

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
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Cong developed Hyd most: Uttam

SRIRAM KARRI | DC
HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

On the last day of the campaign for the elections to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), in which 74.67 lakh voters will decide the fate of 1,122 candidates, TPCC president Uttam Kumar Reddy is neither stoic nor despondent as he gears up for the final day of campaign.

In a cheerful mood, he said that if Hyderabadis look around their city, they will find that the most game-changing development of the metropolis look place under Congress regimes — from building the international airport, the Outer Ring Road to the incubation of the Metro Rail project, to the setting up of the IIT, to some of the great public sector enterprises to the P.V. Narasimha Rao fly-over to supporting the poor with schemes like free houses to Aarogyashri.

In an exclusive interview, he reveals why Congress is the only party that can provide economic growth and develop-



ment and a harmonious social fabric.

Excerpts.
Q. In the GHMC election campaign, the Congress has been found missing. The entire debate is about BJP versus MIM and TRS.

Absolutely true. Another thing completely missing in the campaign are issues relevant to the people of the city — about development, and welfare of the poor. People have noted it — when Congress is missing, development is missing. They are synonymous.

■ **Page 2: End of the KCR regime has started: Uttam**

BJP will dethrone TRS: Shah

Says BJP will have mayor in Hyderabad now, government in Telangana next

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

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

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

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

“Looking at the enthusiasm and support of citizens, I am very sure of a big victory,” Shah said,

adding, “no election is small for us. Those who called the GHMC elections as gully elections are insulting people of Hyderabad. Every opportunity where people give a mandate is of highest importance to us. We are not contesting this election to increase vote or seat share, but to win the mayor’s position.”

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

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

■ **Page 2: Come clean on ties with MIM: Shah to KCR**



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

— DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Shah show surges BJP self-belief

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

An unprecedented massive crowd on both sides of the road to cheer Union home minister Amit Shah gave a massive boost of confidence to the BJP about its performance in

the GHMC elections on Sunday.

Shah arrived at Begumpet airport in a special flight and was received by his deputy, Union minister of state for home affairs G. Kishan Reddy, state party president Bandi Sanjay, party gener-

al secretary Bhupendra Yadav, national vice-president D.K. Aruna, national OBC president Dr. K. Laxman, MP D. Arvind, former MP V. Vivek and other key leaders.

■ **Page 2: Shah performed puja at Bhagyalaxmi temple**

GHMC poll campaign comes to an end

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

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

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

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

bances.”

Sources close to CM Rao disclosed that he said, “With forces rallying against us, I was left with only option — to place my views before people.” Sources claimed that Rao believed strongly that Hyderabad people will give TRS a massive mandate. “Boss is confident of retaining power in GHMC, probably with over 100 seats,” a source claimed.

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

The campaign became a fight for narratives. While the BJP tried to “expose”



the alliance between TRS and MIM, and the appeasement, corruption, family rule of the pink party, besides raking up issues like Rohingya immigrants, the TRS tried to dub it a “battle between decisive and divisive forces”. The opposition also focused on the failures of TRS in fulfilling poll promises, from building two-bedroom houses and handling the recent floods to massive corruption of the ruling party.

It was a campaign where the TRS sought continuity and the opposition pitched

for change.

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar triggered a high-voltage campaign, accusing Chief Minister Rao of having links with terrorists, and questioning if he was a “true” Hindu.

Later, Sanjay spoke of a surgical strike on Old City to weed out illegal Rohingya Muslims, besides Bangladeshi and Pakistani nationals. BJP said the TRS-MIM combine helped Rohingya get voters ID cards.

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi and his brother and floor leader in Assembly Akbaruddin were equally guilty of vitiating the campaign, wherein Akbaruddin claimed all Chief Ministers from Chandrababu Naidu to Dr Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy and present CM Chandrashekar Rao danced to his tunes. He also threatened to wreck the samadhis of several leaders.

SANITISER IS A MUST AT POLL STATIONS: SEC

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

The SEC has started making elaborate arrangements for polling to be held in the GHMC’s 150 wards on Tuesday. Polling will commence on Tuesday at 7 am and continue up to 6 pm.

Sanitising hands will be mandatory at every polling station. Markings will be made in the polling station to ensure social distancing.

If required, voters will be asked to lower their facemask for identification.

■ **Page 2: No entry at poll booth without mask: SEC**

AP minister safe after man attacks

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 29

A drunken man attacked transport minister Perni Venkataramiah alias Nani with a trowel at Machilipatnam on Sunday. The minister escaped unhurt and the attacker was arrested. The incident took place when the minister was performing rituals to his mother Nageswaramma, who passed away recently, at his residence.

The man, identified as Badugu Nageswara Rao, a mason by occupation, came up to the minister,

pretended to touch his feet and attacked him with the trowel. The first blow hit the minister on the waist belt. An Anganwadi teacher G. Padma, standing beside the minister, screamed for help and restrained the accused. When Nageswara Rao tried to attack the minister again, security personnel and the minister’s followers caught him. The shirt of the minister was torn, but he escaped without injuries.

Nageswara Rao was found to be in an inebriated condition.

AP COMPLETES TESTING OF 1CR COVID SAMPLES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 29

AP has crossed one crore mark in terms of the number of Covid-19 tests on Sunday morning. A total of 1,00,17,126 samples have been collected. Of this, 8,67,683 have tested positive.

AP tops the big states with 1,87,587 tests per million compared to the national average of 98,004 tests. Nearly 52.38 lakh were the highly reliable RT-PCR tests.

STORM HEADS TOWARDS TN, PUDUCHERRY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 29

A well-marked low-pressure area lay over the southeastern Bay of Bengal on Sunday. The system would intensify into a deep depression in the next 36 hours.

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

TRS men held with cash in Hyderabad

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

The Punjagutta police booked a case against a TRS worker for allegedly distributing cash in the Somajiguda area. Police said opposition workers gheraoed Srikanth, a TRS worker at Somajiguda area on Sunday evening and accused him of distrib-

uting cash to locals there.

“Though a video shows that people were pulling cash out of Srikanth’s pocket, there was no proof of him distributing any money to the public there. When our team reached the place to inspect, cash pulled out of his pocket was missing. We are verifying the claims made by the opposition party mem-

bers,” said Niranjan Reddy, inspector, Panjagutta.

Meanwhile, the Nallakunta police booked BJP workers for allegedly slapping a TRS candidate’s driver after accusing him of distributing cash to the public at Adikmet on Sunday evening.

Police said TRS candidate Mallikarjun Reddy

and his driver Yadagiri were ambushed by BJP workers under the Adikmet flyover.

“Mallikarjun Reddy told them that he was a resident of the area. Despite that, one of the BJP workers, Vinnu, slapped the driver twice. It was revealed later that no cash found with them or in their vehicle. The CCTV

cameras were checked but nothing came up,” said Nallakunta inspector K. Murlidhar. A case was booked against Vinnu following a complaint from Mallikarjun Reddy.

Elsewhere, 213 cartons of liquor, suspected to belong to Congress workers, were found in an abandoned room in Jeedimetla by the police on Sunday night.

ANIMAL | PLANET

Second attack by tiger in Komaram Bheem Asifabad; Victim’s kin to be given ₹5 lakh, a job

Tiger kills 15-yr-old girl picking cotton in field

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC
KOMARAM BHEEM ASIFABAD, NOV. 29

In a second incident of a tiger attacking and killing a human being, a young girl, Pasula Nirmala, 15 years, was killed while she was picking cotton in the fields on the outskirts of Kondapalli in Penchikalpet Mandal in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district Sunday afternoon.

Nirmala, an Adivasi girl of poor background, had discontinued her studies and taken to working for earning money to support her family. Her mother Lasmakka was picking cotton in nearby fields when

the incident took place.

Nearly 10 villagers went to the fields three km away from their village for cotton picking. Nirmala was picking cotton slightly away while others were picking the crop at different places across the fields.

According to eyewitnesses, a tiger suddenly came from behind and attacked the girl, caught her neck and dragged her off to some distance.

Other agriculture laborers picking cotton in nearby fields got alerted on hearing screams for help and rushed to the spot. Chakravarthy, a villager who was in the surrounding, rushed to the spot and pelted a wooden stick at the

tiger while it was dragging the girl further away.

The tiger dashed off into the thick bushes, leaving the injured girl behind. But the tiger again returned when the villagers were shifting the girl to a safer place.

But the villagers chased it away. The girl, however, succumbed to injuries on the spot.

With this incident, people of surrounding villages have raised doubts whether a ‘man-eater’ tiger on the prowl in the area.

It was, however, not yet confirmed by forest officials whether it was the same tiger that killed Vignesh, an Adivasi youth in Digida village in

Dahegaon Mandal on November 11.

It may be recalled that a resident tigress being called ‘K8’ has been sighted while drinking water at Regichettu Madugu in Penchikalpet Forest Range on November 26.

Komaram Bheem Asifabad divisional forest officer Shantharam, who visited the scene, said they will pay compensation ₹5 lakh to the victim’s family and try to give a job.

He said the tiger that killed Nirmala was not the same that killed Vignesh as they have confirmation that the predator involved in the previous kill had entered into bordering Maharashtra.

‘Victims entered tiger zone’

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOMARAM BHEEM ASIFABAD, NOV. 29

Forest officials said that the two fatal attacks on humans by tigers in one month was caused by their intrusion into the area occupied by the big cats. It is believed that this is being done to avoid criticism from locals.

Foresters said the first victim, Vignesh, had entered the tiger habitat near Digida in Dahegaon Mandal on November 11 when he was attacked.

Saturday’s victim, Pasula Nirmal, who was killed near Kondapalli village in Penchikalpet Mandal, was working in an agriculture field that was located 1.5 km inside the forest. The field was encroached, officials said, and tiger movement was found in this area.

Komaram Bheem Asifabad divisional forest officer Shantharam said tigers are generally scared of the movement of human beings in their territory.

A tiger needs 25 square km on average for its

movement, but it had narrowed down to 5 square km where Saturday’s attack took place near Kondapalli.

Regarding calling the tiger a man-eater, Shantharam said that there were several criteria that needed to be fulfilled. A tiger cannot be declared a man-eater just for attacking humans. Shantharam said two cages will be laid in the area to catch the tiger.

Forest personnel will be deployed for the protection of locals.

WEATHER

Max: 28.2°C
Min: 18.9°C
RH: 70%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy.
Mist or haze likely.
Max/Min temp. 29/18 °C

COVID-19

COUNT

CASES

DEATHS

(+38,035)

(+432)

94,30,724

1,37,152

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+805)

(+4)

TS: 2,69,223

1,455

(+620)

(+7)

AP: 8,67,683

6,988

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

6,28,80,668

DEATHS

14,63,088

COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES

218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana

Tithi: Kartika Shuddha Pournami till 2.57 pm

Star: Rohini full day

Variyam: 11.40 pm to 1.25 am (Tuesday)

Durmuhurtam: 12.27 pm to 1.11 pm; 2.39 pm to 3.23 pm

Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 noon

HIJRI CALENDAR

Rabbi-ul Akhir 14, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.24 am

Zohar: 12.15 pm

Asar: 4.04 pm

Maghrib: 5.46 pm

Isha: 6.57 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.30 AM

SUNSET TODAY 5.40 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 6.12 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 5.43 PM

COUNTER POINT

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

Man drags cop on car for 500m

Nagpur: A traffic policeman was dragged on the bonnet of a car for almost half a kilometre in Nagpur after he asked its driver to stop. The incident occurred at Sakardara square and the driver, Akash Chavan, was arrested. Constable Amol Chidamwar tried to stop a car with tinted glass on the windshield. The driver tried to escape. When the car did not stop, the cop jumped on the car bonnet and clung to it, an official said.

Urmila to join Sena today

Mumbai: Bollywood actor Urmila Matondkar, who had contested the 2019 Lok Sabha elections on a Congress ticket and quit the party later, will join the Shiv Sena on Tuesday. Harshal Pradhan, a close aide of Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, said that Matondkar will join the party in the CM’s presence. Matondkar’s name has been forwarded to Governor B S Koshiyari by the Shiv Sena for nomination to the Legislative Council.

INSIDE

CITY... PAGE 3

Nivar destroys paddy crop of farmers

WORLD... PAGE 5

Smallest atom-memory unit created



GHMC polls..



Thank you Secunderabad for the immense affection in today's roadshow. This massive support reflects Telangana's strong faith in PM @narendramodi and the BJP.

AMIT SHAH
Union Home Minister



He's (Amit Shah) the first Minister in history who needs an MP's letter to do his job. His own party created these imaginary illegal intruders in Hyd & now he wants my approval to go after them? Like "400k termites" in Assam they exist only in Shah's childish imagination & only for elections.

ASADUDDIN OW AISI
MIM President



Able leadership and progressive policies of TRS Government transformed Hyderabad into best investment destination for several marquee companies. These investments help create lakhs of jobs for our youngsters. #VoteForCar symbol is a Vote for a peaceful and inclusive Hyderabad.

K.T. RAMA RAO
TRS working president



KCR Sachchudo.. Telangana vachudo (K. Chandrashekar Rao went on an indefinite fast during the statehood agitation, without caring for his life).

K. KAVITHA
TRS MLC



Let us put an end to indecisiveness, dynastic rule & corrupt administration that has plagued the GHMC for the last 5 years. Vote For BJP will ensure Hyderabad's holistic development with minimum government & maximum governance. BJP's Mayor Is Your Mayor.

G. KISHAN REDDY
Union Minister of State



Where were KCR and Owaisi when the city was mercilessly hit by floods?

ARVIND DHARMAPURI
BJP MP



Amit Shah should see the condition of Musi river in Hyderabad before visiting #Bhagyalakshmi Temple. More than renaming Hyderabad as #Bhagyanagar BJP govt should sanction 3000cr for Musi purification project.

KOMATIREDDY VENKAT REDDY
Congress MP

Acknowledge the good work - VOTE Angry / not satisfied - say so - VOTE Have your say Must vote

ARVIND KUMAR
Secretary,
MA&UD department

Owaisi talk on Rohingya is a poll stunt: Amit Shah

Home minister says Punjab farmers' protests in Delhi are not political

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

Union home minister Amit Shah said here on Sunday that farmer protests against the new farm bills were apolitical. He defended the bills saying they were for welfare of farmers.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, "The new farm laws are meant for welfare of farmers. After a long time, farmers are going to come out of a locked system."

Shah has already appealed to protesting farmers to shift to Burari ground in Delhi to stage their protests, saying the Centre was ready to hold discussions with them as soon as they move to the designated place.

Welcoming political rivals taking up the farmer's cause as a protest, Amit Shah said, "whoever wants to oppose it politically, let them do it. I have never said the farmers' protest is political. But if K. Chandrashekar Rao wants to politically protest against it, he is welcome."

Replying to another question, Shah criticised AIMIM chief and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi over his reported remarks on what action had the Modi government



Union home minister Amit Shah prays at the Bhagyalakshmi temple on Sunday.

— P. SURENDRA

taken over charges that Pakistanis, Rohingya and Bangladeshis were illegally staying in Hyderabad. Shah demanded that Owaisi give in writing, seeking removal of those staying illegally to initiate Central government's

action against them.

"When I take action they (Owaisi and others) create ruckus in Parliament. Have you not seen it?" he asked. "Let them just once give me in writing to expel Rohingya and Bangladeshis... then I will

initiate action. It should not just be a speech for elections."

When there is discussion over the matter in the Parliament, who takes their side? the people of the country know it," Shah added.

Shah dismissed the challenge of Chief Minister KCR to create a federal front, saying, "he tried last time and lost half the Lok Sabha seats in his state. Let him try again... we will see how much more he loses."

Come clean on MIM ties, Shah tells KCR; says TRS failed city totally

From Page 1

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

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

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

Exposed KCR's misgovernance and failure to deliver any of the promises made in the 2016 manifesto, including building

double bedroom houses for poor, giving drinking water connections to homes, creating dump yards, cleaning the Hussainsagar or developing the Musi river-front or building hospitals, Shah said KCR failed Hyderabad totally.

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

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

Shah listed the Modi government's support to Telangana and Hyderabad through funding and programmes in power generation, educational and research institutions, GHMC credit rating, Covid support and street vendor loan scheme,

which benefited over three lakh street entrepreneurs in the state.

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

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

He said, "Sardar Patel rescued Hyderabad and the region from a Nizam who wanted to join Pakistan. Hyderabad should transform into a modern global city and not be stuck with the nawabi and Nizami times. Hyderabad can't afford another Nizam."

Dismissing the unfounded criticism that the BJP was practicing divisive politics, Shah said that

wherever the BJP governs, there are no communal riots.

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

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

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

No entry at poll booth without mask: SEC

From Page 1

At any given time, only one voter will be allowed to stand in front of each polling official while ensuring social distance.

The SEC has issued released a set of identity documents that will be accepted as ID proof in case a voter does not have the voter ID card.

In all, there are as many as 1,122 candidates in fray, including down from major political parties.

There are 74,67,256 people eligible to cast their vote at one of the 9,101 polling stations situated in 2,927 locations spread all over the city. Supervising the polls will be a whopping 36,404 polling personnel.

Poll authorities will deploy 702 50-seater RTC buses, 48 goods vehicles, 445 four-wheelers, 16 tempos and 1,460 mini-buses on the polling day. These vehicles will travel along 611 routes. There will be 18,202 ballot boxes in which voters will cast their votes on Tuesday.

Authorities have received 2,629 applications for postal ballots, 1,540 online and 1,089 offline. After verification, they have issued 1,926 postal ballots of which 1,009 will be online and 917 offline.

Voters coming to polling stations will have to

to invariably wear masks. They will not be allowed into the polling station without the mask. No voter will be allowed to carry his or her cell phone or any other electronic gadget into the polling station.

Voter slips are being distributed to all electors by booth level officers (BLOs). However, if any elector has not received his or her voter slip, she or he can download it through GHMC App / tsec.gov.in / ghmc.gov.in.

GHMC has listed several documents that may be carried in lieu the Electoral Photo Identity Card as ID proof while voting. They include:

- Aadhaar Card
- Passport
- Driving License
- Service Identity Cards with photograph issued to its employees by state / central governments, public sector undertakings, local bodies or public limited companies
- Passbooks with photographs issued by Public Sector Banks TSCOB / DCCBs / post offices
- Income Tax Identity Card (PAN Card)

THE ARRANGEMENTS

No. of DRC Centres: 30(one per Circle)
Total Voters: 74,67,256
Men: 38,89,637
Women: 35,76,941
Others: 678
Flying Squads: 60

(two per circle)
Static Surveillance Teams: 30 (one per circle)
Polling Personnel: 36,404 (with sufficient reserves)
Polling Officers (POs): 9,101
APOS: 9,101
OPOS: 18,202
Returning Officers: 150
Assistant Returning Officers: 150
General Observers: 12
Expenditure Observers: 30

- Smart Cards issued by the RGI under the scheme of National Population Register (NPR)
- MNREGA Job Card (issued on or before the date of election notification)
- Health Insurance Smart Card issued under the scheme of Ministry of Labour (issued on or before the date of election notification)
- Pension document with photograph, such as ex-servicemen pension book / pension payment

- Identity cards with photographs issued by the secretariat of the Legislative Assembly / Legislative Council to MLAs / MLCs
- Ration Cards with photographs (issued on or before the date of election notification)

- ELECTION AUTHORITIES will deploy 702 50-seater RTC buses, 48 goods vehicles, 445 four-wheelers, 16 tempos and 1,460 mini-buses on the polling day. These vehicles will travel along 611 routes. There will be 18,202 ballot boxes in which voters will cast their votes on Tuesday.

- SC / ST / BC certificates issued by the competent authority with photographs (issued on or before the date of election notification)
- Freedom fighter identity cards with photographs
- Arms Licenses with photographs (issued on or before the date of election notification)
- Certificate of any physical handicap with photograph (issued by competent authority on or before the date of election notification)
- Identity cards with photographs issued by the secretariat of Lok Sabha / Rajya Sabha to Members of Parliament
- Pattadar passbooks containing photographs (issued on or before the date of election notification)

End of the KCR regime has started: Uttam

From Page 1

Why should people vote for the Congress? Why does it feel like people are not too enthused by your manifesto?

Everyone who wants development is taking the Congress very seriously. Everyone who wants harmony and peace takes us very seriously. We don't want you to trust us blindly, just look at the track record.

Imagine Hyderabad without the international airport, Outer Ring Road, Metro Rail, or P.V. Narasimha Rao expressway, and over half the flyovers and major roads.

Imagine the educational system without the IIT, or BITS Pilani. Imagine the city had no drinking water from Godavari and Krishna rivers. Imagine a city without the public sectors like BHEL, NFL, DRDO, HMT, HAL, Midhani, or Ordnance Factory. Imagine the city without half of the software industry and most of the pharma industry.

Bharat Biotech to which Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a visit in search of a Covid vaccine was started under which state government's rule? Contrast this with the TRS. We had approved the Metro Rail till the Old City. Who stopped it? The K. Chandrashekar Rao government. Why? Did they ever explain to people there why such injustice was done to the city?

We sanctioned the ITIR project, which envisaged an investment of over ₹2.5 lakh crore and creation of over 50 lakh direct and indirect jobs. Who stopped it? The BJP. What greater proof is needed that the Congress ensures development whereas the BJP and TRS obstruct it?

People should vote for Congress because we are the alternative — to the corruption, lies, autocracy and family domination of the TRS on one hand, and the communal divide and rule policy of the BJP and MIM.

But, across the city, the palpable buzz is the BJP has occupied the slot of principal opposition to challenge the TRS and MIM, while the Congress seems to have failed in taking its message to the people.

We are as an opposition party fighting odds to take the message to people, despite having the most positive agenda. It is because when it comes to financial resources, we can't match the money power of the BJP, TRS or MIM. Secondly, another reason is that the media does not highlight us because we are not going to stoop to the level of other parties that are trying to create communal hatred and divide the people, and deflect from real issues. We don't abuse, so we don't make headlines.

People seem to be responding well, especially to the BJP and MIM.

Please don't confuse a few unemployed followers of these hate spewing leaders with the people of the city at large. Unlike Amit Shah, Yogi Adityanath or Bandi Sanjay or KCR or KTR, I was born in Hyderabad. We have a rich history and culture, a thread of bonding. We never looked at our friends and neighbours as Hindu or Muslim or Sikh or Christian. We respect everyone. We have welcomed and made the city safe for people from everywhere — our brothers and sisters of Andhra to different states. People

Q&A

Uttam Kumar Reddy



will reject hate. Besides, both the BJP and MIM are playing in tandem.

So you think the real fight is between TRS and BJP?

The friendship of BJP and TRS is also very strong. Dilli mein dosti, galli mein kushti (friends in Delhi, feud on local streets). TRS supports demonetisation, GST, abrogation of Article 370, removal of triple talaq. When Modi visits Telangana, CM KCR says "Modi ji, I only want your love..." don't give us funds." All three of them are partners in this anti-people, anti-Dalit, anti-farmer ecosystem.

How does the Congress wish to respond to what you call 'campaign of hatred'?

Bandi Sanjay says he will conduct a surgical strike. As the only leader in this entire campaign who has worked for the Indian Air Force, flown enough sorties and missions along both the Pakistani and Chinese border, and who nearly got killed twice on duty, let me tell you this is not true love for India. No true Indian will try to talk like this. Does the BJP need to have a mayor after having a Central government to remove illegal immigrants? Is changing the name of Hyderabad to Bhagyanagar the number priority?

One party wants to demolish the samadhi of great late leaders like N.T. Rama Rao and P.V. Narasimha Rao. Another party demolished the Secretariat and blocks of several heritage buildings. All three of them — BJP, MIM and TRS — have used the most undemocratic, filthy and unacceptable language and rhetoric. People should reject them just for it. Congress will continue to talk of its vision of an inclusive India and inclusive Hyderabad in which everyone has a place.

How do you see the BJP deploying top leaders for a municipal campaign?

I wish home minister Amit Shah had not followed the example of KCR in not coming to meet people during the floods in which over 100 people died but finding the time during elections. It shows they consider power more important than the people. Anyone can come and campaign. But it would be nice if they care to understand the problems of people.

Amit Shah and other BJP leaders have said that they will form the next state government and that the downfall of the TRS regime has started?

A. It is rare for me to agree with even half a sentence of what Amit Shah might say. In this case, he is half right — the end of the Kalvakuntla regime has started. The party that fought and gave Telangana state will form its first truly people's government. And the revival of Congress will start with the GHMC polls.



The scene at TPCC president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy's campaign at Nampally, Hyderabad, on Sunday.

— P. Anil Kumar

OTHER STORIES

KALLUR AGRI MARKET ASST. SECY DIES IN MISHAP

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, NOV. 29

Kallur agricultural market assistant secretary Inumula Balaji, 36, died in a road mishap at Cherukupalli in Sattupalli mandal.

The incident took place when Balaji was returning from Kothagudem to Kallur on a two-wheeler on Saturday night. His vehicle skidded at Cherukupalli and fell. As it was dark, nobody noticed him. Balaji was transferred to Kallur, two months ago.

The locals of Turakapalli near Cherukupalli found him dead on Sunday morning and his two-wheeler 100 feet away from him. It is suspected that he might have lost consciousness after the accident and might have died as he did not receive treatment on time.



Madavi Thukaram

RICH TRIBUTES PAID TO FIRST ADIVASI IAS OFFICER

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, NOV. 29

Adivasis paid rich tributes to first Adivasi IAS officer Madavi Thukaram on his 22nd death anniversary at a programme organised at Uttoor X roads in the Adilabad district on Sunday.

Adivasi leaders led by the Mesram Durgu, erstwhile Adilabad district Sarimedi of Rai centres garlanded Madavi Thukaram's statue and performed traditional rituals.

Adivasi leaders appealed to the Adivasi youth to follow the footsteps of Madavi Tukaram and educate themselves so that they can acquire top positions in the state and Central government administration.

■ Adivasi leaders appealed to the youth to follow in the footsteps of Madavi Tukaram and educate themselves so that they can get positions in government.

SHARADA TAKES CHARGE AS DIVISIONAL PRO

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, NOV. 29

G. Sharada who was discharging her duties as assistant public relation officer at the district public relation office in Karimnagar has been promoted and posted as Divisional public relations officer in the same office in Karimnagar district.

Ms Sharada, a specially-abled person, joined the department as a typist. Her commitment and dedication towards the job enabled her to rise in rank to become an assistant public relations officer.

After taking charge as divisional public relations officer, Ms Sharada met the district collector K. Shashanka in his chamber at the collectorate. The collector congratulated her on her promotion and wished her well in her new assignment.



District collector K. Shashanka congratulates J. Sharada on her promotion as Divisional PRO in Karimnagar on Sunday.

■ SHARADA, a specially-abled person, joined the department as a typist. Her commitment and dedication towards the job enabled her to rise in rank to become an assistant public relations officer.

Forest officials put onus on people for big cat attack

PILLALAMARRI
SRINIVAS | DC
KOMARAM BHEEM
ASIFABAD, NOV. 29

Forest officials said that the two fatal attacks on humans by tigers in one month was caused by their intrusion into the area occupied by the big cats. It is believed that this is being done to avoid criticism from locals.

Foresters said the first victim, Vignesh, had entered the tiger habitat near Digida village in Dahegaom mandal on November 11 when he was

attacked.

Saturday's victim, 15-year-old Pasula Nirmal, who was killed near Kondapalli village in Penchikalpet mandal, was working in an agriculture field that was located 1.5 km inside the forest.

The field was encroached, officials said, and tiger movement was found in this area.

Komaram Bheem Asifabad divisional forest officer Shantharam said, "Tigers are generally scared of the movement of humans in their territory. A tiger needs 25 square

km on an average for its movement, but it had narrowed down to only 5 square km where Saturday's attack took place near Kondapalli."

Regarding calling the tiger a maneater, Shantharam said that there were several criteria that needed to be fulfilled. A tiger cannot be declared a maneater just for attacking humans.

Shantharam said two cages will be laid in the area to catch the tiger. Forest personnel will be deployed for the protection of locals.



Villagers of Kondapalli along with forest staff scout the area where a tiger attacked and killed a girl in Penchikalpet mandal in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district on Sunday.

TS RECORDS 805 NEW COVID-19 CASES, 4 DEATHS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

The state recorded 805 new Covid-19 cases and four fatalities on Saturday, taking the caseload to 2,69,223 and the toll to 1,455, the health department bulletin said on Sunday.

It said 10,490 patients were under treatment. Of the fresh cases, 131 were reported from the GHMC area, 82 from Medchal-Malkajgiri and 58 from Ranga Reddy district.

Jagtial district recorded 56, Bhadradi Kothagudem 42, Khammam 40 and Karimnagar 35. The bulletin said 46,280 samples were tested on Saturday, taking the total tests to 54,20,421.

TASK FORCE COPS NAB TWO THIEVES IN HYD

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD NOV. 29

The Central Zone Task Force team apprehended two men for a theft at the King Koti Hospital premises and seized the stolen property from them.

The police seized 10 focal spray strip pumps, brass lane and brass plunger along with five meta buckets from Simon Raj Samuel alias Babu, 19, and Henry Eastwood Thomas, 20.

The duo were selling stolen items to scrap dealers.

5 held for rooster fight in Peddapalli

PULI SHARATH
KUMAR | DC
PEDDAPALLI, NOV. 29

The Julapalli police officials of Ramagundam Police Commissionerate held five persons for indulging in rooster fight and betting in Peddapalli district on Friday.

The Circle Inspector of the Task Force police department, Raj Kumar received information that some persons are indulging in illegal rooster fight on the outskirts of Shivapally village present under the Julapalli police station limits.

A team including SI Shaik Mastan, Srinivas, Shekar, Mahendar and Sunil raided the place and nabbed five persons.

The accused were identified as Pallapu Venkatesham (45), Gunji



Knives, cellphones and money used for the rooster fight seized by the police on Saturday.

Srinu (52), Pallapu Srinivas (35), residents of Karimnagar district and Jannarapu Shyam Sunder (41) and Chintakunta Ramu (29), residents of Shivapally of Peddapalli district.

The police seized 11 knives, three roosters, three cell phones and ₹18,130 from their possession.

A case was registered and investigation is on.



Julapalli police show five persons who indulged in rooster fights in Shivapally village of Peddapalli district on Sunday.

OVER THE WEEKEND 50 enthusiasts from Warangal, Hyd participated

A walk in the forest, to bond with nature

ANUDEEP
CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, NOV 29

An eco-excursion was organised by the Orugalla Wildlife Society (OWLS) on Sunday for nature lovers and amateur wildlife photographers in Jayashankar Bhupalpally.

Founder of OWLS, Shyam Sunder said it was meant to provide complete forest knowledge, mental relaxation and to convey social responsibility in environmental conservation.

About 50 enthusiasts from Warangal and Hyderabad participated in the eco-walks. The group first visited the Naina Gullu in the Koyyuru forest area. They learned about the history of Jainism in the area.

A team of experts explained about the rare plants, birds and animals that live in the surrounding forest area.

Retired District Forest

Officer Purushottam explained the benefits of forest walking. They visited Boggula Vagu near Edlapalli.

Wildlife experts Shyam Sunder and Nageshwar Rao explained about the grasslands, flora and fauna of the coal forest.



Nature lovers at the Naina Gullu in Kotturu of Jayashankar Bhupalpally district on Sunday.

Professor Ravi Babu also explained about the wetlands, biological survival and immunity boosting. Later, a seminar was held with environmentalists to discuss forest and species conservation.

Retired District Forest Officer K. Purushotham said, "Such eco-excursions bring peace of mind from daily fatigue apart from gaining knowledge about the environment."

Event organiser Shyam Sunder said "Eco-excursions bring humans closer to nature, by sharing in environmental conservation and fostering an affiliation. We will soon be conducting more forestry programmes with the help of the forest department."

Environmentalists, wildlife photographers and representatives of various NGOs were present among



The paddy field destroyed by the cyclone Nivar rains in Mangapeta thanda in Bhadradi district.

— DC

Nivar destroys paddy crop of Mangapeta farmers

Farmers lost investment of ₹25,000 per acre: CPM

A. RAVINDRA
SESHU | DC
KOTHAGUDEM, NOV. 29

CPM district secretariat member, Gugulothu Dharma, has demanded that the government intervene and pay compensation to the farmers of Mangapeta thanda in Sujathanagar mandal, as they lost their paddy crop due to the rains caused by cyclone Nivar.

Farmers informed that the rains were heavy and continuous and there was no chance to send the stranded rainwater from the fields.

Dharma, who visited the paddy fields, said that the paddy plants were flattened and soaked in the stagnant water.

The bundles of paddy, which were ready for threshing, were washed away.

He tried to console some of the farmers who broke down and cried.

"Farmers lost their investment of ₹25,000 per acre.



A farmer shows his damaged paddy crop to CPI-M leader G. Dharma in Mangapetathanda in Bhadradi district on Sunday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

They cannot sell the soaked paddy even as fodder, all the hard work had been washed away. All the farmers in Mangapeta

thanda are tribals, and it is the duty of the government to protect by paying compensation to them," he said.

CPM leaders met farmers Boda Lallu, Korra Hachu, Vankudothu Seethya, G. Rama, G. Chinna and others.

NELAKONDAPALLI HAS HIGHEST LAND REGISTRATIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELAKONDAPALLI
(KHAMMAM), NOV. 29

The tehsildar cum joint registrar of Nelakondapalli mandal has created a record by completing 132 farmland registration transactions in the mandal.

It has the highest number of farmland registrations in Telangana after Dharani portal commenced.

Tehsildar cum joint registrar of Nelakondapalli Suma managed 10 registrations per day.

All the 132 farmers who bought lands got their pattadar passbooks immediately after the transactions.

Palair MLA Kandala Upender Reddy and zilla parishad vice-chairperson Marikanti Laxmi lauded Suma.

Cop asks transgenders not to trouble motorists, people

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, NOV. 29

Intezargunji police inspector, Venkateshwarlu on Sunday warned the transgender community people not to cause trouble to the people while begging at junctions with inappropriate behaviour.

He held a counselling session for them, after several residents from Warangal city, lodged complaints regarding the problems faced.

Mr Venkateshwarlu said, we received complaints, that few people from the transgender community are physically abusing passengers at the Warangal bus station who refuse to give them money.

He said, "You should treat people with respect and not beg at intersections, causing traffic problems. Legal action will be taken if we



Intezargunji police inspector Venkateshwarlu speaks to people of the transgender community on Sunday.

■ VENKATESHWARLU said we received complaints, that few people from the transgender community are physically abusing passengers at the Warangal bus station who refuse to give them money.

receive complaints from the public."

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SHORT TAKES

I-T DETECTS ₹450CR UNDISCLOSED INCOME IN TN

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

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

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

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

STAN SWAMY'S ALLEGATIONS DENIED

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, NOV. 29

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

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

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

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

JAWAN KILLED, 7 OTHERS INJURED IN NAXAL ATTACK

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, NOV. 29

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

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

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

FARM BILLS OPEN OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMERS, SAYS PM

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 29

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

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

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

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

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

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

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 29

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

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

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

Farmers reject early talks, threaten to 'gherao' Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

Apart from a few incidents of tyre-burning, the protestors broke through the police barricades at the Delhi-Haryana border near Narela to enter the national capital.



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

BJP alleges Cong, SAD instigating stir

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 29

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

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

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

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

The BJP has claimed that supporters of

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

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

CONG DEMANDS PM TO SUSPEND 3 FARM BILLS

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 29

The Congress on Sunday charged the Centre with not taking care of the farmers and demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should immediately 'suspend' the three recent laws affecting them.

Speaking to reporters, Haryana former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda said, "We want the PM to intervene in this immediately and call back the laws. Instead of sending any minister, Modi should meet the farmer representatives immediately." The farmers have been protesting for four days and have blocked three sides of the border of the national capital from Haryana. The party also demanded that all cases against farmers be withdrawn.

Taking a dig at the Amit Shah, Congress chief spokesman Randeep Singh Surjewala said, "Amit Shah can travel 1,200 km and do a roadshow in Hyderabad. The farmers are just 15 km away. But he can't go and meet them." He added, "PM should talk to the farmers.

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

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

Covid cases inch closer to 94-L mark

MP announces closure of schools till December 31

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, NOV. 29

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

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

The state has been reporting more than 1,500

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

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

Gurung to address rally next month

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, NOV. 29

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

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

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



Bimal Gurung

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

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

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

GREEN INITIATIVE

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

Kulhad to replace plastic tea cups at railway stations

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

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

"Tea is given in 'Kulhads' at nearly 400

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

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

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

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

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

He said the investment by Railways and infrastructure development

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

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

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

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

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

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

emphasis is being given on electrification.

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

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

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

MILLION DOLLAR RAJINI QUESTION STILL HANGS IN THE AIR

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, NOV. 29

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SHORT TAKES
CHINA SET TO BOLSTER NEPAL DEFENCE TIES

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

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

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

DAVID PROWSE, ORIGINAL DARTH VADER, DIES

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

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

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

EVACUATION AS VOLCANO ERUPTS IN INDONESIA

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

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

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

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

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

Anti-lockdown protests in London: Over 150 arrested

Arrests for breaching virus curbs, assaulting cop and possessing drugs

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

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

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

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

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

HK TO CLOSE SCHOOLS AMID VIRUS SURGE

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

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



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

Boris defends lockdown in attempt to curb rebellion

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

"Regulations have a sunset of 3 February. After the fourth fortnightly review (January 27), Parliament will have another vote on the tiered approach, determining whether the measures stay in place until the end of March," he wrote. In his attempt to placate angry MPs opposed to further lockdowns, he also committed to publish more data and outline what circumstances need to change for an area to move down a tier, as well analysis of the health, economic and social impacts of the measures taken to suppress Coronavirus.



Boris Johnson

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

Virus: Christmas markets across Europe cancelled

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

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

because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

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

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

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

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

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

Man doesn't wear mask on flight, held

New York, Nov. 29: A 44-year-old man was arrested after refusing to wear a face mask on a Delta Airlines flight heading from Salt Lake City to San Francisco in the US, a media report said.

The man, identified as Joshua Colby Council, was rushing to board his flight at Salt Lake City International Airport on

Wednesday night when a gate agent stopped and asked him to put on a face mask, the *New York Post* reported. The agent followed the man, asking him to put on a mask because of the Covid-19 pandemic. He refused and continued to board the plane, the paper said.

Once on board, the captain and flight attendants

also requested him to wear a mask, but he refused. The staff then called airport security to escort the man off the plane. He refused to leave his seat. Only when all the other passengers got up and walked out did he finally leave the plane, the paper said, citing police. The incident delayed the flight for 45 minutes.

SMART | DEVICE

Scientists find the physics that unlocks dense memory storage capabilities

World's smallest atom-memory unit created

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

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

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

"When a single additional metal atom goes into

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

puters and phones, they said, adding that shrinking down chips also decreases their energy demands and increases capacity.

● **THE NEW device** falls under the category of memristors -- an area of memory research, centred around electrical components with the ability to modify resistance between its two terminals without a need for a third terminal in the middle.

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

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

Afghan suicide car bomb kills 30 security men

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

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

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

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

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

● **IN ANOTHER** suicide car bomb attack on Sunday, one civilian was killed and 20 others wounded in the southern province of Zabul.

in attacks against its forces.

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

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

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

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

India to boost bilateral ties with Seychelles

Victoria, Nov. 29: India has vowed to further enhance its strategic partnership with Seychelles in the post-Covid era as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held high-level talks with the country's top leadership here during his two-day visit to the key Indian Ocean nation.

Jaishankar, who arrived here from the United Arab Emirates, also visited Bahrain as part of this three-nation tour which began on Tuesday. During his visit, he called on Seychelles' newly-elected Indian-origin President Wavel Ramkalawan on Friday and congratulated him on his recent electoral victory.

Jaishankar and Ramkalawan discussed the historical neighbourly relationship strengthened by shared belief in values of democracy and rule of law. He "iterated India's resolve to further enhance the India-Seychelles strategic partnership in the post-Covid era," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement on Saturday.

The minister also "spoke of the centrality of Seychelles to India's vision of SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region) that characterised India's policy towards the Indian Ocean Region. As a neighbour across



S Jaishankar

waters, Seychelles was very much a part of the Neighbourhood First policy as well," it said.

Jaishankar also carried a personal message from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and conveyed an invitation from the Indian leadership to the Seychelles President to visit India in 2021.

"Discussed our close security cooperation, strong development partnership and long-standing people-to-people contacts," Jaishankar said in a tweet after the meeting with Ramkalawan. "Assured him that Seychelles had a particular priority, both under the Neighbourhood First policy and the SAGAR outlook. Look forward to further strengthening our ties under his leadership," he said.

He recalled Ramkalawan's 2018 visit to India and expressed the confidence that under his leadership, the ties between the two countries would develop even further. —PTI

BREXIT TALKS: FISHING RIGHTS TOP OF MENU

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

DECCAN Chronicle

30 NOVEMBER 2020

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

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

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

The Union government has been less than honest when it says it is ready to hold talks with the agitationists... It better address their genuine demands...

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

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

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

Iran killing: Trouble for Biden

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

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

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

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

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Skand Tayal

Are 'virtual' summits of any real use?

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

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

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

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

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

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

On November 12, Mr Modi addressed

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

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

In East Asia, issues of common con-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Subhani

New Delhi tries to reset its ties with neighbours



K.C. Singh

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

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

decided to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan to a full province, signalling to China that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) running through it had a more assured legal status. Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi swung through Japan and South Korea on November 24-25 to apparently woo them before President Biden unveils his Indo-Pacific strategy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS

HYDERABAD

I'm amused by the audacity of the so-called leaders from neighbouring and far-off states to come here and speak utter nonsense (Yogi: *Only BJP can rename Hyd Bhagyanagar, DC, Nov. 29*). If parties believe pompous display and setting up a facade can yield results, they would be fooling themselves. And coming to renaming this city, has anyone ever asked for it?

Navya Alishala
Hyderabad

Announcement like 'renaming of Hyderabad as Bhagyanagar', 'Nizam family should be taught a lesson' and visit to Bhagyalakshmi temple are quite irrelevant to GHMC voters' interests. It amply proves BJP leaders are bankrupt of campaign material for GHMC elections.

B. Raghunadha Rao
Hyderabad

GURU NANAK DEV JI

Guru Nanak Ji spread the message of brotherhood. Ten Gurus followed by 'Guru Granth Sahib' continues guiding humanity for peace and justice in daily life. The picture shown in the report 'Sikhs to celebrate Prakash Utsav on November 29 & 30' (DC, Nov. 29) is of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Guru and not Guru Nanak Dev Ji the first Guru. We need to bring more awareness amongst all concerned.

Dr Jaspal Singh Bhatia
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

India must make atom bomb: Vajpayee

By a staff reporter
NIZAMABAD, Nov. 29
Mr. ATAL BEHARI VAJPAYEE, Chairman of the Bharateeya Jana Sangh, strongly pleaded that it was essential for India to manufacture atom bomb.

He said that he had received information that Pakistan was getting ready for another attack on India. He said that China, Russia and America were giving arms to Pakistan, which would certainly be used against our country. To protect the country and to counter the possible attack by Pakistan, India should sufficiently equip herself with army, arms and ammunition. No one would come to rescue the country at the time of a crisis.

quick BITES

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

* As of Friday/Saturday

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

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

HSBC considers exit from US retail banking



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

Infibeam gets NCLT nod for demerger of biz

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

China needs 4.7% growth to reach 2035 GDP target

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



■ Steep fall in gems & jewellery exports mar H1 figures

Trade balance with UAE turns deficit from surplus

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 29

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

"Dubai is the largest trading hub in the UAE and almost 70 per cent of the shipments reaching Dubai are meant for re-exports to other markets.

The re-exports were almost closed from Dubai due to the pandemic and hence the exports have fallen drastically," said K. Unnikrishnan, deputy director general, Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

PSU general insurers asked to cut flab, rationalise branches

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

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



fund infusion of Rs 12,450 crore to help them meet required regulatory parameters.

The finance ministry has asked

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

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

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

AirAsia India says not exiting but expanding

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

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

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

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

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

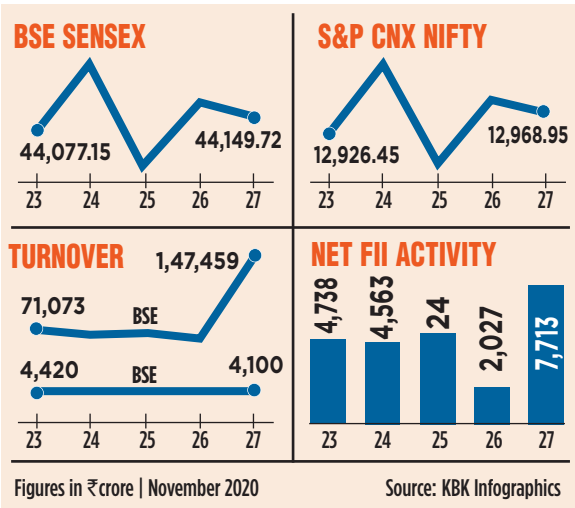
The statement was issued in response to the queries sent to the airline's managing director and chief executive officer Sunil Bhaskaran.

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

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

—PTI

GDP data, auto sales seen as key triggers for market



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, NOV. 29

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Deemed GST registrants face physical verification

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI

From small biz to farmers, middle India is driving demand

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

doing better," said Jakhanwala.

Since the end of May, when the government lifted a ban on flights, monthly domestic passenger traffic has more than doubled from 2 million in June to over 5 million in October. But that is still down from about 12 million a year ago. India's biggest carrier IndiGo and rival Vistara are seeing an uptick in business travel but to a much smaller extent than before.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CAUGHT IN COVID

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

Pandemic has broken shale and left oil markets in Opec hands

KEVIN CROWLEY, DAVID WETHE & SHEELA TOBBEN NOV. 29

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

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

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

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

The shale industry's prudence, also echoed by the CEOs of Pioneer Natural Resources Co and Occidental Petroleum Corp, means that production will probably flatten after a steep plunge this year. US oil output will end 2021 close to 11 million barrels a day, about the same as it is now, according to forecasters IHS Markit, Rystad Energy, Enverus and the US Energy Information Administration.

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



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

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

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

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

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

en cuts.

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

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

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

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

that's how Opec likes it.

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

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

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Tyson draws in comeback fight

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

Hami revs up to win Bahrain GP

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

Five-star Man City hammer Burnley

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

Messi pays tribute to Maradona

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

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

WWE

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

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INDIA FALL FLAT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

During his stay in the



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

FACTFILE

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

SCORECARD

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

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

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

India: Mayank Agarwal c Carey b Cummins 28, Shikhar Dhawan c Starc b Hazlewood 30, Virat Kohli c Henriques b Hazlewood

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

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

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

SMITH LOOKING PRETTY SCARY: SAYS MAXWELL

Sydney, Nov. 29: In red-hot form, Steve Smith is looking "pretty scary" for the opposition teams, gushed Australia all-rounder Glenn Maxwell after his teammate hammered his second successive century against India on Sunday.

"As he said the other day, he has found his hands, he is looking pretty scary at the moment for opposition teams. He is placing the ball as well as anyone around the world. When he puts the foot down, he goes and goes hard," Maxwell said.

"He is picking his spots. A lot of time, you judge him by the way he starts his innings and he just started by hitting the middle of the bat consistently."

Maxwell, who himself contributed in Australia's huge total with his unbeaten 63, said it was great to get a bit of momentum in ODI cricket after struggling in T20s but also credited performing top-order for his success. — *PTI*

Kohli blames bowlers for blooper

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

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

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

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

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



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

would have been a much closer game."

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

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

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

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

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

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

PANDYA BOWLS FOR FIRST TIME IN OVER A YEAR

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

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

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

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

Rithvik named in India chess side

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

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

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

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

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



Raja Rithvik

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

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



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

Rao Nagar wrest Maradona event

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

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

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

Avinash of Shed Lines Team was adjudged Player

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

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



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

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



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

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

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

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

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

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

went unanswered.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sportspersons have been putting forth the causes

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

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

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

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

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

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