


DECCAN Chronicle

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

WEATHER



Max: 31.0°C
Min: 23.0°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: 1.8mm
Forecast: Humid and Overcast. Max/Min temp. 31/23 °C

COVID-19 C O U N T

CASES

(+29,977)

DEATHS

(+476)

88,73,375

1,30,066

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+ 502)

(+3)

TS: 2,57,876

1,407

(+753)

(+13)

AP: 8,54,764

6,881

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

5,50,57,812

DEATHS

13,27,967

COUNTRIES WITH CASES

217

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana

Tithi: Kartika Shuddha Tadiya till 1.20 am (Wednesday)

Star: Jyeshtha till 12.25 pm

Varjyam: Nil

Durmuhurtam: 8.40 am to 9.25 am; 10.44 pm to 11.35 pm

Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm

HLIRI CALENDAR

Rabbi-ul Akhir 26, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.40 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 4.30 pm

Maghrib: 5.45 pm

Isha: 8.15 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.12 AM

SUNSET TODAY 5.32 PM

MOONRISE TODAY 8.14 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 8.41 PM

COUNTER POINT



Our leader is swearing... at their ceremony!

SHORT TAKE

Oil majors skip BPCL stake sale

New Delhi: The government on Monday received 'multiple' bids for buying out its stake in India's second-biggest fuel retailer BPCL but Reliance Industries as well as supermajors Saudi Aramco, BP and Total did not make a bid. "The transaction will move to the second stage after scrutiny," said Tuhin Kanta Pandey, secretary, department of investment and public asset management.

Sabari trek starts amid Covid

Sabarimala (Kerala): Wearing masks and strictly adhering to Covid-19 protocols, devotees of Lord Ayyappa trekked the holy hill Sabarimala and offered prayers at the famous temple here as it opened for the annual two-month-long Mandala-Makaravilakku season on Monday morning. It is the first annual pilgrimage season at the hill temple after the coronavirus outbreak.

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AP records dip in daily Covid-19 cases with 753

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Dustin Johnson wins Augusta Masters golf

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Vol. 32 No. 165 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

Temples reopen in Maharashtra



Devotees offer prayers at the famous Siddhivinayak temple after it was reopened public, in Mumbai on Monday. The Maharashtra government allowed temples to be open for public after months-long Covid-induced ban on people visiting temples in the state. — PTI

Moderna says its vaccine is 94.5% effective on Covid-19

New York, Nov. 16: US-based biotechnology giant Moderna announced on Monday that its Covid-19 vaccine has shown to be 94.5 per cent effective in preventing the deadly disease, bringing a glimmer of hope to a world ravaged by the pandemic.

Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Moderna's announcement comes just a week after Pfizer and BioNTech said their Covid-19 vaccine candidate was found to be more than 90 per cent effective in preventing Covid-19 in participants.

"This is a pivotal moment in the development of our Covid-19 vaccine candidate. Since early January, we have chased this virus with the intent

26,000 VOLUNTEERS LINE UP FOR PHASE 3 TRIALS OF COVAXIN IN INDIA

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

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

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

■ Report on Page 2

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

"This positive interim

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

India, US to field Vikramaditya, Nimitz at Malabar war game

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

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

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

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

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

Sea invades Gangapatnam

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE / TIRUPATI, NOV. 3

Gangapatnam village on the sea coast has become the second fishermen village to be invaded by the Bay of Bengal late on Sunday night after the fishermen colony at Pallipalem earlier met the same fate.

Water entered homes of people living close to the

coast at Gangapatnam following which Nellore RDO SK Hussein Saheb rushed to the village. Mandal development officer Rafi Khan said the village is surrounded by sea from three sides. Following the sea encroaching into their homes, officials have distributed water and food to the affected people. Several low-lying



Nitish Kumar takes oath as the CM of Bihar in Patna, on Monday. — PTI

BIHAR GETS 2 BJP DY CMs, SPEAKER

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, NOV. 16

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

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

16 face cases for defaming courts

CBI takes over defamation case from CID

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

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

The CBI, following the directions of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, took over the case from the state Crime Investigation Department which had already registered 12 cases and clubbed them into a single case. Significantly, none of the serving and former public representatives who figured prominently in the HC hearings for their outburst against the High Court and apex court judges have been made accused by the CBI.

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

The HC on October 12 directed the CBI to probe the case and submit a

SC judge recuses from case on Jagan

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

Supreme Court Justice Uday Umesh Lalit, who was to hear a PIL seeking the removal of Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy from the post of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister over his "scandalising" remarks against a senior judge of the top court, on Monday recused himself from the case saying, "I have difficulties. As a lawyer I had represented one of the parties. Place the matter before the Chief Justice for listing before an appropriate bench of which I am not a member."

Justice Lalit had, as senior Supreme Court law-

yer in 2011-12, appeared before the Andhra Pradesh High Court on behalf of Reddy.

The Chief Minister had, in a letter written to Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde, alleged that a sitting judge of the SC was trying to "destabilise and topple my democratically elected government."

In an open letter addressed to CJI Bobde on October 6, the Chief Minister had alleged that the senior judge had been influencing the sittings of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, including the roster of a few judges.

■ Page 2: Plea seeks bar on comments against courts

report to it in a sealed cover within eight weeks. The next hearing of the case is on December 14. The HC expressed displeasure over the CID investigation before handing over the case to the central agency. CBI office in Visakhapatnam registered the case under various sections. A division bench comprising Justices

Rakesh Kumar and J. Uma Devi observed that "The postings were made to bring hatred, contempt, incite disaffection and ill-will against the HC and Hon'ble judges."

It had noted that the Speaker and the Deputy CM had not restrained themselves from making "scathing remarks" against the judiciary.

SC sends bail plea of man for jailed for tweet to HC

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

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

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

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

"We are quite immune from shock. We see it everyday. Nothing shocks us," the Supreme Court bench observed and asked him to approach the High Court.

who was appearing for Thakkar.

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

Meanwhile, a local court in Mumbai on Monday, granted bail to Sameer Thakkar. Thakkar was granted bail after the Maharashtra government earlier in the day assured the Supreme Court that it will not oppose Thakkar's bail application.

Senior counsel Rahul Chitnis on behalf of the state had told the Supreme Court that Thakkar's interrogation was completed.

SC TO AP: SEEK EC'S APPROVAL FOR SCHEMES

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

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

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

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

Paddy output plummets in East Godavari due to floods and heavy rains

Floods wash away bumper harvest hopes

VADREVU SRINIVAS | DC KAKINADA, NOV. 16

Yield of paddy in the eastern delta has fallen compared to last year due to floods and rains. Farmers are on an average getting 27 to 28 bags per acre against 31 to 33 bags during last year's Kharif season.

Overall, paddy yield is expected to be 11.40 lakh tonnes this year against 13.09 lakh tonnes last year. In addition, farmers are

worried about paddy getting discoloured.

Another reason for decrease in yield is farmers of central delta and Yeleru canal ayacut transplanting nurseries only twice. When transplanting started for the third time, weather conditions deteriorated and did not favour the crop.

Agriculture Department officials said paddy had been cultivated over 2,19,214 hectares in East

The government will help farmers by providing input subsidy. Efforts are also on to provide zero percent interest loans to farmers. The state is seeking help from the Centre over the issue of discoloured paddy.

— K. KANNABABU, Agriculture minister

Godavari as against 2,20,037 hectares last year. They observe that though

rains and floods damaged the crop in eastern delta, farmers could still get a yielding of 27-28 bags per acre. However, the central delta got badly hit by rains and floods. Under the ayacuts of Yeleru and Pampa reservoirs, paddy fields laid remained underwater for more than 10-15 and were thus completely damaged.

N. Venkateswara Rao of Karapa mandal said weather had had hit them badly

dashing their hopes of a good crop this year. He insisted that the government should come to the aid of farmers at this stage.

Agriculture joint director K.V.S. Prasad said of 3,500 cuttings, over 2,400 have been taken. The crop yield is 27-28 bags per acre. But they cannot make the final projections without assessing the remaining cuttings. However, he did concede that the yield will be lesser compared to last year. He

further pointed out that only 25 percent of the harvest has been completed so far in East Godavari district.

Agriculture minister Kurasala Kannababu said the government will help farmers by providing input subsidy. Efforts are also on to provide zero percent interest loans to farmers. He said the state is seeking help from the central government over the issue of discoloured paddy.

SHORT TAKES NO DISRESPECT FOR TTD, SAYS DEEKSHITHULU

From Page 1

He alleged that a pink diamond from the temple treasury had gone missing and there was an attempt to excavate the temple for hidden treasures.

YSRC MP Vijaya Sai Reddy also accused former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu of taking away the pink diamond and demanded a search of his house. In this regard, the then trust board led by its chairman Putta Sudhakar Yadav, passed a resolution (Res. No. 109, 05-06-2018) to issue notices to Deekshithulu and others and to file a suit against them for damages.

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

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

The board's decision, however, came in for widespread criticism from opposition parties and also from several Hindu outfits and organisations. Also, a Hindu outfit, Hindu Janasakthi Welfare Association filed a petition before the court, seeking to include it as a plaintiff. The TTD, however, recently filed a counter to this petition. Now, TTD has filed a memo in connection with the defamation suits, before the X additional district judge and the case has been posted to November 23.

PLEA SEEKS BAR ON COMMENTS AGAINST COURTS

From Page 1

The Chief Minister cited instances of how cases important to the Opposition Telugu Desam (TD) were "allocated to a few judges".

Justice Lalit was heading a three-judge bench, also comprising Justice Vineet Saran and Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, before which three separate petitions by advocates G.S. Mani, Sunil Kumar Singh and Anti-Corruption Council of India Trust, seeking action against the Chief Minister for his allegations.

They have alleged that Jagan Mohan Reddy didn't just write a letter to Chief Justice Bobde levelling allegations against the senior judge, but he also made his aide hold a press conference to release the letter, with false statements.

Singh has urged the Supreme Court to issue an order to bar the Chief Minister from making public statements that lower the image of the judiciary in the eyes of the public.

UMA SEEKS FACTS ON POLAVARAM DAM'S HEIGHT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

Telugu Desam senior leader Devineni Umamaheswara Rao demanded that the YSRC government to come out with facts on Polavaram irrigation project's dam height in the wake of apprehensions on its reduction.

Speaking to the media on Monday, the former minister stated that there were conflicting reports on Polavaram dam's height from various quarters and asked the state government to clear the apprehensions on the issue among the political parties and the farmers.

He also asked the state government to clarify as to when it was going to complete the execution of the whole project and alleged the inordinate delay in its execution resulted in cost escalation.

He turned critical on the state government for failing to mount pressure upon the Centre to get the assured special category status and also funds for Polavaram project and other schemes and works.

He cautioned that in the event of a reduction in Polavaram dam's height, it would affect the water storage capacity and also upset the plans to the inter-link the Godavari with Krishna and Penna rivers.

● Telugu Desam senior leader Devineni Umamaheswara Rao asked the state government to clarify as to when it was going to complete the execution of the whole project.

Differently abled protest



Differently abled persons state a protest in front of Guntur collector office with various demands under the aegis of AP Differently Abled Welfare Associations in Guntur city on Monday. Former minister N. Anand Babu, along with other TD leaders, took part in the protest.

— TEJO ROY ELETI

3 proposals submitted on restructuring Nellore dist

Panel requested to keep Sarvepalli segment in Nellore district

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR |
DC
NELLORE, NOV. 16

The 12-member District-Level Committee constituted for restructuring SPSPR Nellore district has submitted three proposals to the state government for reorganisation of the district.

One is to keep the district intact, citing geographical and historical reasons. The committee justifies this recommendation pointing out that the district was formed based on area, population, geographical contiguity, physical features, historical associations, education, culture, common interests and problems, administrative convenience and economic growth.

Contrary to this is dividing the district on the basis of parliamentary constituencies, taking population and number of electors into considera-

● Despite have long history and possessing great heritage, Nellore district has become very small compared to other districts in Andhra Pradesh after it lost vast areas when Prakasam district was formed, a senior official pointed out.

tion. Sources in the administration said this would deprive the original Nellore district of major industrial centres including the Krishnapatnam Port, apart from special economic zones (SEZs) in Menakauru and Tada.

Despite have long history and possessing great heritage, Nellore district has become very small compared to other districts in Andhra Pradesh after it lost vast areas when Prakasam district was formed, a senior official pointed out.

Among the 10 existing assembly constituencies, Nellore City, Rural, Kovur, Atmakur, Udayagiri, Kavali and Kandukur assembly segments of Prakasam district are part of Nellore

Lok Sabha seat, whereas Sarvepalli, Gudur (SC), Sullurpeta (SC) and Venkatagiri in Nellore district are attached to Tirupati parliament seat.

In the second proposal of reorganising Nellore district, the committee wants to keep Sarvepalli constituency in Nellore district, along with Sarvepalli's vital installations, such as Krishnapatnam Port, Vikram Simhapuri University, Agriculture Rice Research Station, power projects, like APGENCO and SEMB Corp, NCERT, Fisheries Research Centre, and other big business establishments. There are also large chunks of lands available for establishing industries through APIIC in the Chennai-Bangalore

Industrial Corridor.

Incidentally, legislator of Sarvepalli, Kakani Govardhan Reddy of YSRC, has requested the committee to keep his segment in Nellore district, sources said.

As per the third proposal, the committee has underlined the need to keep Gudur assembly segment in Nellore district, as there will be no representation for SCs from Nellore district in the assembly if the district is bifurcated. This is because two SC seats, Gudur and Sullurpeta, will become part of Tirupati (or Balaji) district.

If the government agrees for second and third proposals, the restructured Nellore district will comprise nine assembly segments including Kandukur, Udayagiri, Kavali, Atmakur, Kovur, Nellore City and Rural, Sarvepalli and Gudur, sources in the administration said.

Telugu compulsory, 97% parents prefer Eng medium

VADREVI SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, NOV. 16

Andhra Pradesh Official Language Commission chairman Yarl-agadda Lakshmi Prasad on Monday said that the state government would make Telugu language compulsory from Class I to X in Andhra Pradesh and one Telugu medium school would be set up in each mandal in the state.

He along with the commission members Modugula Papireddy, Profs. Shaik Mastan, Chandu Subba Rao and Sarat Jyotsna Rani reviewed with officials the implementation of Telugu language in the state administration.

Prasad said that when Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was undertaking the Praja Sankalpa Yatra as an Opposition leader, many belonging to the downtrodden sections appealed to him to introduce English medium in government schools. He said that when a study was done among 47 lakhs parents of the government school students, 97 per cent of the parents preferred English medium. But, some of the peo-

● Lakshmi Prasad said that a Telugu dictionary would be published soon for making use of the employees to clear doubts in implementing the Telugu language in the administration.

ple were carrying out a bad propaganda against the government that AP would become 'Angla Pradesh' (English Pradesh). But people should not believe such talk as many of the students in private schools are preferring Sanskrit, French or other languages instead of Telugu with an intention of getting highest marks.

Stating that Jagan was setting right the lacuna and preferred Telugu language in English medium schools, he said that the Chief Minister had promised that free transport facility would be provided to Telugu medium students. He said that Godavari districts have given good preference to the Telugu literature, but for the past eight years, there was no official language commission or its office, but Jagan appointed a commission for Telugu language within

three months after assuming charge as Chief Minister.

Prasad said that the commission has full powers and the it can inspect any government office and give suggestions to the departments in implementing Telugu language. He also said that a Telugu dictionary would be published soon for making use of the employees to clear doubts in implementing the Telugu language in the administration.

Prasad also expressed satisfaction over the implementation of Telugu language in East Godavari district. He said Kunavaram tahasildar office was implementing Telugu language cent per cent, district insurance office (98 per cent), Gangavaram tahsildar Office (96 per cent), Rampachodavaram tahasildar office (96 per cent), Kakinada Municipal Corporation (93 per cent) and implemented Telugu language.

Joint collector G. Lakshminisha said that continuation supervision is being made in implementation of the Telugu language under the leadership of the district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy.

AP records high levels of air pollution on Diwali day

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN |
DC
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

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

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

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

In Rajahmundry, the maximum AQI recorded was



People firing colorful crackers on the occasion of Diwali celebrations in Vijayawada on Saturday.

● Despite state government's direction based on NGT order permitting only bursting of green crackers from 8 to 10 pm on Saturday, people burst all varieties of crackers causing air pollution.

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

In Velagapudi, the maximum AQI recorded was 378 at 8 pm while the 24-hour average AQI was 113. On November 9, the maximum AQI recorded was 184 at 9 am.

In Tirumala where there was no permission for bursting of fireworks, the maximum AQI was

recorded at 61 which is very low. However, the 24 hours average AQI was recorded at 103 and on November 9, the town recorded AQI of 115 at 11 pm.

APPCB junior scientific officer, Dr B.V. Prasad said, "The AQI values have gone up for three to four hours when people started bursting firecrackers. It indicated high levels of air pollution following the release of chemicals and metals. However, average AQI in all the four places was found to be ranging from satisfactory to moderate. Meanwhile, when compared with last year's Diwali, AQI values are relatively down this year, indicating less pollution levels in the air."

JAGAN TO RELEASE ₹510.32 CRORE TO BENEFIT 14.58 LAKH FARMERS TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to release ₹510.32 crore as interest waiver on farm loans to benefit 14.58 lakh farmers on Tuesday.

As the Chief Minister announced YSR Sunna Vaddi Panta Runalu scheme (zero interest on crop loans) earlier, he will release ₹510.32 crore as interest waiver under the scheme by pressing a button so that the amount would be remitted into

the bank accounts of the farmers directly. The interest waiver was meant for crops raised during Kharif season by the farmers in 2019.

Similarly, the CM will also release input subsidy worth of ₹132 crore for the benefit of farmers who suffered crop loss during the Kharif season in October, as they lost both agriculture and horticulture crops.

The amount will be remitted into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers.

₹16,000 crore for new med colleges, hospitals

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHIMAVARAM/UNDI,
NOV. 16

Deputy Chief Minister and Medical and Health Minister Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas (Nani) said that 48 institutions, including 16 medical colleges, 16 for nursing and 16 super-speciality hospitals would be set up in Andhra Pradesh to provide better medical facilities to the people of the state.

He along with Women and Child Welfare Minister Taneti Vanitha and Bhimavaram MLA Grandhi Srinivas laid the foundation stone for construction of an upgraded community health centre from 50 beds to 100 beds at Gollavanitippa village in Bhimavaram constituency on Monday.

Nani said that the state government would spend ₹16,000 crore for creating infrastructure facilities in medical and health education out of which ₹1,200 crore has been allocated to West Godavari district. He said that new medical colleges would be set up in Narasapuram and Eluru. He also said that the tribal people in the agency area are suffering due to non-availability of proper medical services and the government plans to set up a super-speciality hospital to address the problem of people in Krishna and West Godavari districts. He said that ₹10.15 crore

● Deputy CM and Medical and Health Minister Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas (Nani) said that new medical colleges would be set up in Narasapuram and Eluru.

have been sanctioned for constructing the hospital. He said that the government has cleared ₹680 crore arrears under Arogyasri scheme. He greeted Grandhi Srinivas for donating four acres of land worth ₹12 crore for the hospital.

Later, Nani toured Undi and Kolamuru villages and laid stones for development works. He said that when Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was trying to provide houses to all poor in the state, his predecessor N. Chandrababu Naidu was creating obstacles by filling cases in courts and stopping development and welfare activities. Nani called upon the people to oppose Naidu as he was making hectic efforts to stop the housing activity.

MLAs M. Prasada Raju (YSRC), Nimmala Rama Naidu and Manthana Ramaraju (both TD), the district joint-collector Himanshu Sukla, Narasapuram sub-collector K.S. Viswanathan, DCCB chairman K. Srinivas, DCMS Chairman Yedla Tattaji, former MLA P. Sarraju, YSRC Undi Assembly convener P.V.L. Narasimha Raju and others were present.

JAGAN, NAIDU DOING VOTE BANK POLITICS: SOMU

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

State BJP president Somu Veerajulu said that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and TD supreme N. Chandrababu Naidu were playing vote bank politics to promote themselves while handling sensitive issues.

Speaking to media persons here on Monday, the BJP senior leader raised doubts in handling the case of Abdul Salam family suicide at Nandyal recently. He said that though the circle inspector and the constable involved in the case were arrested and sent to the jail, he asked as to what to do with the chief ministers when farmers were committing suicide. He asked the state government whether it was right to arrest the police personnel when they discharged their duty.

Turning his attention on the leader of the Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu, the BJP chief flayed him for provoking the Muslims on the family suicide issue.

The BJP leader alleged that smuggling of red sanders was rampant in the state and asked the state government as to why it was unable to control it.

Referring to the implementation of Vidya Deevana earlier during the Telugu Desam regime for the benefit of students, he asked the YSRC government to provide such benefit even for the meritorious students in the state.

AVINASH SAYS JAGAN WILL RULE AP FOR 30 YEARS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

YSRC Vijayawada East Assembly segment in-charge Devineni Avinash sounded confident that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy would continue to rule the state for 30 more years given a series of welfare schemes being initiated to benefit every section of the community in the state.

The YSRC leader was taking part in the culmination of a 10-day-long programme taken up to mark Praja Sankalpa Yatra here on Monday. He said that their government was implementing the manifesto announced at the time of elections in addition to a series of welfare programmes including Navaratnalu and others providing benefit to the people and slammed the previous Telugu Desam regime for failing to take up any developmental works in the segment.

ISRO | PROGRAMME GSLV MkIII is a three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle

Human rating of GSLV MkIII gets underway

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 16

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

GSLV MkIII is a three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle developed by ISRO. It has two solid strap-ons, a core liquid booster and a cryogenic upper stage. It is designed to carry four-

tonne class of satellites into geosynchronous transfer orbit (GTO) or about 10 tonnes to low earth orbit (LEO), which is about twice the capability of the GSLV Mk II.

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

Each S200 booster carries 205 tonnes of compos-

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

ite solid propellant and their ignition results in vehicle lift-off.

S200s function for 140 seconds. During strap-ons functioning phase, the two clustered Vikas liquid Engines of L110 liquid

core booster will ignite 114 sec after lift-off to further augment the thrust of the vehicle. These two engines continue to function after the separation of the strap-ons at about 140 seconds after lift-off.

According to an ISRO statement on Monday, many new design features have been introduced in the hardware in order to human rate the S200 booster.

In a fruitful industry collaboration, the first critical booster segment of the

motor case with a diameter of 3.2 metre, 8.5 metre in length and weighing 5.5 tonnes has been indigenously developed and delivered by L&T.

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

SHORT TAKES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FREE PRESS SOUL
OF DEMOCRACY,
SAY LEADERS

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

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

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

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

Daggers drawn in Congress
over Bihar election debacle

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

SREEPARNA
CHAKRABARTY | DC
NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nitish Kumar: Masterful
craftsman of realpolitik

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

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

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

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

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

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

GRAND ALLIANCE
BOYCOTTS NITISH'S
OATH-TAKING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Winter, budget
sessions likely
to be clubbed

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BJP asks Congress to clarify its stand on Article 370

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Article 370.

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

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

EVICTION OF GUJJAR-BAKERWAL
COMMUNITY 'ILLEGAL': MEHBOOBA

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

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

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

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

IN BRIEF EXTREMIST GOES ON TRIAL IN FRANCE

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

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

JETLINER HITS BROWN BEAR IN ALASKA

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

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

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

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

SPACEX SENDS 4 ASTRONAUTS TO SPACE STATION

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

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

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

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

Clinical trial to involve 6,000 volunteers across the country

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Merkel, govts to assess lockdown

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

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

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

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

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

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

PERU PRESIDENT RESIGNS, CRISIS GRIPS NATION

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

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

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

MALL | MOVE

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

Here comes Santa with mask, plexiglass

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

And some malls will put



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

faux gift boxes and other decorations in front of

Saint Nick to block kids from charging toward

him. Other safety measures include online reser-

China: RCEP is a milestone of great significance

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

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

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

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

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

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

efforts against common challenges," he said.

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

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

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

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

— PTI

Macron sees Donald's envoy

TIME FOR TRUMP TO CONCEDE, SAYS OBAMA

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

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

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

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

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

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

the election," Obama said.

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

shoring up the priorities of Trump's outgoing administration.

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

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

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

SHORT TAKES

Kipruto charged with sex crime

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

Five ISL clubs fail to secure licence

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

Prajesh loses US Challenger final

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

Italy beat Poland, England bow out

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

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

TENNIS

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

FOOTBALL

UEFA Nations League: France vs Sweden from 11.5 am (Wednesday); Spain vs Spain from 11.5 am (Wednesday); Portugal vs Croatia from 11.5 am (Wednesday); Portugal vs Portugal from 11.5 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 1

Reg. No. AP/VJ/A41/24/2000.

Printed and published from Viljayawada by K. S. Bhatnagar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Deccan Chronicle Holdings, Viljayawada, India. Tel: 020-26111111. Fax: 020-26111111. Email: info@deccanchronicle.com. Website: www.deccanchronicle.com. Reg. No. AP/VJ/A41/24/2000. Editor: K. S. Bhatnagar. Circulation: 1,00,000 copies per day. Price: Rs. 10 per copy. GST No. 27AABN0000000000. P. O. Box: 1234, Viljayawada, India. Copyright © 2020 Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. All rights reserved.

Covid threat to Test Paine in self-isolation after Corona outbreak in Adelaide

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

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

"There is ongoing monitoring but that's the end of the story," a CA spokeswoman was quoted as saying by *Sydney Morning Herald* on the match which is to be a day-nighter. The number of cases had crept up from four on Sunday to 17 on Monday.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Birthday cheer



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



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

Rahul pulls along with tennis ball

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore, when the leather ball is used, any

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

batsman will get a fraction of a second more from the 22 yards. During the '80s and '90s before a tour of Australia or West Indies, the specialist batsmen were known to bat against wet tennis balls from 16 or 18

yards on cement wickets to get adjusted to the bounce.

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

Team's senior speedster Mohammed Shami posted a video on his personal twitter handle, where he was seen bowling with the pink kookaburra ball. Shami is a part of all three squads and it is a given that India will need his skills most during the four-Test series starting on December 17 with the day-night pink ball game in Adelaide. — PTI

Dustin dazzles at the Masters

Augusta (Georgia, USA), Nov. 16: Nothing ever comes easily for Dustin Johnson in the majors, except for slipping into that Masters green jacket. Johnson overcame a jittery start that conjured memories of past majors he failed to finish off. He turned that into a command performance, making sure this one-of-a-kind Masters with no fans also had no drama.

Not even close. Johnson tapped in for par on the 18th for a 4-under 68 to finish at 20-under 268, breaking by two shots the record set by Tiger Woods in 1997 and matched by Jordan Spieth in 2015.

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

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

Two-time champion Bubba Watson was there to congratulate him. "I always dreamed of having one of those,"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Nadal starts with comfortable win

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

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

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

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

Novak Djokovic produced a masterpiece against Argentina's Diego Schwartzman on Monday as he embarked on his campaign for a record-equaling sixth title.

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

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

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

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

A combination of injury and his preference for other surfaces has counted against him but his greater freshness will be the best way to decide the winner. — AFP

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

the eve of the team's departure for Australia, isn't the best from the perspective of the team that's poised to take on one of the best in the game. The first of the three One Day International begins in a less than two weeks from now and the team has got a guarded welcome from the Aussies even when they practice in the bubble created in suburban Sydney. Former Aussie skipper Steve Smith, who missed the last Test series against India, has fired the first salvo, telling the

Indians that short pitch bowling does not bother him and his four failures to Kiwi left-arm pacer Neil Wagner were nothing but an aberration. The Aussie taste for the hook and pull shot is legend and one doubts whether the Indians will fall to this. Notwithstanding the ODI series and the three Twenty20 that follow, the home team is concentrating on the four-match Test series that kicks off mid-December. The Aussie distaste for losing is well documented and their loss in the last Test series to India will be at the back of their minds. Aussie head coach, Justin Langer, has reminded the Indians that they will be two years better and more experienced. Their focus on the Test

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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