lakh students in schools under the Delhi government, the city's cantonment board and NDMC will soon get lessons on the "responsible use of social media".

The month-long series of online sessions, which will be conducted for 1,040 schools, is scheduled to begin from November 23. The lessons are being conducted against the backdrop of increased usage of gadgets and exposure to social media during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Threat through the unknown and anonymous cyber world is a harsh reality nowadays. Ease of access and unmonitored reach has exposed the children to unscrupulous elements on the net," deputy director of education Mohinder Pal said.

"The series on 'responsible use of social media' will create awareness about the various kinds of threats on the internet and also ways to secure oneself from these threats. The children will also be sensitised about responsible use of social media," he said.

— PTI

## Gangotri temple closes for winters



A large number of pilgrims attend the door closing ceremony of Gangotri Dham for winter in Uttarkashi on Sunday. After the closure of the temple gates, an idol of goddess Ganga was carried in a palanquin decorated with flowers to Mukhba village where she will be worshipped during winters.

— PTI

## SABARIMALA TEMPLE OPENS FOR DEVOTEES

Sabarimala (Kerala), Nov. 15: The hill shrine of Lord Ayyappa here opened on Sunday evening for the annual two-month long Mandala-Makaravillakku season, adhering to strict Covid-19 protocol.

Devotees would be allowed inside the temple only from Monday morning, temple sources said. No special pujas were held on Sunday.

Melshanti A.K. Sudheer Namboothiri opened the doors of the sanctum sanctorum and lit the lamps at 5 pm in the presence of Tantri Kandararu Rajeevaru, heralding the start of the 62-day long pilgrim season.

The newly elected Sabarimala melsanthi V.K. Jayaraj Potti and Malikkapuram Melsanthi M.N. Raj Kumar, were the first to climb the holy 18 steps and offer prayers.

They took charge this evening. Each day, only 1,000 pilgrims, who have booked through the virtual queue system, would be allowed to offer prayers.

They have to carry Covid-19 negative certificate taken 24 hours before they reach Nilackkal and Pamba, base camps.

— PTI

## Cong: Delay in seat sharing affected Bihar grand alliance

Party serious about introspection, thorough analysis of election results

New Delhi, Nov. 15: Delay in finalising seat sharing for the Bihar election adversely impacted the Mahagathbandhan's poll performance, senior Congress leader Tariq Anwar said on Sunday, asserting that the Congress must learn from it and complete alliance formalities well in advance for upcoming assembly polls.

Anwar, party's general secretary and a veteran leader from Bihar, acknowledged that there were shortcomings due to which the party performed worse than other 'Mahagathbandhan' constituents and asserted that the high command was serious about an introspection as well as a thorough analysis of the results.

Anwar said the Bihar poll results were "definitely below" the Congress' expectations and it was a setback to bag only 19 out of the 70 seats it contested.

"There was an environment of change with enthusiasm among the common people for it, but we could not exploit that. We had the expectation that with the Congress fighting on 70 seats, it would win at least 50 per cent of the seats," the former union minister said.

"Our government was not formed and we (the Congress) also have a responsibility in that. Going forward, our efforts will be aimed at strengthening the Congress and the Mahagathbandhan and we will make a strategy for it," he said.

## Nearly 160 tonnes of biomedical waste generated during election

New Delhi, Nov. 15: Nearly 160 tonne of biomedical waste in the form of gloves, face masks and empty sanitiser bottles used by polling personnel and voters was generated during the Bihar Assembly polls held amid the Covid-19 pandemic, poll authorities in the state have said.

The poll authorities also relied on an inexpensive but effective technology used to track EVMs to ensure that the waste reached public health centres for its onward journey to the incinerator.

To ensure safety of voters, polling staff and security personnel in the first-ever polls held amid the pandemic, the Election Commission had procured 18 lakh face shields, 70 lakh face

masks, 5.4 lakh single use rubber gloves for polling and security personnel and 7.21 crore 'one hand' single use polythene gloves for voters to press the EVM button and sign the register at the polling stations.

It had also bought a total of 29 lakh hand sanitiser bottles of 100 and 500 ml. As per the guidelines issued by the Election Commission and poll authorities in Bihar, the polling stations were sanitised a day before election and three times on the day of the election.

The office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Bihar had sought the help of the state health department to decide on "Covid safety material" for the three phase elections.

His remarks assume significance as several poll analysts have stated that the Congress dragged the Mahagathbandhan down as it fell short of the majority mark, with the NDA under Nitish Kumar's leadership emerging victorious in the polls by a narrow margin.

Anwar, who was a member of the party's poll management committee, said there should be an introspection and "we have also demanded that it should happen".

He said the high command was ready for an introspection and stressed the top leadership had given all possible support during the polls with former party chief Rahul Gandhi also holding many public meetings in the state.

"But there have been shortcomings on our part otherwise we should have won 35-40 seats. So whether there were shortcomings in organisation or campaign, all of that will be discussed and

## LJP CLAIMS IT PROVED ITS WORTH IN BIHAR

New Delhi, Nov. 15: With questions being raised about the Lok Janshakti Party's prospects after it won only one seat in the Bihar Assembly polls, party sources on Sunday cited its "influence" in "changing" results in over 40 seats to assert that it will continue to have a key presence in the state politics.

The LJP was instrumental in the defeat of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led JD(U) in at least 36 seats which is evident from its vote share, and the BJP would also have been hit hard if the regional party had gone all out against it in a similar manner, the sources claimed. The LJP might have won only one seat, but it has underscored its presence by fetching 5.7 per cent votes, the party sources said.

They noted that the party put up candidates in only six seats where the BJP was in the fray while contesting on almost each of the 115 seats where the JD(U) contested in the elections to the 243-seat Bihar Assembly polls. With the JD(U), hit hard by the LJP in the elections, likely to oppose any friendly vibes to the party by its ally BJP, the sources in party claimed that it was offered only 15 seats to contest in the polls.

— PTI

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, NOV. 15

Maharashtra government's decision of reopening of religious places has resulted in the game of political one upmanship with the BJP calling it a win for Hindutva. However, the Shiv Sena has countered it saying it was neither a victory nor a defeat of anybody.

"The government was forced to reopen the places of religious worship due to the protests by Hindutva organizations and the support extended to them by the BJP," said Praveen Darekar, the leader of opposition in the Vidhan Parishad.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday announced that places of religious worship in Maharashtra, which have been shut from March due to coronavirus-induced lockdown, will reopen from Monday. The state government has also issued guidelines under which religious places located out of Covid-19 containment zones will be allowed to remain open as per the timings decided by the authorities and devotees will be allowed inside in a staggered manner.

"The state government was against the reopening of religious places. But it relented as the BJP stood firmly behind the Hindutva organisations who demanded reopening of temples," said Darekar.

However, senior Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut has said that there was no

## ONLY 100 TO GET DARSHAN AT SIDDHIVINAYAK

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, NOV. 15

Though the Maharashtra government has allowed to reopen the places of worship from Monday, Shri Siddhivinayak Trust has decided to allow only 100 people to seek the blessing of lord Ganesha to its temple in Dadar.

Mumbai's Iconic Siddhivinayak Temple is one of the most revered places in Mumbai for devotees. The trust has come out with a list of SOPs (Standard Operation Procedure) for the safety of devotees.

Addressing a pressure conference in Mumbai on Sunday, Aadesh Bhandekar, Chairman of Shree Siddhivinayak Temple Trust, which is controlled by Maharashtra government, said that the temple will be reopened for the devotees from Monday.

As lakhs of devotees are eager to take 'darshan' of Siddhivinayak, therefore, crowding should be avoided in the temple.

question of taking credit for reopening of places of worship. "Not just temples, but all places of worship will reopen. It was God's will that people stay at home and now it is God's will that places of worship reopen with precautions," he added.

## LEGENDARY | LIFE

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, NOV. 15

Legendary actor Soumitra Chatterjee, who successfully carried forward the golden period of Bengali cinema with his epic roles beyond the era of screen icons like Uttam Kumar and Utpal Dutt, died on Sunday afternoon at a private hospital in Kolkata while fighting prolonged illness from Covid-19. He was 85.

The versatile thespian is survived by his wife Deepa, son Sougata and daughter Poulomi.

Chatterjee had won the national film awards thrice and was a recipient of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 2012

## Feluda is no more. Apu said goodbye. Farewell, Soumitra (Da) Chatterjee, tweets Mamata

## Bengal breaks down as Soumitra Chatterjee passes away



before being conferred with the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France's highest award for artists, in 2017.

He worked with a league of famous film directors like Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Tapan Sinha, Goutam Ghose, Aparna Sen and Rituparno Ghosh. Chatterjee has also contributed to drama and poetry during his six-decade career.

Admitted at Belle Vue Clinic in October 6 with Covid-19, Chatterjee beat the infection in a week but he needed ventilator support twice as his condition weakened due to Covid encephalopathy besides age-related ailments.

The film veteran's condition turned grave since late on Saturday night. He stopped responding to treatment early on Sunday. Chatterjee breathed his last at 12.15 pm.

Eulogising his famous

Shri Soumitra Chatterjee's death is a colossal loss to the world of cinema, cultural life of West Bengal and India. Through his works, he came to embody Bengali sensibilities, emotions and ethos. Anguished by his demise. Condolences to his family and admirers. Om Shanti."

NARENDRA MODI Prime Minister

roles in popular Bengali films *Joybaba Felunath* and *Apur Sansar*. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Twitter, "*Feluda*" is no more. 'Apu' said goodbye. Farewell, Soumitra

(Da) Chatterjee. He has been a legend in his lifetime. International, Indian and Bengali cinema has lost a giant. We will miss him dearly. The film world in Bengal has been orphaned. Best known for his films with Satyajit Ray, Soumitra Da was conferred with Legion of Honor, Dadasaheb Phalke Award, Banga Bibhushan, Padma Bhushan & several National Awards. A great loss. Saddened. Condolences to his family, the film fraternity & his admirers across the world."

Visiting the hospital Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee later along with her ministerial colleagues

and a host of film personalities, walked with a sea of Soumitra Chatterjee's fans in his last journey which covered his Golf Green residence, Artists Forum and Rabindra Sadan.

His funeral was performed at Keoratala Crematorium with a gun salute by the Kolkata police.

Mourning Soumitra Chatterjee's demise, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Shri Soumitra Chatterjee's death is a colossal loss to the world of cinema, cultural life of West Bengal and India. Through his works, he came to embody Bengali sensibilities, emotions and ethos.

Anguished by his demise. Condolences to his family and admirers. Om Shanti."

French Ambassador to India Emmanuel Lenain tweeted, "Deeply saddened to learn legendary actor Soumitra Chatterjee has passed away. A versatile artist, he earned the world's admiration and many awards, including Order of Arts and Letters & Legion of Honour. My heartfelt condolences to his family and fans."

Union home minister Amit Shah, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar and several actors including Sharmila Tagore condoled Chatterjee's death.



## IN BRIEF ISRAELI HOUSES TO COME UP IN EAST JERUSALEM

Jerusalem, Nov. 15: Israel is moving forward on the construction of hundreds of new homes for Jewish residents in a sensitive east Jerusalem neighbourhood, the country's Housing Ministry and a settlement watchdog group said Sunday.

The Housing Ministry on Sunday opened up tenders for more than 1,200 new homes in the Givat Hamatos area of Jerusalem. The settlement watchdog group Peace Now and other critics say construction there would seal off the Palestinian city of Bethlehem from east Jerusalem, further cutting off access for the Palestinians to the eastern sector of the city, which they claim as capital of their hoped-for state. The move may test ties with the incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden, who is expected to take a firmer tack against Israeli settlement expansion after four years of a more lenient policy under President Donald Trump.

## AZERBAIJAN TO PROTECT CHURCHES: PREZ

Moscow, Nov. 15: The president of Azerbaijan has promised that Churches will be protected when the strongly Muslim country takes possession of areas formerly controlled by Armenians.

President Ilham Aliyev's office said he made the promise in a telephone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is deploying peacekeeping forces in the areas under an agreement that ended six weeks of fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Ethnic Armenian forces controlled Nagorno-Karabakh and sizeable adjacent territories since the 1994 end of a separatist war.

Fighting resumed in late September and ended with an agreement that calls for Azerbaijan to regain control of the outlying territories as well as allowing it to hold on to parts of Nagorno-Karabakh that it seized during the fighting. The first of the territories, Kalbajar, is being turned over on Sunday. Kalbajar is home to the well-known Dadivank monastery of the Armenian Apostolic Church. A day before the territory's handover, workers removed many of the monastery's sacred objects. Other residents in Kalbajar torched their own homes, fearing what will happen when Azerbaijani forces take over. Azerbaijan is about 95% Muslim and Armenians fear that churches would be damaged or closed when it takes control of the territories.

## COP GRAFT: BALTIMORE TO PAY \$8 MN

Baltimore, Nov. 15: Baltimore officials are set to approve a roughly \$8 million settlement to two men who went to prison after drugs were planted on them a decade ago during an encounter with members of a rogue police unit that brutalised, robbed and falsely arrested residents.

The city's spending board is scheduled to take up the settlement Wednesday. The Board of Estimates has approved several settlements in recent weeks stemming from the misconduct of members of the Gun Trace Task Force, a once-lauded group that was supposed to take guns off the streets of Baltimore. The settlement for Umar Burley and Brent Matthews is the largest settlement in connection with the task force and surpasses the amount paid in 2015 to the family of Freddie Gray, a young Black man who died a week after he was critically injured in police custody and whose death led to civil unrest. The proposed payment includes \$6.3 million for Burley and Matthews as well as \$1.8 million to pay off a lien due to the estate of Elbert Davis, which sued Burley. Burley and Matthews encountered task force members in 2010 during an illegal traffic stop that led to a high-speed chase.

Burley crashed with another vehicle, killing Davis. Burley spent seven years in prison, while Matthews served two-and-half years behind bars. Their convictions were vacated in 2017 after officers cooperating in the federal investigation into the task force told authorities that a member of the unit had spoken of drugs being planted in the incident. "Mr. Burley and Mr. Matthews were overtly and undeniably framed by a conspiracy of at least four police officers," the men's attorneys, Steve Silverman, said in a statement. "It should not take an army of lawyers litigating for years to right wrongs like this."

# Violence erupts as Trump supporters, rivals clash

## Don backers held rally to support his unproven claims of massive voter fraud

Washington, Nov. 15: Violence erupted on the streets of downtown Washington after thousands of supporters of US President Donald Trump held a protest rally to back his unproven claims of massive voter fraud and electoral malpractices during the 2020 presidential elections. The "Million MAGA March", held a week after Democrat Joe Biden was declared the winner of the November 3 election, was mainly peaceful throughout the day on Saturday, but by late in the night, clashes erupted between Trump's supporters and counterprotesters. A mass brawl broke out later on Saturday night just five blocks away from the White House as counterprotesters clashed with a group of Trump supporters.

According to reports, a man in his 20s, believed to be a Black Lives Matter protester, received serious injuries and was rushed to a hospital after being stabbed in the back during the altercation and two police officers were also injured. The clash lasted for several minutes as the two groups wielded batons and pushed and shoved each other until cops intervened, the reports said. Thronging to Washington DC from various parts of the US, participants of the Make America Great Again (MAGA) Rally asserted that Trump won the elections and that they were in the city to express their support to their leader.

Trump, who has not yet conceded the election to the projected winner, Biden, has repeatedly asserted, without evidence, that fraud and other irregularities deprived him of mil-



Supporters of President Donald Trump protest in front of the Clark County Election Department, in Las Vegas, Nevada on Saturday.

lions of votes in key battleground states. According to *Fox News*, anti-Trump demonstrators allegedly hurled eggs at Trump supporters — or stole signs, hats and banners, and lit them on fire.

Videos posted on social media showed some demonstrators and counter-demonstrators trading shoves, punches and slaps. Anti-Trump protesters clashed with law enforcement in downtown DC as they tried to make their way to a hotel where Trump supporters were staying, the *CNN* reported.

President Trump on Saturday briefly drove by the protesters through Pennsylvania Avenue on his way to his golf course in a Virginia suburb and he waved at his supporters.

Later in the day, Trump in a tweet alleged that

● **TRUMP IN a tweet alleged that news channels are not showing the massive gatherings in support of him, as he posted a picture of protestors of his MAGA rally.**

news channels are not showing the massive gatherings in support of him, as he posted a picture of protestors of his MAGA rally.

"Instead they have their reporters standing in almost empty streets. We now have SUPPRESSION BY THE PRESS. MAGA!" he said. Participants of the rally, which started at Freedom Plaza, chanted "four more years" and "stop the steal."

Sporting the red MAGA cap, they displayed large posters and banners in

support of Trump. Washington DC Metropolitan Police Department, late Saturday said that at least 20 people were arrested. Trump in a tweet blasted counter protesters who turned up at the Million MAGA March as 'Antifa scum' as he joked that they ran for the hills after violent scenes erupted in Washington DC on Saturday night.

The president claimed 'Antifa' had waited until the end of the march to attack attendees as he praised his supporters who "aggressively fought back". "Antifa SCUM ran for the hills today when they tried attacking the people at the Trump Rally, because those people aggressively fought back," he tweeted. Later, in a series of tweets, Trump attacked media outlets.

— PTI

## Gilgit-Baltistan assembly poll over, counting begins

Islamabad, Nov. 15: Wearing face masks, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan in northern Pakistan voted on Sunday in the third legislative assembly election amidst tight security. India has slammed Pakistan for its decision to hold election in Gilgit-Baltistan and said any action to alter the status of the militarily-occupied region has no legal basis.

The voting which commenced at 8.00 am (local time) ended peacefully without any break at 5.00 pm and no untoward incident was reported. The counting of votes has started and complete results are expected by tomorrow. Earlier, the polling officials said that the voters present inside the polling stations would be allowed to cast ballots even after the end of polling time. There are 24 seats for the contest but polling on one seat was postponed, leaving 23 seats up for grabs. As many as 330 candidates, including four women, are in the contest, they said. India has opposed Pakistan's plan to hold election in Gilgit-Baltistan.

— PTI



People queue to cast their ballot at a polling station during the legislative assembly election in Skardu city in Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan on Sunday.

— AFP

## Special courts for speedy rape trials

Islamabad, Nov. 15: Pakistan government is all set to promulgate next week an ordinance seeking establishment of special courts for speedy trial of rape cases, according to a media report.

Under the proposed law, rape cases would not be investigated by ordinary police officials and only a gazetted officer up to the level of DIG or SSP would monitor these cases, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Babar Awan said. He said the proposed law also suggested steps for speedy disposal of cases.

He said this after PM Imran Khan through a tweet announced that the government had planned to bring a "stringent and holistic anti-rape ordinance closing all loopholes".

— PTI

## LEADERS | WARNED

## World faces multiple famines of biblical proportions

## '21 to be worse than '20: Nobel UN agency

United Nations, Nov. 15: The head of the World Food Programme says the Nobel Peace Prize has given the UN agency a spotlight and megaphone to warn world leaders that next year is going to be worse than this year, and without billions of dollars "we are going to have famines of biblical proportions in 2021."

David Beasley said in an interview with *The Associated Press* that the Norwegian Nobel Committee was looking at the work the agency does every day in conflicts, disasters and refugee camps, often putting staffers' lives at risk to feed millions of hungry people — but also to send "a message to the world that it's getting worse out there ... (and) that our

hardest work is yet to come." "It was so timely because we've been fighting to get above the choir," Beasley said of last month's award, pointing to the news being dominated by the US elections and the Covid-19 pandemic, and the difficulty of getting global attention focused on "the travesty that we're facing around the world." "So this was really a gift from above," Beasley said, recalling the surprise and delight of WFP's 20,000 staffers worldwide, and his own shock at being interrupted during a meeting in Niger in Africa's Sahel region with the news.

Beasley recalled his warning to the UN Security Council in April that as the world was deal-

● **WORLD FOOD programme needs \$15 billion next year — \$5 billion just to avert famine and \$10 billion to carry out the agency's global programmes.**

ing with the Coronavirus pandemic, it was also "on the brink of a hunger pandemic" that could lead to "multiple famines of biblical proportions" within a few months if immediate action wasn't taken.

"We were able to avert it in 2020 ... because the world leaders responded with money, stimulus packages, deferral of debt," he said. Now, Beasley said, Covid-19 is surging again, economies are continuing to deteriorate particularly

## Virus curbs tighten in Europe as global deaths top 1.3 mn

Vienna, Nov. 15: A swathe of new restrictions to curtail a second wave of Coronavirus infections were announced or came into force from Austria to Greece, Italy to Portugal on Saturday as the global death toll climbed above 1.3 million. More than 53 million have been infected worldwide by Covid-19, which is running rampant throughout America and Europe, forcing governments to take more action despite the potential economic devastation.

Austria joined a growing trend announcing schools and non-essential shops would close from Tuesday, having imposed a partial lockdown two weeks ago. "There are still many who say that infections don't happen at school, in shops or services," said Chancellor Sebastian Kurtz.

"But the truth is the authorities can no longer trace 77 percent of new infections, which means they no longer know where contamination is happening." Greece, battling a saturated national health system, announced it

## NEW COMPOUNDS TO TREAT NOVEL VIRUS IDENTIFIED

Washington, Nov. 15: Researchers have discovered new drug compounds that target a protein which enables the novel Coronavirus and other viruses with pandemic potential to replicate in human cells, an advance that may lead to new therapeutics for Covid-19.

According to the researchers, including those from the University of Maryland in the US, these compounds disrupt the functioning of a protein complex inside human cells that are critical for the replication and survival of coronaviruses, including the one that causes Covid-19.

— PTI

would shut all schools after imposing a nationwide night curfew from Friday.

— AFP

## German ad hails couch potatoes

Berlin, Nov. 15: The German government has released a tongue-in-cheek ad hailing an unlikely hero in the fight against the Coronavirus pandemic: The humble couch potato.

The 90-second video posted online Saturday begins with an elderly man recalling his 'service' to the nation back when he was just a young student "in the winter of 2020, when the whole country's eyes were on us."

"I had just turned 22 and was studying engineering," he continues, "when the second wave hit." With violins stirring at viewers' heart strings, the setting switches to a scene of the narrator as a young man.

"Suddenly the fate of this country lay in our hands," he says.

— AP

## Indian couple's drive-by wedding

Dubai, Nov. 15: An Indian couple in the UAE has organised a "drive-by wedding ceremony" where guests were allowed to wish them from their cars only, in a bid to maintain social distancing due to the Covid-19, a media report said.

Muhammed Jazem and Almas Ahmed from Kerala first had their 'Nikah' then they stood under a flower arch outside their home in Dubai for a socially-distanced wedding reception, *Khaleej Times* reported. The couple's family members and friends, who could not attend the marriage, stopped their cars outside the newlyweds' home and wished them.

"We asked our guests to stop only for a few moments, give us their best wishes, take a picture and then they could drive away," Jazem said. "We instructed them not to step out of the car, to keep moving to avoid traffic, and not pull over," he said. Jazem and Almas, who grew up in the UAE, had an arranged marriage. Jazem, an aeronautical engineer with Emirates Airline, said that since their parents and many of their relatives are elderly, they did not want to have a big event because they fall under the high-risk category.

— PTI





## DECCAN Chronicle

16 NOVEMBER 2020

### No sign of a thaw yet at the LAC in Ladakh

India's official signalling to its own citizens on where the situation stands in eastern Ladakh, where China has positioned some 50,000 troops along with artillery and armour, obliging India to play the matching game, is confusing and far from reassuring.

In May this year Indians woke up to the nasty fact that the Chinese armed forces had crossed over into India's side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) across eastern Ladakh, from north to south. The government was caught wholly unawares. It simply did not matter to China that the Doklam crisis in the eastern Himalayas had been just about defused in 2017, with the informal Wuhan summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping then offering hope of a mutual understanding toward a measure of stability in bilateral relations. Now we know better.

Although possessing no *locus standi*, China used the emasculation of Article 370 in respect of Jammu and Kashmir and declaring Ladakh as a Union territory in August 2019 as a supposed justification for its military forces to move into the Indian side across a vast swathe of land. Starting from then, the government has refused to take the people into confidence about the status of our borders in the Ladakh region. Indeed, its communication with the public appears to have been less than transparent.

In mid-June, the PM told the Opposition leaders in a virtual formal meeting that China had not intruded into Indian territory. This may have been designed to save face and to avoid political damage within the country, but this was no help to India's cause. The Chinese have continued to throw the PM's words back at us. Even so, the militaries of the two countries have so far held eight rounds of talks with the intention of "disengagement" at the "friction points", which will hopefully lead to a "de-escalation" in eastern Ladakh.

After the eighth round earlier this month, the Indian media, obviously fed by unnamed government or defence sources, communicated a sense of hope of reaching disengagement shortly. Central to this was the idea that the Chinese had agreed to pull back their forces from "Finger 4" (the "fingers" refer to mountainous spurs on the north bank of the Pangong Lake) eastward to "Finger 8", where the LAC runs on the Indian side. The intervening space would be declared as a "no-patrol zone" by the troops of either side. Similarly, on the south bank of the lake and the Kailash Range area broadly, the Indians were to vacate the heights they had seized and these tactically sensitive points were also to be converted into no-patrol zones.

If the Indian government is amenable to such ideas, it will be pushed into a further disadvantageous position since the proposed "no-patrol" zones are within the LAC on the Indian side. Anyhow, for now the whole thing is academic. China's *Global Times* newspaper, an official propaganda sheet, has rejected the contents of the Indian media stories, claiming that India's understanding of the LAC itself is faulty.

Despite this, the PM said, addressing troops in Longewala on Diwali day, that those coveting Indian territory will be given a "prachand jawab", or fierce response. There has been little sign of that so far. First things first — let the government come out with a White Paper laying out the factual position.

### Covid-19: Stick to protocol

The steady quantum of reports that comes out of the research laboratories all over the world about one vaccine candidate or the other clearing another step has been the only positive news on the Covid-19 front of late. As per the World Health Organisation, there are at present more than 100 Covid-19 vaccine candidates under development, with a number of them in the human trial phase.

Close on the heels Pfizer announcing that the vaccine it develops with BioNTech has proved 90 per cent effective in preventing Covid-19 has come the news Sputnik-V being developed by the Russians is 92 per cent effective. The phase-III trials of the vaccine being developed by Oxford University along with AstraZeneca are being undertaken all over the world including in India. It has also been reported that India will get 10 crore doses of the vaccine by December this year, which should come as a big relief for us. US manufacturer Moderna has reported major advancements in the trials. Covaxin, which is being developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech International Limited along with Indian Council for Medical Research, has also entered the human trial phase. Ahmedabad-based Zydus Cadila's vaccine candidate is expected to enter phase III clinical trials by December.

It could be for the first time that the search for a vaccine has covered such substantial distance in such a short time as in the case of Covid-19 vaccine. However, experts are worried over the timeline it could take for it to reach everyone who wanted it. The director of All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, who is a member of the Union government's Covid-19 task force, has said it could take at least two years for the vaccine to reach all. The virus has not gone anywhere, and the vaccine is yet to come. Strict adherence to Covid-19 protocols is the only option people are left with for the time being.

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Subhani



## Will apex court protect liberty for all citizens?



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

The Supreme Court of India upheld the principle of personal liberty by granting interim bail to Republic TV's chief Arnab Goswami in a 2018 case where he is accused of abetment of suicide. This is a good thing. There are some who do not like Goswami's views, or the abusive felicity with which he name-calls and verbally humiliates his ideological "opponents" or demeans those whom he does not like. However, anyone's personal likes and dislikes are not material to the protection of his or her constitutional rights. If his personal liberty has been unfairly violated, and he deserves to get bail, he should not be arbitrarily kept in prison by the law enforcement machinery of a state government with which he is at loggerheads.

It was heartening for citizens to hear the clarification call of Justice D.Y. Chandrachud: "If we as a constitutional court do not lay down the law and protect liberty, then who will?" The message was clear. The highest court in the land will intervene to protect personal liberty at any cost, list a case of this nature with lightning speed, overrule the standard judicial procedures like first pursuing a bail petition before the designated lower court, and hear the petition even if means working on the weekend. This is also a good thing.

However, such heartening news may not have bought much hope to Father Stan Swamy, who is languishing in Talaja jail in Navi Mumbai. The 83-year-old tribal rights activist has been incarcerated

since January 2018 for his alleged Maoist links in the Elgar Parishad case. On November 6 this year, Swamy moved a petition before the National Investigation Agency special court in which he asked for a straw or a sipper cup in jail. "I cannot hold a glass as my hands are unsteady due to Parkinson's (disease)", his petition said. He was asking not for big things like personal liberty and freedom. His only request was for a sipper cup or a paper straw so that he could drink water without spilling. A straw or a sipper are not dangerous items, nor are they luxury items which prisoners should not have. But that request does symbolise some things as important as personal liberty, which the Supreme Court so vigilantly defended. It symbolises a human being's legitimate craving for dignity; of his supplication for compassion; of his expectation of humane treatment; of his hope in a caring system for those in deep medical distress. The special court judge who heard this desperate petition simply asked the NIA to file its reply on the matter on November 26.

For 20 days Father Stan Swamy will continue to wait with his trem-

**A straw or a sipper are not dangerous items, nor are they luxury items which prisoners should not have. And Fr Swamy's request does symbolise personal liberty, which the Court so vigilantly defended.**

**For 20 days Fr Stan Swamy will continue to wait with his trembling hands for a straw or a sipper to be provided to him... And there is no guarantee that... on Nov. 26, the court would accede to the request.**

bling hands for a straw or a sipper to be provided to him. The NIA will get *twenty days* to consider whether such a request should be conceded to. And there is no guarantee that when it does file its reply on November 26, it would accede to the request. The legal position in the matter may require further deliberation. The rules need to be checked out for "dangerous" prisoners. If these don't provide for a straw to be given to prisoners, how can an exception be made? After all a sipper, that would enable an 83-year-old prisoner suffering from advanced Parkinson's disease to take a sip of water, could sabotage the interests of the state.

Perhaps the honourable Supreme Court could take suo motu cognisance of such matters as well. Travesty of justice has many forms. In some cases, the rule book is thrown at those deprived of personal liberty, who languish in prison for months without bail. In others, matters are fast tracked at incredible speed, and the judiciary makes public its unwavering commitment to protect personal liberty. Perhaps, the highest court of the land will also then take steps to ensure that the personal liberty of people like the octogenarian Varavara Rao, who has been repeatedly denied bail, and not given permission to be admitted to hospital. The 80-year-old poet, teacher and activist, who has been in jail without trial since 2018, again for alleged Maoist links in the Elgar Parishad case, "was

found lying on a soiled bed soaked in urine with no one to attend to him". His health is extremely precarious; he has suffered deliriums in jail, where he also contracted the Covid-19 virus. Perhaps the Supreme Court may also ask its judicial subordinates why bail in the case of a pregnant Safoora Zargar, arrested for participating in the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, took as much as 70 days to be processed.

The nation looks upon the Supreme Court, and the judiciary in general, as an agency of the last resort to get justice. When the Supreme Court declares that it will intervene proactively to ensure personal liberty, it raises, in the thousands of prisoners who are for untenable and inhumane reasons being denied personal liberty, the possibility of hope. Surely, the Government of India is not so vulnerable that it treats people above the age of 80 who are nearly disabled, as "enemies" who can destabilise the State. The administering of justice should never be selective, or so lacking in humanity that it revolts the human conscience. When Father Stan Swamy is given the freedom to drink water with a semblance of dignity, we will believe that the Supreme Court's concern for Arnab Goswami has a larger meaning and a message for the conduct of the judiciary as a whole.

*The writer, an author and a former diplomat, is in politics*

**Travesty of justice has many forms. In some cases, the rule book is thrown at those deprived of personal liberty, who languish in prison for months without bail. In others, matters are fast tracked...**

#### LETTERS

##### COVID POTENTIAL

Too many customers are crowding at shopping centres, especially on weekends without maintaining social distancing. Some people not wearing masks has become very common. When this is brought to the attention of store incharge, they tell us to hurry up and finish the shopping early.

Lakshmi Reddy  
Secunderabad

##### COMMON FIREWORKS

In keeping with the festive mood, why not the government itself organise a fireworks display on the shores of the Hussainsagar? Some countries organise fireworks like this and millions watch it on TV and enjoy. Have we not watched and enjoyed IPL by sitting at home?

John Appa Row  
Hyderabad

##### SCB WARD POLLS

There are eight wards in Secunderabad Cantonment and elections for ward members are due. Except for president from the defence wing, there are no other defence personnel on board to manage civic issues. Many encroachments have taken place on nallahs, open defence lands and on park lands. Though there is restriction on construction of multi-storeyed buildings, one can find several such buildings. To check this, we must reserve 50 per cent seats for defence ex-servicemen in the board elections.

M.S. Kumar  
Secunderabad

#### 50 YEARS AGO IN

### DECCAN Chronicle

#### 86 p.c. husbands want wives to do jobs

NEW DELHI, Nov. 15  
Husbands of 86 per cent working women in the country "want, very much want, or at least do not mind" their wives' being in job or profession because of the extra money accruing to the family.

They have, however, not been able to accept that working wives should have a social status of their own.

This is disclosed in a study on the problems of working wives by eminent sociologist, Dr. (Mrs.) Promilla Kapur, in her book "Marriage and the Working Woman in India". A result of over to years' research the study is based on questionnaires and interviews involving 300 working women.

Anita Katyal  
Political  
Gup-Shup



### Why Shah held back in Bihar; hunt for unhappy Trinamul men

When home minister Amit Shah tested positive for the Coronavirus and was hospitalised twice, it was generally accepted that the BJP's chief election strategist would not be joining the poll campaign in Bihar because of medical reasons. But Mr Shah's recent two-day visit to West Bengal immediately set tongues wagging as people wondered that if Mr Shah had recovered sufficiently, why didn't he make it for the last phase of the campaign in neighbouring Bihar? While it is true that Mr Shah kept away from Bihar on doctor's orders, the home minister was also not happy with the fact that he would be constrained from propagating his hard Hindutva line in his speeches. The BJP had decided that it would play down the communal card in Bihar as identity politics usually takes precedence here. Since the home minister and Hindutva are inseparable, it would have been difficult for Mr Shah to contain himself and speak about issues that do not have a dash of

minority-bashing or Hindu nationalism. Though Yogi Adityanath did do his bit, he was promptly put down by Nitish Kumar.

In the Madhya Pradesh government's women and child department jinxed? How else can one explain why the incumbent minister, Imarti Devi, previously with the Congress and now with the BJP, was unable to hold her seat in the recently-concluded byelections. According to the grapevine in Bhopal, ministers who have headed this department have invariably failed to stage a comeback. The previous minister Maya Singh did not get a ticket in the last Assembly poll while an earlier minister Ranjana Baghel had also failed to make the grade. It was widely expected that Imarti Devi would come through with flying colours. Not only is she Jyotiraditya Scindia's camp follower but she was also in the news in the run-up to the election when former chief minister Kamal Nath used derogatory language and referred to her

as an "item". The BJP had launched an offensive against Kamal Nath for insulting a woman and had approached the Election Commission that withdrew the Congress leader's star campaigner status. But despite these efforts and the publicity, Imarti Devi was unable to break the jinx.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphatic declaration that Janata Dal (United) leader Nitish Kumar will remain Bihar chief minister has not gone down well with a section in the BJP that feels the top post rightfully belongs to their party since it has a higher tally in the Assembly. In fact, even before the election, the BJP's Bihar unit had been urging its Central leadership to stake claim to the chief minister's post since it has emerged as the dominant force in Bihar. However, Mr Modi is not pressing his party's claim as it would not like to give Nitish Kumar a reason to switch over to the other side. The BJP has decided it is better to forgo the

chief's minister's post rather than risk losing yet another ally. As it is, there is talk that regional parties, which are making tentative moves to form a joint front, would approach Nitish Kumar to join them and if he was at a loose end, the JD(U) could even be propped up as its prime ministerial candidate.

Now that Bihar is in the bag, the BJP has shifted focus to West Bengal, which goes to polls next year. Keen to expand its footprint in the East, the BJP is eyeing disgruntled leaders and workers of the Trinamul Congress, which can be persuaded to join the saffron party. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has reason to worry as the BJP is determined to dethrone her and will not stop at anything in its mission. It has deployed her former colleague Mukul Roy to identify the unhappy leaders in the Trinamul. In addition, the BJP plans to take a hard look at Trinamul leaders whose names figure in cases of financial impropriety. It will not be surprising if these

cases are suddenly activated in the coming months, only to disappear miraculously once the person concerned crosses over to the BJP.

Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath faces an uncertain future after he failed to stop the BJP from picking up a substantial number of seats in the state byelections. Mr Nath currently holds two posts - he is leader of the Congress legislature party and the state unit president. With Congress insiders blaming Mr Nath for the party's poor performance, there is a growing demand that the party follow the principle of "one man, one post" and replace Mr Nath as state unit president. Mr Nath would ideally like to return to Delhi as he is used to playing on a larger stage but there is no role for him here. He may well be forced to stay on in Madhya Pradesh and focus on grooming his son, a first time MP from Chhindwara.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	43,637.98	0.45
Nifty 50	12,780.25	0.47
S&P 500*	3,566.86	0.84
Dollar (₹)	74.61	0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.19	0.21
Euro (₹)	88.11	0.049
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,425*241	0.47
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	42.87	-0.66
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.878	-0.024
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.893	0.007

\* As of Friday/Saturday

FPIs invest over ₹35K cr in stocks, debt this month

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have invested a massive Rs 35,109 crore in Indian markets in November so far, as corporate earnings and reforms measures undertaken by the government to revive investment activities kept the investors' sentiment upbeat. According to the depositories data, FPIs invested a net sum of Rs 29,436 crore into equities and Rs 5,673 crore into debt segment during Nov. 2-13.

UAE 'golden' visa allows 10-year residency to pros



The UAE has approved granting "golden" visas allowing 10-year residency to certain professionals and others. All holders of doctorate degrees, medical doctors and also computer, electronics, programming, electrical and biotechnology engineers are eligible. Also eligible are those with specialised degrees in artificial intelligence, big data and epidemiology, as well as school students living in the UAE who rank top in studies.

Ministry seeks opinion on social security code

The Ministry of Labour and Employment has sought feedback from stakeholders on draft rules under the Code on Social Security, 2020. The feedback has to be given within 45 days from Nov. 13. The draft rules provide for operationalisation of provisions in the Code on Social Security, 2020 relating to EPFO, ESIC, gratuity, maternity benefit, social security and cess in respect of construction workers, gig workers and the like.

Muhurat trading: Sensex, Nifty soar new highs

Equity benchmarks surged to lifetime highs on Saturday as investors built up fresh positions in the special Muhurat trading session to mark the beginning of Hindu Samvat year 2077. The Sensex soared 194.98 points or 0.45 per cent to close at a record 43,637.98. Intra-day, it hit its all-time high of 43,830.93. The Nifty advanced 60.30 points, or 0.47 per cent, to finish at its lifetime high of 12,780.25.



World's biggest trade agreement floats 15-country bloc Asia-Pacific nations sign RCEP pact without India

GURDIP SINGH SINGAPORE, NOV. 15

Fifteen Asia-Pacific nations, including China, on Sunday signed the world's biggest trade agreement, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), sans India with hopes that it will help recover from the shocks of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The RCEP was signed after eight years of negotiations at the annual summit of Southeast Asian leaders and their regional partners, held virtually this year.

The agreement, which covers almost a third of the world economy, will progressively lower tariffs across many areas in the coming years, reported Channel News Asia.

After the signing, all countries would have to ratify the RCEP within two years before it becomes effective.

India, a leading consumer-driven market in the region, pulled out of talks last year, concerned that the elimination of tariffs would open its markets to a flood of imports.

But other nations have said in the past that the door remains open for India's participation in the RCEP, influenced by China.

The RCEP was first proposed in 2012 and loops in 10 Asean economies—Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia—along



SIGNATORIES WAIT FOR INDIA

New Delhi, Nov. 15: Countries that have signed the RCEP agreement can start negotiations with India for joining the pact once New Delhi submits a written request stating its intention for the same, according to a declaration.

On November 4 last year, India walked out of mega free trade agreement as negotiations failed to address New Delhi's outstanding issues and concerns.

The remaining 15 member countries have signed the RCEP agreement and have stated that the pact would

remain open to India.

"The RCEP signatory states will commence negotiations with India at any time after the signing of RCEP agreement once India submits a request in writing of its intention to accede to RCEP agreement to the depository of the RCEP agreement, taking into consideration the latest status of India's participation in RCEP negotiations and any new development thereafter," according to the Ministers' Declaration on India's Participation in RCEP.

The declaration is dated November 11. —PTI

with China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia.

Host country Vietnam's prime minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc said the pandemic has harmed global and regional trade and investment flows, including the countries partici-

pating in the RCEP talks.

The global and regional economies are facing huge obstacles and challenges caused by not only Covid-19 but also decreased global trade, he was quoted as saying by the Vietnam News Agency (VNA). The conclusion of the

negotiations of the RCEP, the largest free trade agreement in the world, will send a strong message of Asean's leading role in supporting the multilateral trade system, helping to create a new trading structure in the region, VNA quoted Phuc as saying.

Singapore prime minister Lee Hsien Loong said he joins fellow RCEP countries "in hoping that India too, will be able to come on board at some point so that the participation in the RCEP will fully reflect the emerging patterns of integration and regional cooperation in Asia."

They make up nearly a third of the world's population and account for 29 per cent of global gross domestic product, he said.

"We have reached a major milestone of signing this agreement today. It has taken us eight years, 46 negotiating meetings and 19 ministerial meetings to get here," he said.

Malaysia's trade minister Mohamed Azmin Ali, ahead of the summit, had said, "after eight years of negotiating with blood, sweat and tears, we have finally come to the moment where we will seal the RCEP Agreement this Sunday."

The four-day Asean summit included meetings between Southeast Asian leaders and their counterparts from China, Japan and South Korea in the Asean Plus Three Summit, as well as the East Asia Summit and RCEP Summit. —PTI

Infosys says 63% of US ops no longer tied to visas

New Delhi, Nov. 15: Infosys has been "intensely focused" on skilling and generating local employment in markets like the US, which has helped the IT services major become about 63 per cent visa-independent in the US and over 50 per cent in Europe and Australia-New Zealand, its chief operating officer Pravin Rao said.

Infosys, which counts the US as its biggest market, said it is still early to comment on the approach the new US administration could take towards work visas but it expects to continue benefiting from its localisation efforts.

"We continue to see challenges to mobility of talent. New proposed immigration regulations in USA could impact onsite wage costs, granting of visas, tenure of visas, and overall costs of compliance."

"Our localisation programme across USA, Europe and Australia, launched three years ago, mitigates many of these," said at a recent analyst meet.

He said Infosys has eight innovation hubs across the US and the EU, nine global Digital Studios (including a 5G lab in Melbourne) and seven global cyber defence centres.

"We are close to 63 per cent visa-independent in the US and over 50 per cent in Europe and ANZ," he said. —PTI

RIL acquires 96% in Urban Ladder



New Delhi, Nov. 15: Reliance Industries' retail arm has picked up a 96 per cent stake in online furniture retailer Urban Ladder for over Rs 182 crore.

In August, RIL had acquired a majority stake in digital pharma marketplace Netmeds for around Rs 620 crore.

Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd (RRVL), a subsidiary of Reliance Industries (RIL), has acquired equity shares of Urban Ladder Home Decor Solutions Pvt Ltd for a cash consideration of Rs 182.12 crore, RIL said on Saturday.

The investment represents 96 per cent holding in the equity share capital of Urban Ladder, it added.

RRVL has an option of acquiring the balance stake, taking its shareholding to 100 per cent.

Besides, RRVL has proposed to make a further investment of up to Rs 75 crore in Urban Ladder.

The further investment is expected to be completed by December 2023, it said.

This acquisition will help RIL in bolstering its presence in the fast-growing e-commerce segment and widening the bouquet of consumer products provided by it as it looks to compete with e-commerce majors as Amazon and Flipkart.

The investment will further enable the group's digital and new commerce initiatives and widen the bouquet of consumer products provided by the group, while enhancing user engagement and experience across its retail offerings, it said.

According to RIL, no governmental or regulatory approvals were required for the investment. RIL, which has been on a fund raising spree by selling stakes in RRVL, had earlier this month announced a Rs 9,555 crore investment from Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia, taking total fundraise in the last two months to Rs 47,265 crore.

The investment had valued RRVL at a pre-money equity value of Rs 4,587 lakh crore.

Reliance Retail Ltd, a subsidiary of RRVL, operates India's largest retail business with 12,000 stores.

The booming e-commerce market in India will be worth \$86 billion by 2024, according to research firm Forrester. —PTI

Drug firms recall products in US

New Delhi, Nov. 15: Indian drug firms like Marksans Pharma, Aurobindo Pharma, Zydus and Jubilant are recalling products in the US market, as per the latest enforcement report by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

While Marksans Pharma is recalling a diabetes drug, Zydus Pharmaceuticals (USA) is recalling a drug used to reduce stomach acid. Similarly, Aurobindo Pharma (USA) is recalling a pain relieving drug while Jubilant Cadista is recalling a medication used to treat schizophrenia.

Marksans is recalling close to six lakh bottles of diabetes drug metformin hydrochloride extended-release tablets in strengths of 500 mg and 750 mg in the US market. The medication lot has been manufactured at the firm's Goa-based facility.

As per the FDA, the company is recalling the prod-

uct due to deviation from the current good manufacturing practices (CGMP).

"FDA analysis detected N-Nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA) impurity above the acceptable intake level," it noted.

NDMA has been defined as a probable carcinogen.

The FDA said Zydus Pharmaceuticals (USA) is recalling 14,748 cartons of lansoprazole delayed-release orally disintegrating tablets due to failed dissolution specification. The product has been manufactured by Ahmedabad-based Cadila Healthcare.

The FDA has classified the initiatives taken by Marksans and Zydus as class II recalls. Further, Aurobindo Pharma USA is recalling 7,440 bottles of ibuprofen oral suspension drug for labelling error.

Jubilant Cadista Pharmaceuticals, Inc is recalling 23,616 blister packs of olanzapine orally disintegrating tablets for being "subpotent."

INDIA RECOVERING FASTER: OXFORD ECONOMICS

New Delhi, Nov 15: The Indian economy is seen recovering faster than expected and the Reserve Bank is likely to have come to an end of the rate easing cycle, according to global forecasting firm Oxford Economics.

It further said inflation is expected to average significantly above 6 per cent in the fourth quarter and the RBI may hold policy rates in the December monetary policy review.

"While Q4 is likely to mark the peak for inflation, we have turned more cautious on the trajectory over 2021," it said.

Costlier vegetables and eggs pushed up retail inflation to a nearly six-and-a-half year high of 7.61 per cent in October.

"At the same time, robust bottom-up activity data suggest that the economy may be recovering faster than we anticipated. As such, we see an increasing possibility that the RBI's easing cycle has ended," it said. —PTI

Minimum broadband speed needs to be 2 Mbps: Forum

New Delhi, Nov. 15: Industry think-tank BIF has said a revision of broadband definition and speeds in India are long overdue and that it should be reviewed and upgraded to 2 Mbps from current 512 kbps, which is "disimally low".

The Broadband India Forum (BIF) has said communications technology has transformed radically over the past years and entirely new markets for data services have emerged across the nation. Numerous modern internet applications and use cases now require higher speeds than prescribed by the current definition.

"It is our view that since the current definition of broadband captures neither the development of the technology nor the Indian consumers' appetite for high speed broadband services, it must be reviewed and



redefined," the BIF said in its submission to Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai). The submissions form part of BIF's response to the regulator's consultation paper on 'road map to promote broadband connectivity and enhanced broadband speed'.

Trai had floated the discussion paper to seek stakeholder views on various issues, including whether existing definition of broadband need to be reviewed along with threshold download and upload speeds; possibility of defining different cate-

gories of broadband depending on speeds; need for speed measurement programmes in the country, amongst others.

When contacted, BIF president T. V. Ramachandran said the current definition of broadband in India at 512 kbps is disimally low, and the upgrade to 2 Mbps for the same is long overdue, even by the national policy mandates.

According to the BIF, the broadband speeds in India, even post the introduction of 4G, are less than half of the global good practices.

It suggested that a network must provide 2 Mbps download and upload speeds to be considered a broadband.

Different categories of broadband such as 'Basic, Fast, and Ultra-Fast' would help set optional thresholds that can serve distinct use cases, it said. —PTI

ONGC NET PROFIT DOWN 55% IN Q2

New Delhi, Nov. 15: Top oil and gas producer ONGC booked a Rs 1,238-crore impairment loss, which together with a fall in prices led to a 55 per cent drop in the company's September quarter net profit.

Standalone net profit at Rs 2,878 crore in July-September was 54.6 per cent lower than Rs 6,336 crore net profit a year ago, the company said.

Revenue dropped 31 per cent to Rs 16,917 crore.

The company got \$41.38 for every barrel of crude oil it produced and sold in the second quarter of the current fiscal. This was 31.4 per cent lower than \$60.33 per barrel price it had got in July-September 2019. Gas price was also down by more than one-third to \$2.39 per million British thermal unit. —PTI

KEEPING | COUNT

Out of touch with finances? Here are steps to help you level the playing field with your partner

Wives, stop leaving money management to your spouse

FARNOOSH TORABI NOV. 15

Another day, another study suggesting women are bad with money.

A UBS Global Wealth Management survey of over 1,800 married men and women recently found that nearly half of the women-led by Millennials-defer major financial and investment decisions to their spouses.

The wives cited reasons for this such as not wanting to argue, having "no idea where to begin" and believing their spouses are better with money. Close to 60 per cent said simply that they wanted to be "taken care of."

While the sample of women in the study is narrow (the people surveyed were wealthy), the financial imbalance in marriage that the findings underscore is hardly an

anomaly. I speak to hundreds of women each year about their money. Financial avoidance is a recurring narrative among women and wives, often passed down from previous generations.

Now in the pandemic, with more women losing their jobs or dropping out of the workforce than men, traditional gender roles in marriage are increasingly at play, including deferring significant financial decisions to husbands.

We already know the risks inherent to burying your head in the sand-things like getting a false sense of security, scrambling to piece together your finances when a spouse is no longer around or worse, and feeling financially trapped in a bad relationship. So let's discuss tangible solutions.

If you find yourself out



of touch with your finances, here are steps to help you level the playing field with your partner. In the end, the goal is to arrive at a place where you feel like an active participant in the decisions that impact your financial life together.

**Go to the dark place.** For just a moment imagine yourself suddenly left alone needing to manage your finances independently after years of being

in the dark. Or consider wanting out of your relationship, with no idea about the current balances in your joint brokerage account, or even how to access them, to ensure assets get divided fairly.

If, like some of the women in this study, you worry about not knowing where to begin today, think about how lost you'd be later if and when you really need to manage your investments, life insurance and will, with your partner out of the picture.

The facts are that women tend to live longer and are more likely to be alone in old age. We often face higher long-term care costs.

This exercise isn't meant to add anxiety to your life, but to provide the wakeup call necessary to understand the risk that comes with walking through your financial life blindfolded. Face the "what ifs"

and you might be motivated to embrace your finances.

**Get back in the game.** This will require a conversation with your partner; but it doesn't have to be hard. Try something to the effect of: "I've been thinking, and starting this week (or month), I'd like to be more in touch with our finances... It doesn't help you or me when I'm not knowledgeable about things." Your partner should understand and be open to it.

If not, explore why. In my experience, a spouse's resistance to financial transparency and co-piloting big decisions can be an indication of larger issues.

I hope this goes smoothly, but bottom line: You shouldn't feel like you need to get "permission" to know how money's getting managed.

**Start with access and**

**transparency.** Sharing a password-protected document that provides a list of all usernames and passwords to your financial accounts is an easy first step that promotes equal access to your shared financial life. From there, use an online tool that can help you see all account balances and cash flow in one place. On your own time you can log in to such apps and review balances and become more familiar with the numbers.

**Make weekly strides.** From here, expand your knowledge. Dedicate weekly time to touching base with your partner until you feel caught up. Your investments and long-term financial plan can be a lot to digest in one sitting, so pace yourself and commit to learning something new at each meeting. For example, the first can focus on retirement, specifically,

your contributions, investment breakdown and exposure to risk. Are you 100 per cent in stocks or just 60 per cent? Are you comfortable with that? Week two can be about life insurance, followed by your will and then long-term care planning.

**Consider a pro.** Working with a certified financial planner was instrumental in the beginning of my own marriage because it helped us create a financial road map, fill some insurance gaps and create an overall sense of accountability that we may not have had on our own. It was also helpful to have an objective individual in the room to give us highly qualified feedback and advice. If you're worried about disagreements, a good certified financial planner can help calm the waters.

—Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES



Sreekara Darbha Dhruva Thota

## Sreekara, Dhruva are chess champs

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, NOV. 15

Sreekara Darbha and Dhruva Thota won the juniors and open categories of the 174th Brilliant Trophy Chess Tournament that was conducted online at [www.lchess.org](http://www.lchess.org) due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Sreekara won the event by scoring 10.5 points out of 12 rounds. Sk Taj Abdul and Aahlad Karthik took the second and third places with 9.5 points each.

In the Open category Dhruva Thota and M. Niranjan tied for first place with 10.5 points each out of 12 rounds. The tie-break was clinched by Dhruva of Maestro Chess Academy. Niranjan and Ritobro Sen finished third with 10 points each.

## THE RESULTS

■ **Boys Under 15:** 1. Aahlad Karthik, 2. Pradyumna. **Under 13:** 1. Hemanth, 2. Akshith Mattupalli. **Under 11:** 1. Sk. Taj Abdul, 2. T. Aryan. **Under 9:** 1. Vihaan Saikrishna, 2. Vineel R. Karthik. **Under 7:** 1. Havish Kovidh, 2. Hariram Perecharla.

■ **Girls Under 15:** 1. Swaralakshmi S. Nair, 2. Sara Kausar. **Under 13:** 1. Naannya, 2. Sahasra Samudrala. **Under 11:** 1. P. Sravani, 2. Amulya Bhagavathula. **Under 9:** 1. Hritika Thota, 2. L. Laasya. **Under 7:** 1. SriLakshmi, 2. Bhavishya.

■ **Open category:** 1. Dhruva Thota, 2. Niranjan, 3. Ritobro Sen, 4. S. Sumer Arsh, 5. Tulasi Ramkumar, 6. A. Sai Mahathi, 7. A. Vikas, 8. Siddarth Ramanand, 9. Chidvilas Sai, 10. Abdul Sattar.

## France bag finals spot, Germany win

**Paris:** World champions France and Germany rode on the influence of their Chelsea stars to rack up Nations League wins on Saturday while Spain's Sergio Ramos missed two penalties on the night he celebrated a record-setting 177th international appearance. Chelsea midfielder N'Golo Kante scored just his second international goal as France defeated European champions Portugal 1-0 in Lisbon to secure a place in next year's finals. Kante was quickest to react to a rebound as he netted the winner on 53 minutes that clinched France top spot in their group. France led Portugal by three points ahead of Tuesday's clash with Sweden in Paris but are guaranteed first place by virtue of their superior head-to-head record. — AFP

## Johnson seizes Masters lead

**Augusta:** Top-ranked Dustin Johnson went four-under par in the first four holes to seize a three-stroke lead early in Saturday's third round of the Masters, pulling away from an elite field at Augusta National. The 36-year-old American, who grew up only an hour's drive from the course, unleashed his best to any major round in his career to stand on 13-under par for the tournament. South Korea's Im Sung-jae, Spain's second-ranked Jon Rahm, third-ranked American Justin Thomas and Mexico's Abraham Ancer shared third on 10-under. Johnson is trying to become the first top-ranked golfer to win the Masters since Tiger Woods in 2002. Defending champion Woods, who began the third round four strokes off the pace, opened with seven pars before taking a bogey at the par-5 eighth. — AFP

## Live on TV

## TENNIS

ATP Finals: Matches from 7.30 pm and 1.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Six

## WWE

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

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## SEVENTH WONDER

## Hamilton wins record-equalling seventh F1 world title

Istanbul, Nov. 15: Lewis Hamilton secured a record-equalling seventh Formula One world title on Sunday after winning the Turkish Grand Prix despite starting sixth on the grid.

The Briton matched Michael Schumacher's haul of drivers' crowns with three races of the season remaining.

The 35-year-old sealed his latest title with a typically measured masterclass, handling treacherous wet early conditions to claim his 94th career win despite his unaccustomed start position.

A breathless Hamilton said: "I'm lost for words. This is way beyond my dreams."

Hamilton, who sealed his first title in 2008, was adding to his unprecedented roster of records — most wins with 94, most pole positions (97), most podium finishes (163) and most consecutive points finishes (47).

It was widely declared as one of his finest triumphs and entirely appropriate on the day he drew alongside Schumacher in the record books.

He lapped his team-mate and only remaining title rival Valtteri Bottas, who finished 14th after a desultory outing, to claim his 10th victory in 14 races this season.

Hamilton came home over half a minute clear of Sergio Perez for Racing Point. Both chose to make only one pit-stop and spend most of the race on a single set of intermediate tyres as their rivals pitted several times to cope with the slippery conditions.

Hamilton's old rival, four-time former champion Sebastian Vettel, finished third ahead of his Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc, Carlos Sainz of McLaren and, after a wild and impulsive afternoon, Max Verstappen in the leading Red Bull. Alex Albon came home seventh in the second Red Bull ahead of Lando Norris in the second McLaren, Lance Stroll, who had started from his maiden pole position for Racing Point, and Daniel Ricciardo of Renault. — AFP

I often say it is beyond wildest dreams but my whole life secretly I have dreamt as high as this. It felt so far-fetched. I remember watching Michael win those world championships. To get one or two or even three is so hard. Seven is unimaginable.

— LEWIS HAMILTON



Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton celebrates after winning the Turkish Formula One Grand Prix at the Istanbul Park circuit racetrack in Istanbul on Sunday. — AFP

## LEWIS LETS TEARS FLOW AFTER WIN

Istanbul, Nov. 15: After winning a difficult race to equal Michael Schumacher's record of seven Formula One championships on Sunday, the hardest thing for Lewis Hamilton was containing his emotions.

His voice could be heard breaking as he thanked his team over the radio moments after crossing the line at the Turkish Grand Prix, while underneath the helmet the tears were

starting to build up.

"All these emotions were running through me and I was trying to stop it," Hamilton said in his post-race news conference.

"I was thinking about my whole career, from when I was five when I drove in a go-kart, from when we won the British championship, driving home with my dad and singing 'We Are The Champions' and dreaming of being here."

Moments after victory

No. 94 and title No. 7, he sat in his car with his head in his hands.

"It really hit me and I just burst into tears. I couldn't get out of the car because I just couldn't believe it," Hamilton said.

"I didn't want the visor to come up and people to see tears flowing, because I had always said I would never let you see me cry. I remember watching drivers in the past crying and I was like 'I'm not going to do

that.' But it was too much," he said.

Speaking a short time after his win, Hamilton was wiping away those tears as he prepared to mount the podium.

"I'm definitely a bit lost for words. I dreamed of this as a kid. This is way, way beyond our dreams," he said, thanking his family.

Hamilton only had one title, with McLaren in 2008, when he replaced Schumacher at Mercedes in 2013. — AP

## Thiem survives Tsitsipas scare

London, Nov. 15: Dominic Thiem beat Stefanos Tsitsipas in the opening singles match of the ATP Finals on Sunday.

In a repeat of last year's final at London's O2 Arena, won by Tsitsipas, US Open champion Thiem stumbled after winning a first-set tie-break but found his range again to win 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 6-3.

Thiem was impressive on serve in the first set, winning 79 per cent of service points, but failed to convert three break points against the Greek world number six.

The Austrian third seed found himself in deep trouble when trailing 4-1 in the tie-break but battled back and made his first set point count when Tsitsipas went long with a backhand lob.

Tsitsipas produced a forehand winner in the third game of the second set to break the Austrian and haul himself back into the contest, facing no break points as he levelled the match.

The defending champion appeared to have the momentum but it was Thiem who drew first blood in the deciding set, earning a break with a del-

icately dinked forehand at the net in the second game.

The fifth game ultimately proved to be decisive. Tsitsipas had a chance to break but caught the net with a powerful backhand and could not engineer another break point in a game that contained six deuces.

Earlier, Novak Djokovic received the ATP Tour No. 1 trophy after finishing the year at the top of the rankings for a record-equalling sixth time.

The Serbian, who has drawn level with American Pete Sampras, said: "Obviously I am super proud of it, but I have mixed emotions because of what is going on in the world. I can't be ignorant to that, although I have achieved one of the biggest goals in sport."

Top seed Djokovic, who is competing in Group Tokyo 1970 alongside Daniil Medvedev, Alexander Zverev and Diego Schwartzman, plays his opening match on Monday.

London's O2 Arena is hosting the ATP Finals for the 12th and final season before the year-end championships moves to Turin next year. — AFP



Novak Djokovic poses with his year end ATP number one trophy during Day One of the ATP Finals tennis championship at The O2 Arena in London on Sunday. — AP

## Aussies love to hate 'polarising' Kohli

Sydney, Nov. 15: Test captain Tim Paine says Australians have "polarising" opinions on India skipper Virat Kohli, one whom they love to hate as rivals but at the same time enjoy watching him bat as fans. Australia and India are set to lock horns in a four-Test series with the opening Day-Night game in Adelaide starting December 17.

"I get asked a lot of questions about him, he's just another player to me it doesn't really bother me. There's not really a relationship there with him to be fair, I see him at the toss and play against him and that's about it," Paine told ABC Sport.

"With Virat it is a funny one, we love to hate him but we also love to watch him bat as cricket fans. He certainly is polarising in that type of scenario. We love watching him bat, but we don't like seeing him score too many runs."

The last time the two sides met tempers flared with both skippers having

a go at each other at every given opportunity. The duo even had to be separated by the on-field umpires on a couple of occasions.

"Australia and India, it's a heated competition and he's obviously a competitive person and so am I, so yeah there were a few occasions when we had words but that wasn't because he was the captain and I was the captain, it could have been anyone," Paine said.

Comparing his on-field battle with Kohli to the likes of Joe Root and Ben Stokes, the wicketkeeper-batsman said it always a heated affair when the best players are out in the middle. "There is always a bit more tension when a player is as good as he is, it's the same when you play against England, its Joe Root or a Ben Stokes," Paine said.

"It's often the best player is the one that your team goes up a little bit, the intensity goes up when the best players in the world come out to the crease." — PTI

## Hami: Not bad for boy from council house

Istanbul, Nov. 15: Lewis Hamilton cemented his position as one of Formula One's true greats when he equalled Michael Schumacher's all-time record of seven world titles on Sunday, another staggering achievement for a boy who grew up in modest circumstances.

His victory in Istanbul — the 94th of his career — allowed him to add the 2020 title to his championships of 2008, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2019.

The son of a black father and a white mother, whose parents separated in his youth, Hamilton, 35, grew up on a municipal housing estate. His father Anthony at one time held down three jobs to fund his son's embryonic racing career in karting.

Hamilton's journey was unprivileged and without

luxury, but it was clear from an early age that he had an outstanding gift for speed and all the gutsy natural instincts of a born racer.

In 1995, aged 10, and wearing a jacket and shoes borrowed from his predecessor as British Formula Cadet karting champion, he went to a glittering awards ceremony in London where he met McLaren's then-boss Ron Dennis.

He asked for an autograph and told him "one day I want to race for you". Dennis replied: "Phone me in nine years and I'll sort you a deal."

'MERCURIAL, TEMPESTUOUS'

Bold, determined and individual, he almost won the title in his first record-breaking season as he



Lewis Hamilton poses with his dog as he celebrates his record win in Istanbul on Sunday. — AP

reeled off nine successive podiums from his debut in Melbourne, rocking the establishment along the way with his speed and his style.

On and off the track, he was fast, somewhat mer-

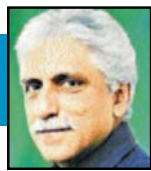
curial and occasionally tempestuous and the combination led to a fierce rivalry with team-mate and two-time champion Fernando Alonso at McLaren. That was a signal of how tough it was to

be for all his future team-mates as Hamilton, who narrowly missed out on the 2007 title, returned to triumph in 2008 with a dramatic last-gasp fifth-place finish in Brazil.

He also showed frustration as McLaren failed to deliver the speed to beat Sebastian Vettel and Red Bull, who reeled off four straight title triumphs from 2010 to 2013, by which time Hamilton had departed for Mercedes.

Escaping the management regime of Dennis and his father, Hamilton found freedom at Mercedes alongside team-mate Nico Rosberg, his teenage karting friend and rival. Rosberg broke Hamilton's sequence of supremacy in 2016 and then retired, leaving the Englishman to dominate. — AFP

## Kohli withdrawal has put broadcaster, CA in distress

Ayaz Memon  
Over The Top

Virat Kohli's decision to be with his wife for the birth of their first-born has thrown the impending Test series against Australia into a tailspin on several fronts.

Kohli is among the foremost batsmen in the game, and over the past 7-8 years easily India's best batsman in the five-day format.

His absence considerably weakens the Indian batting. Considering he is also captain, this is a double whammy for the Indian team. Kohli's most cele-

brated win also came in Australia, in 2018, when led India to a first-ever Test series Down Under.

That he is the game's biggest drawcard has added to the turmoil his decision to return to India after the pink-ball Test at Adelaide has caused more particularly for broadcasters Channel 7.

Financially in the doldrums for over a year, India's tour has come as a lifeline for Cricket Australia. This included a trade-off to ensure the IPL was played at the cost of

the T20 World Cup.

Meanwhile, Cricket Australia structured a complex telecast deal between Fox Cricket and Channel 7 where the latter got rights for all Test cricket played in Australia and the former exclusive rights for all white ball cricket, plus simulcast rights for Tests. Had things gone normally, Fox Cricket would have had 7 exclusive match days featuring Kohli (4 ODIs, 3T20s), plus 20 days (potentially) of him in the four Tests.

Kohli's withdrawal from three Tests has put Channel 7 in deep distress. Now they have only five days (maximum) of the Indian captain, which potentially diminishes viewership and hence revenues.

But while terribly impor-

tant for Channel 7 and CA, this is not the only reason why Kohli's absence from the three Tests has invited widespread scrutiny and opinion.

Former players like Allan Border and Steve Waugh, while respecting Kohli's decision have recalled the times when these things wouldn't even have been on the radar of cricketers.

This, in fact, is the crux issue (financial implications are consequential) and needs to be assessed in a contemporary frame of reference.

Societies evolve, sensibilities change, people's behavioural patterns also change over time. What may have seemed normal 30-40 years back in several aspects, would be considered gross and insensitive

today. It could be unacceptable to the mother that her partner is not with her at the time of delivery. Or indeed the male partner even if the female partner is accepting of his absence.

While uncommon in the past, this is hardly unusual in this day and age. Rohit Sharma returned from Australia in 2018, missing a Test, to be with his wife who was expecting their first child.

This year, Joe Root missed the first Test against West Indies to be with his wife who was expecting their second child. And it need not be only about birth of a child.

Ben Stokes missed the home series against Pakistan to be with his ailing father in New Zealand. In fact, he missed a few

weeks of the IPL, too to spend more time with his dad.

What's compounded matters currently is of course the Covid pandemic. Had times been normal, Kohli perhaps may have missed one Test at most.

Once out of the bio-secure bubble, however, he would have to be quarantined again for a fortnight, which makes his return to Australia redundant.

Dismay at Kohli missing three Tests is genuine, and not just for CA and broadcasters, but also fans. The longest format deserves the best to be seen in action.

Could the itinerary have been planned differently so that he featured in all Tests?

Perhaps. That Kohli wanted to be with his wife

at the time of delivery was known even before the IPL started. Had the Tests been scheduled before the ODIs and T20s, he would have played in all four.

But that would have meant missing almost the entire ODI and T20 series, which would have left Fox Cricket fuming!

All told, the final determinant can't be based only on monetary considerations. In being present for the birth of a child or someone sick in the family, the decision rests with the player.

HR practices in sport, certainly at the elite level, are no longer about dictats from authority or rough and ready solution-finding. That such practices have to be holistic, highly sensitive and enlightened is the new reality.